

How the apostle triumphs in this, a little before his departure from this world: “ *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,*” 2 Timothy iv. 7. Having on the whole armour of God, I have fought and conquered, though all the infernal policy of devils, and stratagems of wicked men, have been unitedly engaged in planning my destruction; and though they have, a thousand times, endeavoured to execute their malicious designs—though we have actually come to an engagement, I have fought, victoriously, under the banner of Christ, and wear the victor’s crown! Though a legion of sins have “warred in my members, against the law of my mind, endeavouring to overcome, and bring me into captivity;” I have fought, and through sin-subduing grace, am conqueror; having *obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.* (Acts xxvi. 22.) Though sin has, times innumerable, caused me to call myself a wretched man, I thank God for victory, through Jesus Christ. I have also fought against all the errors of the age; and prophetically detected the errors of the man of sin, who shall reign, *when he who letteth be taken out of the way.* (2 Thessalonians ii.) With the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, I have fought against all error, and kept the faith, in opposition to the world, the flesh, and the devil; in the strength of Jesus, I have kept the faith, and now I die triumphantly; for, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against*

that day ; (2 Timothy i. 12;) who hath laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day. Thus Paul triumphed ; and such shall be the triumph of all those, who obtain mercy of God, to be found faithful !

I come, now,

II. To give a description of *the Faith of the Gospel* : First, observe that the doctrines of faith are here intended.

Paul, the speaker, in our text, was a great advocate for the doctrines of the Gospel ; they ever administered joy, peace, and satisfaction, to his soul, in the most trying seasons ! Their powerful, and holy influence over his whole soul, produced, in him, a most amiable and exemplary conduct ! The love of Christ shed abroad in his heart, constrained him to detect sin and error, to love truth, and to follow holiness ; which holiness he knew to be in Christ, and to emanate from *him*, to the glory of his grace ! That unparalleled beauty and excellency, which he saw in Christ, inspired him with longing desires, daily to grow in grace, and to be still more zealous to stem the torrent of error, and more gloriously to exalt, and magnify the Lord his Saviour, by a defence of his free grace, and everlasting love !

This was the influence which his doctrines had

over his own heart and conduct. And in his excellent Epistles, written under the immediate influence of the Eternal Spirit, how boldly, and courageously does he defend the doctrines of faith! With what sublimity of thought, and holy rapture of soul, he mentions them! How forcible, and conclusive are all his arguments in their defence!

But some will tell us, that, "Though the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel are his general theme, in his *Epistles*, when he preached to a miscellaneous congregation, he did not insist upon them. They were not the topic of his *preaching*; and, in course, ministers, who profess to follow his example, ought, also, to confine them to writing, or private conversation, among believers."

How degrading would this have been to the apostolic character! Paul would have been ashamed of such a conduct! He detested such cowardice! Let him speak for himself; 2 Corinthians x. 11. *Let such an one think this, that such as we are in word, by letters, when we are absent; such will we be also, in deed, when we are present: and lest any should say, that he has not, here, a reference to his preaching, I refer you to his own declaration, Acts xx. 27; I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.*

The WHOLE—observe, he *kept back nothing*. All that God commanded him, he *declared* unto the people. And, so zealous was he for the doc-

trines of the Gospel, and for preaching them fully, without equivocation, or reservation, that he charges Christ's ministers to preach no other: 1 Timothy i. 3, and iv. 6. Titus ii. 1. *Charge some that they preach NO OTHER DOCTRINE. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith, and of GOOD DOCTRINE. Speak thou the things which become SOUND DOCTRINE.*

Here is a particular charge, given to ministers, not only to contemplate, to converse upon privately, but to *teach, speak, put the brethren in remembrance of good and sound doctrine*, that they may be the more established in the truth; *nourished up in the words of faith*. It is their business to *speak*, and *speak out* boldly, courageously, positively, the eternal, and immoveable Truth of God! so shall they glorify their Divine Master, and comfort the souls of his people!

Second—striving together for faith, dwelling in the hearts of all those who are spiritually taught of God. and,

First, Men, in a natural state, are entirely unacquainted with, and destitute of, faith in Christ: (2 Thessalonians iii. 2.) *All men have not faith*. And it is entirely of God's free grace, that any have; for the people of God, in this respect, are not different from others; but, as they lay in the

ruins of the fall, are upon a level with the rest part of mankind: *Children of wrath, even as others*, and dead in sin, till quickened, and made alive, by the power of God; for he hath *concluded them all in unbelief* (Romans xi. 32.); and it is an infinite mercy that any of us are blessed with faith in Christ.

It does not belong to corrupt nature, neither have men in nature's darkness, any thing to do with the faith of God's elect: for they are under a covenant of works, and faith is peculiar to the covenant of grace. They are *married* to the law, which is their *first husband*; and till they become dead to him, cannot be married to another, (i. e. to Christ by faith,) without being called *adulteresses*. Some may object to this reasoning, but let them remember, that it is not mine, but borrowed from Paul, (Romans vii. 3, 4, &c.) who knew, by experience, the necessity of becoming *dead* to the law, before the soul can be alive to Christ, by a vital faith, which looks alone to him, lives upon him, and affectionately claims him as an *husband*! (Isaiah liv. 5.) "*When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" Seeing the law's purity, and his own sinful deformity, he died, to all hope of being *justified by the law, in the sight of God*. (Galatians iii. 11.) But, he was not even invited to come to Christ, while in his self-righteous state! Whatever you may think, my dear hearers, of universal exhortations, I am

bold to assert, that not one of the self-righteous are invited to come to Christ. I have good authority for this assertion; read Matthew ix. 13. "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"

Second. As man is dead in sin, with a nature hostile to Christ, and an heart *incapable* of believing—as faith in Christ is God's gift, and God's work in the sinner's heart, it follows, unavoidably, that *faith* is not a duty of the law; Romans iii. 28. Galatians ii. 16. and iii. 12. and Romans ix. 32. all, undeniably prove faith opposite, in its nature, to the works of the law; that it is not a duty which God requires of his people, but a grace which he gives them. In the first-mentioned Scripture, we are told, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*; so that it is evident, faith cannot be one of the deeds, or duties, that God has made incumbent upon his creatures in the decalogue. And Galatians ii. 16. beautifully corresponds with this: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* Faith and the law are here held in contrast, by the apostle, as having nothing to do with each other: the former points to, and embraces a bleeding Christ, as the way to God; the latter demands perfect holiness of the crea-

ture, and curses to eternity for the least transgression. They are so diametrically opposite in their design, their nature, and their language, that they must not be blended together; for *the law is not of faith*, (Galatians iii. 12.) and, consequently, faith cannot be of the law.

May you learn, my dear friends, to distinguish between the law and the Gospel! the want of which occasions much darkness and distress of soul. We are always to keep distinct the following things: the *Old* covenant and the *New*, the seed of the serpent and the seed of Christ, the *Old* man and the *New* man, the *Law* and the *Gospel*; and be assured that your comfort, and establishment in the truth, very much depend upon this.

Farther, had faith been a duty of the law, the Jews of old would have obtained that which they sought after, (the peculiar favour of God,) for they sought it by the works of the law; but faith was not of the law, and therefore they could not obtain it, as it is written, Romans ix. 32. *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.*

O! may the Lord enable you to seek him, so as to find him, and experience the blessings of grace peculiar to his spiritual Israel!

Having asserted that faith is super-natural, a grace of the Spirit, the gift of God; and, there-

fore, **not a duty** of the law, the question naturally follows in the

Third place, How comes faith? and what are its operations? This is a question that ought to be well answered, and therefore I shall refer you to the infallible language of inspiration, in Romans x. 17. Galatians iii. 2. Hebrews iv. 2. The first Scripture informs us of the glorious channel through which the Lord conveys faith to the soul. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* This proves that the preaching of God's word, is more particularly employed, by the Eternal Spirit, to give his people faith in Christ. *How can they hear without a preacher? And that is entirely of God's free grace, for how can they preach except they are sent?* Every true minister of Jesus has his qualifications from heaven, is educated in the grand College of Immanuel, and ordained by the *Bishop of Souls*; (1 Peter ii. 25) who sends him to do his appointed work:—"Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah i. 7.)

Thus commissioned, he exclaims, *Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!* (1 Corinthians ix. 16.) A twofold necessity is laid upon me, woe is unto me if I *preach not*, and woe unto me if I *preach not the Gospel.*

The Lord thus sends forth his ministers to preach his precious word, which *comes not in word only, but also in power and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost.* (1 Thessalonians i. 5.) *The Lord opens the hearts of sinners, that they attend unto the things which are spoken;—* (Acts xvi. 14.) *the Holy One of Israel, who teaches his people to profit,* (Isaiah xlvi. 17.) gives them the hearing ear, and as many as were ordained to eternal life believe. (Acts xiii. 48.) Not because they are obedient, and perform the duty of faith, but because it is given unto them to know, and believe, the *mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.*

Paul interrogates such in this language. (Galatians iii. 2.) *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Not by the works of the law; the Spirit is not given, because they are obedient, but to make them obedient; that they may *serve in newness of Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter:* (Romans vii. 6.) *and then, the service of the Lord becomes perfect freedom: they delight to do the will of God, because his law is written upon the table of their hearts.* (Psalm xl. 8.)

It is by the hearing of faith that the Spirit is thus received; by hearing the love, mercy, pity, and compassion of the Father, in the gift of the Son, faithfully preached; by hearing of the love of Christ, in his covenant-undertaking, and wonder-

ful sufferings for his people.—The Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and shews unto them—their deaf ears are unstopped, to hear the voice of Christ, saying, *Behold me, behold me—was ever sorrow like my sorrow—*(Lamentations i. 12.) Their eyes are opened to behold him, in all his bleeding charms, and with divine ravishment of soul, they gaze upon him, till the wonderful sight endears the Saviour to their hearts!

Herein is the distinguishing grace of God manifested, and gloriously magnified, for many hear externally, few, comparatively, are savingly taught by the Spirit. *For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* (Hebrews iv. 2.) Hearing will profit nothing without believing, and *faith is the gift of God;* (Ephesians ii. 8.) consequently, it is to the *praise of the glory of his grace,* (Ephesians i. 6.) his free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace, that you are profited by the preaching of the Word: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Corinthians iv. 7.)

If Evangelical Faith is a duty, the believer may glory, and *boast himself against the unbeliever.* (Romans xi. 18.) He may, with the greatest propriety, address him thus: Faith is the duty of

every creature where the Gospel comes; I have been *obedient*, and performed my duty, by believing; you still remain in a state of *disobedience*, neglecting to do your *duty of faith*; “*Therefore stand by thyself, come not near to me, I am holier, I am more obedient, than thou.*” (Isaiab lvi. 5.) O Sirs! may the Lord shew us daily, more of our own insufficiency and nothingness, that, under the influence of distinguishing grace, we may *abhor ourselves*, (Job xlii. 6.) and looking to the *High Rock*, Christ Jesus, triumphantly exclaim, with the Psalmist, “*Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord! but unto thy name be all the glory.*”

All boasting and glorying in *Self*, is excluded, because,

Fourthly, Faith is the work of God, and the free gift of God. I would appeal to the Scriptures in order to attest the truth of this. For remember, you that are displeased with this doctrine, that the Bible, the precious book of God, is the object of your displeasure. The Scriptures always were, and always will be *affrontive* to the proud, carnally-minded Pharisee; *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* (1 Corinthians ii. 14.)

And, now, I will prove from *God's own word*, that faith is his work, and his own free gift; and

when we have a THUS SAITH THE LORD, blind, fallible worms of the earth ought to be silent! Read Colossians ii. 12. 2 Thessalonians i. 11. 1 Peter i. 5. 1 Corinthians ii. 5. with many other passages that I might quote; all which beautifully corroborate to prove, what I have already asserted—*Faith God's work, God's free gift; and harmoniously agree, in ascribing all power, praise, and glory, to God, and the Lamb for ever!*

That Faith is the work of God, is evident; for *we are risen with him, (i. e. Christ) through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* The very same power that raised Christ from the dead, *quicken'd us who were dead in trespasses and sins,* and gave us faith, which is emphatically termed, FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD: the powerful, invincible, wonderful, operation of the Spirit. We were shut up in nature's darkness, and unbelief; and in that state we must have remained, had not that God, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts:* (2 Corinthians iv. 6.) The very same power that created all worlds, created us *new creatures* in Christ Jesus; or wrought faith in our hearts; which are synonymous terms. Now I would ask, Is it the duty of an unconverted man to make himself a new creature in Christ?—to give himself the Holy Ghost?—O presumptuous idea! bordering upon blasphemy! and not less presumptuous, and erroneous is the idea of Evangelical Faith, as the duty of the unconverted!

For, if faith is the work of the Spirit, and at the same time the duty of the creature, it consequently follows, that it is the duty of a man dead in sin, to give himself the Spirit of God! A sentiment equally as absurd as presumptuous! and to be detested by all sincere advocates for the glory of Free grace!

Faith is not the work or duty of the creature, but the work of the Spirit: *Such power belongeth unto God.* (Psalm lxii. 11.) *It is according to the good pleasure of his goodness, that he worketh in the hearts of sinners, the work of faith with power.* (2 Thessalonians i. 11.)

It is the almighty and miraculous work of God, to take away the *stony heart*, (Ezekiel xi. 19.) slay the *enmity of the carnal mind*, (Romans viii. 7.) break the strong holds of the devil, and create a new man in Christ: All which must be accomplished before any one can *believe to the saving of the soul*: (Hebrews x. 39.) for real believers are said to be in the Spirit: *Without faith it is impossible to please him*, (Hebrews xi. 6.) and we know, *they that are in the flesh cannot please God*, (Romans viii. 8.) consequently, believers must be in the Spirit; *for if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new*; (2 Corinthians v. 17.) and the new creature is the *workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*,

(Ephesians ii. 10.) Such a renewed soul is *kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation*, (1 Peter i. 5.) who manifests his power, in the believer's perseverance, by strengthening him in his ever-living Head, and Advocate, who prays for him, that *his faith fail not*. (Luke xxii. 32.)

Being preserved, called, and kept by the power of God, in Christ Jesus, he bears witness to the truth of Paul's assertion, (1 Corinthians ii. 4, 5.) that the preaching of the Gospel is not with *enticing words of man's wisdom*—endeavouring to reconcile the two seeds which God hath eternally separated, taking the children's bread and casting it to dogs; enticing unbelievers to come into the church, by telling them the faith of God's elect belongs to every creature where the Gospel comes—No, the believing soul knows, that preaching the Gospel is not with these enticing, flesh-pleasing words of man's wisdom, but *in demonstration of the spirit, and of power*. He knows, by happy experience, that his *faith does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God*. *For by grace are ye saved through FAITH, and THAT not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*. (Ephesians ii. 8.)

Fifth. Faith is termed a *mystery*, and those who have it in possession, are said to *hold the mystery of faith in a good conscience*, (1 Timothy iii. 9.) *even the mystery which hath been hid from*

ages, and from generations, but is now made manifest to his SAINTS, (Colossians i. 26.) for unto them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to others it is not given. (Matthew xiii 11.) The Father hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes. And if any object to this, or require a reason why God hath done so, a very precious reason is annexed, "for so it seemed good in his sight." (Matthew xi. 25, 26.)

He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, in preaching his word; to whom he opens a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ: (Colossians iv. 3) who speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, by declaring, and vindicating, from the Scriptures, the eternity, co-equality, and unity of the three persons in the God-head—(1 John iii. 7) THESE THREE ARE ONE! The eternal, inseparable, union of Christ, and his people, (Ephesians v. 30) "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."—The union of the two natures in Christ, human and divine, (1 Timothy iii. 16.) "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh! These are mysteries that soar beyond the utmost stretch of either human, or angelic imagination! But, though in themselves incomprehensible, faith assures the Christian that such mysteries really exist. He knows that they are every way compatible with the incomprehensible nature of the Deity. He does not

aim, with the *Infidel*, to define the Divine perfections of Jehovah, and bring them down upon a level with his carnal reason; he is more happily engaged, in contemplating, with love and amazement, the innumerable, and unsearchable attributes of his covenant-keeping God; and his divinely animated soul, is taught to exclaim, with one of old, *Canst thou by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?*

Grace teaches him to believe in God, and concerning God, as he is revealed in the precious Bible; where he has discovered himself the God of love and grace. Consequently, the Christian rejoices in the *mysteries* before mentioned: that Father, Son, and Spirit, bear witness in behalf of his soul, to the everlasting covenant-engagements, which cannot be broken: that, agreeable to this covenant, the Son assumed human nature, died on the cross, finished salvation, ascended to glory, and as an Advocate, intercedes for him at the Father's right hand. And, deriving spiritual life from Christ, he feels his soul vitally united to him, as an evidence of his membership in that eternally complete body of Christ—the *church purchased with his own blood!*

Sixth. As faith is a grace of the Spirit, and a mystery taught by him, it certainly must be a blessing of the new covenant; for all the blessings of grace were provided by the Father, in the

covenant, and given into the hands of Christ, in the behalf of his elect, to whom they are communicated by the Eternal Spirit. “*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,* (Ephesians i. 3, 4.)

Before the foundation of the world was laid, the Father blessed his people with *all spiritual blessings*; and observe, they are all *in Christ*; for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell. (Colossians i. 19.) All the promises of God IN HIM are yea, and IN HIM, Amen unto the glory of God, by us: (2 Corinthians i. 20.) and these exceeding great and precious promises, were all made in covenant, to Christ, the representative of his church. According to Paul’s account, this is the basis of our hope of glory.—*In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began!* (Titus i. 2.) And, who could he promise it to but Christ? Now, as the Father provided, and gave all spiritual blessings, in covenant; it was the office of the Son to receive them; as it is written in the Psalms, “*Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast RECEIVED GIFTS for men; yea, for the REBELLIOUS also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*” (Psalm lxxviii. 18.) And, as Christ hath received them, it

is the office of the Eternal Spirit to communicate them to the redeemed soul: *He shall glorify me, saith the dear Redeemer, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* (John xvi. 14.)

Faith, then, is a covenant-blessing of the Father, treasured up, and promised, in the Son, and wrought in the soul, by the Holy Ghost. *It is of faith that it might be by grace; to the end, the promise might be sure to all the seed.* (Romans iv. 16.) All the spiritual seed of *Abraham*, or of *Christ*,—the children of the promise, the spiritual *Israel*: *for they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh; these are not the children of God: but the children of the Promise are counted for the seed.* This is the seed for whom the Father provided the blessing of faith in *Christ*: as it is written, (Galatians iii. 7.) *Know ye, therefore, that they which are of FAITH, (or believers in Christ,) the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through Faith, preached, before, the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So, then, they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* Hence it is plain, that faith is a covenant blessing, which leads me to observe,

Seventh, and lastly, That it is peculiar to God's people. *Thy blessing is upon thy people,* (Psalm

iii. 8.) saith the Psalmist; and his peculiar blessing is upon none other. *Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people! saved by the Lord* (Deuteronomy xxxiii. 29.) These are the people that SHALL believe, through the preaching of his word, who are eternally one with Christ! (Read John xvii.) “*For as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed.*” *Ye believe not,* saith the blessed Jesus, *because—of what? Because ye will not perform the duty of faith? No, but, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.* (John x. 26.) Offensive as this doctrine is to some, Paul rejoices in it. (2 Thessalonians ii. 13.) “*We are bound to give thanks always to God, for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.*” We find then, that faith was provided in covenant, for the elect of God, and for them alone; and to them, and them only, is it communicated.

May the blessed Spirit of all grace enlighten the eyes of your understanding, to view the bleeding, Saviour exhibited on Mount Calvary's eminence, groaning under the load of your transgressions; that looking unto him, *the author and finisher of your faith,* (Hebrews xii 2.) you may be taught to join this heavenly triumph of the blood-bought throng: *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.* Amen. (Revelations i. 6.)