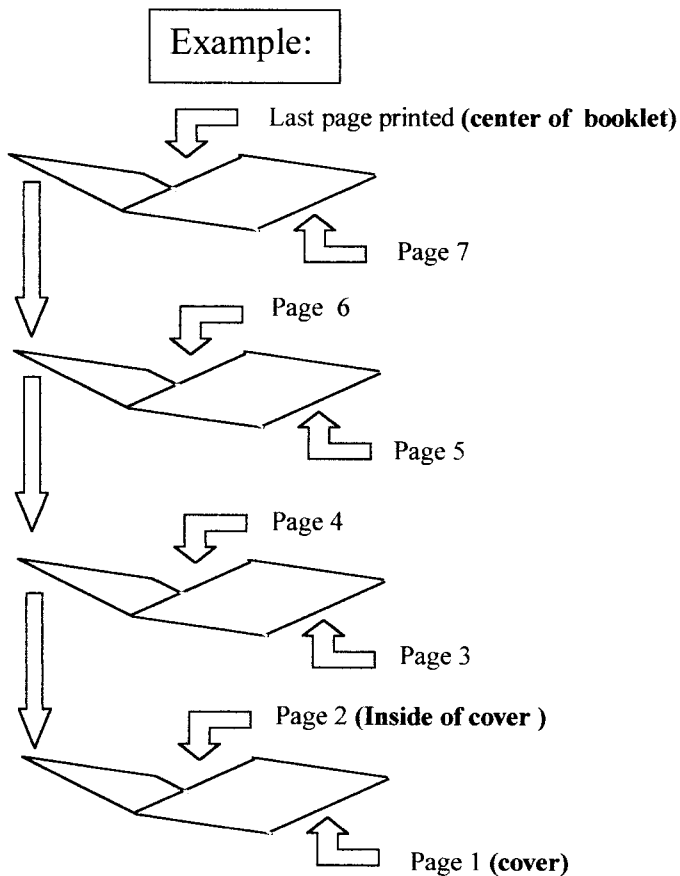


Instructions for printing ACM booklets from Adobe Acrobat Reader

(For booklets with Printed Text Inside the Cover)



Instructions for printing these documents as booklets.

(Please refer to your printer's manual for **double-sided printing**.)

- Print the first page (**the cover**) Then print page 2 (1st page of text) on the back of this sheet.
- Print page 3 on the next sheet, and then page 4 on the back of the same sheet. Do the same with 5 and 6, 7 and 8, etc, until complete.
- The last page printed will be the center of the booklet.
- Fold and staple.

Please note: The actual page numbers printed on the booklet pages, and the page numbers as far as the printer is concerned are two different things. Each single page printed by the printer (one side of a sheet) is actually two pages of the booklet. For example: in a twelve page booklet, page 1 will be front and back of the cover of the booklet, and page 2 for the printer will be page 2 and page 11 together on the same side of the sheet, etc, etc. (example only).

Faithfulness

And

Longsuffering

(Grace Alone)

John Kershaw

Faithfulness

And

Longsuffering

(Grace Alone)

Compliments of:

Agape Chapel Ministries

P.O. Box 59084

Norwalk, CA 90652

USA

E-mail: acm@sounddoctrine.net

Web-site: www.sounddoctrine.net

John Kershaw

Compliments of:
Agape Chapel Ministries
P.O. Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90650
USA

E-mail: acm@sounddoctrine.net
Web-site: www.sounddoctrine.net

Faithfulness and Longsuffering

PREACHED AT ZION CHAPEL, TROWBRIDGE
OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, 1834

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3. 9.)

In the religious world there is a great diversity of opinion concerning Christ. Some are crying out, “Lo, here is Christ” and others, “Lo, he is there;” but we are exhorted by our Lord to “believe them not,” but to “try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The great error of many is they take their own sentiments of the word of God, and labour to make the Bible speak their fleshly whims and notions, instead of taking their principles from the word of God and strive to ascertain the beauty and harmony that shine forth in the Scriptures. For instance; the Arian and the Socinian, who deny the personal Godhead of Christ, refer principally to those texts that speak of His manhood, and then deny the great and glorious mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh.” Then again, the Arminians, who fight against the doctrine of election and particular redemption and vindicate the universal scheme, refer to our text and passages of a similar import, and labour to make them speak their sentiments, without carefully examining the connexion in which such texts stand. Were they

to do this, under the Holy Spirit's teaching, they would find their meaning is very different; as I shall endeavour to prove.

From the words of our text, I will, with the help of the Lord, take notice of the following things:—

- I. The Lord is not slack concerning the fulfilment of His promises as some men count slackness;
- II. The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward;
- III. He is not willing that any should perish;
- IV. He wills that all should come to repentance.

I.

The Lord is not slack concerning the fulfilment of His promises as some men count slackness.

(1.) The promise particularly alluded to is that of *Christ's second coming to judgment*; and it is one of those "exceeding great and precious promises" that our Lord has given us. He told His disciples that He would go and prepare a place for them; and He made a promise to comfort them in their trouble saying, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This is what the saints of the Lord long for, as Paul did when he said, "Having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better," than being here in this "body of sin and death," and this world of sorrow and woe.

When our Lord ascended up on high, having "led captivity captive," His disciples looked steadfastly upon Him as He went up, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men (or angels in the form of men) stood by them in white apparel; (making a promise of our Lord's second coming) said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Whatever scoffers may say against Christ's second coming and the judgment of the great day, this word of promise, spoken by angels, shall stand, "and every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompence of reward," in that great and awful day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting

In every nation, then, under heaven, he that fears God, and, under the influence of the Spirit of God, works righteousness, is accepted of Him; but it is not our fearing God and working righteousness that is the ground or foundation of our acceptance with Him. Decidedly not; we are "accepted in Christ the beloved" (Eph. 1. 6); We "are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2. 10.) We must not look to anything done by us, nor to any of the graces of the Holy Spirit that are wrought in us, as the ground of acceptance in the sight of Jehovah, as a just and holy God; but to the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ; for it is in Him alone that the seed of Israel are justified, and shall glory. (Isa. 45. 25.) It is our fearing God and working righteousness that are the evidence of our acceptance with God; as it is written, "By their fruits ye shall know them." And when we have done all, we must count it but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, for whom Paul suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, complete and accepted.

I have often, with a solemn pleasure, admired Dr. Watts' hymn on this subject —

Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake:
O may my soul be found in Him,
And of his righteousness partake!

The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before thy throne;
But faith can answer thy demands
By pleading what my Lord has done.

Now may the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, accompany His word; and His shall be all the praise and the glory. Amen and amen.

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (2 Th. 1. 7-9.)

This is the awful and doleful side of the question. But the apostle directs our attention in the next verse to another and more glorious end that our Lord has in view in His second coming. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." Have we not often admired His beauty and glory when, by the eye of faith, we have seen Him who is invisible; for the goings forth of our God and King are to be seen in His sanctuary, or His church in her militant state. Thus saith the Lord, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." Though it is but "through a glass darkly," yet one glimpse of His beauty constrains us to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." For He is the chief amongst ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. If this be the joy we feel when we see but a glimpse of His beauty, and that through a glass darkly, what will be the joy of our hearts when we behold His face in righteousness, without a glass or cloud between? We shall then admire His beauty, and adore His majesty for ever and ever with joy indescribable.

In the verses preceding our text, the apostle Peter brings forward the arguments that the scoffers of his day used against Christ's second coming, saying, as they did in a contemptuous manner, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "For this," says Peter, "they willingly are ignorant of, that, by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Whatever infidels may say, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." He shall "sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." Yea, these

Sinners must now come forth,
And stand before the Lord,
Whose word they scorned on earth,
Whose children they abhorred.

(Burnham)

And these shall go away "into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," where their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.

How amazingly different is the state of the true Christian, who is looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God. Having felt the sentence of the killing letter of God's law in his conscience, a knowledge of sin has revived. He has died to all hope of going to heaven on the ground of his own works, and like the Psalmist, has cried unto the Lord out of the horrible pit; and the Lord, in answer to his prayer, has lifted him out of the miry clay and set his feet for eternity upon the Rock of Ages, being washed in the blood of the Lamb. Clothed in the wedding garment, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance and pledge of future glory, the believer is ready to exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

We live in a day in which much is said about Christ's second coming and the millennium, or Christ's thousand years' reign with His saints on earth. Some men are so full of this doctrine that it is the principal topic they dwell on, and they labour in it as if they meant to frighten their hearers out of their senses. But the most needful thing for us to inquire after is this — are we born again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus? Have we the Spirit of Christ? Are we complete in Christ? Have we the oil of divine grace in our hearts, and are our lamps burning? If so, let the Lord come soon or late, we are ready to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb; and it will be of little advantage to us whether we reign with Him on earth or in heaven; for if we are where Jesus is, we shall be happy. For in His presence there is fulness of joy; and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

(2). The Lord is not slack in the fulfilment of *His promise as the God of nature*; for He has said, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen. 8. 22.) We are all witnesses of the faithfulness of God to this promise, for we see the seasons regularly roll round. After a cold and dreary winter, during which the trees and plants have appeared withered and dead, have we not beheld the return of spring — the "time of the singing of birds" — when the sun has gone forth in his strength and warmed the earth, and the Lord

fearth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10. 34. 35).

From these words it is contended that the Lord does not respect one man more than another; that if the sinner will exercise the freedom of his will, and turn to God, and fear Him, and work righteousness, the Lord will love him, and he shall be saved; and this fearing the Lord and working righteousness, is considered, either in whole or in part, to be the ground of acceptance with God. Hence sinners, dead in sin, are told that if they do these things, they will be saved; but if they do them not, they will be damned. Thus they make it out that salvation and damnation depend upon the works of the creature; consequently, that the sinner is beforehand with God. But how different are these statements to the tenor of God's word! As an axe laid to the root of such tenets it hews them down: "We love him, because he first loved us." "But Esaias is very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (that is, Christ the object of his faith) is counted for righteousness." Thus boasting is excluded, not by the law of works, but, by the law of faith, which lays the sinner in the dust, and crowns Jehovah Lord of all in the salvation of His church.

When Peter said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. . . ." it is evident that he was convinced of the error that the Jews and even the apostles themselves had been in, namely, that the Lord respected the Jews more than the Gentiles. The sheet let down from heaven, "wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," fully convinced Peter that God had of His elect family among all the nations of the earth, and that the distinction of Jew and Gentile, circumcision or uncircumcision, bond or free, male or female, were all done away in Christ, and that the church of God of whatever nation, or tongue, or people, are all one in Christ Jesus, who has broken down the middle wall of partition, that He might be His church's all and in all.

concludes that the conduct of God, in the predestination of His people, lays His compassion lower than the compassion of man; and to the eye of reason the argument appears somewhat plausible.

But how pointed, clear, and striking is Hervey's reply to this argument: "News is brought that the Prince George man-of-war, Admiral Broderick's own ship, is burnt and sunk, and above four hundred persons that were on board had perished. Six hours the flames prevailed, while every means was used to preserve the ship and crew, but all to no purpose. In the mean time, shrieks, and groans, bitter moaning, and piercing cries, were heard from every quarter. Raving despair and even madness presented themselves in a variety of forms. Some ran to and fro, distracted with terror, not knowing what they did or what they should do. Others jumped overboard from all parts, and, to avoid the pursuits of one death, leaped into the jaws of another. Those unhappy wretches who could not swim were obliged to remain upon the wreck, though flakes of fire fell upon their bodies. Soon the masts went away, and killed numbers. Those who were not killed thought themselves happy to get upon the floating timber. Nor yet were they safe; for the fire, having communicated itself to the guns, which were loaded and shotted, they swept multitudes from their last refuge."

Mr. Hervey, having related this circumstance, makes a solemn appeal to Mr. Wesley: "What say you, sir, to this dismal narrative? does not your heart bleed? would you have stood by and denied your succour, if it had been in your power to help? would not you have done your utmost to prevent the fatal catastrophe? Yet the Lord saw this extreme distress; He heard their piteous moans: He was able to save them, yet withdrew His assistance. Now, because you would gladly have succoured them if you could, and God almighty could but would not send them aid, will you therefore conclude that you are above your Lord, and that your loving-kindness is greater than His? I will not offer to charge any such consequence upon you. I am persuaded you abhor the thought."

The language of Peter, in the house of Cornelius the Gentile, is often brought forward in support of the universal scheme: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that

has commanded the early and latter rain to water and replenish it? We have seen the trees budding and blossoming, and bringing forth fruit, and the earth yielding her increase, filling our barns with food for man and beast.

May the Lord make us thankful for His goodness as the God of nature, and enable us so to use the good things of this life as not to abuse them, giving thanks to His name.

(3). Our God has not been slack in the fulfilment of *His promise made to Noah that he would never more destroy the whole earth with a flood of water.*

As a token of His faithfulness, God has "set his bow (commonly called the rainbow) in the clouds" of heaven. When we see it in all its beautiful colours, it is a silent but true preacher of the faithfulness of God to His promise.

The Lord, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, for the comfort of His people, says, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." (Is. 54. 8-10.)

When we have looked at this bow in the clouds, has it not, even when our minds have been in darkness, been the means in the hand of the Holy Spirit of leading our hearts to Him, who has said, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." For there is nowhere else for us to look for comfort but to Him who is everlastingly the same in all His attributes and perfections, whatever be the state or frame of our minds. "For if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." Therefore we can at times sing, even when in darkness —

The gospel bears my spirit up;

A faithful and unchanging God

Lays the foundation of my hope,

In oaths, and promises, and blood.

GRACE ALONE

The Eabel builders, disbelieving the promise God made to Noah, began to build their tower which was to reach from earth to heaven, and by means of which they might escape another deluge should one come. But the Lord was displeased with what they did; and a Triune Jehovah came down from heaven, and confounded their language and defeated their design. This He always does with the fears of His people, overthrowing all their projects proceeding from unbelief and carnal reason. Unbelief and carnal reason, like Babel, must fall, but the faithfulness of the Lord shall stand for ever, for it is established in the very heavens.

(4). God the Father is not slack concerning the promises *He's made to the Lord Jesus Christ, the church's Head and Mediator.*

In reading the Scriptures we find many promises made by the Father to the Son, assuring Him that He should have and enjoy all the purchase of His blood. In the second Psalm, the Father, speaking to Christ, said, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree; the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." By the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth are meant God's elect, scattered abroad amongst the Gentile nations. They are Christ's "other sheep. . . which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." (John 10. 16.) Wherever the King's banished ones are cast in the cloudy and dark day of their unregeneracy, the Lord knows where they are: "Having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

Hearken to the voice of the great Shepherd, speaking by the prophet Ezekiel, "For thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (Ezek. 34. 11-12). In the next verse what a display of the discriminating nature of God's grace in the effectual calling of His people, and how evident it is that He is found of them that sought Him not, and made manifest unto them that looked not for Him. "And I will bring them out

of Jerusalem, and an humane wish for their temporal good. Besides, this will of gathering the Jews to Him was in Him, and expressed by Him, at certain several times by intervals, and therefore, He says, 'How often would I have gathered, whereas, the divine will is one continued, invariable, and unchangeable will; is always the same, and never begins nor ceases to be; and to which such an expression as this is inapplicable; and, therefore, this passage of Scripture does not contradict the absolute and sovereign will of God in the distinguishing acts of it in election and effectual calling.'" (John Gill, *Exposition* — Matt. 23. 37.)

We shall see the difference between the human feelings of Christ, as manifested in the above case, and the Spirit of Christ, if we turn to Luke 10. 17-20. The disciples rejoiced that the spirits were subject to them through the name of the Lord; but Jesus said to them, "Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." And in verse 21 it is said, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." There is and must be a divine harmony in the word of God, between these two passages as well as in the rest; and to me it appears impossible to ascertain their harmony on any other ground than the distinction there is between the human and the divine nature of Christ.

It must be clear to all, from the above statements that there is a distinction to be made between the feelings of humanity in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that God who is a spirit; for our God, as God, is not the subject of those feelings and passions as we are: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55. 8, 9.)

In the controversy between James Hervey and John Wesley, the latter gentleman, in speaking against the doctrine of election, represents the Lord as being worse than man, inasmuch as the Lord according to election saves whom He will, and leaves the rest to perish in their sin. "But," says Wesley, "such are the benevolent feelings of men, that they would have all the human race of Adam saved." Thus he

will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. 8. 8, 9; Ezek. 36. 26; Jer. 32. 40; Heb. 8. 10-12.)

Nothing is more common in the mouths of the Arminians, and even of some of our professed modern Calvinists, than the words of our Lord: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23. 37.) This they bring forward to oppose the doctrine of election and irresistible grace, and to vindicate the free will of man. But the plain and true sense of the passage is this: Christ is addressing the rulers and governors of Jerusalem, who killed the prophets and stoned such as were sent unto them by God. These rulers are called fathers, because they had the care and government of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as a father has of his children. And observe, it is not said, "How often would I have gathered *you*, and *ye* would not," as the passage is so often misquoted; but, "How often would I have gathered *thy children*, . . . and *ye* (rulers) would not!" "For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." (Matt. 23. 13.)

The gathering here spoken of is the gathering of the people under the ministry of the word, that Christ might instruct them in the knowledge of Himself as the Messiah. "The will of Christ to gather these persons is not to be understood of His divine will, or of His will as God, 'for who hath resisted his will?' — this cannot be hindered nor made void — 'he hath done whatsoever he pleased,' — but of His human will, or His will as a man, which, though not contrary to the divine will, but subordinate to it, yet not always the same with it, nor always fulfilled." For instance, when the Lord was praying in the garden, we hear Him say, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will (as a man), but thine, be done." As a man, He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and over Jerusalem, when He saw the judgments that hung over her head. In the passage under consideration, He "speaks as a man and minister, and expresses human affection for the inhabitants

from the people, and will gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land." (v. 13). The Lord does not say, I will give them an opportunity of coming unto me, if they will but exercise the freedom of their own will. No, but He "will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away." (ver. 16).

Some may say, But how if they will not come to Christ, and be gathered by Him? To answer this we are led to another promise that the Father has made to Christ. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Ps. 110. 3). Observe the beauty and force of this passage. The Father, speaking to Christ, says, "Thy people" — those that I gave Thee in covenant love, whom Thou hast engaged to redeem by Thy blood — "*shall be willing* in the day of thy power." See how gloriously this promise was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were in so eminent a manner endowed with power from on high, and when the word spoken by them entered into the hearts of the murderers of Christ; for, being pricked in their heart, they said to Peter and the other apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter preached to them the doctrine of repentance and of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, that they might receive the remission of sins; and they that gladly received the word willingly bowed to the sceptre of that Jesus whom they had crucified and slain, manifesting their love to Him by being baptized in His name. And the same day there were added unto the number of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth about three thousand souls. (Acts 2. 31-41.) What a proof of the power of the Lord attending the preaching of His word by these illiterate fishermen, and of the faithfulness of the Father to His promise, saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Solomon says, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Our Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords; so that where His voice is there is the greatest of all power; and His voice is often heard, and His power felt, in the ministry of His word by His ministers to this day. For the Lord is riding forth upon the white horse of His everlasting gospel, conquering and to conquer. At His word the stoutest heart must tremble as Saul of Tarsus did (Acts 9. 6). "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day," — to wit, the day of the Lord's power. His grace shall reign in the effectual

calling of His people until the headstone is brought to the building of mercy, when the cry shall be with shouting, "Grace, grace, unto it."

This leads us to another of the promises the Father has made to the Lord Jesus Christ, which we have on record in the prophecy of Isaiah. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." There is a seed here spoken of, which is Christ's spiritual seed. This seed Paul speaks of: "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been like unto Gomorrah." (Rom. 9. 29). This is a quotation of Paul's from Isaiah 1. 9; and what Paul calls a seed, the prophet calls a very small remnant. Later, Paul calls it "a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom. 11. 5.)

Christ is the Father's first elect, and all His spiritual seed were chosen in Him who is the corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died, but did not abide alone, but sprung up again and is bringing forth His spiritual seed unto this day. "And he shall prolong his days", till they are all "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Being born of God, they are "a seed to serve him, and a generation to call him blessed." This spiritual seed of Christ, the Father tells us He will "make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven (Ps. 39. 29). When the harvest is gathered in, and they are all brought into the garner above, both men and angels shall shout the harvest home, and the Triune Jehovah rejoice to hear.

Another promise that the Father has made to Christ is, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isa. 53. 11.) By the travail of the Redeemer's soul, we are to understand the sufferings He endured in working out our salvation. The prophet Isaiah beheld Him "travelling in the greatness of his strength," and treading in the winepress of His Father's wrath, and of the people there was none with Him. In this prophecy, we behold Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, resisting unto blood, striving against sin, and we hear Him say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." If we look at Him on the cross, we behold the sword of divine justice unsheathed against Him, and His soul made an offering for the sins of His people. Having thus travailed in soul, "he shall see his seed. . . . and shall be satisfied." As a woman, after the sharp pains of labour are over, having brought forth a son,

grace of repentance, He will give eternal glory, because He is not willing that any of them should perish.

As there are many passages which the advocates for the universal scheme bring forward to support their hypothesis besides that which we have had under consideration, I will proceed to examine a few of them.

The first to which I would call your attention is Ezek. 18. 30-32: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD." In order to understand these words aright, we must take into consideration the relation in which Israel stood to the Lord. The Lord declared to Abram that He would make of him a great nation, and that He would be their God and King as a nation, and their Legislator or Lawgiver. This covenant they often brake, and worshipped idols, following after other gods, and He here threatens to judge them according to their evil ways, telling them if they did not repent, and turn themselves from all their transgressions, their iniquity would become their ruin. This repentance is *national*, for national crime, the same as that of the Ninevites. — "Cast away your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed." That is, cast away your idols, and idol worship, which are an abomination unto you, and a trespass against me. — "And make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" By their making them a new heart we learn that they had an idolatrous heart, and were given up to a spirit of idolatry. The Lord calls upon them, as His rational creatures, to have a heart to fear and reverence Him as their God and King, who had done so much for them as a nation. — "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." That the Lord has no pleasure in the death or overthrow of a city or nation, is evident from the many threatenings and exhortations that He has given in His word, for "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." (Lam. 3. 33.)

How different from this are the stipulations of the covenant of grace and salvation! "Behold, the days come saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. . . . not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake; but this is the covenant that I will make with them; a new heart will I give them, and a new spirit will I put within them; and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh. I

wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and make His soul an offering for sin, that guilty sinners might be saved; and He has promised to "pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born." When we are led by faith to look upon Christ, whom we with our sins have pierced, we do not lay all the blame upon the wicked Jews, but feel that we are equally guilty. As Hart sings —

They nailed him to the accursed tree;
(They did, my brethren so did we);
The soldier pierced his side, 'tis true;
But we have pierced him through and through.

The sorrow that arises from a view of the sufferings and death of Christ is that godly sorrow which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." There is a solemn joy mingled with this godly sorrow that cannot be fully described. None ever enjoyed it but those who know Christ for themselves, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Dr. Watts was very blessedly led into this godly sorrow for sin when he composed this hymn —

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away:
'Tis all that I can do.

To conclude. This is the repentance to the enjoyment of which the Lord will have His people come. Therefore, in His own time and way, He gives it to them; and as it is one of the fruits or graces of the Spirit, He works it in their hearts; for He "works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure." From Him is their fruit found; and to every soul that He gives this

looks on him with joy and satisfaction, and rejoices "that a man is born into the world" (John 16. 21), so the Redeemer, after the travail of His soul, shall rejoice to see the purchase of His blood, plucked as a brand out of the fire, humbled at His feet with a broken and contrite heart, determined to venture their souls' eternal all into Jesus' hands, and to take up their cross and to follow Him through evil and through good report, until they sit down with Him in His kingdom of glory above. For neither will the Lord nor His people ever be fully satisfied till they are all enthroned together in the realms of bliss to part no more.

Some people tell us there are of the purchase of Christ's blood now in hell. If so, there is a slackness in the Father's promise, and it falls to the ground unaccomplished; for Christ will never be satisfied if He be deprived of His purchase, as is evident from His intercessory prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." So, as Christ's will is that they all shall be with Him where He is, He cannot be satisfied, nor will the Father be faithful, if any be lost. I speak it with reverence; before this can take place, heaven must sink, and hell must rise and triumph over the throne of God and the Lamb; and this can never, never be.

In order to more clearly show the force of the argument which arises out of these statements, I will use a simile. The greatest part of you, my friends, in this large congregation are labouring men, who earn your bread by the sweat of your brow. You go to your work on Monday morning, and having done your duty to your master, not with eye-service, as pleasing men, but God, when Saturday night comes you go to your master's pay table and receive your wages, and return home with it. After this you go to market and buy those things that you and your family need. Then you return home, and, as prudence dictates, examine whether you have all the goods you have purchased, when you discover that this and the other thing is wanting. And are you satisfied? No; the husband says to the wife, "My dear, did not we buy this and that? but, behold, they are not here; we have been robbed of them, or have lost them." So there is nothing but dissatisfaction. But if, on the other hand, on examination, you find all the purchase there, you are satisfied. If this be the case in these minor things, can we for a moment suppose that the great Redeemer will be

satisfied to lose *His* purchase? O! no. But more of this in another part of our discourse.

(5.) The Father is not slack concerning *the promises He has made to His church and people in Christ.*

All the promises that our covenant God and Father has made to His people are made to them in Christ. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (2. Cor. 1. 20.) Had the promises been made to us on the ground of something being done by us, on condition of which our God would bless us, we should be in despair of enjoying the promised blessing. For we who know the plague of our own hearts cannot kneel down before God, and plead with Him to bless us upon the ground of any worth or worthiness there is in us. It is the self-righteous pharisee who pleads with God to bless him upon the ground of his own doings, saying, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess." (Lk. 18. 11, 12.) Can any of you, my hearers, kneel down before the Lord your Maker, and like this pharisee, tell the Lord a good tale of yourselves and your own doings? If you can, your hearts are like Simon Magus's not right in the sight of God; for you are in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Whatever fair show you may make in the flesh, you are but whited walls and painted sepulchres, appearing outwardly beautiful, "but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

How different is the conduct of the true Christian, who knows and daily feels his own weakness and infirmities! Hear his language when pleading with the Lord for His blessing. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant." "We do not present our supplications before thee for our own righteousness, but for thy great mercies." If ever we rise in ourselves the breadth of a straw above the prayer of the poor publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," we are too high, and must come down. The Christian begins with this prayer, he has to use it all his pilgrimage through, and it will be his prayer on a dying bed.

There is nothing in us, or done by us, that we can plead before the Lord for His blessing. As we, in the matter of our

himself to be altogether as an unclean thing, and that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Where there is true penitence, there will be a hatred of garments spotted with the flesh. True godly sorrow for sin evidences itself in a forsaking of it: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Prov. 23. 13.)

Therefore, if we would find a true penitent, we must not go amongst the men of the world, who are given up to carnal pleasures, for we cannot find him where they delight to meet. The theatre, the ballroom, the race-ground, the tavern, and such like, are not places where the true penitent sinner can live, move, and be happy, no more than fish can live out of water. So that to find a broken-hearted sinner, we must look where weeping Mary was, namely, at Jesus's feet; for there is no place so suitable to his state of mind, as to lie low in the dust at the feet of Mercy. "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." (Jer. 50. 5.) The tabernacles of the Lord are amiable to such, and their "soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD. . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." The penitent sinner would "rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Ps. 84. 1-10.)

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Such a man has new views of himself as a guilty, weak, and helpless worm, and of God, as a just and holy God, that will by no means clear the guilty; for mercy cannot shine forth at the expense of justice. He has new views of Christ, in whom mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Sin never appears in such hateful colours and so odious a light as when we behold it laid on Christ, and are led by the Holy Spirit to consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, resisting unto blood, striving against sin. We behold Him by faith nailed to the accursed tree. His hands and feet bruised with the rugged nails: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was

men should repent, it does not from hence follow that they have a power to repent of themselves; for such is the condition of man by nature, that they neither see their need of repentance, and their hearts are so hard and obdurate that they cannot work themselves up to it, or work it in them and exercise it. This requires the powerful and efficacious grace of God to produce it, and it is a gift of His grace; and if He give the means and not the grace of repentance itself, it will never appear. But the apostles' preaching that men should repent, shows that they were in such a state as to need it, and how necessary it was for them to have it, seeing without it they must perish; and such a ministration is proper to awaken the minds of them to a sense of the need of it, and to direct them to Christ, who is exalted to give it, as well as the remission of sins." (*John Gill, Exposition of the New Testament* — Mark 6. 12.)

True evangelical repentance is a godly sorrow for sin arising from a principle of love to God; so that though there were no hell or punishment connected with sin, the soul that is born of God would hate and abhor sin, as Job did when he said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." We may also add the testimony of Ephraim, who said, "Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." (Jer. 31. 19.) From this passage, it is evident that Ephraim did not repent till he was turned, or changed by God's grace; and being taught of God what a guilty sinner he was both by nature and by practice, he smote upon his thigh, "as expressive of sorrow for sin, after a godly sort of indignation at it; and shame and confusion for it, and also of astonishment at the mercy, forbearance, and long-suffering of God." (Gill, *in loc*) He was ashamed of himself and of his vain and sinful thoughts, words, and ways, and was confounded, feeling the depravity of his nature and bearing the reproach (or iniquity) of his youth.

Sin is a burden to the true Christian, and it makes him cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" or, like the publican, he falls down at the Lord's feet, and his prayer is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He smites upon his breast, intimating that it is not only his outward sins that he is confessing before God, but his heart sins arising from the depravity of his nature; for he feels

justification before God, renounce everything but the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, so, in our approaches to the Majesty of heaven, we must renounce everything but the name, the blood, and righteousness of Jesus, who for our comfort said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." When we come before God, and look to ourselves, we tremble, and wonder the Lord does not cut us down, as cumberers of the ground. But when by a living faith we are enabled to look to Christ, we feel something of that humble boldness Paul speaks of: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." (Heb. 10. 19, 20.) This new and living way which is Christ and Him crucified is the only ground upon which we can plead the promises of God, and look to Him for His blessing; and Christ and Him crucified is the only ground upon which a just and holy God can meet and bless such guilty sinners as we are; for in Christ, "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

When God made promise to Jacob, it was from the top of the ladder which united heaven and earth; and this ladder is none other than our Immanuel, in His human and divine natures, the one Mediator between God and man. When the Lord spoke to Jacob, Jacob was at the foot of the ladder, and his God spoke to him from the top, and made him a promise, saying, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, . . . for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Gen. 28. 15.) Oh, may we often be like Jacob at the foot of this blessed ladder, Jesus Christ; and may we, as Jacob did, hear our heavenly Father speaking to us by promise from the top of this ladder, that our souls may be refreshed, and our spiritual strength renewed, as his was. This Bethel visit Jacob never forgot to his dying day; and the promise made to him stands and shines in the Scriptures as a sunbeam for the comfort of God's spiritual Israel in every age.

Moses, having proved the Lord to be faithful to His word, brings this promise forward to encourage his successor, Joshua; saying unto him, in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong, and of good courage, . . . for the Lord will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

(Deut. 31. 7, 8.) After the death of Moses, the Lord makes the same promise to Joshua, saying, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

The prophet Samuel, having proved the faithfulness of God to His promises, speaking for the encouragement of Israel, said, "The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make them his people." David brings the same promise forward to encourage his son Solomon in the building of the temple: "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." David further says, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Ps. 37. 25.)

Isaiah brings the same undertaking: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Is. 41. 10.) And in verse 14 it is said, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel." So you see, when God made promise to Jacob from the top of the ladder, it was made not only to him but to all his spiritual seed. The prophet Hosea confirms this idea, by telling us that the Lord found Jacob "in Bethel, and there he spake with us." (Hos. 12. 4.) Mark the words of the prophet; not only did the Lord speak with Jacob, but He spake with *us*. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, having the sweet enjoyment of this promise in his own soul, brings it forward in the following soul-animating language: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In Dr. Doddridge's paraphrase of this text, the term never is repeated three times. Truly, a triune Jehovah will never leave nor forsake His people: "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13. 5, 6.)

Joshua, in his exhortation to the people before his death, comes forward as a witness for God, and appeals to the consciences of the people in reference to the faithfulness of God to His promises: "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you: all are come

17. 24. 28, 30.) As Dr. Gill's views on this passage are fully expressive of my own, I will give them in his own words: "That is, he has given orders that the doctrine of repentance, as well as remission of sins, should be preached to all nations, to Gentiles as well as Jews; and that it becomes them to repent of their idolatries, and turn from their idols, and worship the one only living and true God; and though for many hundreds of years God had neglected them, and sent no messengers nor messages to them to acquaint them with His will, and to show them their follies and mistakes; yet now He has sent His apostles unto them, to lay before them their sins, and call them to repentance. And to stir them up to this, the apostle informs them of the future judgment in the following verse. Repentance being represented as a command does not suppose it to be in the power of men, or contradict evangelical repentance, being the free-grace gift of God; but only shows the need men stand in of it, and how necessary and requisite it is: and when it is said to be a command to all, this does not destroy its being a special blessing of the covenant of grace to some, but points out the sad condition that all men are in as sinners, and that without repentance they must perish. And, indeed, all men are obliged to natural repentance for sin, though to all men the grace of evangelical repentance is not given." (*Exposition of the New Testament* — Acts 17. 30.)

The necessity of repentance being thus preached by John, the harbinger of Christ, and even by our Lord Himself, as well as His apostles, and seeing that it is an important branch of divine truth, it is our duty to insist upon it, as well as upon the new birth and faith in Christ; for as we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven if we are not born again of the Holy Spirit, neither can we enjoy the remission of our sins unless we be made true penitents.

It is by faith that we enjoy our interest in the salvation of Christ. Regeneration, repentance, and faith are all needful as graces of the Holy Spirit, and without the enjoyment of them we cannot be saved. Nevertheless, they are not our salvation, but the fruits and effects of it. "Faith and repentance went together in Christ's ministry (Mark 1. 15), and so they did in the ministry of John the Baptist (Acts 19. 4), and likewise in that of the apostle Paul, for he testified 'both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Acts 20. 21.) When they preached that

elders: these he exhorts them to change their sentiments about, and to relinquish them, and give in to the gospel scheme; which proclaims liberty from the law, peace, pardon, and righteousness by Christ, and salvation and eternal life by the free grace of God." (John Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament* — Mark 1. 15.)

When our Lord was told by the Jews, of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the sacrifices, and of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, it being evident that they supposed those characters who suffered were sinners above the rest of mankind, He undeceived them, by preaching to them the necessity of even *their* repentance, saying to them, "I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13. 1-5.)

We are all sinners against a just and holy God, and we must be brought to repent of our sins before God, and confess them with a broken and a contrite heart, as David did, when he said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." If we are thus enabled to confess our sins, God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up at Jerusalem, and preached Christ and Him crucified, charging the death of Christ upon His murderers: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." He then goes on to preach to them the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and proves the doctrine of the resurrection from what was written in the Psalms concerning Him; and when they heard this, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2. 23: 37, 38.)

The doctrine of repentance Paul preached to the men of Athens, when he saw the inscription to the unknown God whom they ignorantly worshipped. He told them that there was one only living and true God, "That made the world and all things therein. . . in whom we live, and move, and have our being," and this God he proves to be the only object of worship and adoration. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts

to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23. 14.)

So you see, there is no slackness in our God, concerning the fulfilment of His promise as some men count slackness.

(6). There is however another principle that we must notice in this part of our discourse. In order that we may prove each for ourselves that the Lord is not slack concerning his promises, *we must be brought in our experience, into those circumstances which will make us feel the need of the things which our God has promised, and be enabled, under the Holy Spirit's influence, to plead the promises by faith, and rest upon them;* as the following instances left on record, abundantly prove.

Abraham is called by the Lord to go forth from his own country and his kindred and his father's house, and to turn his back on their idolatrous worship. This must have been a great trial to him but, for the support of his mind, the Lord made him a promise of the land of Canaan, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. He had not only the promise, but the Lord gave him faith in the promise; so it was by faith in the promise and in the faithfulness of God that he went forth not knowing whither he went; and as he travelled along the promise was the comfort and the support of his mind. (Gen. 12; Heb. 11. 8.)

For a further trial of the patriarch's faith, the Lord allowed Sarah to go childless, until Abraham and she began to think there was a slackness in the Lord's fulfilling His promise; and from a principle of unbelief, Sarah persuaded Abraham to go in unto her handmaid, Hagar. Abraham complied, and Hagar was with child by her master. But instead of these carnal efforts bringing about the promise of God, they brought only confusion into the family, as our unbelief and carnal efforts that we may use to forward God's purposes and promises do to this day. The Lord does not need such carnal means to enable Him to fulfil His promises.

The promise is still delayed, and at length it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women, and Abraham was as good as dead; and now, when all fleshly hopes are cut off, a faithful God renews His promise: "Sarah shall have a son, in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Abraham's

faith is revived, and instead of counting a slackness in the Lord, Paul tells us that he "against hope believed in hope; . . . and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. 4. 18-21.) Sarah, at the set time, brings forth a son, even Isaac, who was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in many things.

Paul, in setting forth the faithfulness of God to His promises, refers to His promise to Abraham. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." (Heb. 6. 13-16.) That the promise made to Abraham, the father of the faithful, still stands for the comfort of all his spiritual seed, whether Jews or Gentiles, is evident from the manner in which the apostle pursues the subject: "Where God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 6. 17-20.)

As a further proof that we must be brought into those circumstances that will make us feel our need of the promised blessing, I refer you to Jacob, of whom I have already spoken. He stood in need of the promise that his God made to him at Bethel, and it was his comfort and support as he went on his journey. But we find him in greater need of the Lord's help when he was returning from his father-in-law's with all that appertained to him, when the messenger told him that his brother Esau was coming against him with an army of four hundred men. This is the time of Jacob's greatest trouble, for it is said he was greatly afraid, fearing that Esau would smite him with the mother and the children. In this day of trouble, he

hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Ac. 5. 31.) You see, how clear it is that Christ is the giver of true repentance to His people Israel, as well as the forgiveness of sins. In Acts 10 and 11, we have an interesting account of Peter being directed by the Lord to go and preach the gospel amongst the Gentiles; and he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but went with the men to the house of Cornelius, and preached unto them Christ and Him crucified, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And God gave testimony to the word of His grace; for these Gentiles repented, believed, and were baptized. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, his brethren that were of the circumcision blamed him for going amongst the Gentiles; but Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order to them; and when the apostles and brethren heard the great things God had done for the Gentiles, they glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." From this, it is evident that true repentance towards God is the special grant of Heaven; and none ever did, nor ever will, possess this blessing but the sheep of Christ, unto whom He gives it, and "they shall never perish." (John 10. 28.)

The doctrine of repentance and remission of sins was to be preached in the name of Jesus among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; because the "election of grace" that are to be made its happy partakers are scattered abroad amongst all the nations of the earth. John the Baptist preached the doctrine of repentance to the Jews who were looking for justification on the ground of their own works and their being the children of Abraham. Thus he laid the axe to the root of the tree, and ministerially hewed down all their false props, showing them the necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in the Messiah. (Luke 3. 2-10.)

"After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1. 14-15.) "He called them to repent, not only of their former sins and vicious course of life, but of their bad principles and tenets concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; concerning merit and free will, justification by the works of the law, and salvation by their obedience to the ceremonies of it, and the traditions of the

overthrown." But the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Now this repentance was a *rational* one, for *rational* crime, and it was universal, from the king on the throne to the meanest beggar; and the Lord, as the God of nature seeing their works, that they turned from their wicked ways, repented of the evil (or revoked the threatened judgment) that He had said He would do unto them, and He did it not (Jonah 4.)

(2). There is also a repentance, commonly called *legal*, which arises from fear of the punishment and shame connected with sin. We have an instance of this in Judas. The evangelist Matthew tells us that "Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. . . ." (Mt. 27. 3, 4.) This did not arise from a principle of hatred to sin and love to God and holiness, but from a slavish fear of the just judgments of God which he saw hanging over his guilty head, ready to burst upon him, because he had betrayed innocent blood. His sorrow was the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. (2 Cor. 7. 10) It is thus with the malefactor who has broken the law of his country and is tried and condemned for his crime. He repents, grieves, and mourns, not because he hates vice and loves virtue, but because of the punishment and disgrace he has brought upon himself. Only let him loose again upon the public, and it is most likely he will do the same again. So with the drunkard. When he has spent his money and injured his character, circumstances, and family, how readily he says he repents, and will do so no more; but let him have some money in his pocket, and be exposed to temptation, and he is gone again, thereby making good the proverb, "The repenting drunkard never mends." His resolutions are merely made in the flesh, and therefore will not stand.

(3). The repentance spoken of in our text is very different to those we have been describing. It is gospel repentance, commonly called *evangelical*, being one of those spiritual blessings our heavenly Father has given us in Christ in the covenant of grace (Eph. 1. 3); and it is given to the Lord's covenant people by Christ, because He is "not willing that any of them should perish, but come to repentance." The apostle Peter confirms this fact: "Him hath God exalted with his right

uses that blessed weapon, all-prayer. He sends all that he has over Jordan, and he is left behind to spread his case before the Lord. Thus it is, when we are in any particular trouble, we must have the matter over with the Lord in secret, as Jacob had.

As Jacob was pleading with the Lord to appear for him, and make a way for his escape, the Holy Spirit (the remembrancer) brought afresh to his mind the promise his God had made to him at Bethel, and by faith he pleaded it, saying, "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good." And as he was pleading the promise, there wrestled a man with him, which was none other than Christ, the Angel of the covenant; and He said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." But wrestling Jacob, having fast hold of the promise by faith, said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me;" thou who hast all hearts in thine own hands, and canst turn them as the rivers of water, thou must appear for me, and deliver me from the hands of my brother Esau. As Jacob was thus pleading with the Lord, the Angel said to him, "What is thy name? And he said, Jacob." But the Angel of the covenant said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. 32.) Jacob prayed the Lord to be a present help in the time of his trouble; and his God, as the breaker of Israel, went before him, and broke down the enmity of Esau's heart; so that when Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw him, Esau ran to meet him and instead of frowns there was a look of affection, and instead of blows, kissing and weeping. Truly it may be said, "What hath God wrought."

We see from this account, the blessedness of leaving all our concerns in the Lord's hands. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee."

We also find Paul himself brought into circumstances where he stood in special need of the promise of God to support his mind. He had an abundant revelation, being caught up into the third heaven, and hearing unspeakable things, which it is not lawful for a man to utter; and he tells us that lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him. This thorn in the flesh, Paul did not like — it was painful and grievous to flesh and blood; and he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But this was not his Master's will. So Paul had not, not because

he asked not, but because he asked amiss. When we pray to escape the path of tribulation, we pray contrary to the word and will of our heavenly Father, who has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." It is "through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of heaven;" and they that are there, enthroned in glory, are such as "have come up out of great tribulation." William Huntington was wont to observe, "They that are out of the path of tribulation are out of the way." Although the Lord would not remove Paul's thorn in the flesh, He gave him a promise to support his mind, saying unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This enabled him to glory in the path of tribulation, and to say, When I am weakest in myself, then I am the strongest in the Lord, and in the power of His might. (2 Cor. 12.)

There is no state into which we can be brought that the grace and promise of God is not sufficient to support our mind while we are exercised therewith. Paul could do all things through Christ which strengthened him. On this subject, the poet sweetly sings —

Let me but hear my Saviour say,
Strength shall be equal to thy day;
Then I rejoice in deep distress,
Learning on all-sufficient grace.

(Watts)

If we refer to a few of the promises, we shall find that they are made for the comfort of the saints in their troubles. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." (Is. 43. 1,2.) To prove this promise true we must be brought into the waters of affliction and adversity, and pass through them as Israel did through the Red Sea, and we must have the Lord with us as Israel had in the sea, to keep us from being overflowed and to hold us up. "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." (v.3.) There is to be fire-work; for the Lord has chosen Zion "in the furnace of affliction" and he "will bring the third part through the fire." So we need not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us as though some strange thing happened unto us. There is the fire of persecution, and into this

cast down, for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." (Ps. 37. 23, 24.) It is likewise said, the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands (of faith) shall wax stronger and stronger. They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength (they shall be strengthened by the Spirit's might in their inner man); they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." (Is. 40. 31.) The weaker in ourselves, the stronger in the Lord.

The feeble saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way.

We cannot conclude this part of our subject better than in the language of Paul: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded." This is a soul-comforting and God-glorifying persuasion, founded upon the covenant engagement of our triune Jehovah — "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8. 37-39.)

As the body without the soul is dead, so that religion is but a dead form which has not the Spirit of God to begin it, maintain it, carry it on, and complete it in our eternal glorification.

IV

We now come to the fourth and last part of our subject, namely, that all should come to repentance.

In considering the doctrine of repentance we will first show that there is a repentance spoken of in the Scriptures, of which we may be the subjects, and yet not be possessed of that which is connected with the salvation of the soul.

(1). Such was the repentance of the Ninevites. The Lord commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness was come up before Him. But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord brought him back again, and made him willing to go to Nineveh and preach the preaching that He bade him. Jonah entered this great city, and cried, in the name of the Lord, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be

uttermost that come unto God by him." Yea, it is said of Him, that "he *will* save," that "he came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost."

The blessed Spirit leads us to see such beauty and glory in Christ, that our souls are all athirst for Him. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." There is none that can help us but the Lord, and under the Spirit's influence we are enabled to cast ourselves at His blessed feet, saying as Esther said, "If I perish, I perish;" for at Jesus' feet I will lie, and

Should worlds conspire to drive me thence.

Moveless and firm this heart shall lie:

Resolved, for that's my last defence,

If I must perish, there to die.

(Watts)

All we want, in such a state of mind, is to know for ourselves that we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"; but this we cannot enjoy, unless the Holy Spirit takes of the blood of atonement and applies it to our conscience, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Then we can say with the apostle Paul, "I know whom I have believed (or trusted), and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

(iv). *The certainty that the Holy Spirit will complete the work of grace in the hearts of His people*, is another proof of his unwillingness that any of them should perish.

Paul, writing to the Philippians, says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1. 6.) The Holy Ghost is the author of the work of grace in the hearts of His people, and where He begins, He carries on and completes His work. Yes, though the world, the flesh, and the devil oppose, the Lord's work in the hearts of His people shall go on, because "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4. 4.) Hannah, in her song, says, "He will keep the feet of his saints." Peter tells us, we are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Solomon says, though the just man fall seven times, he shall rise up again. David says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly

fire Shadrach, Meshch, and Abednego were cast, because they would not fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden god. And when they were cast into the fire, the Son of God went in with them, and commanded the flames, so that not a hair of their head was singed, nor their coats changed, nor the smell of fire passed on them. Thus they proved that the Lord was not slack concerning His promise.

There is the fire of temptation, and in this we must be tried, "if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation;" and this is for the trial of our faith, which is "more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." In this fire our Lord was keenly tried when tempted of the devil in the wilderness, that He might be an able succourer of His tempted family. For their comfort He has said that no temptation shall happen to them but such as is common to men, and that He will with the temptation make a way for their escape that they may be able to bear it.

There is the fire of afflictive dispensations in providence, in which Job was so sorely tried.

Our Lord has been afflicted in all our affliction, and we have Him with us to comfort and support us in our afflictions. Many of the Lord's family can testify that they have most of the Lord's presence with them in their greatest trials, and thus have proved the Lord to be faithful.

Our Lord has His fire in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem (Is. 31. 9); for He tells us that "it is impossible but that offences must come, but woe unto him through whom they come." This is the most painful fire when the most excellent of the earth are as pricking thorns in each others' eyes and sides. Paul calls it biting and devouring one another: and he exhorts such to take heed that they be not consumed one of another. But whatever fire we may be in, our Lord sits "as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness." (Mal. 3. 3.) So we shall ever find the Lord to be faithful to His promise, whatever fire or water we may have to pass through.

In another promise, our God says he will bring the blind by a way they know not, and will lead them in paths that they have not known, and will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will He do unto them, and not forsake them. (Is. 42. 16.) Such as have no darkness to

complain of, nor crooked things to be exercised with, can never prove the faithfulness of the Lord to this promise. But this is not the lot of the Lord's family, for they have often to walk in darkness and cannot see their way, and they have many crooked things, both within and without, and have to say with Israel of old, "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." (2 Chron. 20. 12.) When they are in this state, it is sweet to be enabled to obey the exhortation of the Lord, "Be still and know that I am God" "For this (faithful) God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

II

We now pass on to the second part of the subject, which is to show that **the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward.**

(1). *We will inquire who the "us-ward" are to whom the Lord is said to be long-suffering.*

They are undoubtedly the persons to whom Peter writes his epistles, including himself. Let us turn, then, to the first epistle, and see to whom he wrote: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia;" and he then gives them the honoured appellation of "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." In the second chapter of this epistle, he calls them "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

It is worthy of remark, that the pronouns us and we, so often used by the apostles, in their epistles, are no other than the Lord's chosen people, to whom the precious truths contained in those epistles belong. As a confirmation of this fact, let me refer you to the following texts, in which these two terms, us and we, are often used: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1 3-5.) "But let us who are of the day be sober, for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5. 8. 9.) "Who hath saved us and called

made alive by the quickening influence of God's Spirit, can no longer go on in sin, nor walk the way of sinners; for the Lord says to such, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." (2 Cor. 6. 17, 18) "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (Jn. 15. 19) "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." (1 Pet. 4. 4.)

(ii). *The Holy Spirit's convincing His people of their lost, sinful state and condition is another proof of His unwillingness that any of them should perish.*

Our Lord made us a promise of the Holy Spirit, and said that when He came, His first work would be to convince the world of sin, and of the righteousness of God in His law. (Jn. 16. 7-11). Hence it is by the law in the hands of the Spirit, that we receive the knowledge of our sinful state and condition before God. The commandment being brought home to the conscience by His power, we die to all hope of being saved on the ground of our own works, and we learn experimentally that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; and if we are not taught by the Spirit to know ourselves, we can never know Christ, "whom to know is eternal life." We must know and feel that we are sick before we can be healed; our hearts must be wounded and broken before the great Physician can bind them up; we must see and feel our shame and nakedness before we can put on by faith the garment of salvation; we must see and feel our guilty, condemned state as sinners, before we can enjoy the pardoning love and efficacious blood of the Lamb; and we must experimentally know that we are lost and undone before we can enjoy our interest in the finished work of Christ. These things the Lord has joined together in the experience of His family, and they are things which the Holy Ghost teaches.

(iii). *We have another proof of the Holy Spirit's unwillingness that any of His people should perish, in His leading them to put all their trust and confidence in Christ.*

It is part of the Spirit's work to glorify Christ, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to His people. He leads them to see that Christ and Him crucified is just such a Saviour as we stand in need of, for "he is able also to save them to the

also." Yes, my brethren, our great High Priest has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, being exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and having all things put under his feet, and being given to be the head over all things to the church." (Eph. 1. 21, 22.) He tells us that "all power is given him in heaven and in earth." As Mediator, He hath "power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him."

So, my friends, it is clear, from the testimony of God, that the work of redemption is finished by Christ, and that all power is in His hands; therefore, He will have His people with Him in glory.

(3). *That the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity, is not willing that any of His people should perish, is evident from the following particulars:-*

(i). *That the Holy Ghost is God, and one with the Father and the immortal Word in the salvation and glorification of the church, is clearly revealed: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one" (1 Jn. 5. 7); "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Mt. 28. 19).*

We have already proved that God the Father has a chosen people, whom He has "ordained unto eternal life," and that for this people Christ has "obtained eternal redemption." Nevertheless, who this people are none can tell except as the Holy Ghost makes them manifest; for there is no difference between them and the rest of the world while they are in an unregenerate state, as they walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath (or wrathful dispositions) even as others." (Eph. 2. 2, 3.)

The Holy Ghost in regeneration takes possession of the hearts of His people, for we are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwells in our hearts. Now where this Spirit is, there is life: "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The soul that is thus

us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1. 9.) You see, my friends, from these passages, and many more that might be produced, that the "us-ward" in our text are the objects of God's everlasting, electing love; and that their election is not founded upon any foreseen worth or worthiness in the creature, as the procuring cause of it, will be seen from the characters unto whom the Lord has been long-suffering.

(2). *We will now speak of the long-suffering of God to His people.*

(i). The Lord is long-suffering to His people *before they are called by His grace.* This is evident from the following characters which we have left on record.

Behold the long-suffering of God to Manasseh, King of Judah. The idolatrous worship which his father Hezekiah had demolished, Manasseh re-established; and, as a proof of his zeal as an idolator, he burnt one of his sons in sacrifice to Moloch. He dealt with familiar spirits, and had intercourse with devils; and, what is more awful still, he filled Jerusalem, from one end to the other, with the innocent blood of God's saints. How great must the forbearance and long-suffering of God have been to this wicked wretch, or he had been cut down in the height of his wickedness! But, wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! that one so full of mischief and enmity to all righteousness should be a vessel of mercy — an heir of glory! For notwithstanding his wickedness, God's all-conquering grace reached Manasseh's heart, laid him prostrate in the dust, and made him an humble supplicant before the God of his fathers. The Lord was entreated of him, and blessed him with the pardon of all his sins, because He was not willing that he should perish, but come to repentance.

See the long-suffering of God to Mary Magdalene, that sinful and vile woman who was possessed of seven devils, being a harlot, living in the filth of sin and abomination. Had it not been for the Lord's forbearance, she would have sunk in sin to rise no more. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved (her), even when (she) was dead in trespasses and sins," could not give Mary up; for she had a place in His heart. In due time He brought her, by the power of His grace to His blessed feet, in Simon's house; where with a

broken and contrite heart, she washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and the Lord said of her, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." What a proof is this that the Lord was not willing that Mary should perish, but come to repentance!

I would also call your attention to the Samaritan woman. It is said that Christ "must needs go through Samaria," because there were some of His people there, and the set time to call them by His grace was come. Now there was a woman who was to be the firstfruits of His grace amongst the Samaritans, who had had five husbands, and the man she was then living with was not her husband but they were living together in fornication. You see, the Lord was long-suffering towards this woman, till the time He had appointed to meet her at Jacob's well, to prove to her and to others that, sinful as she was, He was not willing that she should perish. Therefore, He gave her His grace which was in her heart as a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life. (John 4.)

We also behold the long-suffering of God towards Zacchaeus, the publican. Publicans in the days of Christ were collectors of the king's tribute or tax, and were generally looked upon as oppressive thieves and pickpockets, for they were in the habit of demanding more from the people than was Caesar's due, and by this means, enriching themselves. Zacchaeus was one of this sort, and to gratify his curiosity he climbed into a tree; but our Lord, to magnify the riches of His grace in one so vile, called him down, saying, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down." The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ entered into his heart and brought him down. How evident it is that the grace of God makes men honest and benevolent; for no sooner had Zacchaeus come down the tree than he said to the Lord, "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." As a further proof that the Lord was not willing that he should perish, He said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19.)

We have another great proof of the long-suffering of God in Saul of Tarsus. He was a pharisee, and as touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless in his own eyes; but there never was a more inveterately malicious enemy to Jesus of Nazareth and His humble followers than this Saul. He was

gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." (Mt. 25. 32, 33.) For the sheep are the objects of the Father's everlasting, electing love, and the purchase of the blood of the great Shepherd. They are the "us-ward," the "us," and the "all" in our text, whom God will bring to repentance here and to eternal glory hereafter.

Our Lord bought His people at too dear a rate ever to suffer any of them to perish. Had "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," and all that therein is" (Gen. 14. 19), given the sun, moon, and stars, the gold and the silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, for the redemption of His people, the price would have been amazingly great, but infinitely insufficient to redeem them. And, great as such a price would have been, it is not to be in the least degree compared with the price that has been given — the precious blood of Christ. For Christ gave his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20. 28); to wit, for as many as were ordained by the Father unto eternal life. Paul tells us that Christ "gave himself for us (mark this!) He gave Himself for our sins an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour; that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Gal. 1. 4; Eph. 5. 2; Tit. 2. 14.)

The pronoun *us*, my friends, in the above passages, accords with the *us* in our text; and behold how evident it is that He is not willing that any of them should perish; for, to secure our everlasting welfare, He became our Bondman, or Surety, in the covenant of grace, in the councils of eternity, in the fulness of time becoming incarnate, that He might save us from our sins, and deliver us from the wrath to come; putting away all our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness to justify us; giving Himself for us, that He might destroy death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; being the plague of death and the destruction of the grave; bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel; and being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. "Who," therefore, "shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of the Father, who also maketh intercession for us;" and "because he lives, we shall live

mad against the church of God. He consented to the death of Stephen, and held the raiment of them that slew him. He made havoc of the saints, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committed them to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme the name of that Jesus on whom their hope for heaven depended. He breathed out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Jesus, and went to the high-priest, and desired of him letters of authority that he might go to Damascus and bring the few that were there who called upon the name of the Lord, and have them bound fast as prisoners at Jerusalem.

This was Saul's free will, and it was carrying him as fast as possible towards hell, and it would have engulfed him there, but for free grace, which plucked him as a brand out of the fire, being a chosen vessel of mercy. The Lord, that He might magnify the riches of His grace in the salvation of the chief of sinners, suffered him to go near to Damascus, but not to enter in, the time being now come for Saul to be called by grace. And Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Down the rebel fell in the dust, and Jesus slew the enmity of his heart and made him willing to be anything or nothing, that Christ might be all in all. What a display of the grace and power of Christ shines forth in the conversion of Saul, and of the power of Christ resting upon him to fit and qualify him to preach that gospel he had laboured to destroy. From this time to his dying day, nothing but free grace and a dying Jesus's love would do for him; and he is now wearing his crown of glory in heaven, and shouting "Victory, through the blood of the Lamb."

I will refer you to another character we have left upon record, in whom the long-suffering of God shines forth, and truly this crowns all the rest. It is the thief upon the cross, in whom we have a display, not only of the long-suffering of God, but of His discriminating grace. There were two thieves crucified with Christ, one on the right hand and the other on the left; and these two thieves were both in one condition — both born in sin, going from their mother's womb speaking lies; both breakers of the law of God, which says, "Thou shalt not steal;" both a pest to society, breakers of the law of the land, and in consequence of which the civil sword of justice would not suffer them to live. They were both persecutors of Christ, for Matthew tells us that the "thieves also which were

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay,
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame?

(Zinzendorf)

(iv). That Christ is not willing that any of His people should perish, is moreover evident *from His willingness to die for them.*

When the hour drew nigh that Jesus was to be delivered into the hands of sinful men, to be arraigned at Pilate's bar, and crucified and slain, we find Him in the garden of Gethsemane, resisting unto blood, striving against sin. Judas, who betrayed Him, knowing the place where He was, (for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples) went, with a band of men and officers, and entered the garden, having lanterns, and torches, and weapons to take Him. Here behold His willingness to die for His people. Instead of fleeing from them, bold as a lion He went forth to meet them, and said to them, "Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he." And (being confounded) they went backward and fell to the ground. "Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he; if, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." (John 18, 1-8.)

In all this, we see the willingness of Jesus to lay down His life for his people. He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10, 17, 18.) Again He said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10, 11.) And it is further evident from what our Lord says that all men are not His sheep: "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." (Jn. 10, 26) For "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be

crucified with him cast the same in his teeth" as the infuriated multitude did; and Mark says "they reviled him." So you see, in all these things they were both on a level, and both deserved to die and be damned. But see how the doctrine of election shines! One is taken to paradise, and the other is righteously left to perish in his sins; for our God "will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." Behold then the long-suffering of God towards this guilty wretch. He is suffered to go on in his sins until he is brought into the jaws of death, as a malefactor, "hell from beneath being moved to meet him at his coming." But grace, triumphant grace even at the eleventh hour, plucks him out of the fire, because the Lord was not willing that he should perish, but His will was to take him with Him to heaven, as a trophy of His redeeming love and mercy. Therefore he said unto him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

If we come down to more modern times, we may see the long-suffering of God towards John Bunyan, the tinker, who was so notoriously wicked that he became a byword amongst his neighbours. But the Lord was not willing that he should perish, but be brought to repentance and to flee from the city of destruction, as he sets it forth in his inimitable "*Pilgrim's Progress*," and also in his "*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*."

We might also notice John Newton, whose praise is in all the churches, and whose hymns are sometimes sung with grace and melody in our hearts to the Lord. Behold this African blasphemer (as he styles himself) on the coasts of Africa, far off from God by wicked works, and far from his native shore. But the pitying eye of mercy saw him, and brought him back to his native land. During the time of a storm at sea, eternal things were laid with a solemn weight upon his mind, and in due time he was raised up to blow the silver trumpet of the everlasting gospel in the great metropolis of our land.

But, let us look to ourselves, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged, and behold the state we were in. Were we not bent and determined to go in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Were we not by nature the children of wrath, even as others? I can speak for myself, and to my shame I would say it, never was a youth more determined to go on in sin than I was. I had a parent who feared the Lord and walked in His ways, and who desired to

His ancient councils), and fulfilled the prophecies." (Dan. 9. 24.)

O, my friends, Christ having made an end of sin and put it away, is a sweet doctrine; and it has often warmed and animated my soul. ". . . saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." (Jer. 50. 20.) How sweetly does the poet sing of this blessed riddance of sin —

Now if we search to find our sins,

Our sins can ne'er be found,

Awake, our hearts, adore the grace

That buries all our faults,

That pardoning blood, that swells above

Our follies and our thoughts.

Beloved, as our sins are thus put away, made an end of, and removed as far as the east is from the west — two opposites that can never come together — they cannot appear against us to condemn us. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" for our transgressions are blotted out as a thick cloud. Though they often appear to us of so aggravating a nature that they seem to be of a scarlet or crimson hue, yet, they being washed away by the blood of the Lamb, we shall be white as snow or as wool; though black in ourselves as the tents of Kedar, we are white and comely through the comeliness that He has put upon us. (Sol. 1. 5.) Not only are our sins absolved through the blood of the cross, but heaven is well pleased for the righteousness' sake of Christ, for He has "magnified the law and made it honourable" (Isa. 42. 21); and this righteousness God has imputed to us. (Rom. 4. 6.) The language of Paul is the prayer of every one that is born and taught of God: To "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," (Phil. 3. 9) and this righteousness is said to be "unto and upon all them that believe." So then, being complete in Christ, and accepted in the Beloved, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," our safe standing for eternity is as we stand in Christ; and of Him we joyfully sing —

saving His people, is another proof of His unwillingness that any of them should perish.

It being utterly impossible for us to save ourselves by any works of righteousness done by us, when we were utterly without strength, in due time Christ came. Not all the blood of bulls and goats that was spilt on Jewish altars could make a satisfactory atonement to divine justice for sin. Therefore Jesus in prophetic language said, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book (of God's decrees and of the prophets) it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40. 7. 8.) He threw by His radiant glory which He had with the Father "before the world was," and veiled His Godhead in a tabernacle of clay, being made of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem His people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. (Gal. 4. 4, 5; 3. 13.) He came to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance that Christ came into the world to save the very chief of sinners. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Moreover He "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (Heb. 2. 14; 2 Tim. 1. 10.)

(iii). *Christ's making an end of the sins of His people, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them*, is another proof of His unwillingness that any of them should perish.

Christ is our spiritual scapegoat on whom all the sins of His people were laid, and He carried them into the land of forgetfulness, never more to return. (Lev. 16, 21, 22.) "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53. 6, 12). "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin (by nature or practice, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin); that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5. 21). "Once in the end of the world (the old dispensation) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9. 26) He is said to have finished transgression, to have made an end of sin, to have made reconciliation for iniquity, to have brought in everlasting righteousness, and to have sealed up the vision (of Jehovah in

bring his children up in the way that they should go. But when I was compelled to go with him to the house of God, I cursed him in my heart. Had it been left to me and my free-will, I should have gone on in sin, and lived and died an enemy to God, till I had lifted up my eyes in hell. But the Lord was not willing that I should perish; for when I was about fifteen years of age, He was graciously pleased to put His fear into my heart, which was as a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death; and having obtained help of God, I have continued to this day, and am not without hope that the Lord will continue to hold me up, and be my God and guide even unto death and eternal glory.

Many of the Lord's family, after they have been called by divine grace, have been led to look back at the hair-breadth escapes they have had, and to admire and adore the kind and watchful care of the Lord over them, when they had no thought or care for themselves, and to sing with the poet —

But see how heaven's indulgent care

Attends their wanderings here and there;

Still hard at heel where'er they stray.

With pricking thorns to hedge their way.

(Keni)

It is impossible for a vessel of mercy to be destroyed or to die before he is born again of God; for they are all predestinated to be called by God's grace, and to be conformed to the image of his Son, and are "afore prepared unto glory." (iii). We now come to show that the Lord is long-suffering to His people, *after they are called by divine grace*.

We who see and feel our own weakness and daily failings and infirmities know that if the Lord were to lay righteousness to the line and judgment to the plummet and deal with us according to our sins, we should be swept away. But we rejoice that the Lord has proclaimed Himself to be "merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." It is said that He "delights in mercy," and that He will be merciful to the unrighteousness of his people. and their sins and iniquities will he remember no more.

The Lord was long-suffering to David, the man after His own heart. We behold in him the heinous crimes of adultery and murder. Well might he cry out, "If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." This David

knew by experience, the Lord having put away his sin; for he says, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." (Ps. 86. 15.)

Poor backsliding Peter, who denied his Lord and Master with oaths and curses, might well include himself among the "us-ward" in our text, to whom the Lord is long-suffering.

Jeremiah knew something of the long-suffering of God, for he says, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." (Lam. 3. 22, 23.)

The Lord was long-suffering towards Ephraim, who was as a "cake not turned," and therefore good for nothing. He was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and instead of being a pleasant child he was a froward child. Nevertheless the Lord, though He spoke against him, could not give him up; for He says, "I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him" (Jer. 31. 20.) How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I "make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" — two cities that were built upon the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord had overthrown. (Hos. 11. 8.) But He cannot consume His people, for they are "engraven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him." For their comfort He has said, "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." So that He will not execute the fierceness of His anger; He will not return to destroy Ephraim; for He is "God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee."

From these passages, you will see that such is the love of the Lord to His people, that none can turn it away from them; for after all their backslidings, He says, "Turn O backsliding children, . . . for I am married unto you." (Jer. 3. 14.) Whatever men may say against this doctrine, telling us that it leads to sin, and so forth, we know the truth to be that the more we enjoy of it, the more we hate sin and love holiness. It constrains us to obedience to the precepts and exhortations of our God. It is by our fruit that we are known to be a peculiar people whom the Lord hath formed for Himself, to show forth His praise.

Lord gave that bond in covenant, He did it in full expectation that He would have the debt to pay, as all the sins or debts of His people were placed to His account. Here we see the love and compassion of the Redeemer's heart;

This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
He pity ne'er withdrew. (Watts)

This is the "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure," which was the joy of David's soul in the prospect of death and eternity, for it was all his salvation and all his desire (2. Sam. 23. 5.)

It was upon the ground of the covenant engagement of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the promises of His coming into the world were made. He was the seed of the woman which was to bruise the serpent's head. God promised Abraham that in His seed all the families or nations of the earth should be blessed. This was a promise of Christ, and Abraham believed it and rejoiced to see His day. (John 8. 58.) Christ was the bright and morning star that was to come out of Jacob (Num. 24. 17); and the Shiloh that should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, unto whom the gathering of the people shall be. (Gen. 49. 10.) All these promises, and such as are of a like import, are founded upon the covenant engagement of Christ.

It was on the ground of this covenant engagement that the prophets were moved by the Holy Ghost to prophesy of the coming of Christ — the place where He should be born (Mic. 5. 2); the glory of His mysterious person as our Immanuel, the awful nature of His sufferings and death, and the triumph of His resurrection. (Isa. 53 and 63.) The patriarchs and prophets that lived before the coming of Christ believed these things, died in the faith of them, and went to heaven on the strength of them. And it is no disparagement to say that they went to heaven on the ground of credit; for had there been a failure in the payment of the debt they owed, which Christ had engaged in the fulness of time to pay, they would have sunk in darkness, horror, and despair. But, blessed be the name of the Lord, He failed not, nor was discouraged (Isa. 42. 4), but in due time paid the debt with His life and blood.

(ii). *Christ becoming incarnate for the express purpose of*

read that there are white robes, and palms of victory, and crowns of glory, prepared and laid up in heaven for all that love the Lord, and long for His appearing. (2 Tim. 4. 8.)

Thus, it is certain that there is a kingdom to be possessed, a building in heaven to be inhabited, mansions to be occupied, white robes to be clothed in, and crowns of glory to be worn. And should any of the Lord's adopted children miss the enjoyment of these glorious things given or bequeathed to them by their heavenly Father in the covenant of grace and promised to them in the word of God, the Holy Spirit blessing them with an earnest of them in their hearts (Eph. 1. 14), the Lord would be a disappointed God, defeated in His purposes and counsels. But a defeated or disappointed God is not the God that made the heavens, the earth, and the seas and all that therein is; nor is He the God of the Bible, which tells us that heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God's truth shall fall to the ground, till all be fulfilled. Such a God will not do for me; I never preached such a God, and trust I never shall. But such is the Arminian's God, who, they say, wants to save all the human race, but cannot. Moreover, if it be as they tell us, that there are thousands in hell that the Lord wanted to be in heaven, possessing those heavenly things of which we have been speaking, does it not follow that the kingdom will be but in part possessed, that there will be buildings or mansions unoccupied, white robes unworn, and crowns laid up in heaven and none to wear them? Such a confused system, we solemnly and boldly discard, and I hope that the Lord will ever enable me to trample it under my feet in the ministry of His word. For "The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness (yea, they shall possess the kingdom, with all the blessings of glory and honour it contains), and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Is. 35. 10.)

(2). That our Lord Jesus Christ is not willing that any of His people should perish, will appear evident from the following considerations:—

(i). *The covenant engagement of Christ.* The council of peace was between the Father and the Word that was made flesh. Hence Christ is said to be the Mediator of the better covenant, which was established upon better premises; in which covenant He became Surety or Bondman to the law and justice of heaven for all the sins of His people. And when our

III

We now proceed to the third part of our subject, which is to show that **the Lord is not willing that any should perish.**

(1). That *Jehovah the Father is not willing that any should perish*, is evident from the following considerations:—

(i). *From the counsels of His will.* The Lord's will is not as ours; for we may have a will to do this or that, but for want of power we cannot accomplish that which we would.

The wicked cannot do the evil that they would; for that God that said to the raging sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be staid," hath set bounds to the passions of both men and devils; so that Abimelech could not take Sarah, the wife of Abraham, to his bed, nor could the wicked prophet Balaam go one whit behind the word of the Lord, to do more or less; neither could Satan move a hair's breadth against Job, but by divine permission.

The saints of God cannot do the good that they would; to good is present with them, but how to perform that which is good they find not; for the good that they would, they do not, but the evil that they would not, that they do. (Rom. 7. 18, 19.) They would live without sin if they could, but they cannot because of the depravity of their natures.

Not so with the Lord; "for our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Nebuchadnezzar was necessitated to say, The Most High "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4. 35.) Job proved Him to be "in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." And Paul speaks of "the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

God the Father is not willing that any of His little ones should perish (Matt. 18. 14). He purposed or decreed in His own eternal mind that they shall be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation. (Eph. 1. 11.) This is called "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." (Eph. 1. 9.) It is also called "the purpose of God according to election," which shall stand. "My counsel

shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps. 33. 11). "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."

So you see, it is the will, counsel, and determination of Jehovah the Father that His people should not perish, but be brought to repentance here, and to glory hereafter. For "whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8. 30.) This passage has often, with great propriety, been called the golden chain of salvation: and, it rejoices my soul that a link of it cannot be broken, neither by sin, the world, men, devils, death, nor hell, for these are all vanquished foes —

Our Jesus nailed them to his cross.

And sung the triumph when he rose.

"Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us."

(ii). We have another proof of the Father's unwillingness that any of His people should perish *in the gift of His Son*. "God so loved the world (which He was, in Christ, reconciling to Himself), that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3. 16.) "He . . . spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Ro. 8. 32.) "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4. 9, 10). Paul's soul being directed into the love of the Father, as it shines forth in the gift of his Son, joyfully exclaims "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Its greatness is such that no tongue can describe nor thought conceive it.

The Father, speaking of this gift, says, I will "give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 42. 6); and when the Father gave Christ in covenant, He did not give Him at random, but gave Him to be the surety of His chosen people. For this people the Lord Jesus Christ gave His bond, that in the fulness of time He would redeem them to God by His blood, the blood of the

everlasting covenant. So He would open the way through which the love and mercy of the Father's heart could flow to guilty sinners such as we, in a way consistent with all His divine attributes, that He might be a just God and yet save His people in Christ.

(iii). We have another proof of the Father's unwillingness that any of His people should perish, *in making them His adopted children*.

Adoption is an eternal act of the Father, in which He took His people into union with Himself in the covenant of grace, having "predestinated (them) to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1. 5.) Thus predestinated, they are in due time called by God's grace; for He will "say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." (Is. 43. 6.) You see, they are sons before they are called; and it is because they are sons that God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." (Gal. 4. 6.) Thus they were

Predestinated to be sons,

Born by degrees, but chose at once;

A new regenerated race,

To praise the glory of his grace.

(Watts)

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the adopted children of God, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," of that inheritance which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us". This inheritance God's elect are predestinated by their heavenly Father to obtain. It is the kingdom our Lord speaks of saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Mt. 25. 34.) It is moreover evident from what our Lord said to the mother of Zebedee's children, that it is a kingdom prepared for a special people: "It shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." (Mt. 20. 23.) Paul speaks of "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And our Lord informs us that in his "Father's house there are many mansions." We likewise