

THE F A I T H
OF THE
OPERATION OF GOD
BEING THE
SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON
PREACHED AT
THE NEW CHAPEL
DAGGER-LANE
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2
THE FAITH
OF THE
OPERATION OF GOD,
GAL. 2: 20.

—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.

THE subject before us, is a subject which is at all times necessary to be insisted on; but perhaps never more so, than at this present time, when men are encouraged by *fame*, to think themselves *true believers* or real Christians, with only a bare *assent* to the gospel revelation: *others* are asserting, that the Christian's *faith* is only that of *Devils*; while a *third sort* are telling us, that *the faith of the operation of God*, is a DUTY incumbent on all those who live under the gospel dispensation; to the great confusion of the *gospel plan*, as well as of the minds of those who are the hearers thereof.

My design therefore in what follows is to *oppose error* and to establish *truth*, according to my views of both. And in discoursing on the words of my text, I shall

- I. Take notice of Paul's *life* which he now lived,
- II. Of *the faith* by which he lived;—And
- III. Of the *privilege* he thereby enjoyed.

First, then I am to take notice of Paul's life which he now lived.

By the word NOW in my text, he gives us to understand, that it was a life different from that which he formerly lived when in a state of nature, for his life which he THEN lived, was a life of enmity, disobedience and opposition against God and every thing that was good; as may be gathered from his own

confession, in various parts of his writings. We find in the *first* place, that he lived a PERSECUTOR: this he freely and voluntarily confesses saying, *I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women.*—They know Lord, (said he) that *I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee, and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.*¹ Nay said he, *I punished them* (viz. Christians) *oft in every synagogue; and being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities,*² and in another place he says; *Ye have heard of my conversation in time past—how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it.*³

But *Secondly* he lived formerly a BLASPHEMER, this also we have from himself, who tells us that he *was before a blasphemer,*⁴ viz. before his conversion, and not only so, but he informs us likewise, that he *compelled others also to blaspheme.*⁵

And *Thirdly* we are told by him that he *lived a PHARISEE.*⁶ That is, he was one that *trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others,*⁷ and of all the characters that we read of in the word of God, there is none more wicked than this, nor are there any greater enemies to God and his Christ: for beside their *other* acts of rebellion against him, they are adding thereto, that of

¹ Acts xxii. 4, 19, 20.

² Acts xxvi. 11.

³ Gal. i. 13

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 13.

⁵ Acts xxvi. 11.

⁶ Acts xxvi. 5.

⁷ Luke xviii. 9

despising his way of salvation by Christ only, although it is said *there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*⁸ And there is no character or class of sinners in the world against whom more woes are found in the word of God, than against *Pharisees*, for our Lord addresses them no less than *seven* times, in the xxiii chapter of the gospel by St. Matthew; with *woe unto you Scribes, Pharisees and Hypocrites, &c.* and in the 33rd verse of that chapter, he says to them, *ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell.* And yet this *persecuting, blasphemous Pharisee* found mercy: for it was different with him NOW, viz. at the time he wrote this epistle, and had been ever since that time in which God met him on his way to *Damascus*;⁹ when he quickened his soul, enlightened his understanding, and communicated to him a principle of grace, called by the apostle Peter *the divine nature*; under the influence of which, he was led to see his state, feel his guilt, and to cry *what shall I do Lord?*¹⁰ So that from hence, he lived a life of *love, obedience and communion* with his God, for he (as is every gracious man) was taught to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.*¹¹

But let us proceed now as was proposed, *Secondly*, to take notice of that *faith* by which the apostle at this time lived. It is called in my text *the faith of the Son of God*, because it flowed from that divine person who is the ONLY BEGOTTEN of the

⁸ Acts iv. 12.

⁹ Acts xxii. 5.

¹⁰ Acts xxii. 10.

¹¹ Tit. ii. 12.

Father full of *grace* and *truth*:¹² or because he is the *author*, *object* and *finisher* thereof. But—

In opening this part of the subject, permit me to speak *first* of the ESSENCE of faith, and *secondly* of its ACTINGS.

There is (it is true) an *historical* faith, which is a belief of the truth of *divine revelation* and the doctrines that it contains; which belief may be had by those, who are destitute of special grace, as is seen in the case of *Simon Magus*, of whom it is said *he believed*.¹³ This also appears plain in the case of those who are mentioned by the apostle James, where he says, *Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know O vain man,, that faith without works is dead?*¹⁴ But this is not the faith with which I have at this time to do; for although this is included in *true faith*, yet true faith is not included in this, as appears from the above-mentioned scripture. *Pertinent* to this (I think) is the remark of *Dr. Owen*, where he says, “*of all the poisons which at this day is defused in the minds of men corrupting them from the mystery of the gospel; there is no part that is more pernicious than this one perverse imagination that to believe in Christ is nothing at all but to believe the doctrine of the gospel! which yet we grant is included therein.*”¹⁵

With regard to the ESSENCE, or nature of that faith by which the apostle lived, whatever it is, it will be found to be SOMETHING that *all men* have not: for saith the apostle, *all men*

¹² John i. 14.

¹³ Acts viii. 13.

¹⁴ James ii. 19, 20.

¹⁵ On the person of Christ, chap. x. page 79.

*have not faith.*¹⁶ But since *there is* ONE FAITH, under the influence of which men believe to the saving of the soul; let us hear what the scriptures say concerning it.

The apostle breaks out in one place saying, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things) in Christ,* and that too before the foundation of the world.¹⁷ Now if ALL spiritual blessings be treasured up in Christ for his people; then FAITH must be there, since that is one of those blessings which is received out of the fulness of Christ, in consequence of a previous connection with him the *vine*, and without such a connection not a single spiritual blessing could have been enjoyed by his people.

Again we are told that *faith is the GIFT of God;*¹⁸ a supernatural blessing, received from him who is the *fountain of living water*.

This same faith of which I am now speaking, is called the *faith of the operation of God,*¹⁹ and is therefore a principle of grace which none by nature can boast of, and which no man can produce in himself, any more than another can produce it in him.

Again the apostle calls it in another place *a fruit of the spirit;*²⁰ and if faith be a FRUIT, surely it is a *something*, and if a *fruit* or production of *the spirit*, then we should never expect to find it on the *dry tree of NATURE*; for it is a GRACE too *spiritual* to grow out of a *natural* man, and too *heavenly* for an *earthly* man to

¹⁶ 2 Thess. iii. 2.

¹⁷ Ep. i. 3, 4.

¹⁸ Ep. ii. 8.

¹⁹ Col. ii. 12.

²⁰ Gal. v. 22.

produce. He styles it in another place the *faith of God's* ELECT:²¹ because it is a principle of grace which none but the *Elect* ever did, or ever will partake of, let men say what they please; for the text holds forth *peculiar faith*, which manifests its subjects to be *a peculiar people*; We are told also that Stephen *was a man FULL of faith*,²² and Paul speaks of the same faith as an abiding principle, saying, *now ABIDETH faith*;²³ and however it may fail, (as it did in Peter) respecting its *acting*, it can never fail as a *principle of grace* in the soul, *for the water that I shall give him, shall be in him, a well of water springing up to everlasting life*.²⁴ Hence the apostle Paul when writing to Timothy about this faith says, *when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is IN THEE, which dwelt first, IN thy grandmother Lois and IN thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that IN thee also*,²⁵ from whence it is plain that the ESSENCE of faith, is a GRACE OF THE SPIRIT which has its *being*, or *dwelling* in the Christian's heart.

Therefore *the faith of the Son of God* by which Paul lived, seems to be nothing more nor less, than a principle of GRACE or LIFE from Christ *not of a separate existence from him*, but constantly maintained by, or supplied from the fulness of him who is its glorious *author* and *finisher*; just in the same manner, as the branches are supplied with *sap* from the vine, or the members of the body with *life* from the head. So that to live by FAITH is to live by CHRIST; therefore he told his disciples,

²¹ Tit. i. 1.

²² Acts vi. 5.

²³ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

²⁴ John iv. 14.

²⁵ 2 Tim. i. 5.

*because I live you shall live also.*²⁶ But were we to conceive of *faith* or any other grace as *separate* from Christ; it could not exist a moment in that state, because there is nothing in the dry tree of nature for its support.

But having taken notice of the essence of this faith, let us now proceed to its *actings* in the soul. And first we may remark, that faith is that which *purifies the heart*.²⁷ Now every christian I think must allow, that nothing less than a *principle of grace* can purify the heart; and we are told in the above mentioned passage, that God does this by FAITH, which clearly proves that *faith* must be a GIVING, ACTING principle IN the heart; and therefore something more than a bare *assent* to the gospel revelation; for were a man to assent to every truth contained in the word of God, such an assent without a *principle of grace*, would never purify his heart; but like Simon Magus of old, would be found to be *in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity*.

Again we are told, that the inheritance to be enjoyed by God's people, is *an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is IN Christ*.²⁸ Now as before observed, a bare *assent* to the truths contained in the gospel does not *sanctify* the heart, for then the hearts of *Judas* and *Simon Magus* would have been *sanctified*; no Sirs, nothing less than FAITH as a principle of grace in the heart received out of Christ's fulness can ever accomplish a work of this nature. And inasmuch as the SPIRIT works this faith, he is called the *spirit of faith*;²⁹ and the work

²⁶ John xiv. 19.

²⁷ Acts iv. 9.

²⁸ Acts xxvi. 18.

²⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 13.

which, he performs, is called by the apostle, *the sanctification of the spirit*.³⁰

Now that this faith of the operation of God is an *active principle* is evident, for we are told it WORKS *by love*;³¹ and here we may remark, that faith is not a WORK; but a GRACE which produces *works*. Jude calls this faith *our most HOLY faith*,³² because the author of it is *holy*, as is also its *nature*; and because those who are possessed thereof, *have, their fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life*:³³ which is what no one with a *bare assent* to the gospel revelation, ever had, or ever will have.

By this faith as *a grace of the spirit* it is, that we *overcome the world* with its frowns, smiles and allurements; for *this is the victory that overcometh the world even our FAITH*.³⁴ Through this *faith* it is that we are SAVED from the guilt of sin in the conscience, the love of it in the heart, and the dominion of it in the life and conversation, for *by grace are ye saved through faith*.³⁵ Through this faith it is that we are KEPT, cleaving to Christ and resting on him, nay *kept* (we are told) *by the mighty power of God THROUGH FAITH unto salvation*.³⁶ By this faith it is that we LIVE or are kept lively and act spiritually in the ways of God, for *the just shall live by faith*.³⁷ By it we WALK³⁸ steadily, uprightly and comfortably in the ways of God; and

³⁰ 2 Thess. ii. 13.

³¹ Gal. v. 6.

³² Jude verse 20.

³³ Rom. vi. 22.

³⁴ 1 John v. 4.

³⁵ Ep. ii. 8.

³⁶ 1 Pet. i. 5.

³⁷ Rom. i. 17.

³⁸ 2 Cor. v. 7.

*without this faith, it is impossible to please God.*³⁹

But now let us compare this *faith of the operation of God* with *the faith of devils*, to see whether the Christians' faith and that of the devils be alike as is by some asserted.

And 1. The faith of the operation of God is *a spiritual and new covenant blessing*, received in consequence of *union* with Christ, but the devils have no *union* with Christ, therefore whatever they believe, they must be destitute of the faith of the operation of God.

2. This faith is called *a fruit of the spirit*; but as the spirit of God does not work upon devils, therefore devils must be without that faith which the spirit produces.

3. This faith of the operation of God is the *faith of God's ELECT*, but as the devils are not of *that number*, therefore they can never have that faith which is peculiar to the *Elect only*.

4. This faith *purifies and sanctifies*; but notwithstanding all that the devils believe, they remain *unholy* and *unsanctified*, therefore the faith of devils and that of christians cannot be the same. Again—

5. The Christian's faith *works by love* to God, his people, his word and ways, but notwithstanding what the devils believe they are full of enmity against God and everything that is good, and will always remain so; therefore the devils' faith and that of Christians' differ. We may observe—

6. The Christian's faith is that *through which he is saved*, but notwithstanding all that the devils believe, they are as far from salvation as ever they were, being *reserved in everlasting*

³⁹ Heb. xi. 6.

*chains under darkness; unto the judgment of the great day.*⁴⁰ Therefore the Christian's faith is different from that of the devils. Again—

7. The devils' faith is a *dead faith* because a *faith without works is dead*, but the faith of Christians is a *living FAITH*, and produces GOOD WORKS. Now whoever they are that maintain that the faith of christians is no other than that of devils; I would wish them to take into consideration the foregoing remarks; and let such remember at the same time, that it will be of no use to them, to call in to their assistance the apostle's expression, *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is BORN OF GOD*;⁴¹ for the truth contained in this text was without doubt assented to, or historically believed by the devils as well as by Judas and Simon Magus, and yet none of them appear to be born of God: for the same apostle in one of the preceding chapters tells us, that *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin*, (viz. with pleasure and delight) for *his seed remaineth in him*;⁴² now from this description of one that is born of God it is plain, that whatever might be believed by the devils, Judas and Simon Magus concerning *Jesus* being *the Christ*, they were not born of God, for they loved and lived in sin, and as to the SEED or principle of grace which is said to remain IN him that is born of God, they were total strangers to, so that a bare assent to the above truth that *Jesus is the Christ*, without that faith which is of the operation of God and by which sin is conquered, is *no proof* that a man is born of God.

But let us enquire now whether *that faith which is of the*

⁴⁰ Jude verse 6.

⁴¹ 1 John v. 1.

⁴² 1 John iii. 9.

operation of God be the DUTY of all those who live under the gospel dispensation.

This I think cannot be the case for these two reasons; *first*, because faith is no NATURAL PRINCIPLE, and *secondly*, because it is not required by the MORAL LAW.

In order to find whether the *faith of the operation of God* be a natural principle, let us enquire what ADAM had in his possession as our head and representative, for although God has an undoubted right to require of us all that we had in him as our head; yet since he *the judge of all the earth will do right*, he will require no more, for he is not an *hard man reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strawed*.

After God (then) had *formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life that he became a living soul*;⁴³ he then blessed him with all the rich blessings of an *earthly paradise*; that he an *earthly man*, could enjoy. He had the advantage moreover of the knowledge of God as his *creator, preserver and bountiful benefactor*, and of enjoying *communion* with him as such.

After he had thus *formed* and *blessed* him, he then gave him a LAW; which he had an undoubted right to do. Therefore *the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*.⁴⁴ On his *personal, perfect* and *perpetual* obedience to this law, depended a *continuation*

⁴³ Gen. ii. 7.

⁴⁴ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

of all his *earthly* blessings, even his *natural life* itself, which would have been ETERNAL had his obedience been so. In short the *law* given to Adam, (which is allowed by most divines to be the same in substance with the moral law) had in it the nature of a *covenant*, for it contained a *promise* in it, and had a *sanction* annexed to it. It contained a promise of *natural life* and the enjoyment of every *earthly blessing* to Adam, so long as he should observe the *conditions* of it; but neither the law of *Moses*, nor the law of *nature*, made promises of any other than a *natural* life: for Adam's covenant was but a *natural* covenant, made with a *natural* or earthly man:⁴⁵ and contained only *natural* or Earthly blessings, and had he continued in his obedience he could have procured thereby the enjoyment of no *new* blessing, but only the continuation of what he had in his possession, and therefore had Adam stood, he must have received the *heavenly inheritance* as a free gift at the hands of God; for any thing that appears to the contrary.

Adam however broke this law, by which act of rebellion he forfeited all he had, and became obnoxious to the curse of the law and wrath of God; as well as all his posterity who were then seminally in his loins.⁴⁶ He lost his *original righteousness*, or rectitude of his nature; guilt seized on his conscience, and he endeavoured to *hide himself among the trees of the garden*. Fear followed upon a consciousness of guilt, for said he *I was afraid because I was naked*. He lost communion with God, for *God drove the man out of the garden*; and instead of gaining more knowledge, he lost much of what he had, and of his

⁴⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 47.

⁴⁶ Rom. v. 18.

posterity it is said, *there is none that understandeth*.⁴⁷ And had Adam been entrusted with our *spiritual blessing*, they would have been forfeited at the same time, and in the same manner. But blessed be God that was not the case, for we are told, *that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ*.⁴⁸ From hence we may observe, that if we were blessed with ALL Spiritual blessings, we must be blessed with *faith*, for that is one of them, and if we were blessed IN CHRIST with all spiritual blessings; we could be blessed with none IN ADAM. From whence I conclude that the faith of the operation of God is no *natural principle*, but a *spiritual blessing* in the hands of Christ, even at that time when Adam stood as our head and representative, therefore neither this *faith* nor any other *spiritual blessing* was lost by the *sin* of Adam: for though he lost *all he had*, yet he could lose no more. And it is well for us that our spiritual blessings were not lost, because we nowhere read in the word of God, of Christ *purchasing* such blessings. We read (it is true) of *Christ purchasing his Church*; and so we do of *his purchased possession*.⁴⁹ But as to his purchasing spiritual blessings there was no need of, for they were never lost, because *Adam* was never entrusted with them. For we are told by the apostle, that *grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*.⁵⁰ And if so it was not *in Adam*, and therefore Adam could not lose it, and as to *eternal life*, God never designed that any man should have it by his *own obedience* to any *law* whatsoever; for

⁴⁷ Rom. iii. 11.

⁴⁸ Ep. i. 5.

⁴⁹ Acts xx. 28. Ep. i. 14.

⁵⁰ 2 Tim. i. 2.

he PROMISED *eternal life to his people before the world began*.⁵¹ We are told also that *eternal life is the GIFT of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*:⁵² and that *God hath GIVEN to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*.⁵³ Therefore whatever Adam lost, he neither lost GRACE NOR GLORY; for they were both secure in Christ Jesus for all his people.—thus,

In him the tribes of Adam boast,
More blessings than their father lost.⁵⁴

We may observe therefore that *salvation* had no immediate influence on the *spiritual blessings* themselves; any farther than to remove that *sin, misery and bondage*, which prevented the *enjoyment* of them, for *to set free from misery and bondage and secure the person in all his former enjoyments, is the utmost extent of salvation*. Thus for instance God *promised* to Israel the land of Canaan, but their *bondage* in Egypt made *salvation, or deliverance necessary* before they could enjoy it; therefore although God brought them out of Egypt as a *Saviour*, he gave them the land of Canaan as a *faithful performer of his promise*; which was made to their fathers long before their bondage. It is true likewise that the person who is a *saviour* may be also a *benefactor*, not only saving from misery, but loading with blessings. Thus we find it was with Joseph, who saved the lives of the *Egyptians* as well as the lives of his *brethren*, but obtaining for his brethren an *inheritance* in the land of Goshen; was an *additional act of bounty*; so were Christ to save us from *sin, misery, and bondage*; restore to us our *moral rectitude*, and

⁵¹ Tit. i. 1, 2.

⁵² Rom. vi. 23.

⁵³ 1 John v. 11.

⁵⁴ Dr. Watts Psal. 72.

replace us again in our *earthly paradise*, this indeed would be *salvation*, but even then the HEAVENLY INHERITANCE whenever bestowed upon us, must be an *additional act of bounty*; seeing that if Adam and his posterity had stood, they could have procured nothing by their obedience, but the constant enjoyment of what they then had in possession. But *should* any object and say, “*if Adam’s obedience could not merit eternal happiness, neither could his disobedience merit eternal misery*;” let such remember, that God never punishes without a *criminal cause* in the creature, and as punishment is the *effect* of sin, that punishment which is inflicted must run parallel with the sin, and as every unholy creature will continue to sin, his *punishment* must be ETERNAL because his *sin will be* so.

From what has been said it appears, that as the faith of the operation of God, or that faith to which salvation is annexed is not a *natural principle*, but a *spiritual blessing*; it cannot be the *duty* of any *natural man* to have it, unless it be his duty to have what he never possessed neither in his own person, nor in the person of his representative.

That Adam in a state of innocence had power to *do* all that God commanded him, and *believe* all that he revealed to him must be granted; but that he had an *inherent power* to believe in Christ for life and salvation must be denied; not merely because he was in a state of innocence, and so needed not salvation, nor yet because Christ was not then revealed to him; but because he was destitute of the *life of faith* which was at that time a spiritual blessing in the hands of Christ, and was never enjoyed by him till after his fall; therefore whatever perfections dwelt in Adam before his fall, they could not be of

the same nature with the *life of faith*, being only *moral qualities* inherent in the cistern of nature, and not streams of grace flowing from *Christ* the fountain of life.

But let us proceed now to show that this Faith cannot be a DUTY; because it is not required by the MORAL LAW, for as the *law* is not of *faith*, so neither is *faith* of the *law*.

The law as a *covenant* knows nothing of *grace* nor salvation, it has no concern in commanding sinners to look to Christ as a saviour, it supposes no satisfaction, knows no mitigation, admits of no repentance, affords no assistance, nor does it require any thing as a *condition* of deliverance, but binds all men to *perfect* and *perpetual* obedience in heart, lip and life, and upon the smallest breach pronounces condemnation, saying, *cursed* is every one that *continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*.⁵⁵

Now if the *law* required FAITH, it would some where or other point out its glorious *object* CHRIST, but the *law* no where points out the object of faith, therefore faith cannot be a *duty* required by the law.—Beside were the law to require that faith which is connected with salvation as a *duty* it would be a *work*; but as no work is connected with salvation, therefore this faith cannot be a duty required by the law.—Again were the law to require *faith in Christ* for salvation, it would thereby make known the way of *life*; but *life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel*;⁵⁶ therefore the law knows nothing of *faith in Christ*, and so can be no *duty* required by it.—We may observe again, that whatever is a *duty* is a work to be done *by*

⁵⁵ Gal. iii. 10.

⁵⁶ 2 Tim. i. 10.

the creature, but the faith of the operation of God is no work done by the Creature, but is a principle of grace given *to* him, and therefore this faith is not a duty.

In short no creature ever was or ever can be obliged to *have* what was never given him, or to *keep* what he never had, and as *the faith of the operation of God* is a heavenly grace or spiritual blessing never possessed by Adam *before his fall*; it is impossible to prove that a just God should require it of any of his posterity, till he himself hath been graciously pleased to give it; for *this faith* is not an *act* or *work* of the believer, but is the *Spiritual* LIFE by which he acts spiritually; it is not what God *requires of him*, but what he *gives to him*, not *his* work, but the *work of God* in him, and as in the *first* creation, God did not *require*, but *gave* life, and then required obedience: so in the *new* creation, God does not *require* spiritual life but *gives* it, and then requires obedience, and it is impossible to prove that ever God required an *act* of any man, before he possessed the principle *proportionable or equal to that act*: either in his *own* person or in the person of his *representative*.

From what has been said then it appears, that that *faith* to which *salvation* is annexed, cannot be the *duty* of any man, because it is no *natural principle*, or principle possessed by Adam *before his fall*; nor is it required by any *law* that is now; or that ever was in existence.

There is it is true a *faith* which the law requires and obliges to, namely, a belief, or trust in God as the God of *nature* and *providence*; moreover the law obliges men to *credit* or assent to any revelation which he has made, but as for *special faith* in Christ as a Saviour, the law knows nothing of, nor does it make

it known, but is a blessing of the *covenant of grace*, which flows from God's everlasting love, is a *gift* of God through Christ, and of the operation of his spirit. Besides, it is called *the faith of God's elect*;⁵⁷ and can never be the *duty of all men* to have it, unless it be the *duty of all men to be elected*; to suppose which would be absurd.

In short all men are *obliged* to believe according to the *revelation made to them*, if *no* revelation of Christ be made to a people; *no* believing in him can be required: therefore the *heathen* who never heard of Christ will never be punished for not believing in him, but for their *sins* against the *law and light of nature*; for says the apostle, *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard*.⁵⁸ If the revelation be *external only*, which lies in the outward ministry of the word, declaring in general such things as relate to *the person and office* of Christ, as that he is God as well as Man—the Son of God—the Mediator between God and Man—the Messiah—the Saviour—who died, rose again and ascended into heaven; &c. these things all men who live under the gospel dispensation are obliged to give credit to, upon the evidence which they bring with them, and if they do not, they are culpable, and are so far punishable; but be it remembered that all these things may be *assented to*, or *historically* believed, without that faith which is of the operation of God; which without doubt was the case with Judas and Simon Magus as well as many others.

But beside this *external* revelation when the gospel comes in *word only*; there is an *internal* one by the *Spirit of God*, who

⁵⁷ Tit. i. 1.

⁵⁸ Rom. x. 14. Also Rom. ii. 12-15.

makes known to men their lost state and condition by nature and their need of a Saviour, acquaints them with Christ as an able and a willing Saviour; sets before them the *fullness, freeness, and suitableness* of his salvation, and encourages and enables them to receive, embrace, and cleave to Christ, or to *believe in him to the saving of their souls*.⁵⁹

But to what has been said some perhaps may object saying, “*if the law does not require faith, it requires love to God and our neighbour, and as no man can love God and his neighbour without faith, therefore the law must require faith,*” to which I reply, the reasoning is false, for that love which the law requires was practiced by Adam before faith in Christ as a *Savior* was possible. But—

Another objection is brought by some *saying, “if faith be not a duty, then unbelief is no sin.”* To which I reply, that whatever *unbelief (which is a rooted enmity in the heart against God and his word and is manifested by a departure from him)* has an exigence in, proceeds from, or is practiced by the creature; is undoubtedly *sinful* as well as *punishable*, but the want of *faith* as a grace of the spirit is no more *sinful*, than it is sinful of a criminal going to the gallows that he has not the *king’s pardon*, which the king was not obliged to grant; and were a bystander asked *what the man is hanged for*, his answer would not be because the *king would not pardon him*, but because he *robbed, or murdered* and had thereby broken the *laws* of his country. So should any ask what men will be punished for at the last day, we answer, not because they had not the *faith* of the operation of God (which he was not obliged to give them) but for their

⁵⁹ Heb. x. 39.

transgressions of his *law* and for their *practical unbelief* and contempt of the *gospel*, and of *Christ* revealed therein as *God's way of salvation*.

But others perhaps may say “it is plain that unbelief is the *damning sin*, because it is said *he that believeth not shall be damned*;” to which I reply, that all men who live and die in a state of *unbelief* or *departure from God* will be damned must be granted; but that any man will be damned for the want of *faith* as a principle of grace, which he never had in his own person, nor in the person of his representative must be denied, for the above mentioned reason; and I think, none but an *inconsiderate* or *inconsistent* being would assert such a thing.

From what has been said under this head, we may learn, that nothing less than that faith which is a *principle of life from Christ, a new covenant blessing, the gift of God and of the operation of his spirit*, can do a man any real good at the last, with regard to the salvation of his soul: for without this faith, whatever he may *historically believe* or assent to, he will never receive, embrace, or cleave to Christ as *his Saviour*.

But let us proceed now *Thirdly*, to take notice of the *apostle's privilege*.—It is contained in these words, *who loved me, and gave himself for me*.

Under this head we may remark, that Christ's love did not commence at the time Paul wrote this epistle; nor yet at the time of his *conversion*, though I know there are some who tell us that “God *hates*, or is *angry* with his people till they *believe* or are *converted*;” but for my part I am not of that opinion; for previous to Paul's, conversion, Christ had redeemed him from the curse of the law, the hand of justice and wrath to come; and

surely this could not be a mark of his *hatred*; but rather of his *love* to him: and this we are told he did for his people while they were enemies; for *while we were yet enemies Christ died for us*.⁶⁰

And again we may observe that before the apostle's conversion Christ sent his spirit to *quicken* and *regenerate* him, and this was not done at a time when Paul was *praying*, nor when he was *reading*, nor yet when he was *meditating*, unless it was the destruction of the saints on his way to *Damascus*; and yet even at that time, *it pleased God to call him by his grace*,⁶¹ *unsought* for, *unasked* for and *unthought* of. From hence we may see that God does not *seek* holy principles, but *gives* them. But then I cannot think this any more than the former, a mark of Christ's hatred to Paul, but of his love to him. Thus then we see that Christ gave himself FOR Paul, and his spirit TO him before he could be converted, which surely were instances of his love to him. Well therefore might he say that *God is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were DEAD IN SINS*.⁶² In short, if God be angry with his people till they *believe*; I should be glad to know what an unbeliever is to do in order to appease his anger; since *without FAITH it is impossible to please him*.⁶³ For I am greatly mistaking if any poor sinner can come to God at all upon this plan; unless we can suppose him capable of doing something to reconcile an *angry God*.

But we may observe also from this part of our text, that faith

⁶⁰ Rom. v. 8.

⁶¹ Gal. i. 15.

⁶² Ep. ii. 4, 5.

⁶³ Heb. xi. 6.

has not to do with Christ for *another* in matters of salvation but for *one's self*, for says Paul, *he loved ME and gave himself for ME*.

It was under the influence of this faith, that *Job* was enabled in confidence to say, *I know that MY Redeemer liveth*,⁶⁴ observe he did not say I know that A or THE Redeemer liveth, but I know that MY Redeemer liveth.—It was under the influence of this faith of the operation of God, that *David* could say, *Bless the Lord, O. my soul and forget not all his benefits, Who forgiveth all THINE iniquities, who healeth all THY diseases*.⁶⁵ Nay it was by this faith that *Hezekiah* in his address to God was enabled to say, *thou hast cast all MY sins behind thy back*.⁶⁶ And in short, without this kind of faith, we shall never be able to say with *David*, *though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil*.⁶⁷

You therefore who are *weak* in faith, take with you to a throne of grace the language of the apostles of old, *Lord increase our faith*; that you may be enabled to say as in the words of my text, *he loved ME, and gave himself for ME*.

From the whole then we may learn *first*, that the life which the apostle at this time lived, was different from that which he formerly lived, for whereas he formerly lived a life of *enmity*, *disobedience*, and *alienation* from God; he *now* lived a life of *love*, *obedience*, and *communion* with him.

We may learn *secondly*, that that faith by which Paul lived, was more than a bare *assent* to the truths of the gospel, or *the*

⁶⁴ Job xix. 25.

⁶⁵ Ps. ciii. 2, 3.

⁶⁶ Is. xxxviii. 17.

⁶⁷ Ps. xxiii. 4.

faith of devils, for it was nothing less than a *grace of the spirit* and a new *covenant blessing*, which is the *gift of God*; nay it was *spiritual life* that flowed from Christ the fountain of life to his soul; in consequence of his union to him and therefore because *Christ lived, Paul lived also*.

We may learn also that it can be no man's DUTY to have this faith, because it is no *natural* principle or principle found in Adam when he was our representative, it being at that time a *spiritual blessing* in the *hands* of Christ—Nor is it a duty required by the *moral law*, and therefore the want of it can be no sin, because no transgression of the law.

We may learn *thirdly*, the love of Christ *to* his people (*even before conversion*;) which is manifested in the gift of himself *for* them, and of his Spirit *to* them, to convince, regenerate, and enable them to claim Christ as *their Saviour* and to cleave to him as such.

But should any one after all that has been said, be disposed to maintain that the faith of the operation of God is the *duty of all who live under the gospel dispensation*; let him ask himself this question; *did I perform* faith as a DUTY, *or did I receive it* as a free gift of God, on Christ's behalf? and if upon examination he finds that he did not perform it as a *duty*; then let him not enforce it as such upon others; but rather encourage them to attend at the *preaching of the word*, (knowing that faith comes by hearing,) reminding them at the same time, that it is *God* that must *work in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, before they will be able *experimentally* to say; Phil. ii. 13., *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. FINISH*