

SERMONS

BY THE

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WITH A

FUNERAL SERMON BY THE REV. SAMUEL FINLEY, B. D.,

HIS SUCCESSOR IN THAT OFFICE,

AND SOME ACCOUNT OF PRESIDENT DAVIES, BY THE REV. THOMAS
GIBBONS, D. D., OF LONDON, AND THE REV. DAVID
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CONTAINING ALSO

AN INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR OF PRESIDENT DAVIES,

BY THE

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SERMON XIV.

CHRIST PRECIOUS TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

1 PETER ii. 7.—*Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious.*

YES; blessed be God; though a great part of the creation is disaffected to Jesus Christ; though fallen spirits, both in flesh and without flesh, both upon earth and in hell, neglect him or profess themselves open enemies to him, yet he is precious; precious not only in himself, not only to his father, not only to the choirs of heaven, who behold his full glory without a veil, but precious to some even in our guilty world; precious to a sort of persons of our sinful race, who make no great figure in mortal eyes, who have no idea of their own goodness; who are mean, unworthy creatures, in their own view, and who are generally despicable in the view of others; I mean he is precious to all true believers. And though they are but few comparatively in our world; though there are, I am afraid, but few additions made to them from among us; yet, blessed be God, there are some believers even upon our guilty globe; and I doubt not but I am now speaking to some such.

My believing brethren, (if I may venture to claim kindred with you,) I am now entering upon a design, which I know you have much at heart: and that is, to make the blessed Jesus more precious to you, and if possible, to recommend him to the affections of the crowd that neglect him. You know, alas! you love him but little; but very little, compared to his infinite excellency and your obligations to him; and you know that multitudes love him not at all. Whatever they profess, their practice shows that their carnal minds are enmity against him. This you often see, and the sight affects your hearts. It deeply affects you to think so much excellency should be neglected and despised, and so much love meet with such base returns of ingratitude. And you cannot but pity your poor fellow sinners, that they are so blind to the brightest glory and their own highest interest, and that they should perish, through wilful neglect of their deliverer; perish, as it were, within reach of the hand stretched out to save them. This is indeed a very affecting, very lamentable, and alas! a very common sight. And will you not then bid me God speed this day in my attempt to recommend this precious, though neglected, Jesus? Will you not contribute your share towards my success in so pious and benevolent a design by your earnest prayers? Now, shall not the interceding sigh rise to heaven from every heart, and every soul be cast into a praying posture? I shall hope to discharge my duty with more comfort and advantage, if you afford me this assistance. And surely such of you cannot deny me this aid, who desire that Jesus may become still more precious to your own hearts, and that he may be the object of universal love from all the

sons of men, who are now disaffected to him.

To you that believe, he is precious—He? Who? Is it mammon, the god of the world? Is it pleasure, or honour? No; none of these is the darling of the believing heart. But it is he who is the uppermost in every pious heart; he, who is first in the thoughts and affections; he whom every friend of his must know, even without a name; if it be but said of him, he is precious, this is enough to distinguish him from all others. “If it be he the apostle means, may every believer say, who is most precious to my soul, then I can easily point him out, though without a name. It must be Jesus, for O! it is he that is most precious to me.” The connection also of the text directs us to the same person. It is he the apostle means, whom he had just described as a living stone, chosen of God, and precious; the chief corner-stone, the great foundation of the church, that spiritual temple of God, so stately and glorious, and reaching from earth to heaven; it is this precious stone, this heavenly jewel, that is precious to believers.

“To you that *believe, he is precious*,” i.e. he is highly valued by you. You esteem him one of infinite worth, and he has the highest place in your affections. He is dearer to your hearts than all other persons and things. The [Greek] word requires a still stronger translation: “To you that believe, he is *preciousness*,” preciousness in the abstract; all preciousness, and nothing but preciousness; a precious stone without one blemish. Or it may be translated with a little variation, “To you that believe, he is honour.” It confers the highest honour upon you to be related to him; and you esteem it your highest honour to sustain that relation. Though Jesus and his cross are names of reproach in the unbelieving world, you glory in them, and they reflect a real glory upon you. Or, “To you that believe, there is honour.” Honour is now conferred upon you in your being built as living stones in the temple of God upon this precious foundation; and honour is reserved for you in heaven, where the crown of righteousness awaits you.

“To you which believe, he is precious;” that is to say, the value of this precious stone is, alas! unknown to the crowd. It is so far from being precious, that it is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; a stone disallowed of men, (v. 4,) rejected even by the builders, (v. 7,) but you believers, ye happy few, have another estimate of it. Faith enables you to see the glories of the blessed Jesus; and, when you know him through this medium, you cannot but love him. The blind world neglect the Lord of glory, because they know him not: but you believers know him, and therefore to you he is precious. Faith presents him to your view in a just light, and directs you to form a proper estimate of him. It is truly lamentable that such real excellency should be despised; but so it will be with the world till they believe. The mere speculative recommendation of their reason, the prepossessions of education in his favour, and the best human means, are not sufficient to render

Jesus precious to them. Nothing but saving faith can effect this.

To you therefore which believe he is precious. The illative particle, therefore, shows this passage is an inference from what went before; and the reasoning seems to be this: "This stone is precious to God, therefore it is precious to you that believe. You have the same estimate of Jesus Christ which God the Father has; and for that very reason he is precious to you, because he is precious to him." That this is the connection will appear, if you look back to the 4th and 6th verses; where you find Jesus described as "a chief corner-stone, laid in Zion, elect or chosen, and precious; disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Men wickedly disapprove this stone, and even many of the professed builders of his church reject him. This, says the apostle, must be granted. But this is no objection to his real worth. He is precious to God, who knows him best, and who is a perfect judge of real excellency; and for that very reason he is precious to you that believe. Faith teaches you to look upon persons and things in the same light in which God views them; it makes your sentiments conformed to his. Christ is the Father's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and he is your beloved Saviour, in whom you are well pleased.

Is it any wonder that Jesus should be precious to believers, when he is so precious in himself, and in his offices, so precious to the angelic armies, and so precious to his Father,

1. He is precious in himself. He is Immanuel, God-man; and consequently, whatever excellences belong, either to the divine or human nature, centre in him. If wisdom, power, and goodness, divine or human, created or untreated, can render him worthy of the highest affection, he has a just claim to it. Whatever excellences, natural or moral, appear in any part of the vast universe, they are but faint shadows of his beauty and glory. *All things were created by him and for him: and through him all things consist:* Col. i. 16, 17. And whatever excellences are in the effect must be eminently in the cause. You do not wonder nor censure, when you see men delighted with the glories of the sun, and the various luminaries of the sky; you do not wonder nor blame when they take pleasure in the beautiful prospects of nature, or in that rich variety of good things which earth and sea and every element furnishes for the support of man, or the gratification of his senses: you do not wonder and blame, when they are struck with moral beauty, when you see them admire and approve wisdom, benevolence, justice, veracity, meekness and mercy: you never think it strange, much less censurable, that men should love these things and count them precious; and can you be astonished, can you ridicule or find fault that Jesus is precious to poor believers? If the copy be so fair and lovely, who would not love the original, that has eyes to behold it? Believers see so much of the worth of Christ as is sufficient to captivate their hearts, and convince them of their guilt in loving

him no more; and the clearer their views are of him, the more are they mortified at the criminal defects of their love! for O! they see he deserves infinitely more!

2. The Lord Jesus is precious in his offices. His mediatorial office is generally subdivided into three parts; namely, that of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king; and how precious is Christ in each of these!

As a prophet, how sweet are his instructions to a bewildered soul! How precious the words of his lips, which are the words of eternal life! How delightful to sit and hear him teach the way of duty and happiness, revealing the Father, and the wonders of the invisible state! How transporting to hear him declare upon what terms an offended God may be reconciled! a discovery beyond the searches of all the sages and philosophers of the heathen world. How reviving is it to listen to his gracious promises and invitations; promises and invitations to the poor, the weary, and heavy laden, the broken-hearted, and even to the chief of sinners! The word of Christ has been the treasure, the support, and joy of believers in all ages. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth," says Job, "more than my necessary food." Job xxiii. 12. It is this precious word the psalmist so often and so highly celebrates. He celebrates it as "more to be desired than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb:" Psal. xix. 10. "O how I love thy law!" says he; "it is my meditation all the day:" Psal. cxix. 97. "How sweet are thy words unto taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth," ver. 103. "The law of thy mouth is better than thousands of gold and silver," ver. 72. "Behold, I have longed after thy precepts," ver. 40. "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage," ver. 54. "In my affliction thy word hath quickened me," ver. 50. "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction," ver. 92. This is the language of David, in honour of this divine Prophet, near three thousand years ago, when Christ had not revealed the full gospel to the world, but only some rays of it shone through the veil of the Mosaic dispensation. And must not believers now, who live under the more complete and clear instructions of this great prophet, entertain the same sentiments of him? Yes, to such of you as believe, even in this age, he is most precious.

But this external objective instruction is not all that Christ as a prophet communicates; and indeed, did he do no more than this, it would answer no valuable end. The mind of man, in his present fallen state, like a disordered eye, is incapable of perceiving divine things in a proper light, however clearly they are revealed; and therefore, till the perceiving faculty be rectified, all external revelation is in vain, and is only like opening a fair prospect to a blind eye. Hence this great Prophet carries his instructions farther, not only by proposing divine things in a clear objective light by his word, but inwardly enlightening the mind, and enabling it to perceive what is re-

vealed by his Spirit. And how precious are these internal subjective instructions! How sweet to feel a disordered dark mind opening to admit the shinings of heavenly day; to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the beauties of holiness, and the majestic wonders of the eternal world! Speak, ye that know by happy experience, and tell how precious Jesus appears to you, when by his own blessed Spirit he scatters the cloud that benighted your understandings, and lets in the rays of his glory upon your admiring souls; when he opens your eyes to see the wonders contained in his law, and the glorious mysteries of his gospel. What a divine glory does then spread upon every page of the sacred volume! Then it indeed appears the Book of God, God-like, and worthy its Author. O precious Jesus! let us all this day feel thine enlightening influences, that experience may teach us how sweet they are! Come, great Prophet! come, and make thine own spirit our teacher, and then we shall be divinely wise!

Again, the Lord Jesus is precious to believers as a great High Priest. As a High Priest, he made a complete atonement for sin by his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross; and he still makes intercession for the transgressors on his throne in heaven. It was his sacrifice that satisfied the demands of the law, and justice of God, and rendered him reconcilable to the guilty, upon terms consistent with his honour and the rights of his government. It was by virtue of this sacrifice that he procured pardon of sin, the favour of God, freedom from hell, and eternal life for condemned obnoxious rebels. And such of you who have ever felt the pangs of a guilty conscience, and obtained relief from Jesus Christ, you can tell how precious is his atoning sacrifice. How did it ease your self-tormenting consciences, and heal your broken hearts! How did it change the frowns of an angry God into smiles of love, and your trembling apprehensions of vengeance into delightful hopes of mercy! How precious did Jesus appear, with a pardon in his hand, with atoning blood gushing from his opened veins, and making his cross, as it were, the key to open the gates of heaven for your admission! Blessed Saviour! our great High Priest, thus appear to us in all thy pontifical robes dyed in thine own blood, and cause us all to feel the efficacy of thy propitiation!

Let us next turn our eyes upwards, and view this great High Priest as our Intercessor in the presence of God. There he appears as a lamb that was slain, bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people. There he urges it as his pleasure, as his authoritative will, that these blessings should in due time be conferred upon those for whom they were purchased. In this authoritative manner he could intercede even in the days of his humiliation upon earth, because of the Father's covenant-engagements with him, the accomplishment of which he has a right to demand, as well as humbly to petition: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given to me, may be with me," &c.

John xvii. 24. Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause! that the great High Priest should offer up the grateful incense of his own merit, with the prayers of the saints! that he should add the sanction of his authoritative will to the humble petitions of faith! that he should urge the claims of his people, as his own claims, founded upon an unchangeable covenant with his Father, of which he has fully performed the conditions required! that he should not intercede occasionally, but always appear in the holy of holies as the constant ever-living Intercessor, and maintain the same interest, the same importunity at all times, even when the petitions of his people languish upon their lips! What delightful reflections are these! and how warmly may they recommend the Lord Jesus to the hearts of believers! How just is the apostle's inference, "Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Heb. x. 21–23. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" for this reason, because "he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25. May each of us intrust his cause to this all-prevailing Advocate, and we shall certainly gain it! The unchangeable promise has passed his lips, "that whatsoever we ask the Father in faith, and in his name, he will give it us." John xvi. 23.

Let me add, the kingly office of Christ is precious to believers. As King he gives laws, laws perfectly wise and good, and enforced with the most important sanctions, everlasting rewards and punishments. And how delightful, how advantageous, to live under such a government! to have our duty discovered with so much clearness and certainty, which frees us from so many painful anxieties, and to have such powerful motives to obedience, which have a tendency to infuse vigour and spirit into our endeavours! As King, he appoints ordinances of worship. And how sweet to converse with him in these ordinances, and to be freed from perplexity about that manner of worship which God will accept, without being exposed to that question, so confounding to will-worshippers, *Who hast required this at your hands?* As King, he is head over all things to his church, and manages the whole creation, as is most subservient to her good. The various ranks of creatures in heaven, earth, and hell, are subject to his direction and control; and they must all co-operate for the good of his people. He reclaims, confounds, subdues, or destroys their enemies, according to his pleasure. And how precious must he be in this august character to the feeble helpless believer! To have an almighty friend sitting at the helm of the universe, with the supreme management of all things in his hands; to be assured that even the most injurious enemy can do the believer no real or lasting injury, but shall at length concur to work his greatest good; and that, come what will, it shall go well

with him, and he shall at last be made triumphant over all difficulty and opposition. Oh! what transporting considerations are here! But this is not the whole exercise of the royal power of Christ. He not only makes laws and ordinances, and restrains the enemies of his people, but he exercises his power inwardly upon their hearts. He is the King of souls; he reigns in the hearts of his subjects; and how infinitely dear and precious is he in this view! To feel him subdue the rebellion within, sweetly bending the stubborn heart into willing obedience, and reducing every thought into a cheerful captivity to himself, writing his law upon the heart, making the dispositions of his subjects a transcript of his will, corresponding to it, like wax to the seal, how delightful is all this! Oh the pleasures of humble submission! How pleasant to lie as subjects at the feet of this mediatorial King without arrogating the sovereignty to ourselves, for which we are utterly insufficient! Blessed Jesus! thus reign in our hearts! thus subdue the nations to the obedience of faith! “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty! and ride prosperously, attend with majesty, truth, meekness, and righteousness.” Psalm xlv. 3, 4. “Send the rod of thy strength out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies,” Psalm cx. 2, rule us, and subdue the rebel in our hearts.

Thus you see the Lord Jesus is precious to believers in all the views of his mediatorial office. But he is not precious to them alone: he is beloved as far as known, and the more known the more beloved: which leads me to add,

3. He is precious to all the angels of heaven.

St. Peter tells us that the things now reported to us by the gospel are *things which the angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. i. 12. Jesus is the wonder of angels now in heaven; and he was so even when he appeared in the form of a servant upon earth. St. Paul mentions it as one part of the great mystery of godliness, that *God manifested in the flesh was seen of angels*. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Angels saw him, and admired and loved him in the various stages of his life, from his birth to his return to his native heaven. Hear the manner in which angels celebrated his entrance into our world. One of them spread his wings and flew with joyful haste to a company of poor shepherds that kept their midnight watches in the field, and abruptly tells the news, of which his heart was full: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord: and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.” Crowds of angels left their stations in the celestial court in that memorable hour, and hovered over the place where their incarnate God lay in a manger: Jesus, their darling, was gone down to earth, and they must follow him; for who would not be where Jesus is? Men, ungrateful men, were silent upon that occasion, but angels tuned their song of

praise. The astonished shepherds heard them sing, "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace: good-will to men." Luke ii. 10-14. When he bringeth his first-born into the world, the Father saith, *Let all the angels of God worship him*, Heb. i. 6. This seems to intimate that all the angels crowded round the manger, where the Infant-God lay, and paid him their humble worship. We are told, that when the devil had finished his long process of temptations, after forty days, and had left him, the *angels came and ministered unto him*. Matt. iv. 11. When this disagreeable companion had left him, his old attendants were fond of renewing their service to him. In every hour of difficulty they were ready to fly to his aid. He was seen of angels, in his hard conflict, in the garden of Gethsemane; and one of them "appeared unto him from heaven, strengthening him." Luke xxii. 43. With what wonder, sympathy and readiness, did. this angelic assist' ant raise his prostrate Lord from the cold ground, wipe off his bloody sweat, and support his sinking spirit with divine encouragements! But oh! ye blessed angels, ye usual spectators, and adorers of the divine glories of our Redeemer, with what astonishment and horror were you struck, when you saw him expire on the cross!

"Around the bloody tree
Ye press'd with strong desire,
That wondrous sight to see,
The Lord of life expire!
And, could your eyes
Have known a tear,
Had dropt it there
In sad surprise." [Doddridge]

Ye also hovered round his tomb, while he lay in the prison of the grave. The weeping women and his other friends found you stationed there in their early impatient visits to the sepulchre. O what wonders then appeared to your astonished minds! Could you, that pry so deep into the secrets of heaven, you that know so well what divine love can do, could you have thought that even divine love could have gone so far? could have laid the Lord of glory a pale, mangled, senseless corpse in the mansions of the dead? Was not this a strange surprise even to you? And, when the appointed day began to dawn, with what eager and joyful haste did ye roll away the stone, and set open the prison doors, that the rising Conqueror might march forth!

"And when arrayed in light,
The shining conqueror rode,
Ye hail'd his rapturous flight
Up to the throne of God;
And wav'd around

Your golden wings,
And struck your strings
Of sweetest sound." [Doddridge]

When he ascended on high, he was attended "with the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." Psalm lxxviii. 17, 18. And now, when he is returned to dwell among them, Jesus is still the darling of angels. His name sounds from all their harps, and his love is the subject of their everlasting song. St. John once heard them, and I hope we shall ere long hear them, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 11, 12. This is the song of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men:

"Jesus the Lord, their harps employs;
Jesus, my love, they sing;
Jesus, the name of both our joys,
Sounds sweet from every string." [Watts]

O my brethren, could we see what is doing in heaven at this instant, how would it surprise, astonish, and confound us? Do you think the name of Jesus is of as little importance there as in our world? Do you think there is one lukewarm or disaffected heart there among ten thousand times ten thousand of thousands of thousands? Oh no! there his love is the ruling passion of every heart, and the favourite theme of every song. And is he so precious to angels? to angels, who are less interested in him, and less indebted to him? And must he not be precious to poor believers bought with his blood, and entitled to life by his death? Yes, you that believe have an angelic spirit in this respect; you love Jesus, though unseen, as well as they who see him as he is, though alas! in a far less degree. But to bring his worth to the highest standard of all, I add,

4. He is infinitely precious to his Father, who thoroughly knows him, and is an infallible judge of real worth. He proclaimed more than once from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. Behold," says he, "my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Isa. xlii. 1. He is called by the names of the tenderest endearment; his Son, his own Son, his dear Son, the Son of his love. He is a stone, disallowed indeed of men; if their approbation were the true standard of merit, he must be looked upon as a very worthless, insignificant being, unworthy of their thoughts and affections. But let men form what estimate of him they please, he is *chosen of God, and precious*. And shall not the love of the omniscient God have weight with believers to love him too? Yes, the apostle expressly draws the consequence; he is precious to God,

therefore to you that believe, he is precious. It is the characteristic of even the meanest believer, that he is God-like. He is a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore views things, in some measure, as God does; and is affected towards them as God is, though there be an infinite difference as to the degree. He prevailingly loves what God loves, and that because God loves it.

And now, my hearers, what think you of Christ? Will you not think of him as believers do? If so, he will be precious to your hearts above all things for the future. Or if you disregard this standard of excellence, as being but the estimate of fallible creatures, will you not think of him as angels do; angels, those bright intelligences, to whom he reveals his unveiled glories, who are more capable of perceiving and judging of him, and who therefore must know him better than you; angels, who have had a long acquaintance with him at home, if I may so speak, for near six thousand years, as God, i.e. ever since their creation, and for near two thousand years as God-man? Since angels then, who know him so thoroughly, love him so highly, certainly you may safely venture to love him; you might safely venture to love him implicitly, upon their word. He died for you, which is more than ever he did for them, and will you not love him after all this love? It is not the mode to think much of him in our world, but it is the mode in heaven. Yes, blessed be God, if he be despised and rejected of men, he is not despised and rejected of angels. Angels, that know him best, love him above all, and as far as their capacity will allow, do justice to his merit; and this is a very comfortable thought to a heart broken with a sense of the neglect and contempt he meets with among men. Blessed Jesus! may not one congregation be got together, even upon our guilty earth, that shall in this respect be like the angels, all lovers of thee? Oh! why should this be impossible, while they are all so much in need of thee, all so much obliged to thee, and thou art so lovely in thyself! Why, my brethren, should not this congregation be made of such, and such only as are lovers of Jesus? Why should he not be precious to every one of you, rich and poor, old and young, white and black? What reason can any one of you give why you in particular should neglect him? I am sure you can give none. And will you, without any reason, dissent from all the angels in heaven, in a point of which they must be the most competent judges? Will you differ from them, and agree in your sentiments of Christ with the ghosts of hell, his implacable, but conquered and miserable enemies?

If all this has no weight with you, let me ask you farther, will you not agree to that estimate of Jesus which his Father has of him? Will you run counter to the supreme reason? Will you set up yourselves as wiser than Omniscience? How must Jehovah resent it to see a worm at his footstool daring to despise him, whom he loves so highly! Oh let him be precious to

you, because he is so to God, who knows him best.

But I am shocked at my own attempt. Oh precious Jesus! are matters come to that pass in our world, that creatures bought with thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to thee should stand in need of persuasions to love thee? What horrors attend the thought! However, blessed be God, there are some, even among men, to whom he is precious. This world is not entirely peopled with the despisers of Christ. To as many of you as believe, he is precious, though to none else.

Would you know the reason of this? I will tell you: None but believers have eyes to see his glory, none but they are sensible of their need of him, and none but they have learned from experience how precious he is.

1. None but believers have eyes to see the glory of Christ. As the knowledge of Christ is entirely from revelation, an avowed unbeliever who rejects that revelation, can have no right knowledge of him, and therefore must be entirely indifferent towards him, as one unknown, or must despise and abhor him as an enthusiast or impostor. But one, who is not an unbeliever in profession or speculation, may yet be destitute of that faith which constitutes a true believer, and which renders Jesus precious to the soul. Even devils are very orthodox in speculation; devils believe and tremble; and they could cry out, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? We know thee, who thou art; even the holy One of God." Mark i. 24. And there are crowds among us who believe, after a fashion, that Christ is the true Messiah, who yet show by their practices that they neglect him in their hearts, and are not believers in the full import of the character. True faith includes not only a speculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and a hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jesus Christ; and such a view, such an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening influence of the holy Spirit shining into the heart. Without such a faith as this, the mind is all dark and blind as to the glory of Jesus Christ; it can see no beauty in him, that he should be desired. Honourable and sublime speculations concerning him may hover in the understanding, and the tongue may pronounce many pompous panegyrics in his praise, but the understanding has no realizing, affecting views of his excellency; nor does the heart delight in him and love him as infinitely precious and lovely. The god of this world, the prince of darkness, has blinded the mind of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them. But as to the enlightened believer, God, who first commanded light shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This divine illumination pierces the cloud that obscured his understanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jesus in a strong and striking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around

him; a light, in which it is impossible view this glorious object without loving him. A believer and an unbeliever may be equally orthodox in speculation and have the same notions in theory concerning Jesus Christ, and yet it is certainly true, that their views of him are vastly different. Believers, do you think that, if the Christ-despising multitude around you had the same views of his worth and preciousness which ye have, they could neglect him, as they do? It is impossible. You could once neglect him, as others do now; you were no more charmed with his beauty than they. But oh! when you were brought out of darkness in God's marvellous light, when the glories of the neglected Saviour broke in upon your astonished minds, then was it possible for you to withhold your love from him. Were not your hearts captivated with delightful violence? You could no more resist. Did not your hearts then naturally and freely love him, whom they had once disgusted, as ever they loved a dear child or a friend, or the sweetest created enjoyment? The improving your reason into faith is setting the disordered eye of the mind right, that it may be able to see this subject: and when once you viewed it with this eye of reason restored and improved, how did the precious stone sparkle before you, and charm you with its brilliancy and excellence? Christ is one of those things unseen and hoped for, of which St. Paul says, *faith is the substance and evidence*. Heb. xi. 1. Faith gives Christ a present subsistence in the mind, not as a majestic phantom, but as the most glorious and important reality: and this faith is a clear, affecting demonstration, or conviction, of his existence, and of his being in reality what his word represents him. It is by such a faith, that is, under its habitual influence, that the believer lives: and hence, while he lives, Jesus is still precious to him.

2. None but believers are properly sensible of their need of Christ. They are deeply sensible of their ignorance and the disorder of their understanding, and therefore they are sensible of their want of both the external and internal instructions of this divine prophet. But as to others, they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehend themselves in very little need of religious instructions; and therefore they think but very slightly of him. Believers feel themselves guilty, destitute of all righteousness, and incapable of making atonement for their sins, or recommending themselves to God, and therefore the satisfaction and righteousness of Jesus Christ are most precious to them, and they rejoice in him as their all-prevailing Intercessor. But as to the unbelieving crowd, they have no such mortifying thoughts of themselves! they have so many excuses to make for their sins, that they bring down their guilt to a very trifling thing, hardly worthy of divine resentment: and they magnify their good works to such a height, that they imagine they will nearly balance their bad, and procure them some favour at least from God, and therefore they must look upon this High Priest as need-

less. They also love to be free from the restraints of religion, and to have the command of themselves. They would usurp the power of self-government, and make their own pleasure their rule; and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, as a King, is so far from being precious, that he is very unacceptable to such obstinate, headstrong rebels. They choose to have no lawgiver, but their own wills; and therefore they trample upon his laws, and, as it were, form insurrections against his government. But the poor believer, sensible of his incapacity for self-government, loves to be under direction, and delights to feel the dependent, submissive, pliant spirit of a subject. He counts it a mercy not to have the management of himself, and feels his need of this mediatorial King to rule him. He hates the rebel within, hates every insurrection of sin, and longs to have it entirely subdued, and every thought, every motion of his soul brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and therefore he feels the need of his royal power to make an entire conquest of his hostile spirit. His commands are not uneasy impositions, but most acceptable and friendly directions to him; and the prohibitions of his law are not painful restraints, but a kind of privileges in his esteem. The language of his heart is, "Precious Jesus! be thou my King. I love to live in humble subjection to thee. I would voluntarily submit myself to thy control and direction. Thy will, and not mine, be done! Oh subdue every rebellious principle within, and make me all resignation and cheerful obedience to thee!" To such a soul it is no wonder Jesus should be exceedingly precious: but oh how different is this spirit from that which generally prevails in the world? Let me add but one reason more why Jesus is precious to believers, and them only; namely,

3. None but believers have known by experience how precious he is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of him, which themselves have had, to captivate their hearts for ever to him. They, and only they, have known what it is to feel a bleeding heart healed by his gentle hand; and a clamorous languishing conscience pacified by his atoning blood. They, and only they, know by experience how sweet it is to feel his love shed abroad in their hearts, to feel a heart, ravished with his glory, pant, and long, and breathe after him, and exerting the various acts of faith, desire, joy, and hope towards him. They, and only they, know by experience how pleasant it is to converse with him in his ordinances, and to spend an hour of devotion in some retirement, as it were, in his company. They, and only they, have experienced the exertions of his royal power, conquering their mightiest sins, and sweetly subduing them to himself. These are, in some measure, matters of experience with every true believer, and therefore it is no wonder Jesus should be precious to them. But as to the unbelieving multitude, poor creatures! they are entire strangers to these things. They may have some superficial notions of them floating in their heads, but they have never felt them in their hearts, and therefore the infinitely precious

Lord Jesus is a worthless, insignificant being to them: and thus, alas! it will be with the unhappy creatures, until experience becomes their teacher; until they taste for themselves *that the Lord is gracious*. 1 Pet. ii. 3.

There is an interesting question, which, I doubt not, has risen in the minds of such of you as have heard what has been said with a particular application to yourselves, and keeps you in a painful suspense: with an answer to which I shall conclude: "Am I indeed a true believer?" may some of you say; "and is Christ precious to me? My satisfaction in this sweet subject is vastly abated, till this question is solved. Sometimes, I humbly think, the evidence is in my favour, and I begin to hope that he is indeed precious to my soul; but alas, my love for him soon languishes, and then my doubts and fears return, and I know not what to do, nor what to think of myself." Do not some of you, my brethren, long to have this perplexing case cleared up? Oh, what would you not give, if you might return home this evening fully satisfied in this point? Well, I would willingly help you, for experience has taught me to sympathise with you under this difficulty. O my heart! how often hast thou been suspicious of thyself in this respect? The readiest way I can now take to clear up the matter is to answer another question, naturally resulting from my subject; and that is, "How does that high esteem which a believer has for Jesus Christ discover itself? Or how does he show that Christ is indeed precious to him?" I answer, he shows it in various ways; particularly by his affectionate thoughts of him, which often rise in his mind, and always find welcome there. He discovers that Jesus is precious to him by hating and resisting whatever is displeasing to him, and by parting with everything that comes in competition with him. He will let all go rather than part with Christ. Honour, reputation, ease, riches, pleasure, and even life itself, are nothing to him in comparison of Christ, and he will run the risk of all; nay, will actually lose all, if he may but win Christ. He discovers his high esteem for him by the pleasure he takes in feeling his heart suitably affected towards him, and by his uneasiness when it is otherwise. Oh! when he can love Jesus, when his thoughts affectionately clasp around him, and when he has a heart to serve him, then he is happy, his soul is well, and he is lively and cheerful. But, alas! when it is otherwise with him, when his love languishes, when his heart hardens, when it becomes out of order for his service, then he grows uneasy and discontented, and cannot be at rest. When Jesus favours him with his gracious presence, and revives him with his influence, how does he rejoice? But when his beloved withdraws himself and is gone, how does he lament his absence, and long for his return! He weeps and cries like a bereaved, deserted orphan, and moans like a loving turtle in the absence of its mate. Because Christ is so precious to him, he cannot bear the thought of parting with him, and the least jealousy of his love pierces his very heart. Because he loves him, he longs for the full enjoyment of him,

and is ravished with the prospect of him. Because Christ is precious to him, his interests are so too, and he longs to see his kingdom flourish, and all men fired with his love. Because he loves him, he loves his ordinances; loves to hear, because it is the word of Jesus; loves to pray, because it is maintaining intercourse with Jesus; loves to sit at his table, because it is a memorial of Jesus; and loves his people, because they love Jesus. Whatever has a relation to his precious Saviour is for that reason precious to him; and when he feels anything of a contrary disposition, alas! it grieves him, and makes him abhor himself. These things are sufficient to show that the Lord Jesus has his heart, and is indeed precious to him; and is not this the very picture of some trembling, doubting souls among you? If it be, take courage. After so many vain searches, you have at length discovered the welcome secret, that Christ is indeed precious to you: and if so, you may be sure that you are precious to him. “You shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels. Mal. iii. 17. If you are now satisfied, after thorough trial of the case, retain your hope, and let not every discouraging appearance renew your jealousies again labour to be steady and firm Christians, and do not stagger through unbelief.

But, alas! I fear that many of you know nothing experimentally of the exercises of a believing heart, which I have been describing, and consequently that Christ is not precious to you. If this is the case, you may be sure indeed you are hateful to him. He is angry with the wicked every day. “Those that honour him, he will honour; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.” 1 Sam. ii. 30. And what will you do if Christ should become your enemy and fight against you? If this precious stone should become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you, over which you will fall into ruin, oh how dreadful must the fall be! What must you expect but to lie down in unutterable and everlasting sorrow!