

The bruised Reed BOUND UP, and the smok-
ing Flax ENFLAMED:

OR, *Davis*

The weak oppress'd BELIEVER VICTORIOUS,
thro' the tender CARE and GRACE of CHRIST.

Book A 1/59

S E R M O N,

Preached at *Cohanse*, in *West-Jersey*, August
13th, 1758: And afterwards at *Pequea*, in
Pennsylvania.

BY ROBERT SMITH,
Minister of the Gospel at *Pequea*.

Published at the Request of the Hearers.

Isaiah lx. 11. *He shall feed his Flock like a
Shepherd: He shall gather the Lambs with his
Arm; and shall carry them in his Bosom; and
shall gently lead those that are with Young.*

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P R E F A C E.

IN so enlightened an Age as ours, when many able Writers oblige the Public with their Productions, it may, perhaps be expected, that only something extraordinary in his Performance, or peculiar in his Circumstances, should move an Author to make his Appearance to the World in Print.

I can plead neither of these as the Reason of my publishing the following Sermon; on which Account, I scarcely expect to escape the Censure of sundry.

For this Reason, as well as want of Time to fit it for the Press, I declined, for some Time, to comply with Importunities to send it into the World.

But, on considering, that those who solicit the Publication of it, supposed there were sundry Things in it peculiarly suited to their Cases; and that People may receive more Benefit by deliberately reading, than only once transiently hearing a Discourse; and likewise, that tho' many worthy Pieces have lately been published, I do not remember to have
seen

seen one on the following Head, which is so very necessary at this Day : On weighing these Things, and hoping, that what I have done, may excite some abler Hand, to treat the Subject more fully, I, at length, determined to gratify the Desire of my Friends.

I have represented the Exercises of weak, distressed Christians, in a plain, familiar Dress, in order the better to assist those, whose Good I had chiefly in View.

I intreat my Readers, especially those who desired that the following Discourse might be printed, carefully to weigh the several Cases it offers to your Consideration ; and earnestly entreat the compassionate Redeemer, to fix such a lasting Impression of them on your Hearts, and enable you so to observe the various Distinctions and Directions given in it, as you may receive special Instruction, and Assistance by them.

People are sometimes exceedingly pleased in hearing a Sermon, and for the first two or three Times they read it ; but it afterwards becomes old to them ; therefore they rest unactive, without obtaining the End at first proposed, at least, in so great a Degree as they expected.

If this shall be the Case with you, my Design in this Discourse, will, in a great Measure, be frustrated, which is, to quicken your decaying Graces, that, forgetting the Things which are behind, and reaching to those which are before, you may,

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with geater Vigor, press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of GOD, in CHRIST JESUS, (Philippians iii. 13, 14.) That our gracious Lord may bless it for these Purposes, is the earnest Request of,

*Pequea, April
10th, 1759. }*

Your Souls Servant,

For Christ's Sake,

ROBERT SMITH.



To



TO THE READER.

IT is the exprefs command of God, that his Embaſſadors divide the Word aright, and give to every one his proper Portion ; without this, the End of the Miniſtry is not like to be answered : It is not only neceſſary to alarm the Secure, and detect the ſelf-deceived, but likewiſe to heal the wounded, and Speak a *Word to the weary in Season, which is like Apples of Gold, in Pictures of Silver* : The bleſſed Jeſus enjoyns his Servants to comfort his People, and feed his Lambs : When real Religion is in general in a low State, it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that many who have the Root of the Matter in them, are oppreſſed, with Doubts and Diſcouragements : Now to *pour in Wine and Oyl into the bleeding Wounds of ſuch, and bind them up with a Friendly Hand,* is as needful as it is god-like and noble ! The following plain practical *Diſcourſe*, ſeems well calculated to answer this important Deſign, which I heartily wiſh thro' the devine Bleſſing it may ; and that the pious and valuable *Author*, may be of much Service to the Church of Chriſt.

Philadelphia, April
13th, 1759. }

GILBERT TENNENT,



The bruised Reed BOUND UP, &c.

A

S E R M O N.

*Isaiah, xlii. 3. A bruised Reed shall he not break :
And the smoking Flax shall he not quench : He
shall bring forth Judgment unto Truth.*



ANKIND having, by the Breach of God's holy Law, insulted the Majesty of Heaven ; rejected his just Authority, and contended with him the Rights of Sovereignty ; what could reasonably have been expected, but that he would have left them to perish without Remedy, in the doleful Ruins of their Apostacy ? But, surprising Mercy ! Unsearchable Wisdom has devised, and unparalleled Goodness revealed, a glorious Method of Salvation for guilty Sinners, through the Mediation
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of God's own eternal, & equal Son ! News, that astonish, not only us, but all the wondering Throng on high ! The Appointment of our LORD REDEEMER to, his Qualifications for, and the acceptable Method in which he discharges his Office, are excellently described, in this Passage of Scripture, of which the Words of my Text are a Part. But, what at his Time, more especially requires your Attention, is, the peculiar, tender *Care* of the Compassionate BISHOP of Souls, over the weakest of his Flock ; of which let us Observe the *Objects*, *Acts*, and *Effects*.

1. THE *Objects* of CHRIST's tender *Care*, are pointed out in these Words, *a bruised Reed*, and *Smoaking Flax*. (*a bruised Reed*) i. e. the Saint, who, broken in Spirit, and bowed down with a Sense of his Sin, and Weakness, cannot exert, at least, in any comfortable Measure, the confirming Acts of Grace ; but is so feeble, that he seems to be rendered useless, like a crushed, or bruised Reed.*

(*Smoaking*

* *Hierom* supposes there is, in this Phrase, an " Allusion to a musical Instrument made of a Reed, which
" Shepherds used to have, which when bruised sounds
" ill, and is flung away by the Musician, as disdaining
" to spend his Breath upon such a vile Instrument, that
" emits no pleasant Sound. But Christ will not cast off
" poor Souls that cannot make so good Music in God's
" Ears as others, and answer not the Breathings of his
" Spirit with that Life and Vigor, but he will take Pains
" with them to mend them.

(*Smoaking Flax*) *Flax* is here, by a *Metonymy*, put for the *Week* of a *Candle* made of it ; which *smoaks*, or only burns *dimly*, as the Words may be rendered ; and this is the Case, when the *Week* is not well dried, especially when newly lighted. A true Image this of the Christian, when, upon the Suspension of divine Influences, his Infirmities and offensive Corruptions, excited by Temptations, cloud his Grace, and suppress its Acts ; so that, *the Things which remain with him, are ready to die*. Particularly, it gives us a lively View of some young Converts, whose Grace is weak, and Infirmities many, not having made Progress in Sanctification, nor having had their Grace confirmed by the Sealings of the Spirit of Promise : But, as Fire resisting the moist Matter that suppresses its Operations, struggles to break out into a Flame : So, true Grace, wherever it is, will endeavour to be disentangled from the oppressive Weights that clog it, and break out into lively Exercise. Now, tho' Men may tread upon, and put out an offensive Week, yet, our Lord will not extinguish, but rather encrease, the Believers small Sparks of Light and Heat. Which brings me to observe,

2. The Acts of CHRIST's tender Care over his weak People, expressed in these Words, *shall he not break,* and *shall he not quench*. Here is a beautiful Meiosis more understood than expressed : Instead of crushing, and extinguishing, he will

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carefully

carefully bind up the bruised Reed, and enflame the smoking Flax. That this is the Meaning of the Words, will more fully appear, by considering,

3. THE Effect of CHRIST's tender Care, *he shall bring forth Judgment unto Truth.* Judgment may here betaken, either (1.) for the Doctrines of his Word, (as in the 119 *Psalms*, with sundry other Places,) which CHRIST will publish faithfully, and by this Means, spreading the glorious Victories of his Grace, shall promote the Interests of his Kingdom on Earth, notwithstanding the Opposition of all its Enemies: Therefore it is added, in the 4th Verse, *the Isles shall wait for his Law.* Or, (2.) it may betaken for the Believer's Cause that is debated, which CHRIST will manifestly decide, and give Sentence in, according to Truth and Equity, and not unjustly, and partially, as corrupt Judges use to do, in Cases brought before them. Hence the faithful Judge of all the Earth promises, *if we commit our Way to him, he will bring forth our Judgment as the Noon-Day,* (*Psalms*. xxxvii. 5, 6.)

THO' the Words may be understood in the former Sense, yet the latter is principally intended, as appears, (1.) from the Quality of the Persons for whom Judgment shall be brought forth, who are supposed to be discouraged and oppressed in Contest with themselves, respect-

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ing the State of their Soul, and with their Spiritual Enemies Sin and Satan. (2) by comparing this Passage with *Matthew xii, 20.* where it is rendered, *till he Send forth Judgment unto Victory*; i. e. “Till Judgement, or Sentence be given for him, in which Case a Man is said to be victorious in Judgment†.” Hence it is added, (Verse 21) *In his Name shall the Gentiles Trust.*

THIS Promise may be applied to the Church in General, which, tho’ she has chiefly hitherto been oppressed, yet, thro’ divine Aid, has overcome every Opposition, and shall, at last, effectually prevail against all her Enemies. But it peculiarly respects all weak, distressed Believers, whose imperfect Struggles, and weak Beginnings in Grace, CHRIST will strengthen more and more, till they become more than Conquerors thro’ him that loved them; and their small Spark be kindled into a Flame.

Doct. The most oppressed, and weak Believers shall come off Victorious, thro’ the tender Care, and Grace of CHRIST.

I AM persuaded, Brethren, there are not a few, that snatch at the Children’s Bread, who yet have no Right to it. Such a Subject as this, pleases those hypocritical Pretenders: While the Ministers of CHRIST, attempt, after his Example, to strengthen

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† See *Poole’s Annot. on Isaiah lxii. 3.*

en the weak Hands, that hang down, and confirm the feeble Knees, they take Occasion from thence, to support their false Hopes : They examine themselves by the lowest Marks of Grace, if they examine themselves at all ; and Hope, that their Filthiness is the *Spot* of God's Children. It is therefore, one of the most difficult Tasks in the whole Compass of ministerial Duties, to feed the weakest in CHRIST's Flock, and, in the mean Time, detect bold Presumers : But both being necessary, I shall

I. *Mention some Things, which are found in the Experience of all true Believers, even the weakest ; that none may presume they have Grace, who are not possessed of it. And*

II. *Give you the Characters of weak, oppressed Believers ; that the bruised Reed and smoking Flax may see his own Picture.*

III. *I shall prove, that true, tho' weak, oppressed Believers, shall come off victorious, thro' the Grace and tender Care of CHRIST. And*

I. I AM to shew you some Things, that are found in the Experience of all true Believers, even the weakest.

I. *They experience an universal Change of Heart and Life : All their old Things are passed away, and all Things are become new, (2 Corinthians v. 17.) The stony Heart is took out of their Flesh, and an Heart of Flesh given them, (Ezekiel xxxvi. 26.) The HOLY SPIRIT, by his powerful*

powerful Influences, implants a Principle of spiritual Life in their Souls, removes their impenitent Hardness, fatal Security, stupid Blindness, base Propensity to fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh; removes their unyielding Enmity against God, his Law, and the Gospel Method of Salvation thro' his Son, and enables them to exert living, spiritual Acts, (*Ephesians* ii. 1.) He discovers divine Things in their attractive Beauties, so as they feel their transforming Power, and taste their Sweetness, (*2 Corinthians* iii. 18.) gives them a prevailing Bias to God, and the Duties of Religion, (*Psalms* lxxiii. 25. *Romans* vii. 22.) Hence they act from new Principles, and with new Ends, in all they do: The Love of CHRIST excites their Devotions, (*2 Corinthians* v. 10.) And his Glory is the ultimate Aim of their Actions, (*Romans* xiv. 8.)

Object. PERHAPS some distressed Christian may say, alas! I fear, I have never experienced a Change of Heart; for Self, and other Corruptions, not only work in, but prevail against me.

Ans. RENEWING Grace makes an effectual, but not a perfect, Change on all the Powers of the Soul: There are Corruptions in the best Saints, which, upon the Suspension of divine Influences; work in, and may prevail against them for a Season, (*Psalms* lxxv. 3.) But the Promise of God secures them against the *Dominion* of Sin,

(*Romans*

(*Romans* vi. 14.) which intends its general and allowed Sway,

How weak soever their Graces, or strong their Corruptions may sometimes be, Believers have an habitual Disposedness of Heart to God, as their only satisfying Portion; and therefore when they lavish away their Affections on empty Creatures, they can have no Comfort, nor Peace of Mind, till they return to, and replace their Affections on God, their supreme Good: They oppose the base Idol Self, the Rival to their Maker's Glory, and accounting themselves wretched for this, and all their other Corruptions, breathe for Deliverance from them! (*Romans* vii, 24.)

BUT, O! ye hypocritical Professors, whatsoever Exercises you may have experienced in Religion, you have never obtained the forementioned Change of Heart. You may have trembled, as *Felix*; and received the Word with Joy, for a Season, like the stony Ground Hearers: Yet the Stone still remains in your Nature, and Self is the chief Mark of all your Aims. All your Pursuits in the World, are only to serve yourselves, and gratify your sensual Appetites.

You perform the Duties of Religion, merely out of Custom, to procure a Name among Men, shut the Mouth of Conscience, obtain Heaven, and escape Hell; and in short, to answer your own Ends, in some Respect or other, without a View to God's Honour. Your religious Sor-

rows are only excited by Fear, and the Spring of your Joys is nothing else but the Delusive, fanciful Dream, that your State either is, or will be safe; but you are Strangers to the sweet Impression of Divine Glories, moving you to rejoice purely in the LORD.

Now, as Nature alone, or, at most, Nature assisted by common Influences, is the Spring of all your Actions, and Self only the End of them, you are, doubtless, in a graceless State; and, consequently, Heirs of Wrath. For tho' you may do what for the Matter of it is good; yet the Principle and End of your Actions being bad, you are destitute of two main Ingredients of a good Action; therefore nothing you do can be spiritually good, and pleasing to God. But if you do not please and honor him, you are certainly a Nulance to spotless Purity; and therefore you must, if you continue in your present Case, be the perpetual Subjects of his sore Displeasure.

2. *True Belivers, disclaiming their own Merit, and Ability, depend entirely on the Righteousness of Christ for the Acceptance of their persons and Services, and on his Power for Strength to exert all the Acts of Grace, as well as to Perform every Duty, (Psalm lxxi. 16. Isaiah lxiv. 6. Phillipians iii. 3, 9, 10.) The weakest Faith includes such a Renunciation of ourselves, and resting on CHRIST; for weak Grace does not differ*

differ from strong in the Nature of its Acts, but in the Degree of them.

Object. SOME bluiſed Reed may be ſaying, Alas ! I have not a comfortable View or Perſuaſion of an Intereſt in CHRIST as my Saviour ; therefore, I fear I have no true Faith.

Anſ. AN Intereſt in CHRIST is one Thing, and a well grounded Perſuaſion of it another : The former may be, and often is, where the latter is not : Therefore you ſhould not conclude you have no Intereſt in CHRIST, becauſe you cannot come to a full Perſuaſion of it. But that you may be aſſiſted in clearing up your Intereſt, attend to the following Queries. (1.) Do you look upon yourſelves as the chief of Sinners, the meanest, and moſt unworthy Wretches ; and ſee ſo many Defects in all your religious Performances, that you wonder GOD does not reject you for the Sin that cleaves to the beſt of them ? On the other Hand, do you admire the Worth, and adorable Condeſcentions of CHRIST ? And are you afflicted that you cannot prize him more ? Such a Frame as this is an Evidence of Faith, which always abates the Creature, and exalts CHRIST. (2.) Tho' you have not a ſatisfying Perſuaſion of your Property in CHRIST as your Saviour ; yet can you acknowledge him as your LORD, and vindicate his Property in you ? Do you deſire to ſtoop to his royal Scepter ? And do you oppoſe Sin as his Enemy, and yours ? If theſe Things are ſo, they
manifest,

manifest, that, having put yourselves under the Government of CHRIST, you have common Friends and Enemies with him; and are therefore embarked in his Cause, tho' you are destitute of present Comfort. (3.) Do you highly Esteem an Interest in CHRIST? Are your Hearts saying, O! blessed are they, who can freely embrace, and call him theirs? And does your Esteem of a State of Grace flow, not meerly from the Safety you suppose there is in being in it, but from its Excellency, and the Beauty of the Plan of Redemption by which it is obtained? Are you so pleased with this *Plan*, that had you ten Thousand Souls, you would desire to venture them all upon it? Do you see it so worthy of the Majesty of Heaven, that you would not chuse any other Method of Salvation, were it left to your own Choice, upon what Terms you would be saved? If this be the Case, you are indeed Believers; for to be pleased with the Plan of Redemption thro' CHRIST, is to consent to take him according to that Plan. (4.) Are you groaning because of the Unbelief of your Hearts, and saying, LORD, what shall I do with this fearful, this suspicious, this desperately wicked Heart? Shall I always dispute and stagger? Persuade my Soul, good LORD, persuade it to rest in CHRIST, and say to it thou art my Salvation! Persist in this Exercise, Brethren, and our compassionate LORD, will bind up your bruised Reed, and enflame your smoking Flax.

I shall once more take Aim at your Consciences, O ye Hypocrites ! And may the LORD direct the Arrow between the Joints of the Harness. You are entirely destitute of saving Faith ; therefore you cannot *Please* God, (*Hebrews*, xi, 6.) Rejecting CHRIST you rest on your own Righteousness, as appears by the Ease of your Consciences upon the Performance of Duties, tho' you have not met with CHRIST, nor obtained his Grace. Or, if, from a rational Conviction that Works of Obedience to the Law will not save you, you attempt to reject a Dependence on the outward Performance of Duty, don't you lean upon your Frames as your Righteousness ; at least you think, these will recommend you to CHRIST's Righteousness, and both will recommend you to the Favour of God. Thus you divide your Salvation between yourselves and CHRIST, and by this Means you reject him ; for he will either be all in all in the Work, or nothing at all.

ENCOMPASSING yourselves with your own Sparks, you come to God with a Price in your Hands ; and supposing that this gives you a Right to the Promises, you lay hold on them, but, alas ! you do not lay hold on CHRIST exhibited in them. e. g. When CHRIST promises rest to all weary and heavy laden Sinners, upon their coming to him, you suppose, that the Persons distressed Condition specified in the Promise, is
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a Gospel Qualification, required of all, that come to him, as a recommending Worth, and concluding, that you have this Worthiness, because you have had distress of Conscience for Sin, &c. you snatch at the Promise as yours ; but you only consent to take the Blessing, because you have something to give for it ; and do not consent to take CHRIST, the Dispenser of the Blessing, because he is freely offered to you.

THIS is a very fine spun Thread of Self-righteousness, with which many weave themselves a Covering, that the Flames of Wrath will consume. They come to the very Point of closing with Christ ; but dashing on this Rock, they are drove from him to their eternal Confusion ; and so will you also, if God, of his infinite Mercy does not break the Snare with which you are entangled.

You entirely mistake the Design of such Promises, which is not to inform us, that there is any recommending Worth, in any Conditions, or suspending Terms supposed in them ; but to teach us the Necessity of Faith, only as an Instrument to interest us in the Promises ; and to encourage distressed Souls to come to CHRIST for free Mercy, by mentioning their very Case, whereby they, in particular, are invited as it were by Name.

3d. *All true Christians have Communion with CHRIST ; for he promises, if any Man will open the Door, he will come into him, and will sup*

with him, (*Revelations* iii 20.) CHRIST discloses his Heart to Believers, and they disclose their Hearts to him. He reveals the Secret of his Covenant to them, (*Psalms* xxv. 25.) By discovering divine Perfections in the Gospel Method of Redemption, their Souls are attracted to him, in the Exercise of all the Graces of the Spirit.

Object. I HAVE not ravishing Discovers of God's amiable Perfections ; therefore, I doubt, I have never had Communion with him.

Ans. (1) You may have as real and profitable Communion with God, while you humbly lie in the Dust, and deplore your Iniquities, from the Discovery of his Majesty and Holiness, as when your Souls are sweetly ravished by Views of his unparalleled Grace and Love. *Job* had, doubtless, as real Communion with his Maker, when he abhorred himself, and repented in Dust and Ashes, (*Job* xlii. 6.) as *Moses* had, when his Face shone with transporting Views of divine Glory ; (*Exodus* xxxiv. 30.) (2) Tho' every Christian is always in a State of Communion, he has not always actual Communion with God. The LORD went up from *Jacob*, in the Place where he talked with him, (*Genesis* xxxv. 13.) The *Psalmist* declares with the same Breath, that his Mountain stood strong, and that God hid his Face from him, (*Psalms* xxx. 7.) (3) You have certainly tasted its sweetness, if you are troubled when God withdraws the Light of his Countenance,

(*Psalms*

(*Psalms* xxx. 7.) and desire the Return of it more than all the choicest Things of Nature, (*Psalms* iv. 6, 7. *Cant.* i. 2.)

HYPOCRITES too are troubled, when they lose their Frames ; for then the Spring of all their Hopes being gone, their Fears return upon them. This is the Reason of their Grief, and not the Want of Communion with God ; for that they never had, nor desire to have, for its own sake. Fixing their supreme Delight in Things of Time and Sense, their chief Cry is, who will shew us any worldly Good, (*Psalms* iv. 6.) Could they get it, they would take up with the World for their eternal Portion, and leave the Saints to possess the Joys of Heaven alone.

4th. *The Saints rejoice to approach GOD in divine Ordinances*, that they may behold his Beauty, while they enquire in his holy Temple, (*Psalms* xxvii. 4. lxxxiv. and cxxii.) We desire an Opportunity of seeing and conversing with the Persons we love : But Believers sincerely love the LORD ; therefore do they breathe after the Ordinances ; because these are the Means by which he manifests his Glory to, and communes with them.

BUT, Hypocrites being dragged to Duties by Conscience, or moved from selfish Views, they cannot take Pleasure in them, as Means of Communion with God : Hence divine Ordinances are generally a Weariness to them. Yet sometimes a Minister, by his moving Oratory, especially on a melting

melting Theme, may be to them, as *Ezekiel* was to his Hearers, *as the Song of one that has a lovely Voice, and can play with an Instrument* : But tho' he sooth their Natures, their Hearts are not changed ; *They hear his Words, but do them not ; and while the profess much Love with their Mouth, their Hearts go after their Covetousness*, (*Ezekiel xxxiii. 31, 32.*)

Object. PERHAPS some trembling Saint is saying, I doubt, this is my very Cate ; for tho' sometimes I have felt a Pleasure in Duties ; yet am I often exceedingly out of Frame for them.

Ans. THE Spouse sought CHRIST on her Bed by Night, (*Cant. iii. 1.*) which points out both her Darknels and Security. Nay, when he knocks at the Door of her Heart for Entrance, she makes Excuses against rising to let him in, (*Chapter v. Verse 2.*) Yet may we find in her Exercises, the following Marks of Sincerity, in which your Exercises agree with hers, and to which no Hypocrite can attain.

(1.) THO' she sleeps her Heart waketh, and she knows the Voice of her Beloved speaking to her, (*Cant. v. 2.*) In like Manner, Brethren, how indisposed soever you are to Duties, when CHRIST speaks, the Spark of Grace awaking in your Hearts, will struggle to break thro' all the Clogs of Stupidity into an active Flame ; and you know it is that same Voice of Mercy and Love, that before spake to you. (2.) It was *him whom her Soul lov-*
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ed she sought ; so, however you are hung around with Inactivity, CHRIST is the Center of Love, to which your Souls are attracted. (3.) Arising from her Bed, she goes thro' the *Streets and broad Ways*, enquiring for her *Beloved* at the *Watchmen* and *Daughters of Jerusalem* ; nor does she stop here, but, passing them all, continues her solicitous Pursuit, until she finds him, (Chapter iii. 2, 3, 4. and v. 8.) Thus endeavouring to shake of Security, you will carefully seek CHRIST in every Ordinance ; and, as you have Opportunity, will ask Direction of the Ministers of the Gospel, and other Professors ; nor will this satisfy you, you cannot live upon Means ; but going beyond them all, will continue to seek CHRIST, till you find him, and be enabled to say, *my beloved is mine, and I am his*, (Cant. v. and vi. 3.) (4.) Having found CHRIST, she *held him fast*, and *would not let him go, until she had brought him into her Mother's House, and into the Chamber of her that conceived her*, (Chapter iii. Verse 4.) Grace is a very generous Principle : The Believer does not Want to engross all Favours to himself alone ; but having found CHRIST, he endeavours to bring him into the Church, that others may, with him, partake of his Presence and Love.

5. *True Believers maintain a War against every Sin, and all Temptations to it*, (Galatians v. 16.) *The Spirit lusteth against the Flesh, and the*
Flesh

Flesh against the Spirit. They hate every Degree of Sin, because of its Contrariety to the Law and Perfections of God; therefore do they oppose it.

HYPOCRITES may also oppose it, as *Pilate* did the *Jews*; and repent for it, as *Judas*. But their Resistance is but faint; nor are they willing to mortify all Sin: They *will not cut off a right Hand, nor pluck out a right Eye for CHRIST*: There are still some darling Lusts and Idols they would have spared. Neither do they resist any Sin, because of its Malignity, which strikes at the divine Being; nor because of its Vileness, which robs them of God's Image. The chief Spring of their Struggles against it is, the Terror of their Consciences awakened by the Law of God. They don't lament that they have sinned against God, *only*, with *David*, (*Psalms* li. 4.) but with *Cain*, that their Punishment is greater than they can bear, (*Genesis* iv, 13.) They would rejoice to commit Sin with Greediness, could they do it with Impunity; nor would they attempt to obey any Command, did they not fear the Wrath of God.

Object. I FEEL Sin working in me, and often bringing me into Captivity to its Law.

Ans. BELIEVERS Obey the Law of Sin with the Flesh, but with the Mind the Law of GOD, (*Romans* vii. 25.) remaining Corruptions bring them into Captivity to Sin, while renewing Grace inclines them to delight in the Law of God, and resist the Motions of Sin, (*Verse* 22, 23.) They do

do not generally, and allowedly ; nor can they totally, and finally, fall away into Sin, because *the Seed of GOD remains in them*, (1 John iii. 9.) Turn the Needle in the Compass to what Point you please, it will not fix there, but quiver, till it points to the Pole again. So, tho' the Saints may be turned off from God, by the Force of Temptations, they cannot be at rest, till they point to *him* again, who is the Center of their Affections. An Army may be foiled, and yet not totally routed : Tho' the Enemy get an Advantage, it may rally again. Tho' Satan may, for a Season prevail against you, he cannot wholly destroy you ; nor will your Hearts chearfully yield to his Commands ; but counting his Service a base Drudgery, you hate it, and groan to be free from his slavish Yoke, (*Romans* vii. 15, 24.) I appeal to your Consciences, whether, upon a calm, deliberate View of the Case, you would not chuse Holiness for its intrinsic Beauties, tho' there were no Danger of Wrath ? If this be the Case, you are indeed holy, whatsoever Weight of Corruption you groan under.

6. *Increase is a Property of true Grace*, (*John* xv, 2.) *Every Branch in me that bringeth forth Fruit, my Father purgeth it, that it may bring forth more Fruit.* What is begun in Regeneration, is carried on and perfected in Sanctification, until the Believer is ripened for Glory. Aiming at Perfection, he rests in no certain Pitch arriv-

ed at in Religion : *He counts not himself to have already attained, or to be already perfect ; but forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth to those Things which are before, he presses toward the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS.* (*Philippians* iii. 12, 13, 14.)

Object. UPON this, some bruised Reed and smoking Flax, may be ready to reject all his Hopes, without any Hesitation, because of his sad Declines in Religion ; particularly, his losing the lively Edge, with which he first set out in it.

IN Answer to which, let it be observed, (1.) that tho' it is the Nature of Grace to grow, it does not actually grow at all Times : It is natural to the Flowers and Grass of the Field to grow ; yet they wither by scorching Heat, and pinching Cold : But, on the Return of the warm Showers of Spring, Nature again puts on a verdent Bloom. So, when Sin and Temptations prevail against the Saints, the Exercise of Grace will decay. But dissatisfied with their Deadness, they breathe for quickening Influences, that *their Spices may flow out*, (*Cant.* iv. 16.) These, according to his gracious Promise, GOD bestows on them ; by which *they revive again as the Corn, grow as the Lilly, and cast forth their Roots as Lebanon*, (*Hosea* xiv. 5, 6, 7.) (2.) You ought not to judge you do not grow in Grace, because
you

you have not the same sensible ravishing Exercises as formerly : Your Love to God, as well as all the Graces of the Spirit, may be much stronger in Habit, than at your first Conversion, tho' your Affections are not so sensibly engaged as then, and you can bear his Absence with much greater Resignation. A loving Spouse's Regards to her Husband, are not diminished, but rather encreased, tho' after some Years Conversation together, she may not every Hour feel the same sensible Sallies of Affection towards him, and can bear his Absence a few Days, with much less Anxiety, than at the Beginning of their Acquaintance. If you have more solid, stayed Exercises of Heart, greater Degrees of sanctifying Knowledge in the Mysteries of Grace, are more emptied of yourselves, and humbled, by Views of God's Purity, the Spirituallity of his Law, and your own Imperfections, your Grace is stronger than at those Seasons in which your Zeal and Love seemed to be more flaming.

BUT the Hypocrite will not always call upon God : His temporary Flash, having no Foundation, presently vanishes away, (*Matthew* xiii, 20, 21.) then *the unclean Spirit returning into him, with seven Spirits worse than himself*, he turns Apostate, and *his latter End is worse than the Beginning*, (*Matthew* xii, 43, 44, 45.) or, settling on his Lees, he contents himself with an empty formal Round of Duties. As he rests in

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what he does, so he rests in what he has attained to, in Religion. Possessed with a false View of Happiness, as principally, if not only, a Deliverance from Wrath; and *Heaven* as a Place of Retreat from Punishment, he satisfies himself with just as much Religion, as he thinks will bring him to it. I proceed now to the

+ II. PROPOSED, *viz. to give you the Characters of the weak, oppressed Believers.* And,

I. *To insist for Sight and Feeling, as a Ground of believing,* is an Evidence of a *bruised Reed*, and *smoking Flax*. Of this the Apostle *Thomas* is a remarkable Instance; tho' the antient Prophets, and CHRIST himself before his Passion had foretold his Resurrection; and tho' *Thomas* was so well acquainted with the Veracity of his Brethren, who testified the Truth of the Fact: Yet, so weak was his Faith, and desperate his Unbelief, that he obstinately refused his Assent to it, till he should see in CHRIST'S Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side. (*John* xx. 25.) Our LORD did not break to Pieces this bruised Reed, nor quench this smoking Flax; but appearing to the Disciples afterwards, he addresses himself particularly to *Thomas*, inviting him to take the Proof he insisted on, rather than continue in his Unbelief, (*Verse* 27.) This healing Word so strengthened and enflamed his Heart, that, with Astonishment, and Appropriation,

tion, he crys out *my LORD*, and *my GOD*, (Verse 28.) While CHRIST heals him, he gently rebukes his Unbelief, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen me, and yet have believed*, (Verse 29.) i. e. Their Faith was more spiritual and strong than yours; therefore they were more blessed, who have believed upon a bare Word of Testimony.

It is an Evidence of weak Grace, to suspend the Acts of Faith on Frames, i. e. to refuse, or, at least, to scruple the Gospel Testimony respecting CHRIST, and to embrace him therein offered to us, except we can see, and feel, good Dispositions in ourselves, as an encouraging Foundation for us to close in with him.

THO' Believers, convinced of the Sin and Folly of such a Conduct, have resolved against it, at their first closing with CHRIST; yet, thro' the remains of a legal Temper, they afterwards strangely drop into it. When Sin works in their Hearts, Darknes covers their Minds, and Deadness seizes their Affections; their Consciences tremble with a Sense of Guilt, and they endeavour to have Sin destroyed, and Peace composed. But, shy of approaching his Majesty's Presence, whom they have offended, they dare not venture to lay hold upon him, until they are better disposed. Therefore they endeavour to get humble, melting Frames, until, finding their Attempts abortive,

tive, they are shut up to the blessed Necessity of coming to CHRIST without Money. Now, Believers, who are frequently perplexed with such a legal Spirit, learn your Folly, and do not legalize the Gospel, which breathes the purest Air of rich Grace: You ought not to look for Frames, to give you a Right, in any Respect, to come to CHRIST; but you ought to come immediately to him for Frames, and every Thing you need. *He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to dispense these, (Acts v. 31.) and out of his Fulness you may receive, and Grace for Grace, (John i. 16.)* But Faith is the Hand that receives Blessings from CHRIST; and the Commands, Offers, Invitations, and Promises of the Gospel, that at first encouraged you to lay hold upon him, continue to be your Warrant to fly to him daily for fresh Supplies of all your Wants: These, and no good Dispositions in you, are the proper Grounds of believing.

2. You are weak, distressed Believers, *who are frequently denying what God has done for you, and attempting to raise the Foundation of all your Hopes.* As Hypocrites are hardly persuaded to part with their Confidence, so some of God's Children are hardly persuaded to retain theirs. Tho' they have, at Times, had their Interest in CHRIST so clearly manifested, that they could not refuse the Evidence of it; yet, afterwards suspecting the Truth of all they have experienced, they

they endeavour to lay, and set out upon, a Foundation entirely new. Apprehending that Conviction never thoroughly pierced their Hearts; and that their discoveries of CHRIST, and the Gospel Plan of Life were not clear and affecting: They fear they were never fairly divorced from the Law, and brought Home to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Hence they try to obtain such powerful deep Conviction of their deplorable State; such sensible, sweet Relief, by believing on CHRIST, attended with *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*; and the lively Impressions of these Things so steadily fixed on their Hearts, from that very Instant, as may ever afterwards put the Matter quite out of Dispute with them. But as often as they attempt this Exercise, they meet with a Disappointment; for when they come to the Point of parting with CHRIST, their Hearts so cleave to him, in whose Favour Life is bound up, that they cannot quit their Claim to CHRIST for a Thousand Worlds. But their Disappointment encreases their Fear, that they are so settled on their Lees, that they will never give up with their delusive Confidence, till they become a Prey to inexorable Wrath.

Now, poor, shattered Believers, you are guilty of the following awful Mistakes, (1.) you are measuring the Truth of Grace, by the Degree of your Exercises: In order truly to determine your Interest in CHRIST, you should rather enquire, whether

whether your Experiences have had the Scriptural Characters of a Work of Grace, than what has been the Degree of them ? (2.) Fixing a Plan for him to Work by, you set Limits to a sovereign God, who will deal with his Children in what Manner, and bestow on them what Measure of Grace he pleases. (3.) You are attempting, and desiring an Impossibility, *viz.* that the Spirit of God would convince you, that you are in a State of Condemnation ; and, consequently, Heirs of Wrath. The Children of God may exceedingly fear it, but having received an irreversible Pardon of all their Sins, they cannot be convinced by the HOLY SPIRIT, that they are in a *Christless State* ; for the SPIRIT is not the Author of Contradictions. (4.) You dispute your Interest in CHRIST, while you should believe, in order to clear it up ; and you attempt more to view what Grace is in you, than what Grace is in CHRIST for you ; you examine yourselves, meditate, pray, read, hear, &c. but after all your Searches and Researches, you cannot determine whether you are Believers, or not. To use all these Means, is, doubtless your Duty. But, in the mean Time, while CHRIST is so much left out of the Question, you neglect the noblest Mean of all. You should view CHRIST as in every Respect suitable to your Case, and by a fresh Act of Faith, cast yourselves upon, and derive Virtue from him ; and then, what is beset with Darkness, may be clear to you

as the *Noon-Day*. Let me add in the (5.) Place, that a great Train of other provoking Evils are included, in your denying what God has done for you : Particularly, you call the God of Truth a Lyar ; keep Grace under ; discourage weak Christians ; bear false Witness against CHRIST, his SPIRIT and GRACE ; wound Conscience ; grieve, and rob the HOLY SPIRIT of the Glory of his Work, as well as your own Souls of Peace and Comfort !

3. You are bruised Reeds, *who wrestling against the Tide of Corruptions in your Souls*, particularly, *your Enmity and Unbelief*, obtain but *very insensible, if any, Victory over them* ; nay, *may sometimes receive the Foil yourselves* : And, hence, are drawing the harshest Conclusions against your own Souls. But let me ask you ; are your Corruptions felt, and lamented ? Do you really desire to have them slain ? If so, CHRIST will slay them for you. And let me tell you, that as the *Canaanites* of old were drove out before *Israel*, but by *little and little*, so God sees it most necessary for you, to give Victory over your Sins, but by *slow Degrees* ; nay, sometimes to suffer you to be overcome by them : For by this Means, you have a greater Sense of your own Weakness, and are taught to depend alone on Almighty Power and Grace.

4. THEY are oppressed Christians, *who are frequently subjected to Satan's Buffetings*. Appearing

ing as an Angel of Light, he draws the Paint of Duty over Sin, and of Sin over Duty : And thus he persuades the Believer, to do as Duty, what he ought to avoid as Sin ; and to avoid as Sin, what he ought to do as Duty. Sometimes he moves to Sin, by slow Degrees, that he may obtain his End the more surely : He excites Fancy to sport with the Object, till the Affections are entangled ; by which the Mouth of Conscience is stopped, and Consent easily gained. At other Times, assaulting as a roaring Lion, before the Believer has Time to weigh relieving Considerations, he hurries him into Sin. The Apostle mentions his *fiery Darts*, (*Ephesians* vi. 16.) in Allusion to the Practice of some antient Warriors, who tinged the Points of their Arrows with Poison, that, while they wounded, they might also enflame, and cause accute Pain, as well as more certainly do Execution. None of all Satan's Temptations are more perplexing to the Christian, and make him scruple his Sincerity more than these, that may be peculiarly called his *fiery Darts*, such as horrid, atheistical and blasphemous Injections ; diminutive Thoughts of, Enmity against, and Temptations to sell, or part with CHRIST, &c.

To relieve such burdened Souls, I shall offer the following Considerations, *viz.* That temptations are not your Sin, but the Devil's, if they are not complied with. That the immaculate

Lamb

Lamb of God was as sorely tempted as any of his spiritual Seed, and to as vile Acts, *viz.* to distrust Providence, by *commanding Stones to be made Bread* for his Sustenance; to tempt Providence, by *casting himself down from a Pinnacle of the Temple*, in which Case, he must have perished, except a Miracle had been wrought for his Deliverance; to Idolatry, and that of the worst Kind, *viz.* *to worship the Devil*, the vilest of Creatures. See CHRIST's Temptations on the Mount, (*Matthem iv.*) Thus being in all Points tempted like as you are, tho' without Sin, he has a fellow feeling of your Infirmities, and knows how to relieve you. Therefore tho' you should not only be tempted, but sometimes fall before the Temptation, yet if you hate the Temptation, and desire to be disentangled, CHRIST will raise you up again. Besides, as he has overcome the Devil, and destroyed his Works, in a little Time you shall, thro' his Grace, get beyond the reach of all Temptations, and sing triumphant Songs of Victory over them all. Gird to you then, the whole Armour of God; particularly the *Shield of Faith*, wherewith you shall *quench all his fiery Darts*; and, after CHRIST's Example, take the *Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God*, with which, if you *resist the Devil*, he will fly from you.

5. *The Christian is at best but a smoking Flax, when he is easily overcome by Temptations.*

Faith is the Victory whereby we overcome our Spiritual Enemies, (*Ephesians* vi, 16. 2 *Timothy* iv, 7, 8. 1 *John* 5, 4.) It must therefore be sunk low, when the sly Insinuations of Satan lead, or his roaring Assaults terrify the Soul from CHRIST. When the gilded Vanities of an empty World, the alluring Baits of Pleasure, the empty Puff of Honor, and infectious Breath of Applause, draw the Soul from a regular, strict, and steady walk with GOD. Of this *Solomon* is a pregnant Instance, who was led away by his strange Wives; and *Hezekiah*, who, thro' the Pride of his Heart, discovered his Treasures, his Strength, and his Glory, to the Messengers of the King of *Babylon*. How shattered are Christians, when Afflictions, Reproaches, and Persecutions, sink them into Dispondency, enervate their Confidence, damp their Hopes, and make them shrink from the Cross of CHRIST! The Disciples forsook CHRIST in the Hour of Danger; and *Peter*, who afterwards was firm as a Rock in the Profession of his LORD, at the Challenge of a silly Maid, denied him with Oaths and Cursing; he was sifted as Wheat, and proved a wavering brittle Reed! But, behold the compassionate Redeemer's Care over him! He immediately fixing his Eyes on *Peter*, looked Repentance into his Heart! And, after his Resurrection, sending the News of it to his Disciples, he directed the Message particularly to him: *Go tell my Disciples, and Peter*. But why so particularly to *Peter*?

Peter? Because he was a *bruised Reed*, and *smoaking Flax*. Are there any Believers in this Assembly, who, in Word, or in Deed, have denied their LORD? CHRIST sends me with a particular Message to you; repent afresh, and believe in his Name; for *he will not break a bruised Reed; nor quench the smoaking Flax: He will send forth Judgment unto Truth.*

6. *Much unmortified Corruption in the Saint, proves him to be smoaking Flax.* What an affecting Instance of this was the Prophet *Jonah*! He fled from the Presence of the LORD; told him to his Face he did well to be Angry, and behaved as if he would rather the whole large City *Nineveh* should perish, than that he should but seem to be a false Prophet. Some, who we cannot but Hope have the Root of the Matter in them, are strangely giddy, and conceited. Others seem to be pleased with Nothing; ill natured, and peevish; they are a Burden to themselves, and all around them. Many, as tho' they never received a Blessing from God to praise him for, constantly afflict the Ears of their Friends with mournful Notes; ever murmuring, and discontent; they scarcely relate any Thing but Disappointments, and Grievances, of one Kind or other. And how unaccountably are some filled with Resentment, and seem as if they knew not how to forgive, when the least Tittle is whispered, which they suppose bears hard on their Character! Others lade themselves with thick Clay, and

are so immersed in the Cares of Life, that they have scarcely Time to serve God and make Religion their main Business: They give to pious Uses with a sparing Hand, and are too much devoted to their own Interests, to be greatly engaged for God, and his Glory. Now, can it be, that Grace will grow, when borne down with such oppressive Weights? No, verily! The Spark will not break out into a glowing Flame, while smothered with such a Heap of Rubbish! O Christians, be convicted of your Sin and Folly; and *mortify the Deeds of the Body, that ye may live.*

7. *The Believer is then a bruised Reed, when he draws harsh Conclusions from the dark Dispensations of Providence towards him; Joseph is not, (says old Jacob,) and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: All these Things are against me; (Genesis lxii. 26.) Yet they were all intended for Good to Jacob, and his Seed. Some of God's People conclude, that a Change in his Providence supposes a Change in his Love towards them; or rather, that he never loved them at all. When afflicted with Losses, Sickness, and Disappointments, in their Persons, and Families, when attended with assaulting Temptations, and rising Corruptions, they fear, the Lord is punishing them as an Enemy, and not correcting them as a Father; and are apt to say, O! if I were one of his Children, I would not be treated after this Manner. But, Brethren, such*
Conclu-

Conclusions suppose small Acquaintance with the Methods and Design of Providence, as well as the Weakness of your Faith in the Promises. Neither Love, nor Hatred, can be known from outward Dispensations, (*Ecclesiastes ix. 1.*) Except by their Effects upon the Mind. Afflictions are necessary to try your Faith and Patience, as well as to repress your Luxuriance: In this Probationary State, you need Physic as well as Cordials: While there is so much Corruption in you, and abuse of the Kindness of Heaven, *Waters of a full Cup* will not always suit you; therefore does God chuse that you should *bear the Cross*, and *through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. The Corrections of a Father are Arguments of Love to his Child. *Despise not, then, the chastning of the LORD, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the LORD loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth,* (*Hebrews xii. 5, 6.*) He has Promised, that *all Things shall work together for your good,* (*Romans viii 28.*) Sing, therefore of *Mercy and Judgment,* (*Psalms ci. 1.*) for both shall conspire to promote your good. Do you say, your Afflictions are of a singular Nature? I Answer, you don't know what all the Children of God endure. Had you the Burthen of sundry of them to bear, instead of your own, you would probably, desire to exchange it for your own again. But, suppose
your's

your's were more abundant, than the Afflictions of any Mortal, all that can hence be inferred, is the great Degree of your Father's Love ; for the greater your Cup of Afflictions is, the greater will be your future Happiness, if suitably improved : *Our light Affliction, (says the Apostle) which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more Exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. (2 Corinthians iv. 17.)*

8. *It is an Evidence of weak Grace, to be full of distressing Anxiety, and perplexing Cares, respecting the Issue of divine Dispensations towards you ;* for in this you distrust God, and assume his Prerogative. Two Things are to be considered, in every Thing you attempt, the Care of the Work ; and the Care of the Success of it : The former is your's, the latter is God's. Therefore you ought faithfully to perform your Duty, and chearfully leave the Event with God. But when exceedingly fearful and uneasy, respecting Events, both before and after they come to pass, you discover a Dissatisfaction with God's Management, and attempt to take the Reins of Government out of his Hands. Your Conduct is not only very Wicked, but very Weak ; for it will hurt yourselves and may make others uneasy ; but can never change the Course of divine Providence. *Can you, by taking Thought, add one Cubit to your Stature, or make one Hair white or black? No : Cease then to govern the World ;*
for

for the **LORD GOD** Omnipotent reigns. Why should you distrustfully enquire, *what shall we eat, what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be Cloathed?* Does not God cloath the Grass of the Field? And will he not much more cloath you, O ye of little Faith? (*Matthew vi. from the 25 Verse to the End.*)

9. *The weak Christian is soon discouraged in pleading for Mercy, as well as weak in urging his Plea:* He takes Delays for Denyals; frowns for absolute Discouragements, and seeming Oppositions for utter Impossibilities: Hence he cries out, *my Hope and my Strength are perished from the LORD.*

BUT, distressed Souls, CHRIST speaks a Parable to you, to this End, that *you should always Pray, and not faint;* (*Luke xviii. i.*) He does not always deny, when he delays to answer; for he may delay, till he have many Prayers to answer at once; and till the properest Time to give, when his Gifts will be more acceptable, and the Goodness of the giver the more conspicuous. He may appear to refuse, as a Tryal to your Faith; and yet intend to grant your Request. Of this we have a Famous Instance in the Woman of Canaan, (*Matthew xv. from the 22, to the 29. Verse.*) When she Requests of CHRIST a Cure for her Daughter, he first answers her with Silence; then says, *he was not sent, but to the lost Sheep of the House of*
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Israel

Israel; and, last of all, *that it was not meet to take the Children's Bread, and cast it to the Dogs.* Yet instead of resolving to drop her Plea, as some of you would perhaps have done, under so many Frowns, she renews her request with greater Importunity; her Eagle-eyed Faith could spy, and draw Encouragement, Even from a seeming repulse: *Truth, LORD says she, yet the Dogs eat the Crumbs that fall from their Master's Table.* Q. d. Compassionate LORD, thou wilt certainly, not treat me worse than Men do their Dogs, who, tho' they will not admit them to the Children's full Loaf, will yet allow them to partake of the Crumbs that fall from it. Accordingly CHRIST commends her Faith, and grants her Request; *O Woman, great is thy Faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* O! Christians, when CHRIST seems in his Providence to Frown upon you, and desires to be let go, lay fast hold on him, in Faith, and, with good old Jacob, tell him, you will not let him go, untill he bless you, (*Gen. xxxii. from the 24th. to the 30th Verse*)

10. *The more impatient you are for a comfortable and speedy Answer of Prayer, the weaker is your Faith; for he that believes shall not make haste,* (*Isaiab xxviii. 16.*) Did you thoroughly believe the Goodness, that made the Promise, and the Wisdom, that sees the properest Time to execute the Grant, you would patiently wait for

for an Answer, the holy Importunity mentioned in the preceeding particular, is an urging of the Promise, in Faith, with humble Patience and Submission. The impatient hastening, now spoken of, flows from fear, as if God would not be always kindly affected towards you ; or, as if the present Testimonies of it, can be the only Arguments of his kind Intentions towards you.

Further. THE weak Christian is much oppressed, when God withdraws the Light of his Countenance from him. *He goes forward, but the LORD is not there ; and backward, but cannot perceive him : On the left Hand where he doth Work, but cannot behold him : He hides himself on the right Hand, that he cannot see him, (Job xxiii. 8. 9)* He has comparatively dark Views of divine Truths, of the Beauties of CHRIST the Mediator, and the inexpressible Glories of GOD; and after many puzzling Searches and Re-searches into the State of his Soul, is still at a Loss to determine respecting it. Troubled when the LORD hides his Face, he crys out, *O that I knew where I might find him, I would come even to his Seat.* Perplexed inquirers, you may find him disclosed in Gospel Promises in his Fulness, Willingness, and Faithfulness, to save you : *Tho' in a little Wrath, he hides his Face for a Moment ; yet with everlasting Kindness will the LORD your Redeemer have Mercy on you, (Isaiah liv.)*

Again. *Remissness in Duty is an Evidence of little Love to G O D, and Zeal for his Glory.* When Love is in Exercise, all the Floods of Affliction, Persecution, and Temptation, cannot quench its vehement Flame, (*Cant. viii. 6, 7.*) How weak, then, is its Exercise, when every little weight suppresses its noble Efforts? When Believers make Excuses against rising to let CHRIST in, and seek him on their Beds? The Voice of CHRIST to you now is, *open the Door my Sister, my Spouse, my Love, my Dove, my undefiled; for my Head is wet with the Dew, and my Locks with the Drops of the Night, (Cant. v. 2.)* O! the Stupidity of that Heart, which feels not the constraining Influence of such melting Words! And, yet, I fear, some of you do not; but, with the Spouse, plead the Drowsiness, that is your Crime: *I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my Feet, how shall I defile them?* Would it not be very shameful, and untender, in a Spouse, to indulge herself in soft Repose, while her loving Husband, tho' requesting Entrance, is shut out, exposed to all the Injuries of the Night and Weather? But, by this striking Metaphor, CHRIST reproves your Unkindness to him. Be ashamed of your Conduct, O sluggish Believers: Awake from Sleep, let dull Delay be gone! Intreat CHRIST to put in his Finger by the Hole of the Door, that your Bowels may be moved for him. It may be, that while you attempt

attempt to open the Door to him, *your Hands will drop with Myrrh, and your Fingers with sweet smelling Myrrh, on the Handles of the Lock.*

Once more. *The fearful Believer is a bruised Reed and smoking Flax; for, Fear bewrays a Distrust of the Power, and Faithfulness, of a Promising God. These Passions met in PETER, (Matt. xiv. 29. 30, 34.) who sinking, when he walked on the Water to meet CHRIST, doubted; and, in a Flush of Fear, cry'd out, LORD help me. CHRIST seasonably afforded Relief; but in the mean Time, reprov'd the Weakness of his Faith, O thou of little Faith, wherefore didst thou doubt.*

The strongest Relievers have the greatest Sense of the august Glories of God; and will therefore revere him most. And, possessed with a deep Sense of the desperate Wickedness of their own Hearts, will have a holy Jealousie over themselves, lest they should offend him, and deceive their own Souls. Therefore, the more reverential Fear of God, we are possessed with, and cautious Fear of ourselves, the stronger is our Faith. But that Fear which is an Argument of weak Faith, is

1. Tormenting, and distracting, flowing from Apprehensions of divine Wrath? Thus *Haman* crys out in the 88th *Psalms*, *that the Wrath of GOD lay hard on him, and his fierce Wrath went over him, while his Terrors cut him off; that afflicted, and ready to die from his Youth up, he suffered the Terrors of the LORD,*
and

and was distracted. As some Hypocrites go to Hell by the Borders of Heaven : So some Christian go to Heaven by the very Borders of Hell. Viewing their Sins, more than the Remedy, the Arrows of God stick fast in them, the Poison whereof drinks up their Spirits. In their Passage to Glory, *Sinai's* Lightnings flash, and it's Thunders roar around them ; hence they exceedingly fear and quake. This evinces their greater Sense of the terrible Attributes of God, *viz.* his Justice and Holiness, than his more mild Attributes of Mercy and Love. They view him more as a Legislator, than Redeemer ; and understand better the Claims of the fiery Law, than the alluring Voice of the Gospel.

2. It is a sinful Fear, that sinks the Soul in Dispondency, so that, *as a forsaken Woman,* the Believer is grieved in Spirit, (*Isaiah. liv. 6.*) Now the Springs of this Dejection may be either (1) a melancholy Habit of Body, which presses the Spirits, and is a great Enemy to Godliness. It is often ready to bid farewell to Duties, and every Comfort ; it calls Evil Good, and Good Evil ; turns Fancies into Realities, and Realities into Fancies. While it grieves the Minister, it wounds Relations, and makes Sport for the Devil. It's usual Companions are Drunkenness, Solitariness, Fretfulness, Peevishness, Moroseness, Anxiety, and Sadness ; which are sometimes mistaken for a tender Conscience, Faithfulness,

fulness, Humility, Mortification, &c. (2) Dependancy may flow from the Souls failing of its Expectations and Desires : It wants sensible Victories over Sin, sweet Communion with God, comfortable Discoveries of its Interest in CHRIST, &c. but these being denyed, it sinks all discouraged, and unactive. This Frame is usually attended with a great Multitude of Jealousies : Now, the more Smoke, the less Fire ; so the more of these Jealousies prevail, the less Steady Faith is : The Believer then turns every Thing to his own Disadvantage, Staggers at the Promise through Unbelief, and is reduced to a great Number of perplexing Dilemmas. He fears he presumes, if he confides in pardoning Mercy ; if he does not, he fears he rejects CHRIST. If he goes to the LORD's Table, he thinks he crucifys CHRIST ; if he does not go, he fears he rebels against him. If he asks Mercy, he is so sinful, God will not grant it ; if he does not ask, he is prophanely Wicked. If Ordinances do not presently comfort, they are entirely sealed up ; and if every sinful Motion is not subdued, he is a Stranger to Mortification. He doubts his Sin is unpardonable, because against Knowledge and Mercies. Distraction in Duty, he concludes, is a certain Evidence of Insincerity ; and hellish Suggestions disprove his Interest in CHRIST.

PERPLEXED Christians, disclose your Cases to your Ministers ; and converse with chearful, judicious

ditions Christians. Consult and labour to understand Gospel Promises in their Glory, Fulness, and Freedom. View CHRIST's Excellency, Willingness, and Ability to save you; particularly endeavour to be persuaded, that *he will not break a bruised Reed, nor quench smoking Flax, till he send forth Judgment to Victory.* But this brings me to the

III. THING proposed, viz. to prove, that *weak, oppressed Believers shall come off victorious thro' the tender Care, and Grace of CHRIST.*

BESIDES the forementioned Examples of this Truth, it appears evident from the following Considerations, which I shall but just mention.

1. *Weak and oppressed Believers were particularly given in Charge to CHRIST: He was anointed with the holy Spirit, that he might bind up the broken hearted; proclaim Liberty to the Captives; give Beauty for Ashes; the Oil of Joy for Mourning; the Garments of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness, that they all might be called Trees of Righteousness, the Planting of the Lord, that he might be Glorified, (Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3.)* Therefore, if any of them should not prove victorious over all their Discouragements and oppositions, it would stain his mediatorial Glory, as well as reflect on the Wisdom of the Father, in appointing a Mediator, who was unfaithful in, or insufficient for the Discharge of his Trust.

2. *They are the peculiar objects of encouraging Promises. He shall gather the Lambs with his Arm*

Arm, and carry them in his Bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young, (Isa. xl. 11.) O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy Stones with fair Colours, and thy Foundations with Sapphires (Isa. liv. 11.) Now the Strength of Israel cannot lie, nor alter the Thing that has gone out of his Mouth.

3. CHRIST has given it in Commission to his Servants, to Strengthen the weak Hands, and confirm the feeble Knees. To say to them that are of a fearful Heart, be Strong; fear not: Behold, your God will come, and save you, (Isa. xxiv 3, 4.) and surely he never sends his Ministers with a Lie in their Mouths.

4. THIS Point appears from his Sympathy with his People under their Distresses: In all their Afflictions he was afflicted, and he bears them all the Days of Old, (Isa. lxxiii. 9.) being tempted in all Points like as you are, yet without Sin, he is touched with the feeling of your Infirmities, and is able to Succour you when tempted, (Heb. ii. 18. and iv. 15.

5. His Power is an Argument, that all Believers shall be made perfect. He has a Power of Authority, (Jo. xvii. 2.) and a Power of Ability; For GOD laid Help upon one that is mighty to save, (Psalm lxxxix. 19.) He is a God to enforce his Instructions; and command the Deliverances he has purchased for his People. Being endowed with the Gifts of the Spirit, without Mea-

sure as to his human Nature, he shall not fail, nor be discouraged till he have set Judgment in the Earth, (Isaiah xlii. 1, 4 and iii. 34.) And because he ever lives to make Intercession for them, he is able to save to the utmost all that come unto GOD by him, (Hebrews vii. 25.)

6. All Believers, even the weakest, have a vital Union to, and derive Nourishment from CHRIST, as the Branches from the Vine, (John xv. 5.) and the Members from the Head, (Ephesians v. 28, 29, 30.) so long then, as their Head lives, they shall live also, (John xiv. 19.) Was the least Member of CHRIST's spiritual Body lacking, there must be a Chasm in it; therefore, being maimed, it would be deformed. Omitting sundry other Arguments, I shall only add in the

7 Place. THAT CHRIST has given the Spirit and Seeds of Grace to abide in them; therefore, they cannot fall away totally and finally from a State of Grace, but shall obtain everlasting Life, (John iii. 9. John vii. 38, 39, and iv. 14.)

I PROCEED now to the Application of the Subject, and

1. It informs us of their Error, who assert the Possibility of the Saints falling away entirely from a State of Grace: This Sentiment darkens the Wisdom of God; sets him at great Uncertainties with respect to the Objects of his Love; frustrates the Designs of Grace, and the Fruits of CHRIST's Mediation; makes void the Promises of God; and

and therefore cuts off from his People, the noble Source of their Strength and Consolation, in all their Distress and Weakness, as well as enervates all the Springs of their Hope, and Courage : With what Courage, or Comfort, can they engage in Duty, finding themselves beset with invincible Weakness? Search into Truth, when surrounded with thick Clouds of Darkness? Attempt to mortify Lusts, or resist Temptations, the least of which is an Over-match for them ? Or, how, under all these Discouragements, can they support, or hope for Glory ? If they are not encouraged, and strengthened, by the infallible Promises of a faithful God, who of infinitely rich Grace, has engaged, to *bring forth Judgment unto Truth.*

2. WHAT has been said teaches us, to put on *Bowels of Compassion towards one another ; especially towards the weak and discouraged.* These we should Comfort and Strengthen ; for they are the Objects of CHRIST's tender Care, who has herein set us an Example that we should follow his Steps. Those, who are overtaken in a Fault, we must restore in the Spirit of Meekness, (*Galatians vi. 1.*) Nor may we be cruel, and censorious ; but charitable, and kind. We ought ever to put the best Construction on what may appear weak, and sinful in others, that the Nature of the Case will admit.

MINISTERS of the Gospel particularly, to whom the Charge of the Flock is committed, should

take peculiar Care. The halting and maimed they must strengthen, heal the wounded, restore the wandering, and comfort those that mourn. The weak must *be nourished with Milch* ; while others are fed with strong Meat.

SOME of the Flock are *wicked*, rather than *weak*, and try to cloak their Wickedness with a Mask of Religion : Their morose and sullen Humours must pass for Humility ; their censorious Turn for conscientious Scrupulosity ; their rash and peevish Flouts for Zeal ; and their selfwilled, obstinate Temper for persevering Constancy in a good Cause. These, like humorous Children, grow worse by Indulgence ; therefore, for their Good, we are obliged to take the Rod, in order to humble them.

3. HENCE we are taught, not to *despise*, but *improve the Day of small Things*. Jesus laid the Foundation of the Church, and will finish the Superstructure ; we may therefore rejoice to see the *Plummet* in his Hand ; for notwithstanding all the Opposition he meets with herein, he will bring up the Head-stone thereof with Shoutings, of *Grace, Grace !* (*Zachariah* iv. 7, 8, 9, 10.) He has often bound up and enflamed the Church, when she was a bruised Reed, and smoking Flax. She has generally been as a *Bush* in the midst of *Flames*, but, thro' the Grace of CHRIST, remains *unconsumed*. All the Malice and Wrath of Hell, all the Enmity and Rage of Earth, have conspired

ed against her ; but never could, nor ever shall, be able to prevail.

HORRID Abuse of Mercies, and provoking Impieties of every Kind, among all Ranks, have of late, awakened divine Indignation ; by which, not only the *british*, but the whole *Protestant Interest* has been threatened. Hardness of Heart, Insensibility under Judgments, and awful Impenitency prevail. Brokenness in Judgment, Obstinacy in *Schism*, wrathful and hot Contentions distract and weaken many. Sundry seem formed to cavil, rather than be instructed ; and Ministers, in some Places, have more Employ to remove Offences, and contentious Debates, than solve practical Cases of Conscience. Divine Influences are in a Measure withheld, and Religion lamentably declines : Hypocrites continue to deceive themselves ; the secure settle on their Lees, nor will prophane Sinners be reclaimed ; few are crying, *LORD what shall we do to be saved?* and enquiring the Way to Zion, with their Faces thitherward, weeping as they go. There is but little lively Exercise of Grace among Christians in general ; for *the wise sleep with the foolish Virgins*. And as if sundry conspired with one Consent, to make Excuses, what trifling Inconveniences keep them from the House of God ! How lamentably thin are our Assemblies on Week Days ; even the Week Days of solemn sacramental Occasions ! While Fairs, Vendues, and, in many Places, revelling Frolicks, are crowded with Numbers !

BUT, tho' our Reed be thus shattered, we have some that sigh, and mourn for all the Abominations committed amongst us. Some that labour to lay hold on a *departing GOD*, and *departing Glory*. Some that long to see the Shadows fly away, and the Flowers appear on the Earth. Some that Breathe for quickening Influences, and wrestle earnestly for God's gracious Visitations to his Church. We have yet faithful Preachings, and a goodly Number of the *LORD's Servants take Pleasure in the Rubbish and Stones of Zion*.

FROM these Instances of his kind Care, have we not Reason to hope in his Mercy? And from the Encouragement he gives us, to plead his supporting Promise, that *he will not break our bruised Reed; nor quench our smoking Flax, but send forth Judgment unto Truth*? Therefore pray earnestly, that *he would arise into his Rest, he, and the Ark of his Strength* that Religion may revive among us; and all Ranks of Men be reformed. That the *protestant Lamp* kindling brightly, may shed it's Influences of Light and Heat to the remotest Corners of the Earth, so as Multitudes may be allured to the Redeemer, and his Praises sounded from Shore to Shore.

THO' the Church's Enemies vastly over-top her in Power and Numbers; yet shall she thro' the *Blood of the Lamb, and the Word of her Testimony*, gloriously overcome them all. *Antichrist,*

richrist, shall be destroyed with the *Breath of his Mouth*, and the *Brightness of his Coming*, as well as *Mahometan Delusion*, *Jewish Prejudices*, and all *Monuments of Pagan Idolatry*. Then shall *Zion's Cords* indeed be lengthened, and her *Stakes strengthened*. The *glory of Lebanon* shall be given to her, and the *Excellency of Carmel and Sharon*. Tho' we are not favoured with the bright *Display of that Glory*; yet may we be Comforted in the certain *Expectation of it*, notwithstanding our *Reed is Bruised*, and our *Candle burns dim*; yet let us not be Discouraged; but plead the *Promise of CHRIST*; and be thankful for what he gives, which is the *Way to get more*. Let every one be careful to reform himself, and endeavour according to his *Share of Influence*, to reform and strengthen the Church, that her *Righteousness may go forth as Brightness*, and her *Salvation as a Lamp that burneth*.

4. WHAT has been said may serve to alarm guilty Sinners of their Danger, and excite them to fly to CHRIST for Mercy. He will not crush to Pieces a bruised Reed; but if you continue impenitent, he will grind you to Powder. His Rod and Staff shall comfort his mourning People; but if you touch not his Scepter of Peace, he will break you to pieces with his Iron Rod. Therefore kiss the Son, lest his Wrath begin to burn, and ye perish from the Way. Consider your Need of CHRIST: You are guilty and polluted, without
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any Title to, or meetness for Heaven (*John* iii. 36. *Hebrews* xii. 14.) Your Natures being full of Enmity against God and Holiness, you are unfit for its perfect Worship and Privileges ! therefore you would mar its Harmony, nor could you be happy, were you taken there : Consequently, without Heart changing Grace, you must inevitably fall a Prey to inexorable Wrath. God is arrayed against you with all his Terrors, ready to discharge Thunder-bolts of Vengeance on your guilty Heads. But can you enter the List with *Jehovah*, who is a *consuming Fire to the Workers of Iniquity* ? Are Worms of Dust a fit Match for the Maker of the Earth and Heavens ? In vain may you think to compound with your Maker ; for were it in your Power to give *Thousands of Rams*, or *ten Thousand Rivers of Oil* ; or did you offer *your first born*, the *Fruit of your Body for the Sin of your Souls*, all this would be utterly contemned, as falling infinitely short of the Claims of offended Justice. Hasten then, to the Blood of CHRIST as your only Refuge from the Pursuits of incensed Fury ; lest *sudden Destruction* overtake you, as *travel on a Woman with Child*, and you shall not escape. You know not how soon the Flames of Wrath may kindle upon you ; for *Judgment lingereth not*, nor does *Damnation slumber*. Fly therefore, O perishing Sinners, fly to CHRIST for Salvation. He has healing Salve to anoint your blind-

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ed Eyes, white Raiment to cloath your naked Souls, and Gold tried in the Fire to enrich you: He is freely willing to dispense these Favors, and commissioned of the Father for this very Purpose. I beseech you by all his painful Wounds, by all his bloody Agonies, by all his dying Love, and by all his tender Compassions, not to reject him. What say you Sinners, to this Offer? Will you now, even now, receive the LORD JESUS CHRIST, or will you not? If not, you reject him; and if so, LORD have Mercy on you; for this Moment your Refusal is recorded in Heaven, and to the Bar of God I refer you, to answer for it. But, remember, O Sinners remember, that then this whole Assembly shall witness against you; I will witness against you; the Gospel I preach shall witness against you; your own Consciences shall bear witness against you, and the Blood you slight shall be worse than ten Thousand Witnesses against you, if you continue to reject CHRIST. Conscience, charge the Sinner with his guilt: Tell him, O! tell him, how dreadful it is to answer for Blood! The slighted Blood of the Son of God! If they that *despised Moses's Law, died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment shall you be thought worthy, who tread under Foot the Son of GOD, and count the Blood of the Covenant an unholy Thing, (Hebrews x. 28, 29.)* Better you had perished with the vile Sodomites, than go down to the Sides of the Pit, with a

Candle in your Bosom, lighted by Gospel Instructions: For these will make Conscience as a fiery Oven!

5. HENCE let all convinced Sinners *be excited, and encouraged, to lay hold on CHRIST for Relief.* A most compassionate Saviour promises *rest to all weary and heavy laden Sinners, that come to him, (Matthew xi. 22.)* He opens Prison Doors, and sets the Captives at Liberty; binds up the broken hearted, and comforts all that mourn. Heaven observes with Pleasure, and encourages the first Resolves, and most distant Movements of the returning Prodigal, *(Luke xv. 12.) When he was yet a great Way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him.*

Object. I HAVE sinned against so much Light and Mercy, against so many Warnings and Checks of Conscience, and have so long resisted the Motions of the holy Spirit, that I fear, CHRIST cannot consistent with his Honor, pardon so vile a Transgressor; nor can my Sins be purged out, being so deeply rooted.

Ans. THIS is the Language of Unbelief, excited by *Satan* your grand Enemy, in order to veil the Glory of rich Grace, and keep you in Chains. Christ's Commission reaches to Sinners of every Size, even the vilest: An idolatrous, bloody *Manassch* and persecuting *Saul* were the Objects of his pardoning Mercy; and he cast se-

ven Devils out of *Mazdalen*. He commanded *Repentance and Remission of Sins to be preached among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, where were his Murderers, the worst of Sinners, (*Luke xxiv. 47.*) To say, that your Sins are too heinous to be pardoned, or too strong to be broken, is in Effect, to say, that their Demerit and Strength exceed the infinite Merit of CHRIST'S Righteousness, and his Almighty Power. But as such a Supposition is highly dishonouring to him, you ought to repent of it, and fly to his Blood to pardon it, and all your other Crimes. He has the Righteousness of a God to cloath you; the Wisdom of a God to direct you; the Strength of a God to assist you, and the Compassions of a God to pardon you, and you have the Warrant of a God to believe in him for the Application of these Mercies to you. Therefore you may be assured, that, if you come to him, *he will bring forth Judgment unto Truth*. Attempt then, at his Command, to stretch forth your withered Hand; and plead, that out of his Fulness you may receive Grace, to answer his Call.

6. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, (1 Corinthians, x. 12.) Be not high minded, but fear*; for it is not you, but CHRIST, that brings Judgment unto Truth. Grace is not in its own Nature immutable; for it is a created Thing. You Stand only by the irreversible Grant of God, and the constant Care of CHRIST

over you. If *Peter*, and *David*, and others of the famous Saints fell when left to themselves; nay, if *Adam* lost primitive Innocence, when left to stand in his own Strength, much more will you make Shipwreck, if CHRIST the *Author and Finisher of Faith* does not uphold you, I charge you, then, O Believers, *by the Roes, and by the Hinds of the Field, that you stir not up, nor awake your Love, till he please.* If by your-self Confidence, and other Instances of Untenderness you provoke him, he may let you experience your own Strength, to your Cost.

Particularly, let young Converts be very cautious and Self-diffident. Grace, at its Beginning, like the Flame of a Candle when first lighted, is usually weak. Yet sometimes the Candle, when it has but just caught Fire, blazes with such Violence, that it is like to consume itself immediately: So some young Converts, by an undue Zeal, overshoot themselves. Brethren, not being far advanced in the School of Grace, you scarcely know yet, *what Manner of Spirit you are of*; therefore be watchful, and walk steadily, with a constant Sense of your Dependence on CHRIST.

7. What has been said affords Consolation to all the Children of GOD, especially to these that are grieved and oppressed in Spirit. Neither the Devil, the World, nor the Flesh; neither Tribulation, nor Distress, nor Persecution, nor Peril, nor Sword,

Sword, nor Famine, nor Nakedness; neither Life, nor Death, 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 you from the Love of God which is in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.* Universal Nature shall be racked, and the Powers of Heaven shaken, but you shall never fall off from CHRIST: For having *began*, he will perform the *Good Work in you.* Your State by Grace is better than *Adams* in Innocence, tho' not for present Integrity, yet for Continuance here, and Happiness hereafter. Songs of Praise resulting from rich Grace and Mercy, shall exceed, in Sweetness, any Thing that could be uttered, had Man retained original Rectitude. Tho' your Grace be weak, the Foundation of it is strong; for it has for its Basis the firm, irrevocable Covenant of God, (*Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. 2. Sam. xxiii. 5.*) Your Stock is not in your own Hands, but in the Hands of CHRIST for you, who delights in the faithful Execution of his Trust. In the Days of his Flesh, he took a peculiar Care of the weak, and taught them as they could bear it. And after his Assention to Glory, he noticed, with Approbation, a little Strength in the Angel of the Church of *Philadelphia*, promised to set him an open Door, and keep him from the Hour of Temptation. He will so order Matters, that you shall not be called to Duties, which require Self-denial

denial above your Strength; or he will give Strength proportioned to your Tryals: He will moderate your Afflictions, (*Isa. xxvii 8.*) and restrain the Tempter, or make a Way for your Escape, (*1 Cor. x. 13*) If Corruptions Work, the Grace of CHRIST is stronger than they; 'tis his Glory to conquer them, and he has promised to purge them out, (*Jo. xv. 2*) He will secretly support you by his precious Influences, cherish your Graces, strengthen and encrease them. Hence shall you go on *from Strength to Strength, till you appear before GOD in Zion with triumphant Songs of Victory.* Then you shall no more complain of wild, disordered Affections; nor shall a tempting Devil afflict you any more. Dull, unactive Hearts will no longer clog you in the Service of GOD; and open Vision will forever banish all your Clouds and Fears. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away; the Notes of *Paradise* will cause perpetual Transports of Joy. Don't your Hearts now begin to catch the heavenly Flame, and feel an Earnest of those inexpressible Pleasures, that flow at the right Hand of GOD. Pluck your Harps from the Willows, where they have long, too long hung useless, and tune them to his Praises, *who will not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smothering Flax, till he send forth Judgment unto Victory.*

8. Let weak oppressed Believers make their Application to CHRIST, to have their Graces quickened, and strengthened. Tho' you have long
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lain among the Pots; yet, if you come to JESUS, you shall appear as Doves, whose Wings are set with Silver, and their Feathers with yellow Gold. Shake off Sloth and Inactivity, and endeavour to get strong and lively Actings of Grace.

That you may comply with this Exhortation, observe the following brief Directions. Keep a pure Conscience, (*Hebrews x. 22.*) Watch against all Apparitions, and the first Motions of Sin. Let not Fancy sport with it, else it will entangle and corrupt your Affections; vitiated Passions will beget in Conscience a Sense of guilt; and guilt will subject you to perplexing Doubts and Fears.

Endeavour to get more clear, distinct Knowledge in the Nature, Mysteries, and Actings of Grace. View divine Truths in their Harmony, Connections, and Dependencies. You are in Perplexity, for want of Light to discern Truths; and make little Progress in your Way, by so frequently disputing whether you are in it.

Let Religion be the main Business of your Lives, and rest not in small Degrees of Grace; but, *forgetting the Things which are behind, and reaching to those which are before, press daily toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in CHRIST JESUS, (Philippians iii. 13, 14.)* Always endeavour to have larger Acquaintance with God, greater Victories over Sin, and Grace in more lively Exercise, that *your Light may shine brighter*

brigher and brighter to the perfect Day, (Proverbs iv. 18.)

BE much in the Practice of every known Duty, especially Mortification. If you would *run with Patience the Race that is set before you, you must lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that so easily besets you, (Hebrews xii. 1.)*

LAY your Accounts to bear the Cross of some kind or other, while you are in the World ; and be prepared for the worst you may meet with in the Course of your Pilgrimage : To familiarize and expect Difficulties, is the Way to have them sit light when they come, and to keep the Heart from sinking under them.

GET an extensive, clear View, and firm Certain Persuasion of the Nature, Objects, Freedom, and Fulness of Gospel Promises ; for this is the Way to quicken your Graces, and keep you from wavering, (*Hebrews x. 23.*)

ENDEAVOUR by repeated Acts of Faith to improve CHRIST for sanctification, as well as Justification, (*Galatians ii 20.*) And to derive Grace from him who has the *seven Spirits of GOD, (Revelations iii. 1.) i. e.* The various Influences of the Spirit to dispense to the Church, suited to the various Necessities of his People. Eye him as your great Patern, (*1 Peter ii. 21.*) Let the Inoffensiveness, Meekness, Holiness, Self-denial, Zeal, Heavenlyness, and Diligence of JESUS CHRIST run thro' your whole Lives.

FREQUENTLY

FREQUENTLY view the Glories of Heaven, and let the Palms of Victory you shall obtain at the End of your Course, daily quicken your Pace to it.

I SHALL conclude with a Motive or to excite you to comply with the foregoing Exhortation. Great Grace glorifies GOD, for it credits divine Power, Mercy, and Faithfulness; nor does it stagger at the Promises thro' Unbelief, (*Romans iv. 18, 19, 20.*) It easily expects a ready Answer of great Matters requested: *Only speak the Word,* (says the Centurion) *and my Servant shall be healed,* (*Luke vii. 8.*) It will make you to walk more like Zion's Travellers, humble, holy, spiritual, meek, and heavenly; and nobly to resist great Temptations to Sin: *How shall I do this great Wickedness,* (says Joseph) *and Sin against GOD,* (*Genesis xxxix, 9.*) This will enable you to endure Afflictions, and to despise Shame and Reproach for CHRIST: This will make the Cross sit light on you, (*Hebrews xi.*) The strong Believer walks steadily, sees his Way clearly, and comes up cheerfully thro' this dark and dreary Wilderness. *He is comforted in the Valley of the Shadow of Death,* (*Psalms xxiii. 4.*) And, with the Apostle Paul, (*I Corinthians xv. 27.*) Triumphs over Death and the Grave, saying, *O Death where is thy Sting? O Grave where is thy Victory?*

F I N I S

Page 42, line 27, for Drunkeness, read Darknells.