

SERMON 26

THE GOSPEL NOT ABSURD, NOT CONTRARY TO JUSTICE, NOR LICENTIOUS A SERMON PREACHED APRIL THE 13TH, 1757, IN GREAT EAST-CHEAP: 1757

*To the SOCIETY who support, the Wednesday Evening-Lecture in that Place.
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2 TIMOTHY 2:25

“In Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging the Truth.”

THE Apostle in the Context gives Directions to *Titus*, how to discharge that important Service, unto which he was called, in the Church. Exhorts him to *avoid foolish and unlearned questions*, because *they gender Strifes*. And the *Servant of the Lord must not strive: But be gentle to all Men, apt to teach, i.e.* disposed to it, and in some good Measure qualified for it; *patient*, not provoked to Wrath, or undue Resentment, by the Opposition, which some may make unto the Gospel.

I apprehend that intelligent Readers will easily discern, that there are four Things, in general, observable in the Text; viz That some oppose the Gospel — That Instruction is to be given to them — That this Instruction must be given in Meekness. — That the End to be proposed thereto is, their Repentance, and Acknowledgment of the Truth.

I. Some, yea, many oppose the Gospel. A great Number objected to it, in the Time of the Apostles, have in succeeding Ages, now do, and we must expect a continued Opposition unto it, from carnal Men. For, unto them it is *Foolishness*, and, therefore, they think it is their Wisdom to reject it. They charge it with *Absurdity*; reproach it, as *Inconsistent with Justice, and Licentious*. There are very heavy Charges indeed, and if they can be supported, are sufficient to sink its Credit with all wise and virtuous Persons.

1. A Charge of *Absurdity* is brought against it. I confess, that some do advance absurd Notions, and call them evangelical Truths. One Instance whereof permit me to give, *viz.* The Pre-existence of the human Soul of Christ, and that the Covenant of Grace was made therewith. Some think that Existence was given to the intellectual Part of his human Nature, before all Worlds. Now either that Duration, wherein his Soul existed before the Creation, had Commencement, or it had not. If it had not, then his Soul is properly eternal; and it cannot be a voluntary Production. For, that

which always was, cannot be the Production of any Cause whatsoever. Because, that which is produced, once was not. If that Duration had Commencement, as it must, most certainly; if his Soul was created, then there are two limited Durations; one wherein the Soul of Christ existed, before the Creation; and another, which began with the Creation. For, according to the Language of the Scripture, *In the Beginning God created the Heavens, and the Earth*: which cannot possibly mean the Commencement of a Duration, which was long, very long before it. And, therefore, this necessarily supposes, that there are two Beginnings, in finite and limited Duration. For, that Duration, wherein it is thought, the Soul of Christ existed before the Creation, even to the End of the World, is finite and limited; it had a Beginning, and it will have an End. Time is the whole of measurable and limited Duration: And it must include in it all Duration which hath a Limit. And, therefore, as measurable Duration cannot have two Ends; so it cannot have two Beginnings. This Notion therefore, of the Pre-existence of the Soul of Christ, must be false, if it is true, that God created the Heavens, and the Earth, in the Beginning. For it is most clearly absurd to imagine, that limited Duration had two Beginnings.

Farther, It seems exceedingly strange to me, that any should think that the Covenant of Grace was made with the human Soul of Christ. His human Nature was contracted for, in that Covenant, by his divine Person, as a constituent Part of Himself, in the Character of Mediator; but it was not a contracting Party therein. To conceive it was, is to raise it unto a Dignity, which is infinitely above its Due.

Nor could it possibly be such, because the foederal Transactions of the divine Persons were not external Acts, which they mull have been, if the Covenant of Grace yeas made with the Soul of Christ. They were internal Acts of the Deity, and not external, The Covenant of Grace is the distinct Acting's of the divine Wisdom and Will, which are one essentially, in the distinct divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, respecting the Salvation of the Elect. And, consequently, they were not external Acts, but internal: wherefore that Covenant could not be made with the Soul of Christ. Besides, if his Soul existed when that Covenant was entered into, it is not an eternal Covenant. This Consequence is granted; and the Eternity of the Covenant of Grace is denied, by the Advocates for this Opinion. They, therefore, mutt also allow, that once there was no Covenant of Grace: That once Christ was not Mediator: That once He was not a Head: That once He had no Body or Members: That once He was not a Surety for the Church: That once the Elect were not given to Him by the Father: That once they were not blessed with all spiritual Blessings in Him: Or, that once, that Grace was not given to them in Him, according to which they are saved and called, with an holy Calling. All there are unavoidable Consequences of that Opinion. It is astonishing to me, that any should esteem that an evangelical Truth, which undeniably everts the Eternity of the Covenant of Grace, which this most evidently does, as the Embracers of it, are free to grant. That very elegant and

glorious Context, which you have, in *Proverbs*, Chap. 8. from Verse 21 to the 31st inclusive, (Proverbs 8:21-31.) hath been abused and perverted to give Countenance unto it; which the Reader may see vindicated in my Sermon On *the proper Eternity of the Divine Decrees*. The *Arians*, who would be thought Men of superior Sense and Wisdom, are guilty of the same Absurdity. They suppose that the Body of Christ was animated by a Spirit, which was created long before all Worlds; and that, that Spirit was concerned in the Creation of all other Beings. Now if that Duration, wherein that Spirit existed, before the Creation of the World, was immeasurable, it must be Eternity. If measurable, then it is included in Time, for Time is the Whole of measurable Duration; and, consequently, Time must have had two Beginnings; one when this Spirit was created; and another when the World was created; that is, if *Moses speaks Truth*, who says: *In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth*. But this by the Bye. * The Opposers of the Gospel charge various Doctrines of it with *Absurdity*.

(1.) The Doctrine of the Trinity. It supposes, say they, *that there are three Gods*.

Ans. This is a Mistake. For the divine Essence is one; though there are three divine Persons subsisting therein. They object to this Answer thus: *A distinct Person is a distinct Essence*. Unto which it may be replied; Every finite created Person is so; but it doth not follow, that a distinct divine Person is a distinct Being. God may be one *essentially*, and three *personally*, for ought we know or can know. Our Reason cannot prove that it is impossible, that three intelligent Agents should subsist in the divine Essence. It can most clearly prove the Unity of the divine Essence; but we have not, nor can have such a Knowledge of that Essence, as to demonstrate, that there cannot three subsist therein, who act with Wisdom, Will, and Approbation: And, therefore, are three Persons; for not to insist on a critical Definition of a Person, I understand, and mean thereby an intelligent Agent. This Doctrine contradicts not the Unity of the Deity, and therefore it is not absurd.

(2.) The precious Doctrine of proper Atonement for Sin by the Death of Christ, is also said to be Absurd: *The Guilt of one cannot become another's*.

Ans. Not by Contraction; but it may by Imputation, bit there is a proper Ground for it, which there is in this Care; *viz.* Christ's Suretyship for us. His undertaking to expiate our Guilt, is a just and fit Foundation for the Charge of it to Him. Again, it is objected, that *the Sufferings of one who is innocent, cannot satisfy for the Crimes of a guilty Person*. To which it may be replied, Christ was innocent in Himself; but our Crimes being imputed to Him, He did not suffer, considered as innocent; but as guilty, by the Imputation of our Guilt to Him. And, therefore, His Sufferings were of a penal Nature, and by Reason of the Dignity of His Person, they were satisfactory for that Guilt, in Relation unto which those Sufferings were inflicted on Him.

(3.) The important Doctrine of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ is likewise pronounced Absurd. *The Righteousness of one*, it is said, *cannot become the Righteousness of another*.

Answ. It cannot inherently: Or the obediencial Acts of one cannot become the personal Actions of another. But the Obedience of one may become another's by Imputation, if there is a fit Ground for it; which there is in this Affair; *viz.* our Union with Christ, and His being made under the Law for us.

(4.) The glorious Truth of efficacious and irresistible Grace is also affirmed to be *Absurd*. It is vehemently urged, that it deprives the human Will of its *Freedom* in acting. If this can be proved, I grant it is an absurd Principle. But Proof cannot be given thereof.

Ist. A holy spiritual Principle is infused, or created in the Mind, in which the Will neither concurs, nor opposes: Or, it neither wills, nor nills, in that Infusion and Creation. The Mind, in *this supernatural* Work upon it, is *entirely passive*, or it acts not at all therein, either in a Way of Concurrence or Opposition. Now, the Freedom of the Mind's Agency cannot be affected in a Work upon it, wherein it is not, nor can be active, either in a Way of Concurrence, or Opposition; which is the Fact in this Matter. It is granted, I think, even by all who differ from us in this Point, that Men may, with Helps afforded to them, acquire holy Habits. I ask, therefore, if it is impossible with God, to create such Habits, in the human Mind? If it is, then, Men are able to do more for themselves, than God can do for them. To imagine this, seems to me *a real and great Absurdity*. Divine Promises, most certainly, do not exceed the Extent of divine Power. God promises to *take away the Heart of Stone, out of our Flesh: And to give us an Heart of Flesh. A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you.*, is His gracious Language in the new Covenant. Which Promises very clearly express the Infusion, or Creation of a holy Principle, or Spring of Action, in our Souls. What His Goodness promises, His Power can effect and, therefore, He is able, to in principle our Minds, with a holy Disposition. And, this Infusion of Holiness, cannot infringe the Liberty of our Will; the Reason whereof, is most clear, our Will is not active therein. For, the Will acts not, either in a Way of Volition, or Nilling, in that Work upon us. And its Freedom cannot be affected, in that wherein, neither its Consent, nor its Refusal, do, or can take Place.

2dly. Grace excites that holy Principle into Action, wherein the Will acts freely, as it is the Subject of that Principle, or Disposition to Holiness. No *unnatural* Force, or Violence is offered to the Will, in moving it to act, agreeably unto its own Disposition. And as our Minds are sanctified by divine Grace, there is an habitual Disposition, or Inclination, in our Will, unto that which is Good. As there is, in the Flesh, an habitual Inclination to what is Evil. We act freely both in our good, and evil Volitions: For, the Will's Choice of contrary Objects is voluntary, because there are in it, two contrary Springs of Action. One is Good, and the other is Evil. And,

therefore, its Freedom in neither is infringed in the least Degree. If we maintained, that the Will, is determined, by a divine Influence upon it, to choose what is Good, without a Disposition, or Inclination in it, unto Holiness, it might be said, that we prejudice its natural Liberty; but as we do not, nor suppose it, there is not the least Ground for this Charge of Absurdity, against our Opinion of the Efficacy, and Irresistibility of the Grace of God, in our Regeneration, and Sanctification.

2. Many object, that the evangelical Scheme is *Inconsistent with Justice*. Particularly, Christ's suffering Penalty, in the Stead of Sinners. I Answer,

(1.) He covenanted to suffer for them. It was proposed to Him, by the divine Father, to lay down His Life, for His People, unto which Proposal He agreed.

(2.) He had Power over His Life, and He might enter into Agreement to resign it, for perishing Sinners. He had *Power to lay it down, and Power to take it again*. For, He was Lord of it. Which is what no Man is. And, therefore, none may agree to suffer Death, for a capital Offender. Nor is any Man Lord of his Members, any more than of his Life. And, therefore, it is not lawful for anyone to agree to suffer Mutilation, the Loss of an Eye, or a Hand, for another, who by his Crime, hath rendered himself worthy of such Punishment. Nor, would it be just, in a civil Governor, to accept of the Engagement of an innocent Person, to suffer bodily Pains and Penalties for a Delinquent. Because, no Man is Lord of himself, or hath a Right to dispose of his Life, or his Limbs, as he pleases. A Man may not injure himself, in his Person, nor hath a Power of investing others with a legal Right, of doing him, a personal Injury. But all Things, are otherwise with God, and Christ, our Saviour, or else we are inevitably undone for ever-more.

(3.) His human Will was wholly in it. No Violence was offered to Christ, our Saviour, by God our Judge, in His Sufferings and Death. He was not reluctant, but absolutely submissive to the Pleasure, and Appointment, of God, in all He suffered. His Language was this: Not my, Will; but thine *be done*. And, *shall I not drink the Cup, which my Father, giveth me to drink?* Since our blessed Lord, had a Right to dispose of His Life, and He freely resigned it, in Obedience to the Will of His Father, there was nothing contrary to Justice, in that *amazing* Transaction.

(4.) The Sufferings of Christ were not of long Continuance. If they had been perpetuated, and He had not seen an End of them, it might be objected, that infinite Wisdom, and Justice, could never ordain, that this Holy ONE, should always remain in a suffering State, for guilty Men; because, in that Case, it would have been impossible for Him, ever to receive from God, a Reward for His *unparalleled* Submission, unto His sovereign Will. But as He was conducted through, and a Period was put to His Sufferings, such a glorious Reward might be given unto Him, as it became God to bestow, and is fully satisfactory to Him, in its Enjoyment. Which is the real Fact. For,

(5.) Our Redeemer is amply rewarded for His Sufferings, and Death.

On Account of His Obedience to the divine Will, in submitting to suffer the ignominious, painful, and *accursed* Death of the Cross: God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name, which is above every Name: That at the Name of Jesus, every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things in Earth: And that every Tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. He hath done, does, and will eternally see of the Travail of His Soul, unto His entire Satisfaction, and Joy. And, therefore, there is nothing inconsistent with Justice, in this Procedure. That was not required of Christ, which was not in his Right to give. His Life was His own: He was Lord of it. And the Will of that Nature, wherein He suffered and died, voluntarily submitted to Suffering and Death. He is delivered from a State of Suffering, and is crowned with Glory and Honor, as a Reward for His Obedience to the Will of God, in this Affair. This Cause will triumph over all the groundless Cavils of Objectors. A clear Stating, and proper Explication of it, will enable us, to answer the Objections, which are brought against it, in such a Manner, as not to admit of a solid Reply.

3. Many affirm, that the evangelical Scheme is *Licentious*.

(1.) The Doctrine of the super abounding Grace of God. It is said, *that it encourages Men to continue in Sin*.

Ans. Divine Grace saves the chief of Sinners; but it saves no Man *in his Sins*, or *without Holiness*. And, therefore, such as are destitute of Holiness, have no Ground to conclude, that they are Subjects of Salvation. Consequently, this Doctrine gives no Encouragement, unto a Continuance in Sin. But we need not wonder that such a Charge is brought against it, for it was in the Time of the Apostles. And it is not strange, that the same Doctrine, is now loaded with the same Reproach by the same Sort of Persons. *And not rather as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm, that we say: Let us do Evil that Good may come.* The Apostle passes a severe, but just Sentence, against these Objectors: *Whose Damnation is just* (Romans 3:8.). Who thus impiously dare to slander the Doctrine of the Grace of God?

(2.) The Doctrine of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ is also charged in the same Manner. It is said, *that it renders our Obedience needless*.

Ans. 1st. It dissolves not our Obligation to Obedience. That remains in full Force, and it eternally will. For, it is not possible, that should cease. And, therefore, 2d. Obedience is necessary in Point of Duty, though not for the Justification of our Persons, before God. 3d. Our free Justification by Christ's Righteousness is a powerful Motive, unto holy Obedience, in a Way of Gratitude, for so eminent a Favor, graciously bestowed on us.

(3.) The Doctrine of final Perseverance is likewise so charged. The Opposers of it say, *What need of Watchfulness, Caution, and Diligence, is there, if Perseverance is rendered certain by the Grace of God?* Many have much displayed their Rhetoric, in haranguing on this Doctrine, in order to expose it.

Answ. 1st. It is not Perseverance in Sin, but in Holiness, which is pleaded for, as secured, by divine Grace. 2d. Though true Believers shall not finally perish, they may *lose their Comforts, Suffer the Hidings of God's Face, and break their Bones.* And, he who trembles not, at the serious Thoughts of these Things, is *no Christian I am sure.* 3d. He who can be negligent, careless, and loose in his Walk and Conversation, *upon this Principle, I say, upon this Principle,* sins in such a Manner, as *apostate Spirits,* cannot do; for they have not an Opportunity of sinning, after this dreadful Rate. I will be no Advocate for such an *incarnate Devil;* he is not travelling to Heaven; but posting down to Hell: And if he shall remain such in his Disposition, and Conduct, *there let him perish for ever, without the least Pity from God, or any who love him, Angels, or Saints.*

II. Instruction must be given to such, as oppose themselves: Or, *think the contrary,* (ἀντιδιατιθεμῶν) to the Gospel of Christ, in its several Branches.

1. Respecting the Doctrine of the Trinity.

(1.) It is to be observed, that there is a *Plurality,* in Deity; clear Evidence is given of this, in these Words: *Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness* (Genesis 1:26.). *Us,* and *our,* properly imply a Plurality, and, therefore, more than one Agent, was concerned, in the Creation of Man. Hence, we read of our Makers, in the plural Number. *Where is God (עֵ) my Makers* (Job 35:10.)? *Let Israel rejoice (בַּעֵי) in his Makers* (Psalm 149:2.). *Remember (בִּרְאִיתִי) thy Creators* (Ecclesiastes 12:1.). *For thy (עֵ) Makers* (Isaiah 54:5.). It is reasonable to conclude, that Man was not formed by *single Agent;* but that more than one acted in his Formation. We do not infer from hence, that there are *many* in Deity, as *Enjedinus,* a *Socinian* Writer very perversely suggests. All which is pleaded for, from there Testimonies, is this: That there must be a *Plurality,* in Deity, because these Modes of Speaking, manifestly suppose it. We do not pretend, that the Number of divine Agents, can be by them determined. But clear it is, that more than a single Agent is designed in them. We learn from other Scriptures what that Number is.

(2.) Divine Agents are *not fewer, nor more than three.* God the Father. Concerning whole Deity, and Almighty Agency there is no Dispute. Christ, who bears the Characters of Son, and the Word. He is another divine Agent. And by him were all Things created. *All Things were made by Him, and without Him, was not any Thing made, that was made.* He *afro upholds all Things, by the Word of His Power.* The Holy Spirit, likewise, is a Divine Agent. And, is the Author of Works, which can only be effected, by immense Wisdom and Power. He was an Agent in the first **Creation.** For, *He moved upon the Face of the Waters,* therein. And, He is the efficient Cause of the new Creation. Those who are born again, are born of the Spirit. There three, the Father, the Son, and the Blessed Spirit, are jointly proposed, as Objects of Christian Worship. Christians are to be baptized, *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* They are truly *distinct,* the Father, is

not the Son, nor the Son, the Father, neither is the Blessed Spirit, either, the Father, or the Son; but another distinct from them both. Yet there Divine Three are *One, There are Three, that bare Record in Heaven, she Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, these, Three are ONE* (1 John 5:7.). They are *three personally*, and *one essentially*. In which Sense only, they can be three distinct Divine Agents, and the joint Objects of the Worship of the Church, which they will eternally be.

2. The Doctrine of Election, is another important Truth, concerning which, Instruction ought to be given. As the Word imports, that is, a Choice of some, from among others. And most evident it is, that God did choose a certain Number of the human Race. *According as He hath chosen us in Him* (Ephesians 1:4.). *Hath from the Beginning chosen you* (2 Thessalonians 2:13.). This Act of God was eternal, before the Foundation of the World. A *Purpose* which was, in the Divine Mind, *before the World began* (2 Timothy 1:9.). And, it was a sovereign gracious Decree. It is an *Election of Grace* (Romans 11:5.). The Objects of it were not considered, in that Divine Act, possessed of such Qualities, as recommended them to the Favor of God, before others. For, all that Holiness, whereof they become subjects, springs from their Election, and therefore, it could not be a Motive to that Choice. *God chose us that we might be*, and not, because he foresaw, that *we would be holy* (Ephesians 1:4.). This Choice is *unto Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit* (2 Thessalonians 2:13.). Consequently, our Sanctification, is an Effect of that gracious Decree. And, as Glorification follows upon Sanctification, that Salvation which we were chosen to, must be eternal Glory, *unto which we are called, by the God of all Grace*, according unto his *Purpose in Election* (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Timothy 1:9.). This Decree is unalterable, it is that *Foundation, which standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them, that are His* (1 Timothy 2:19.). And, therefore, all the Elect, shall certainly be Partakers of Holiness, in this World, as a Meetness, for the everlasting Enjoyment of God, in the next. Unto both which, He eternally designed them, in this His Sovereign, and gracious Decree.

3. The Covenant of Grace is a glorious Subject, about which Instruction should be given. That there is a Covenant, wherein, Provision is made for the Salvation of the Church, it is most dear. This was the Support of *David*, and the Ground of his Triumph, under his Troubles, and in the Prospect of his Dissolution. *Although my House be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting Covenant; This is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, though he make it not to grow* (2 Samuel 23:5.). The Parties, who contracted, therein, were the Divine Persons, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christ was constituted Mediator, in that Compact. And, in that Capacity, the Father required Him to do and suffer all that was necessary unto the Salvation of the Church, in a Consistency with the Honour of the *Law*, and the Glory of the Divine Perfections.

Christ, on his Part, consented to the Will and Requirement of the Father. On Account of this His free Engagement, He is called the *Surety of this better Testament*, or Covenant. And this His Undertaking, brought upon Him an Obligation, to perform the Father's Will; who promised Him, on that Condition, that he should *see His Seed*, *i.e.* view them in such a State of Blessedness, as would be fully to the Satisfaction, and Joy of his Soul. And, therefore, all the precious Benefits, of Pardon, Peace, Justification, Grace, and eternal Glory, are comprised therein. Christ having punctually performed all he undertook to do and suffer, an Obligation on the Father, arises from thence, to fulfil those Promises made to Him, respecting His Seed, for whom, he became a Surety. And, on that Ground, He hath a Right to expect and demand, the Bestowment of Grace and Glory, in their Behalf. The Holy Spirit, concurred with the Father, and Christ in this Design, and agreed, in this foederal Transaction, to glorify our Blessed Lord, and sanctify His Church, or *mystical Body*. By these foederal Acts of the Divine Persons, the complete and everlasting Salvation, of all the Elect, is *effectually* secured, and rendered *certain*. This Agreement is very rightly called a Covenant of *Grace*. Because, *free Favor* gave Rise to it, and all, or every Kind of Grace is promised therein. This is a very, *noble, grand, and sublime* Subject, and, therefore, it is most worthy of our diligent Consideration. For, there is therein, an unequalled Display of the Glory of the Divine Persons, and of all the infinitely glorious Properties of the Divine Nature. And, therefore, we cannot be better employed, than in serious and fixed Meditations on it, and in giving clear and convincing Instruction concerning it.

4. Redemption and Peace by the Blood of Christ, we must explain and give Instruction about. The Demerit of Sin is to be treated of and maintained. We must shew, that it subjects Men to the Curse of the Law, and the awful Displeasure of God. And it is necessary to prove, that we are all guilty, before God, our righteous Judge; and, therefore, are obnoxious to the Law's Curse, and the dreadful Vengeance, of the Divine Lawgiver. That, without Satisfaction made for our Crimes, it is impossible, we should ever be admitted to Fellowship with our Maker. And, that it is absolutely out of our Power to redeem our Souls, and make our Peace with God, by any Thing, we have to offer, or can perform. We must assert, inculcate, and clearly explain, that *eternal Redemption*, which Christ *obtained*, and that *Peace*, which He *made, by the Blood of His Cry*. Our Saviour was *made of a Woman, and made under the Law, to redeem us, who were under the Law*. And, He suffered its Curse, whereby our Redemption from it, was effected. This Redemption is the *Forgiveness of Sins*. Not a Proposal of Pardon, upon our Performance of certain Conditions; but *Remission of Sin itself*.

Whereof, the Nature of the Thing, is a clear Evidence. For, our Guilt being charged on Him, and He suffering the Penalty, which it demerited, and his Sufferings being such in Value, as Law and Justice required, by Reason of the infinite Dignity of the

Blessed Sufferer: It must be *real* Pardon, and not an Offer of it, which was by His Sufferings obtained. Reconciliation for our Iniquity is made, by the *Messiah* being *cut off, not for Himself*; but on our Account. There is, therefore, no *Condemnation to them, that are in Christ Jesus. Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died.* And therefore, *we being justified, i.e.* acquitted and discharged of our Guilt, *by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him.* Such are the Evidences, in Favor of this most glorious and precious Truth, of our eternal Redemption, by the Death of the Son of *God*, that it will never be possible, for the *depraved Wit* of Men, to obscure them, by their most *sophistical* Cavils, and Objections. We shall certainly be able to triumph over them all, in *strictly* attending unto, and *properly* arguing upon, those clear and shining Evidences of it.

5. It is requisite to give Instruction, concerning the important Doctrine of Justification. The Guiltiness of Men, before God, is to be asserted and proved. *What Things, soever the Law saith, it saith to them, who are under the Law; that every Mouth may be stopped, and all the World may become guilty, before God* (Romans 3:19.). And the Impossibility of a guilty Creature, being justified in the Sight of God, as considered in himself, is to be demonstrated, from the Perfection, and unalterable Nature of the Law, and the infinite Purity of the Divine Lawgiver; with whom it is not possible, to account a Man righteous, who hath not a Righteousness, which Is answerable to the Requirements, of the Law, which is the Rule of Action to him. One *Kind* of Righteousness is not required of us, in Point of Duty, and *another* accepted, by our Maker, as the Matter of our Justification before Him. We are *justified freely*, or without any Works of our own. Christ is made of God, *Righteousness unto us.* And, we are *made Righteous by his Obedience* (Romans 5:19.). So that *Righteousness, without Works, is imputed to us* (Romans 6:6.). That is to say, without our *personal* Acts of Obedience. For, that is the *only* Sense, wherein it can with Propriety, and Truth, be said, that Righteousness without Works, is imputed unto us. The Meaning of the Apostle cannot be, that Righteousness, does not consist of Works, or Acts of Obedience, for, that it most certainly does. But his Design is to prove, that, that Righteousness, whereby, we are justified, before God, does not consist of, but is without any of our personal Acts of Obedience. And, therefore, it must be the Obedience of another, *viz.* of Christ who is *the Lord our Righteousness.* And *in Him are we justified* (Isaiah 45:25.). This is that solid Foundation, whereon, we may now *glory*, and upon which, we shall be admitted unto the Enjoyment of future Glory and Blessedness. For, *Grace will reign, through Righteousness unto eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 5:21.).

6. The Doctrine of Regeneration and Sanctification, must be stated, explained, and defended. We ought to shew the Necessity of Regeneration. That without it, Men cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. *Holiness* is our *Meetness* for the heavenly State. And, *without it no Man shall see the Lord.* The efficient Cause thereof is God,

without the Concurrence of our Will therein. For, as Christians, we are born, *not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man; but of God* (John 1:13.). *We make not ourselves to differ, neither have we any Thing, which we did not receive;* and, therefore, *we should not glory, as if we did not receive it.* The impulsive Cause, is, the *abundant Mercy, and great Love of God to our Persons* (1 Peter 1:3, Ephesians 2:4.). It is the pure Effect of his good Pleasure, and is absolutely without any moving Consideration, in us. Of which, the Nature of the Work itself, is a most clear Proof.

For, it is the Implantation, Infusion, or Creation of a holy Principle, in our Souls, and from that Principle, all Acts of holy Obedience spring, both internal, and external. Consequently, previous unto the Production of that Principle, no Acts of Faith, Hope, Love, evangelical Repentance, and holy Obedience, could possibly arise in our Minds, or be performed by us. The Grace of Regeneration, therefore, must be freely given, or without any the least Motive in us, to induce God to communicate it unto us. Farther, it is God, who maintains, and carries on this good Work in us. For *it is God, that worketh in us both to will and to do, of His good Pleasure* (Philippians 2:13.). So that, the Whole of our Holiness, or Sanctification, is from Him, in a Way of Efficiency. *We are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good Works* (Ephesians 2:10.). As no good Thing, dwells in our Flesh, or corrupt Nature, no good Acts, can be educed out of it. Holy Actions cannot arise from that, which lusteth against *the Spirit*, or the regenerate Principle, which is called *Spirit*, because *it is born of the Spirit*, and its Nature is spiritual. The Grace of Regeneration, therefore, is not bestowed on us, because we were Subjects of a Fitness to receive it actively. Nor, can we, by our natural Ability, increase that Holiness, which in Regeneration is wrought in our Hearts. As the Beginning, so the Progress and Advancement of our Sanctification, are entirely of God, efficiently.

7. The final Perseverance of the Saints, is a Doctrine, which we must maintain, and give Instruction about. By that, is intended, the Security of Believers from Falling *totally and finally*. The Grounds of that Security are many. The unalterable Love of God. The Immutability of the Divine Counsel concerning their Salvation. The Expiation of their Guilt by Christ's Death. The Justification of their Persons, through His Righteousness, by which, they *are made Heirs, according to the Hope of eternal Life*. Their Union with Him, as a Head of Life, and Influence. The Dwelling of the Holy Spirit in them, as a Sanctifier, and Comforter. The Intercession of Christ for them. The Will of the Divine Father, that he should rarely keep, and conduct them to Glory. There are some of the *numerous solid* Grounds of their Security, and they are such as cannot fail. And, therefore, their Faith shall *not fail*. Grace in them shall never become *extinct*. It is in them, *a Well of Water springing up into everlasting Life*. God, and Christ are united, in the gracious Design of their final, full, and certain Felicity. And, if the Grace, Power, and Care of both, are sufficient to uphold and

defend them, they shall never miscarry and be lost. *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any Man pluck them out of my Hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no Man is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand* (John 10:27, 28.).

8. The Doctrine of eternal Life is to be explained, and inculcated. We must give Instruction about the Origin of future Blessedness. Which is the *good Pleasure of God* (Luke 12:32.). It is to us an *absolute free Gift*. And yet, we have a *legal Title* to it, which is our Justification by the Righteousness of Christ, imputed to us. For, thereby, we are *made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life*. And therefore, Justification, and Glorification are inseparably connected. *Whom He justified, them He also glorified*. On this Foundation, the Law is *magnified*, and the Glory of Divine Justice shines forth, in our everlasting Bliss, to the Amazement of Angels, and the Joy of the Church for evermore.

Again, we ought to shew, that Grace imparted to us from Christ, is our *Meetness* for the Enjoyment of future Glory. None but those, who derive Holiness, and Grace from Him, are *fit for*, and *capable* of enjoying Heaven. And, we must shew the Nature of it. That it is the Fruition of God, as *the God of all Grace* (1 Peter 5:10.). The Saints, therefore, will forever be conversant about, the sovereign, free, and infinite Love of God. The glorious Designs of Divine Love. And the distinct Acting's of it, in the distinct Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And, about the adorable Discovery of all the infinitely glorious Properties, of the Divine Nature, in their Salvation. There are some of those important Principles, which we ought, as Ministers, to give Instruction concerning, unto them, who *oppose themselves*, or *think contrary* to us, on those Points of Doctrine.

III. Instruction must be given, 'in Meekness.' This does not, it cannot mean, that evangelical Doctrines are to be treated of, in a *cold* and *indifferent* Manner, as if they were speculative Points, and of *small Importance*. For, they are of the *greatest Moment*. The Glory of God, the Comfort, Peace, Joy, and everlasting Salvation of the Saints, are most nearly interested therein, and promoted by them. Nor, is it to be thought, that we must speak of these Principles, in a *doubtful* Way; as if full Evidence of their Truth *was wanting*. They are to be *constantly affirmed*, as certain and undoubted Truths, and with a full Persuasion of their Verity, upon a serious and diligent Consideration, of those clear and cogent Proofs, which we have thereof, in the Holy Scriptures. Coldness and Hesitation, in Relation to evangelical Doctrines, may cause Men to think, that they are, either *trivial* or *doubtful*, and, therefore, it is no great Matter, whether they are embraced, or rejected. It is to be feared, that *the supine* and *lukewarm* Manner, wherein, some Preachers, have treated of evangelical Doctrines, hath occasioned many to entertain an Opinion, that they are of *very little*

Moment. They ought to be expressed, with *Boldness*: And contended for, with *Earnestness*. Also, *in Meekness*, towards such, who *oppose themselves*.

1. With Humility and Tenderness. We should consider that we are naturally, subjects of the same Darkness, and Aversion to spiritual Things, from whence their Opposition to the Gospel springs. Which Consideration will engage us, to give them Instruction, in a *Spirit of Meekness*, and with Tenderness towards their Persons. But,
2. Some we ought to *rebuke sharply*, (αποτομῶ) *severely, cuttingly, that they may be found in the Faith* (Titus 1:3.). Their Impertinence in arguing, is to be taken Notice of, and exposed, with *Smartness*, in defending the Principles, which they oppose.

IV. *The End we are to propose is their, 'Repentance, and Acknowledgment of the Truth.'*

1. Repentance of their Errors. Which are owing to the Carnality and Pride of their Hearts. They imagine that their Reason, is first to be consulted, about the Nature of religious Principles, and as that determines, concerning them, so they frame their Belief. And, not according to scriptural Evidence, even on such Subjects, as are *peculiar to Revelation. Than which there is Nothing more absurd.*

2. Repentance is a Divine Gift (Acts 5:31.). And, as we know not, but God may graciously bestow it, we should continue to give Instruction, unto there Opposers.

3. An Acknowledgment of the Truth will follow. The Gospel, in general, which is *the Word of Truth*. Or some particular Doctrines of it. We ought to be ready to *give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope, that is in us, with Meekness and Fear* (1 Peter 3:15.). *As we believe with our Heart unto Righteousness: So with our Mouth, we are, to make Confession unto Salvation* (Romans 10:10.). To the Divine Father, the Eternal Son, and the Holy Spirit, *be equal*, and the *highest Praises*, ascribed, now, and for evermore. *Amen.*

FOOTNOTES

* I know, some vainly conceit, that there was an Everlasting, before the World began, which had Commencement: As others foolishly dream, that there will be an Everlasting, after the End of the World. which will have a Period put unto it. Both have an Hypothesis to serve, which cannot be maintained without the Grant thereof. But the Truth of neither, I dare affirm, will ever be proved by any Man whatsoever. He who denies, that Punishment for Sin will be endless, may as soon prove, that there will be an Everlasting, when this World shall cease to be, that will have an End: As he will be able to prove, that there was an Everlasting, before the Creation, which had a Beginning, who thinks, that the Soul of Christ existed before the World began.