

rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

Fear not, then, Christian; you that have fled to Jesus for refuge, be of good courage. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* (Isaiah liv. 17.) Here is a positive promise of everlasting victory over every foe: though assailed on all sides, fear not, you are also surrounded by an immensity of love and mercy; the Lord hath *set an hedge about you*; (Job i. 10.) nay, he declares that he will be *unto you a wall of fire round about.* (Zachariah ii. 5.)

Who can feel himself interested in these promises, without exclaiming, with the Psalmist, *I will love thee, O Lord my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* The Lord is worthy to be trusted, and greatly to be praised.

Gratitude, love, and adoration, are justly due unto him for such distinguishing grace! Such wonderful salvation? *Thanks be unto God, that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians xv. 57, 58.)

Your labour, toil, and difficulty, shall not be in vain; for, observe, they are in the Lord. You suffer them in Christ; *for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. (Philippians i. 29.)* Your sufferings are all, in covenant, appointed for you, and not one is in vain! They are of infinite service to you, and shall all work together for your good, and terminate in God's glory. Had not Lazarus died, *the Son of God could not have been glorified (John xi. 4.)* in his resurrection? if you were never in distress, you never could praise God for his supporting, and delivering grace: if not exposed to dangers, he could not be glorified in your protection and deliverance.

The mount of danger is the place,
Where we shall see surprising grace. WATTS.

God's surprising grace, manifested in your deliverance, *will fill your mouth with laughter and your tongue with singing; for the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

“From all your afflictions, his glory shall spring,
And the deeper your sorrows, the louder you'll sing.”

But why should the Christian be so courageous, why so confident of a victory over his foes? Because,

Fourthly, Faith realizes the precious promises of God to his soul. *It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* (Hebrews xi. 1.) It takes God at his word: *thus saith the Lord* is enough for faith; though there appears no prospect of the promise ever being performed. Though there may appear, according to sense, an impossibility of its performance, faith causes the believer, *against hope to believe in hope*, and brings the very substance of the things hoped for, into real possession! The soul inherits them by faith, knowing that it is impossible for God to lie; but, that he who has promised, is able, and certainly will perform!

Faith has to do entirely with the divine promise; and prefers God's word even before all ocular evidence. We have a striking proof of this in 2 Peter i. 16—19. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were EYE-WITNESSES of his Majesty—We have also A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, unto which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

Though the apostles saw the glorious trans-

figuration of Christ, when they were with him in the "holy mount;" which was to them a very striking evidence of his Deity and Messiahship; yet the word of God was esteemed by them, "a more sure evidence."

Faith considers, the ability, faithfulness, and veracity of the promise-maker, the creator and upholder of all things, who has declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—The nature of the promises, that they are all absolute and unconditional; not "yea and nay," not yea, ye may be saved; or *nay*, ye shall not; according to your obedience or disobedience; "for all the promises of God in him (i. e. Christ) are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God. They shall be my people, and I will be their God," is the unchangeable determination of Jehovah.

The real believer lives upon the eternal promises, and is daily nourished and supported by them. O how sweet are they to his soul in the worst of seasons! They are applicable to his state and situation, at all times; and, *a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* (Proverbs xxxv. 11.) Such is the nature of the following promises, that they are calculated to comfort and support the tried soul under the heaviest pressure:—*My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor*

forsake thee; and I that speak in righteousness am mighty to save. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. And also, the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent.

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” In his own due time, he will do it; for though he hides his face from you, and leaves you to walk in darkness, it is but for a little time: “In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee for a moment,” but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord.” He was angry, not with thy soul, but with thy sins.

When the Lord applies these promises, under their soul-reviving influence, the believer, though walking in darkness, “trusts in the name of the Lord, and stays upon his God.” Yea, confidently trusting in a promise-performing God, he triumphantly exclaims: “Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Rejoice not against me, O thou mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” (Micah vii. 8.)

Eighth. Faith enables the Christian to please his God, which he could not do by the works of the law. He is now comfortably fixed upon the rock Christ, and his goings are established in the ways of wisdom; he walks with God, by faith, like *Enoch* of old, and obtains "this testimony, that he pleases God." (Hebrews xi. 5.) The Father views him in his "Beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased." Being washed from his sin and uncleanness, in the blood of the Lamb, he is "made a king and a priest unto God;" (Revelations i. 5, 6.) and, as one of the "holy priesthood, offers up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii. 5.)

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES.—He serves God in newness of spirit; he worships him in the spirit. The Lord requireth truth in the inward parts; he demands the whole heart. (Proverbs xxiii. 26.) "My Son, give me thine heart." The believer gladly acquiesces in the divine request, and willingly surrenders his heart to God; fervently addressing him in such language as this: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart; a broken and a contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not despise." (Psalm li. 16, 17.) The whole heart is offered unto God, which is acceptable THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Nothing can be acceptable but that which is offered upon the "golden altar" of a

precious Jesus; ascending up before God with the incense of his powerful intercession. (Revelations viii. 3, 4.) All the prayers, praises, and spiritual sacrifices of the heaven-born soul, are performed in the strength of Jesus, and with confidence in him, are offered up before the Eternal throne; whose vicarious sacrifice renders them acceptable.

He acts now upon different principles, and from nobler motives, than when he laboured under the covenant of works: "The love of Christ constraineth him." That attractive expression of his Redeemer, has a powerful influence over him, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John xiv. 15.) Gratitude calls aloud for his obedience, and tells him, that it is "but his reasonable service to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." (Romans xii. 1.) Dissolved by divine goodness, his language is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" (Psalm cxvi. 12.) Or as it is poetically and beautifully paraphrased by Cowper:

What shall I do, was once the word,
That I may worthier grow?
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now,

When tempted to sin, his *new man* is taught to express his hatred to it, like Joseph *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God!* (Genesis xxxix. 9.) A God of Grace! who has loved me, and saved me with an everlasting sal-

vation ! And shall I grieve the spirit, slight his love, and bring reproach upon his cause, and distress his people, by yielding to the corruptions of my nature ? How can I exercise such base ingratitude, by the commission of such a detestable crime ! Yet, such is the viciousity of my heart, that I should immediately become guilty of it, if preventing grace did not forbid it !

He knows, by sad experience, that *sin* and *sorrow* are inseparably connected ; and he is also as well assured, that in the presence of Christ is a fulness of joy : on which account he thirsteth for God, for the presence of Jesus, the living God. But remember, it is the *new man*, who thus pants after Christ. The *new man* is the image of God in the soul, which causes the Christian to delight in the law of God ; for *I*, saith *Paul*, *delight in the law of God after the inward man*. *He is zealous of good works* ; not in order to be *saved* by them, but because Christ hath *redeemed and saved him from all iniquity*. (Titus ii. 14.) Not that he *may be* justified, but because *he is justified*. (Ephesians i. 8—10.) Not to merit the love of God, but because God *hath* loved him. (Jeremiah xxxi. 3, and 1 John iv. 10.) He is not working for life, but *from* life ; (Romans viii. 2.) not to be seen of men, like the Pharisee, in order to be applauded for his pretended virtue and holiness ; but to glorify God : agreeable to the exhortation, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in Hea-*

ven. (Matthew v. 16.) Whatever he does *for*, or *in*, the cause of Christ, is not done with a view to merit the Divine favour, but for the benefit of the saints. After he has done all, he humbly acknowledges to the Lord, that he is but an unprofitable servant. *My goodness*, says David, *extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight.* (Psalm xvi. 2, 3.)

Thus the real Christian, stimulated by love, and gratitude to God, and by a sacred pleasure, which he finds in his ways, waits upon him with renewed strength, and increasing faith. He obeys the Lord as a kind and indulgent Father; and has the inexpressible satisfaction of acting under the Divine approbation. The Eternal Father smiles upon him, in and through the Son; and, in the most endearing accents, expresses his delight in him, and in his services, which spring from that active and invigorating principle of love, and which are *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.* (Philippians iv. 18.) How encouraging, and at the same time, how sweet and melting, to hear the munificent Father of mercies say, *thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee.* (Isaiah lxii. 4.)

Sixth. Faith assures the believer, that though he is miserably poor in himself; in Christ, he is

unsearchably rich. O what scenes of wonder open to his view, when faith teaches him to claim kindred with Christ! When the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that he is a *child of God*; (Romans viii.) then is he assured, that though he has *nothing, yet he possesses all things*, (2 Corinthians vi. 10.) being *heir and lord of all*; (Galatians iv. 1.) yea, an *heir of God, and a JOINT-HEIR with Christ*. (Romans viii. 17.) What a wonderful vicissitude! Who can behold it without joining the angelic choir, in extacies of joy, and songs of praise to the Lord, *who thus raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes, and to make him inherit the throne of Glory*. (1 Samuel ii. 8.) There were music and dancing when the prodigal's rags were taken off him, and he gloriously arrayed in the best robe: and in like manner, yea, in an infinitely greater degree, see the poor sinner, in his conversion to God, emerging from the gloom of extreme poverty, exalted to the zenith of grandeur, and *unsearchable riches in Christ!* Angels rejoicing at his happy return to God; and the eternal Jehovah himself, as the object of his love and choice, *rejoiceth over him with joy*. (Zephaniah iii. 17.) The Redeemer looks upon him as a new trophy of his victory, a *chaste virgin espoused unto him, a jewel in his eternal crown of glory, and the joy and delight of his heart!* (Solomon's Song iii. 11.) *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown where-*

with his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

O! how admirable is Divine grace! That the Lord should thus visit a rebel against him; whose sins had rendered him odious to the Divine purity, and obnoxious to eternal wrath! Who lay perishing *in his blood*, (Ezekiel xvi. 6.) *wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; (Revelations iii. 17.) and knew it not, until it was discovered to him by the enlightening Spirit of God.

But God's Grace IS FREE GRACE, beyond all expression *free!* And with this soul-enriching grace, he blesses all the spiritually poor. (Matthew v. 3.) *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the kingdom of heaven. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be rich.* He took our poverty, that we might have his riches; He bore our sins, that we might have his righteousness; He died, that we might have redemption through his blood, and enjoy the everlasting smiles of a God of love! That our souls might be enriched with an amiable train of graces, (Galatians v. 22.) *that being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, (Colossians i. 12.) *an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* (2 Peter i. 1.)

Faith assures the believer, that these incalculable blessings are his own everlasting treasure, and teaches him to say, *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.* (Lamentations iii. 24.) He gave himself to me in covenant; (Jeremiah xxxii. 38—40.) he is mine by virtue of my union to Christ, (John xx. 17.) with whom I am a joint-heir; and therefore cannot be disinherited!

No, believer, though you may be poor in this world, you are *chosen of God*, RICH IN FAITH, *and an heir of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.* (James ii. 5.) It is impossible for you to be disinherited, for *who shall separate you from Christ?* And having him, you possess all things. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* 1 Corinthians iii. 22, 23.

What are the boasted riches and grandeur of the worldling, when compared with your's? They will not admit of any comparison, kings and emperors, who are not blessed with faith in Christ, when once compared with you, must sink into contemptible meanness, languishing poverty, unenviable misery, and extreme wretchedness; in the eyes of all; who can behold the unsearchable riches of Christ!

In vain they boast their little stores,
Trifles are *their's*, a kingdom *your's*. STEELE.

Seventh, as our text expresses it, the believer *lives* by his faith. He is dead to the law, to the world, and to sin; and is looking unto Jesus, the fountain of everlasting life. (Galatians ii. 20.) *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Christ is his daily bread. *I am the living bread which cometh down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* (John vi. 51—55.) The broken body of a crucified Christ, and his precious streaming blood, which cleanses from all sin, keeps his soul alive to God, preserves him from all slavish fear, fills him with courage and boldness, inspires him with a lively hope, feeds a sacred flame of affection to God, keeps up a serene and heavenly frame of mind, maintains a lasting peace in his conscience, and fills him with unutterable joy! As an inspired writer beautifully expresses it, *Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:* (1 Peter i. 8.) He not only feeds upon Christ, but he lives in him. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do*

nothing. (John xv. 5.) As the branches receive sap and nourishment from the vine, so the believer derives spiritual life from Christ, by which he grows in grace, and *flourishes in the courts of our God.* (Psalm xcii. 13.) Christ is the living head, and he a member of his mystical body!

Christ is also the *heart* of his people; for as the blood flows from the heart, through various arteries, and diffuses life into all the members of the body, returning back again by the same canals inverted, and thus by its continual circulation, supports that life which it gives; so the precious blood of Christ flows freely, as a life-giving balm, delivering his church from spiritual and eternal death; filling believers with an heavenly animation, by which they live unto the Lord.

The christian then, observe, lives *in* Christ, and continually derives life from him, as a member of his body. And, that life which he receives *from* Christ returns to him; so that he not only lives *upon* Christ, and *in* Christ, but also *to* Christ; enjoying fellowship and communion with him, and living to the glory of his name! Knowing that whether in life or death, Christ is his, and he is blessed. (Philippians i. 21.) *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

We come now to consider,

II. Some of the properties of Faith.

O! that we may know by happy experience its blessed effects! And then shall we be familiarly acquainted with its glorious properties.

To speak then of the properties of faith; observe, *First*, It is *unfeigned*. This is what *Paul* so much admires in young *Timothy*: 2 Timothy i. 5. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.* Not that we are to infer from this, that faith is hereditary, and therefore this ennobling quality was received by descent, or communicated to him by his mother. If so, the Oriental nations, by all probability, would, by this time, have been well stocked with Christians; for though the primitive believers themselves have been long since extinct by death, their natural progeny must be very considerable; but the degenerated, and unbelieving state of those nations is a convincing proof, if we had no other, that those who believe on the name of Christ, *are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (John i. 13.)

My dear young hearers! You that are under the instruction and care of affectionate parents, who know the Lord, be assured you must have far superior teaching to their's, before you are Christians indeed. You may, by their example and advice, become *Dissenters*; for a *Dissenter*

may make a *Dissenter*, but, none but the eternal Spirit can make a real Christian, and give you that faith which is unfeigned; and which distinguishes the believer from all the *formal* and *hypocritical* professors in the world. Whatever outward garb of religion *they* may put on, being unrenewed in the image of their minds, their faith is but *feigned*, which renders them odious and detestable to him, who searches the heart.

Their lifted eyes salute the skies,
 Their bended knees the ground;
 But God abhors the sacrifice,
 Where not the heart is found. WATTS.

They draw nigh unto the Lord with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. All their works they do to be seen of men. Their religion consists in the performance of such external duties as are more visible in the eyes of men; but ignorant of Christ, and dead in sin, they have no mental and private communion with the Lord: and, consequently, are feeding upon their duties, while the Christian hungers for the bread of life. What will such profession avail in the sad hour of death! *The hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.* Job viii. 13, 14.

Not so the child of God: With what fervency he breathes out his desires to the Lord! He asks in *unfeigned faith, nothing wavering*; (James i. 6.) *and cometh to God, believing that he is, and that*

he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews xi. 6.) He pleads the promised blessing: Lord! *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* (Genesis xxxii. 26.) O! the sweet communion he enjoys with his God, which no mortal creature is privy to but himself!

He looks with unfeigned affection to Jesus Christ; and calls him as a witness of the reality of his love: *Lord! thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* (John xxi. 17.) Or, if jealous of his deceitful heart, he cries, *Search me, O God! and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

But, as I have already taken up too much time, must hasten to a conclusion; and, therefore, can only just mention two or three more of the most conspicuous, and shining qualities of faith. And, it is,

Second, an *holy* faith; which has *the Holy One of Israel* for its author and finisher: its doctrines are holy, and *according to Godliness*; (1 Timothy vi. 3.) and have an holy influence over the believer's heart and conduct.

It is the only *holy* faith, or if any other should claim any kind of holiness (but, for my part, I know of no other holiness,) still the faith of God's

elect has the ascendancy, and can boast of a superior holiness; for it is the *most* holy faith. (Jude xx.) *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. Most holy.* Holy in the greatest degree; coming immediately from Christ, and looking to him, as its *most holy object*, and insuperable delight!

Thirdly, it is *tried* faith! *Tried* in the furnace of affliction, by the eternal God himself—*tried* by the fiery temptations of Satan—*tried* by a persecuting world—*tried* by inward sin.—But genuine faith will stand the trial, and become,

In the *Fourth* place, *victorious* faith, which gains a complete victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil—yea, more, it is victorious over death himself, the last of enemies! Faith points to death's great conqueror, and when the Christian has a view of the risen Jesus, Death appears no longer in his frightful forms; but, on the contrary, has an angelic appearance! Yea, even in his cold embraces, the believer shall join the apostolic triumph—O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?

Knowing the reality of this, I cannot conclude without saying, that it is,

In the *last* place, *precious* faith; (2 Peter i. 1.) which lives, and leans upon a *precious* Jesus, and

relies upon the exceeding precious promises of God in Him—is *precious* in life—*precious* in death—but, here it ceases;—swallowed up in sight—when the believer, in full possession of all that faith caused him to hope for, joins the everlasting song of angels, and glorified spirits, in ascribing all glory to God and the Lamb!