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THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT.

Being the Substance of a Sermon preached at Trinity Chapel, Alfred Street, Leicester, by MR. M'KENZIE, September 4th, 1842.

"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."—EPHESIANS i. 13, 14.

In speaking from these words as the Lord shall enable me, it is my intention to confine my remarks chiefly to two particulars—*viz.*, *believing* and *sealing*: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed." I shall then in the (I.) first place endeavour to speak a little on believing, and then (II.) secondly on sealing.

I.—*Believing.* While there is but one true and genuine faith (Eph. iv. 5), which is a grace-covenant blessing (Eph. i. 3), and a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22), yet the Scriptures speak of several kinds of faith; false and true faith, natural and spiritual faith, dead and living faith, faith which gives up the conflict, and faith which endures to the end; faith which can be shipwrecked (1 Tim. i. 19), and faith which stands the fiery trial (1 Pet. i. 7), lives in floods (Isa. xliii. 2), and is rooted and grounded in love (Eph. iii. 17), faith which can be overthrown (2 Tim. ii. 18), and faith which overcometh the world (1 John v. 4); the faith of miracles (1 Cor. xiii. 2), and the faith of devils (James ii. 19). And it is solemnly awful to see to what great lengths the former can go, and how very near in some cases it can approach in likeness to the latter, and how many are deceived by it. Can spiritual faith select a sacrifice and offer it to God? So can natural faith (Gen. iv. 3, 4). Does faith in the Spirit "worship God in Spirit and in truth?" letter faith can "draw nigh unto Him with the mouth, and honour Him with the lips" (Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8, 9). Does true faith "rejoice in the truth" and receive it in the love of it? false

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faith can "receive the word with joy," but when touched with trials withers and dies. Does living faith draw the sap of life from the true vine into the branches? natural faith professes to do the same (John xv. 1—6). Does gracious faith move the heart with fear, and receive the words of God with trembling? (Heb. xi. 7; Ezra ix. 4) "the devils also believe, and tremble" (James ii. 19). Does true faith believe in the only and true God? (1 Cor. viii. 4—6); dead faith believes this also: "Thou believest there is one God." (James ii. 19). Does living faith bring forth fruits of righteousness? dead faith has a kind of fruit also, "whose fruit withereth," "and who bring forth no fruit to perfection." Does divine faith "purify unto God a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" natural faith can also "escape the pollutions of the world" for a season, and sweep and garnish the house, but in the hour of temptation return again to its vomit and the mire (2 Pet. ii. 20—22; Luke xi. 25). Does gracious faith restore four-fold for all ill-gotten gain, and give the half of the residue to the poor (Luke xix. 8)? natural faith can give up part of its own lawful property to the cause of truth, but with the other part lie to the Holy Ghost (Acts v. 1—5). Does sincere faith in the heart salute the brethren from spiritual union to them in the truth (1 Cor. xvi. 21—24; Col. iv. 14, 15)? feigned faith can also salute them: "There salute thee Epaphras;" "*Demas* hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (Philemon 23; 2 Tim. iv. 10). Does true faith believe and practise baptism? so does natural faith: "Simon believed also, and was baptized." Does true faith join to the church as a visible member (Acts ii. 41, 42)? so does false faith: "There are certain men crept in unawares;" "False brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus;" "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock;" "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things." Thus we see that false faith can travel step by step with true faith in all the externals of religion, and in many apparent internal things too. So long may persons go on in a profession of religion, and so near may they approach to the truth, that time only will manifest the cheat to themselves and to others.

True, indeed, it is that "many are called (into a profession), but few are chosen" or accepted of God. The devil, dead ministers, and blind zeal call many, and many call themselves; but however deceived and deceiving graceless pro-

fessors may pass here as genuine, at the last grand day, when the Lord shall be revealed "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," He will separate the precious from the vile, the chaff from the wheat, and divide the goats from the sheep, and give to every man according to that which shall be found in his heart (1 Kings viii. 39), "even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. xvii. 10). He will reward sin with the wages of death, tribulation, and anguish; but His own grace He will honour with the crown of glory, immortality, and eternal life.

"In that night there shall be two men in one bed (resting on the bed of truth), the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together (at the mill of experience), the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field (labouring in the field of the gospel), the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke xvii. 34—36).

A natural faith in God's Word, and a letter obedience to it, is the religion of the day. Ministers of the letter beget letter faith in their hearers, letter faith begets letter obedience and a letter profession, and this is generally sufficient to satisfy and keep the natural conscience quiet till the devil gets them safely into hell. Sunday-schools, tract societies, the pious trade of proselyting, the bawling of Arminian preachers, the general offers and invitations of legal ministers, religious meetings and tea-parties, the novelty of the truth, the light of a good natural understanding, associating with the people of God, hearing the doctrines they believe, the experience they express, and the phrases they use, are amongst the many successful means Satan uses to beget natural faith and letter religion in deceived souls.

When Satan lights the lamp of profession in the heads of fools, he seems to equip them with every requisite for their supposed heavenly journey. He furnishes them with lamps, wicks, and light, and sets them agoing with the wise. They slumber and sleep with the wise, and when the cry of "The bridegroom cometh!" is heard, they arise and trim their lamps with the wise. But they are destitute of one grand essential—oil: "They took no oil with them." This grand secret, this heavenly commodity, this distinguishing article, the oil of the Holy Ghost, the unction of the Holy One, was wanting; and when that was wanting, all was wanting; for "when the bridegroom tarried" their dry lights went

out, and left them in utter darkness (Matt. xxv. 1—12). "The lamp of the wicked shall be put out;" "he shall not see when good cometh;" "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him." But the wise virgin, "her candle shall not go out by night."

It appears that the characters mentioned in Heb. vi. 4—8 were partakers of great light and gifts, "and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come," and went to awful lengths in a profession of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and must have had great faith of some kind; but with all their faith, light, gifts, and "drinking in the rain (the word of God) that cometh down upon it," they were only that kind of ground which brought forth "thorns and briars," which is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. They brought forth no "herbs meet for him by whom it was dressed, receiving blessing from God." They were the land that shall "become briars and thorns," not the "hills that shall be digged with the mattock; there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns; but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle" (Isa. vii. 24, 25). They were not "the good ground" of an honest heart, made so by divine teaching and the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. They were fellows to the stony-ground hearer, who "received the word with joy;" yet, when tribulation, persecution, temptation, and affliction arose, he withered away." He was lacking in three capital points:—(1) His rocky heart had never been broken by the hammer of truth (Jer. xxiii. 29), and ploughed up by the plough-share of law and justice. (2) His religion had no root in it. (3) He had no moisture, none of the heavenly bedewings, waterings, and gracious anointings of the blessed Spirit.

Korah and his company, Balaam, Saul, Judas Iscariot, John's letter professors, Jude's "wandering stars," Peter's "false teachers" and "cursed children," Alexander the coppersmith, Hymeneus, and Diotrefes appear to have been of this class of gifted and shining professors, and had a great degree of faith of some kind, to carry them so far into a profession as it did.

Balaam speaks of himself thus: "Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are opened hath said; he hath said which heard the words of God, and knew the

knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty falling into a trance, but having his eyes open." And he declared he could do nothing without the Lord: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own mind; but what the Lord sayeth that will I speak." "And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth." And he could prophesy glorious things of Israel and of Israel's God: "He took up his parable and said, How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? for from the tops of the rocks I see Him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the Son of man that He should repent; hath He said and will He not do it? or hath He spoken, and will He not make it good?" "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel; the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them." He could also call the Lord *his* God: "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord *my* God, to do less or more;" and when the naked sword of God glittered in his face, he could "bow down his head, and fall flat on his face," and confess his sin: "I have sinned," said he. But with all this he was but "Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. ii. 15), who, bent on the secret lust of his heart, with his tongue confessed he could not "go beyond the commandment of the Lord;" but with his heart he went into the high places of Baal, and there built seven altars, and offered seven oxen and seven rams, that he might curse Israel; and though he wished to die the death of the righteous, and his last end to be like his, yet he perished by the sword of the Lord in the hand of Israel (Num. xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxxi). And as to Saul, "God gave him another heart;" "and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied" among the prophets, and was "turned into another man;" who at one time was so "little in his own sight" that he could confess his unworthiness to be captain over the Lord's inheritance (1 Sam. x. 9); and when he sinned he could confess his sins unto Samuel: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam. xv. 24).

But when the Lord refused to answer him, he turned to the witch of Endor for counsel (1 Sam. xxviii. 6—8); and the Lord became his enemy (verse 16). And when pursued by the

Philistines he rushed upon the point of his own sword (1 Sam. xxxi. 4), and there was an end of him according to the word of the Lord by Samuel (1 Sam. xxviii. 19). And as for Judas, he followed the Lord long. He supped with Him, walked with Him, talked with Him (and "his words were softer than oil"); "he obtained part of the ministry," took charge of the poor, cast out devils, healed the sick, and preached the kingdom of God (Luke ix. 1, 2; Matt. x. 1—8); and with all this he was a devil—the son of perdition; and when the hour of temptation came "Satan stood at his right hand," "entered into him," and stirred up his love of money and treachery, so that he went and "betrayed the innocent blood." And when the heinousness of his crime rushed like a flood into his conscience, in the remorse and anguish of his guilt under the wrath of God, he cast down the money in the temple, and confessed his sin to the priests (not to God), and went out and hanged himself. And "as he loved cursing," the curse of God flowed into his bowels like water (Psa. cix. 18), "and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out" (Acts i. 18); "and he went to his own place" (verse 25).

These awful characters, and their generations who have followed them, and walked in their steps to the present day, are, I believe, the characters who commit the "sin unto death," for which John forbids us to pray: "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John v. 16). But the Lord's people, though they sin, though they offend in many things (James iii. 2), for "there is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings viii. 46); "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20); "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8); yet their sin is the "sin not unto death" (1 John v. 17). For "whosoever is born of God sinneth not (*i.e.*, the sin unto death); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The unction of the Holy One abideth in them, and teacheth them all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as it has taught them, they shall abide in Him (1 John ii. 20—27), and cannot, therefore, commit the sin unto death. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin (the sin unto death), because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 19), and is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter i. 5).

But all who are destitute of the incorruptible seed of God in their hearts, the precious faith of God's elect, and the blessed unction of the Holy One, whatever may be their profession of religion and pretensions to piety, or shining gifts and clear head-knowledge in the doctrines of grace, are destitute of vital and gracious religion; and if they die, so they will die in their iniquities, and sink for ever under the wrath of a sin-avenging God. But let us endeavour to speak a little on the nature and operations of true faith in the heart.

Some suppose that we have no faith till we believe in Jesus to the pardon of our sins and the knowledge of salvation. Others, who will perhaps not go quite so far, will condemn and cry down everything but the full assurance of interest in the redemption of Christ, trampling under foot all doubts and fears, gloomy forebodings, soul-sinking helplessness, inward faintings, sighs and groans, darkness and temptation; and make much ado about looking out of self, living upon Christ above their frames and feelings, and being determined not to look at their sins, guilt, and misery. But such faith is not of God, neither are such "plagued like other men" (Psa. lxxiii. 5); for though the Lord's people do not live on their frames and feelings, yet they find they cannot live *without* frames and feelings.

Heart belief (Rom. x. 10) lodges and lives in the heart; and it cannot stir, either up into heaven or down into the depths of depravity, or look sideways at Sinai or forward to Zion, without producing feelings of some kind, whether pleasant or painful, joyous or grievous. Others, again, talk about their experience and divine things, and pray and go on in a profession as though they had never heard of the blessed sealing of the Spirit, nor believed that it must be experienced by the people of God, nor expected to experience it themselves. These are errors in the professing world, which he who has eyes to see may easily discern; and errors, too, to be found in some of the people of God. The two former are the worst, and those which head-knowledge Calvinists and letter-preachers and professors are most liable to. Such are, therefore, a plague and source of perplexity and distress to the Lord's living and tried people. In this letter-assurance and presumptuous confidence their consciences are, as it were, cased in a coat of mail, which wards off every arrow from the mouth of God's servants. They esteem all the darts in God's Word against them as stubble, and "laugh at the shaking of a spear" (Job xli. 29), because "the flakes of their flesh are

joined together; they are firm in themselves. Their heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone." "They cover their faces with their fatness, and make collops of fat on their flanks, and run upon thick bosses of God's bucklers" (Job xv. 26, 27). Such are generally light, carnal, and worldly, and have much of that vain and foolish jesting which is not convenient. Their conversation or preaching savours of theory, barrenness, and presumption, more than of anything else. No tenderness of conscience, softness of spirit, filial fear, unaffected humility, gracious meekness, and spiritual-mindedness are manifested; nothing to minister grace, softness of heart, life, and comfort, but everything to harden and grieve bondage. Such persons hate a tried and exercised religion, and dislike theirs to be brought to light, and they put their foot upon the neck of all doubts and fears, solemn suspicions, and heart-searchings about the reality of their religion.

Religion which labours under so much gloom, darkness, helpless guilt, misery, and temptation, is too mean and troublesome a religion for them; yet at times they will have sudden twitches of conscience that all is not right, seeing so much in the book of Job, the Psalms, and in the experience of the prophets, apostles, and Scripture saints that makes against them. But letter faith gets up, and swallows down in general terms the truth of the doctrines of grace, and thus quiets conscience. But blessed is the man that is possessed of one particle of true spiritual faith, for "he that believeth (however faint and feeble) shall be saved."

Many of the Lord's people, I believe, are much tried about the genuineness of their faith, whether that faith which they trust they have is the gracious gift of God, seeing it brings into their souls so little lasting comfort and joy, so little assurance of the pardon of their sins, and the earnest of heaven. But where there is one spark of true faith, neither sin, nor hell, nor any other creature shall destroy it or put it out, till it brings into the heart full assurance of pardon, the indelible seal of the Spirit, and sees the soul safe through the storm of life and the solemn passage of death, "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

True faith often exists long in the heart of God's elect before it seals pardon, and brings into the heart a satisfactory assurance of an interest in the Redeemer's blood and obedience. What saith the text? "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Here it is

plain that they believed before they were sealed by the Holy Ghost. And who can tell how long they believed, and in how many of the solemn truths of God they believed, and savingly too, before they were sealed? Faith, it appears to me, had travelled round a wide circuit, and seen, believed in, received, and testified to many of God's truths, before this solemn sealing time. A person may have strong faith in his sins and guilt, from a feeling sense of them laid upon his conscience, but little or no faith in the pardon of them. He may be fully assured of his helplessness by painful feeling, when he has scarcely a grain of faith in God as his strength and everlasting portion. And yet this faith in his sins and helplessness is true faith, and the very kind of faith too that will by and by bring into the heart peace and pardon. But faith in our sins and faith in our salvation will produce very different feelings; and the difference arises from the different objects faith views, and not from any difference in the nature of faith itself. When Moses' faith saw the flaming justice of God on Mount Sinai, he exceedingly feared and quaked; but when, in the cleft of the rock, faith "saw the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious" pass by, he "bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped." When the Philippian jailor saw God in His holy law, he trembled; but when he saw Him in His Son he rejoiced (Acts xvi. 25-34). When Paul saw God in the commandment, he died; but when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ shone into his heart, he rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh. But what is true spiritual faith? It is a blessed, but wonderful and mysterious thing. It is a mystery, an incomprehensible secret, to all but those who possess it. There is neither root nor branch, seed nor essence of it in the heart of man by nature, as he is born into the world. It is a grace-covenant blessing from God (Eph. i. 3; vi. 23), in and by Christ (Eph. i. 3; Acts iii. 16), communicated to the heart by the Holy Ghost in the act of divine quickening (Eph. ii. 1; Rom. x. 17; 1 Cor. xii. 9). It is the free gift of God (Phil. i. 29; Eph. ii. 8), the fruit of the Spirit in the heart, and of His power and operation therein (Gal. v. 22; Col. ii. 12; Eph. i. 19); and it requires the same God who freely and graciously gave it to cause it to work with power (2 Thess. i. 11). It stands in the power of God (1 Cor. ii. 5), and works by love (Gal. v. 6), purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9), overcomes the world (1 John v. 4), and the wicked one (ii. 13), gives

peace with God (Rom. i. 17). It is the effect of the demonstration of truth to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 5). It is the eyes, mouth, hands, and feet of the soul; eyes to "see Jesus," the "visions of God," and "to behold wondrous things out of His law;" a mouth to "taste that the Lord is gracious," and His word sweet, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Lamb; hands to "handle the word of life," to "lay hold on eternal life," and wield "the sword of the Spirit;" feet to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," to walk in the path "which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen," "in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham," in the high and holy way, the "new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say His flesh." It clothes the soul with the righteousness of Christ (Rom. iii. 22), feeds it with His sufferings, blood, death, resurrection, and intercession (Gal. ii. 20). It is the shield of the soul to resist the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. v. 16), and the "new threshing instrument having teeth," that beats the mountain of sin, guilt, unbelief, and fears into chaff, and the whirlwind of the Lord scatters them (Isa. xli. 15, 16). It "is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It brings into the heart a solemn realization of the truth and certainty of divine things desired and hoped for. Thus the elders by faith obtained into their hearts the good report and glad tidings of salvation by rich and free grace, and sweetly felt it in their souls as a substantial reality.

Against all natural probabilities and human likelihoods, Abraham, by faith in the immutable promise, power, and oath of God, in his heart realised Isaac, the promised heir, as though he was already born; and when commanded to sacrifice him, in heart obeyed, and against hope realised him as already raised from the dead, and thus felt evidence in his heart as a certain reality, as good as accomplished, that he was "heir of the world," and the "father of many nations," blessedly proving in his soul that faith was both "the substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is the evidence, or testimony in the heart, of things not seen by the eye: "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice,

with joy unspeakable and full of glory." When the blessed Spirit reveals any of the truths of God to the soul, faith, as a witness, bears evidence or testimony to the truth of them, and seals them as solemn facts upon the heart. Thus when the justice and holiness of God is applied with power, faith bears witness to the truth of it. And so it is with the judgments of God, His rebukes and reproofs, promises and invitations, faithfulness, love, mercy, grace, pardon, and long-suffering. Thus "faith brings into the conscience a measure of the nature of the truth in which it believes, whatever that truth may be." By faith Abel selected and offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Cain's natural faith offered the fruits of the earth, earthy; but Abel's spiritual faith saw the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world typified in the firstling of his flock, and thus he obtained witness in his heart that he was righteous with God, by the righteousness of the Lamb of God (Gen. iv. 2—7). When God warned Noah of the flood, "not seen as yet," faith believed the warning, and saw the flood to come, and moved him with fear to prepare the ark to the saving of his house. Thus by faith he had witness of things not seen, of the flood which had not yet happened, "and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. xi. 7). By faith Isaac blessed Jacob with the first-born blessing, and could not reverse it, though he intended it for Esau, and though Esau ran for it, and lifted up his voice and wept bitterly for it (Gen. xxvii. 27—40). "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." When Jacob's departure was at hand, his faith took a sweet retrospective view of all the way the Lord had led him, and remembering his precious Bethel visits, he said, "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession." And by faith he conferred the cross-handed blessing on Ephraim, who was the younger, in preference to Manasseh; pronounced his last prediction and benediction on his sons; and made Joseph swear to him that he would carry him up out of Egypt, and bury him in his own burying-place, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan.

When the Lord ordered Moses up to the top of Mount Nebo, to see the promised land and die, in his departing blessing to

the children of Israel his faith had a sweet view of the Lord's glory, and His love and mercy to His people, when he said, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand, and they sat down at Thy feet; every one shall receive of Thy words" (Deut. xxxiii. 2, 3). By faith Caleb and Joshua, having another spirit, followed the Lord fully, searched and brought a good report of the land, and stilled and encouraged the people in the Lord against the ten letter-faith spies, who "made all the congregation to murmur, by bringing up a slander upon the land." But while Caleb and Joshua, who followed the Lord wholly because they had another spirit of faith, inherited the land over which their feet had trodden, according to the Lord's faithful promise, "Those men who did bring up the evil report upon the land died by the hand of the Lord" (Num. xiii., xiv.). By faith Caleb, when he came into the land of promise, reminded Joshua of the Lord's promise to him by Moses, saying, "Now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now . . . both to go out and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance" (Joshua xiv. 9—14).

By faith fearful Gideon blew a trumpet, and gathered Abiezer after him, and worshipped the Lord, when he heard the dream and interpretation of the barley cake, and blew the trumpet, and brake the pitcher, and held the lamp in his left hand and cried, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet" (Judges vi., vii.), and this Paul calls faith (Heb. xi. 32, 33). The faith of God's elect is, therefore, by the Spirit of the Lord coming down upon the soul.

By faith Elijah hastened to meet his departure and his

God, smote the waters of Jordan, bequeathed his mantle to Elisha, and was received up into glory; and by faith Elisha saw Elijah's departure at hand, and followed him wherever he went, prayed for a double portion of his spirit to rest upon him, and though he "asked a hard thing" he received it, for he returned and smote the waters with his mantle, and passed safely through (2 Kings ii.). "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and of Samuel, and of the prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb. xi. 32—34). But this precious faith is not confined to the cloud of these witnesses who have gone before, but is also at times sweetly experienced by the Lord's people in this day, who, though often sorely pressed down with many weights, and stopped in the race with the sin of unbelief and murmuring which so easily besets them, yet this precious faith, at times, when the blessed Spirit is pleased to come down upon the heart, gloriously breaks away from them all, looking unto and entering into Jesus.

There are times when the heart feels no appetite for, nor interest in reading, the Word of God; no light, life, nor unction felt from it. At other times the Spirit will move and soften the heart, and the Scriptures will shine with light, glory, truth, and reality; faith will spring up in the heart, and give such a sweet solemn conviction of the truth of what is read, that the heart will be dissolved in blessedness, heavenly delight, holy reverence, and adoration, endearing the Lord, His truth, and heavenly things to the soul. Having thus spoken a little on the nature and operations of true scriptural faith, I shall now endeavour to point out a few particulars in which this faith, in a quickened soul, usually believes before he experiences the sealing meant in the text.

1. First, he believes in his sins and in the holiness and justice of God. The Spirit convices of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John xvi. 8). When the Spirit quickens a vessel of mercy dead in sins (Eph. ii. 1), He communicates to his soul spiritual life, light, and feeling, and this He may do with or without the letter of God's Word or any outward means, but never without the Spirit of the Word, nor contrary to the letter of it (John vi. 63); nor is the exact

time always known; and when spiritual life is communicated to the soul, seldom, if ever, does the person himself know that it is a work of grace at the time. New feelings, sensations, desires, and views he has, but whence they come, and where they will lead him, he knows not, but he hears the sound of a holy God in His law, and the echoes of a guilty conscience; as it is written, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In this new birth the Spirit will reveal to the soul the holiness, spirituality, and justice of God, and cause the heart to feel an inward sense of its guilt and vileness before Him.

With the eye of an enlightened understanding he sees God an Infinite Spirit, glorious in holiness, inflexibly just, and exceedingly pure and righteous in all His ways; and he feels a secret witness in his heart of his guilt, vileness, and worthlessness before God. From this there is felt an inward conviction of the awful disparity betwixt the nature of a holy God and his guilty, depraved, and fallen soul, so that he feels neither fit to meet God nor live with Him.

When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filling the temple, and the seraphims covering their faces and feet with their wings because of His glorious holiness, he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" when John saw His glory he "fell at His feet as dead;" when Ezekiel saw "the glory of the Lord" as "the appearance of fire," he "fell upon his face." When Paul was on his way to Damascus, and heard His secret voice, and saw His light above the brightness of the sun, "he fell to the earth." Thus, when the justice and holiness of God are revealed, there will also be a true sense of our guilt and vileness experienced, so as to cause us to feel that we are in reality transgressors against a holy God in His law. Thus by feeling our sins and God's holiness and justice we believe in them. We may, indeed, know little of the nature of the law by the express term law, but the spirituality of it, the holiness of God therein and our own personal guilt, condemnation, and vileness under it will be distinctly and sensibly felt, so as to make the conscience feel burdened with sin, distressed, and pierced with guilt, and bound with condemnation, causing the heart to sigh and groan, grieve and lament, and

ardently to desire a conscious sense of peace and acceptance with God. But all are not convinced of sin alike, some being convinced more deeply and suddenly than others. But all must be taught of God out of His law, that they may come to Christ: "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (John vi. 45). "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law, that Thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity" (Psa. xciv. 12, 13).

It does not appear that Lydia, Cornelius, and the eunuch were as suddenly and deeply convinced of their sins as first as Paul, the Philippian jailor, and the three thousand who were pricked in their hearts under Peter's sermon. I believe Lydia had a true sense of her sins, and the majesty of God, before the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul, for it is said she "worshipped God" at a place where prayer was wont to be made. Cornelius, "a devout man, and one that feared God and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway," it appears, was some time in the same state before the Holy Ghost came down upon his soul and sealed it with the love and blood of Jesus and the pardon of his sins under Peter's preaching. The eunuch appears to have been exploring the Scriptures in search of eternal life out of a humbled heart, from a secret sense of his sins, when Philip came up, and "preached unto him Jesus." But whether convictions be deep or shallow, accompanied by the letter of the law or not, if they are gracious convictions, the spirituality and holiness of God and the nature and consequences of sin will be sensibly felt, and the soul will be turned from sin to seek God in earnestness and sincerity. The fear of God, and at times a dread of hell, will be in the heart. Eternal things will be seen and believed in as solemn realities, and they will now become, as it were, the business of the soul; a sense too of the want of a Bible religion in the heart will be painfully and distinctly discovered. But there are some deep and distinct natural convictions of sin which never end in salvation. Witness the case of Cain, Balaam, Saul, Judas, Simon Magus, and Felix, who, when he heard Paul reason on the judgment to come, trembled, and ordered him away for that time. And many professors now talk of convictions, which were never the convictions of the Spirit of grace.

Natural conviction never brings the soul to God; it has no contrition, penitence, and godly sorrow in it, no mourning

and grieving over sin, no sitting in judgment against self, no self-loathing, no marks of sincerity and tenderness of conscience accompany it. Gracious convictions of sin will be attended with the following marks:—

(1.) The leprosy of sin will be felt in the soul deeper than the skin with the white hairs of death in it, spreading wider and wider till the whole soul be covered with it, till conscience cries out, "Unclean, unclean," having the tenderness of quick raw flesh, creature-righteousness rent in twain, the head bare, the conscience defiled, dwelling alone, shut without the camp (Lev. xiii.). The burden of sin, the yoke of bondage, and the daily task grow more and more heavy and rigorous. The rigid demands of the law, with a sensible inability to perform them, will make the soul bitter with hard bondage; and cause the heart to sigh and groan by reason of the bondage, and cry to be delivered (Exod. i. 14; ii. 28).

(2.) It will be attended with anxious inquiries of what must be done: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(3.) Solemn and sincere confessions of sin will flow out of the heart: "I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God, and said, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens;" "We have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts, and from Thy judgments;" "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight;" "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight."

(4.) Supplications and prayer will rise out of the heart: "Behold he prayeth;" "God be merciful to me a sinner;" "Lord, help me;" "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

(5.) There will be a turning from the vanities and vices of an ungodly world to the Lord, not walking according to the course of this world, in the vanity of the mind, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. ii. 2—5).

(6.) Unlawful and ungodly callings will be abandoned: "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." And lawful callings will be followed honestly and righteously (Tit. ii. 11).

(7.) The conversation and general conduct will be upright (Eph. iv. 22—24; 1 Pet. ii. 12). And the evil that is done is not done allowedly: "That which I do I allow not."

(8.) After exercise of guilt and grief, bondage and distress, the word of grace will be received gladly (Acts ii. 41), and in due time the soul will be fully delivered from guilt and bondage into gospel liberty, by an application to the heart, by the Spirit, of God's rich mercy and grace in the blood and obedience of Jesus Christ (Isa. lxi. 1—3; John viii. 31—36).

ii. He believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as the salvation of God. Having laboured for life, striven against sin, endeavoured to keep the law and obtain peace with God by his good works, and found "Tekel" stamped on them all; having seen an end of creature perfection, being heavy laden and oppressed with guilt and helplessness, and having felt the witness in his heart that if heaven depend on his righteousness, he must be lost for ever; having thus felt all his righteousness to be as filthy rags, and all his goodness to pass away as the early dew, the Spirit will reveal to him the plan of salvation and the harmony of grace. His mind has been hitherto wrapped up in a cloud of ignorance, darkness, and legal bondage, not knowing wherein salvation lies. But now the blessed Spirit opens to his understanding spiritually the glorious mysteries of redemption; and he sees in a way which he never saw before the grand point on which salvation hangs—that it hangs on Jesus alone—"that Christ is all and in all;" that it hath "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell," "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" yet was He "made lower than the angels," and "took upon Him the seed of Abraham," "the form of a servant;" "was touched with the feeling of our infirmities; in all points tempted like as we are;" "made to be sin;" "made under the law," "under the curse;" "became obedient to death;" that "He is head over all the things to the church;" that she is "complete in Him," by one offering perfected for ever, comely through His comeliness, "all fair," no spot in her, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," "a glorious church;" that Jesus is "everlasting salvation" and "eternal life;" that the church is one with Christ, "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh;" that He is the "end of the law for righteousness," "the propitiation for sin," "the righteousness of God;" that He is made unto His people "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" that the church is justified, sanctified, and saved with an eternal redemption in and by

Christ. In short, he sees with a glorious ray of light that Christ has done for poor sensible sinners what he has long been labouring to do for himself, but has always failed, viz., to keep the law and save his soul. He now sees that salvation is in no sense by works, either in whole or in part, but in Christ alone, in His blood and obedience; that His life and death were vicarious, in the room and stead of persons, and for their personal sins, and those persons the elect, and for them only; that He stood in their place, kept the law for them, took their sins and guilt upon Himself, endured the wrath of God in the curse of the law, and the pains of hell in their stead; and thus satisfied the demands of the law, atoned for their iniquities, and put away their sins and guilt for ever by the sacrifice of Himself, casting them into the depths of the sea, no more to be remembered for ever; brought in an everlasting righteousness, and made peace with God.

When he thus sees Jesus "the way, the truth, and the life," he drops his legal works for heaven, and could as soon believe that his sins would take him there as his good works; and an excellency and glory shine in Jesus as the way of salvation which delight and gladden his soul,—He is so suited to his wretched and helpless case. Jesus was as a root out of a dry ground to him before, and he saw no form nor comeliness in Him that he should desire Him (Isa. liii. 2); but now He is the "chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," "full of grace and truth" (Song v. 10—16; John i. 14). He beholds Him Jesse's root, the ensign of the people to which the Gentiles seek, whose rest is glorious (Isa. xi. 10). He beholds Him as the Lamb of God which taketh away sin, and follows Him, and lodges with Him (John i. 29). He sees Him to be the way of escape and the city of refuge; the way, the only way, to God; the door of access to the Father (John x. 9; Eph. ii. 18); the ladder from earth to heaven; the way down which all blessings descend from God, and the way up which all saints ascend to Him (Gen. xxviii. 12); the holy way to Zion (Isa. xxxv. 8); the new and living way (Heb. x. 20); and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John xiv. 6). And so delighted will he be with thus seeing Jesus the salvation of God, that His very name will be precious; as it is written, "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments, Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love Thee" (Song i. 3).

Thus by the Spirit's light he sees and believes on Jesus as the salvation of God; and a wonderful change it produces in

his mind. The eyes of his understanding are enlightened, his soul is illuminated with a knowledge of the truth, the scales fall from his eyes, the veil of ignorance is rent from his heart, he beholds wondrous things out of the law of love, and they are marvellous in his sight and delightful to his soul. The change produced in his mind by the light of truth is as great, if not greater, than when he was at first quickened into spiritual life. But this "light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ," is very different from mere dry head-knowledge, or the natural judgment being enlightened in the doctrines of grace. It is the unctuous light of the wise virgins, not the dry wick light of the foolish, which is liable to be puffed out with every blast, or whirled about "with every wind of doctrine," and will never hold out till the bridegroom cometh. But this is the unctuous "light of life," supplied from the golden pipes (Zech. iv. 2). It is the light of the golden candlestick furnished with pure beaten oil, shedding a flood of light throughout the sanctuary, especially on the table of shewbread (Lev. xxiv. 2—4). And though this is chiefly the grace of light, it communicates a degree of feeling, unction, and comfort, and causes the heart to delight in God and Christ.

It is not the cold head-knowledge of Balaam and Saul, which left their hearts as hard, carnal, and graceless as all the sons of Belial—unsoftened, unhumiliated, impenitent, and arrogant. This light enlarges the man's understanding and strengthens his judgment, puts a standard of truth to a certain extent into his soul, and enables him to judge all things; yet he himself is judged of no man (1 Cor. ii. 15). When Jesus is thus discovered as a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, the villainy of a deceitful profession is discovered. Then vile letter and free-will preachers and professors "shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful: for the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and cause the drink of the thirsty to fail" (Isa. xxxii. 1—8). The Arminian lies of freewill, creature strength, human ability, self-righteousness, inherent holiness, and universal redemption; and the delusions of letter obedience, natural faith, decided piety (so called), general invitations, indefinite atonement, with all the deceit and emptiness consequent on them, will be

seen and abandoned. And if any wish to see a faithful portrait of the attire and impudent face of the spiritual harlot, and the fatal effects of her subtle delusions over the simple ones, let him only read Proverbs vii. But the children of light, thus illuminated, avoid her house, which "is the way to hell going down to the chambers of death." Thus the religious habits, phrases, and doctrines of the Ishmaelites and children of Ashdod are laid aside, when the light of truth shines into the soul.

But though the soul thus believes in Jesus as the way of salvation, and receives Him gladly, which is a deliverance to a certain extent, yet it is not such a full deliverance as he thinks it is, nor is he as old in spiritual things as he supposes. His utter helplessness, and the total depravity, deep deceit, and desperate sin of his heart, he knows little of. He believes on Jesus as the way of salvation, but he has not yet believed on Him to the full assurance of his own personal interest in Him; he has not yet had His blood applied to his conscience for himself personally, to the sensible pardon of his sins; he has not experienced the "sealing" in the text. He has had Jesus as the Saviour of His people sealed upon his heart; but he has not had Him sealed as his own personal salvation. And though he has "seen a great light," he still feels wanting, still short of the Spirit speaking distinctly into his conscience the pardon of his sins and assurance of his salvation. This he has never yet felt, nor has the Spirit yet borne witness to his spirit that he is a son of God. He has received the truth in the love of it, and believes in it; and has a hope but not an assurance of interest in Jesus. He has found the field, but not obtained the treasure therein; he must dig for that (Matt. xiii. 44). He has found the city of refuge and fled to it, but is not safely lodged within its gates. Like Lot, he has fled from the city of Destruction to Zoar, but is not yet sheltered in the cave in the mountain (Gen. xix. 15—30). He has seen the King in His beauty, and the land that is very far off (Isa. xxxiii. 17), but is not planted therein (Exod. xv. 17). He goes "up into the mountain," and views the land "what it is," and returns with a cluster of the grapes of Eschol; but after this he has to return and traverse "the great and terrible wilderness," and there suffer hunger and thirst, that he may be humbled and proved, and know what is in his heart, before he enters into the "mountain of the Lord's inheritance" (Deut. viii. 3; Exod. xv. 17).

iii. He believes in the characters and titles applied to

quicken souls in the Scriptures. He sees that the Lord's precious promises, special invitations, and gracious declarations, are not indefinitely applied to anybody or everybody, but to special characters, singled out by a description of their feelings, which are the spiritual names of God's living and regenerated people. When the heart was shut up in gross darkness, he knew not that these titles referred especially to the feelings of the Lord's living people; but by having the same feelings wrought in his heart, and the light of the Spirit shining on the description of those feelings in the Word, he understands and believes in them. I well remember when these characters and names of living souls were first revealed to my soul; it was in reading Matt. v. 6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." A light shone upon my past experience, and I saw that I was the person who had long been hungering and thirsting after a righteousness to fulfil a broken law and justify my soul before God. The Lord does not always call His people by those names and characters which they in reality are in His sight, but which they in the experience of their souls feel themselves to be. For instance, He says, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." Now Jacob was not a worm, but a man; but he felt in his soul's experience a poor, blind, crawling, helpless, defenceless worm, ready to be trodden under foot by every by-passer. The Lord therefore calls him a worm, and graciously tells this worm that He will make him a new threshing instrument, and with it he shall beat the mountains into chaff (Isa. xli. 15). The characters and feelings of quickened souls are sometimes described by impotent persons and afflicted members of the body, such as, "I will bring the blind, and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither" (Jer. xxxi. 8); "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not;" "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (Luke xiv. 13); "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly; and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out" (Zeph. iii. 18, 19), "and her that I have afflicted" (Mic. iv. 6). It is very blessed when enabled by the Spirit to see how full the Scriptures are of such descriptions of the soul-experience of the Lord's people; from all which it is clear that the Lord's living people, in their souls' experience, are mostly a poor, and an afflicted, and tried people, that they may trust in the name of the Lord (Zeph. iii. 12);

"Outcasts of Zion, whom no man careth for" (Jer. xxx. 17); and the "flock of slaughter" (Zech. xi. 7); "killed all the day long; accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Rom. viii. 36); "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10). Thus the Lord calls His people by name, and declares them the legacy of His will: "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in My sight. I will make all My goodness pass before thee" (Exod. xxxiii. 12-19). When a sinner is brought by the Spirit to feel that his own righteousness is as filthy rags, and that his iniquities, like the wind, have taken him away, there will be an inward thirsting and ardent desire after Christ's righteousness: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness." The eye of faith having seen Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, the heart seeks and follows after this righteousness, as it is written, "Hearken to Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" (Isa. li. 1). As though the Lord had said, "Ye poor, naked, stripped, guilty, and condemned souls, who feel barren and destitute of everything spiritually good, with sighs and fervent desires following hard after righteousness, and seeking an experimental apprehension of the Lord, look unto Abraham your spiritual father; I called him alone; he was once as solitary, barren, and destitute as you feel; but see how in the end I blessed him, and increased him; so in the end will I bless and increase you;" "For the Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Thus the soul, which truly follows after righteousness, will at times feel itself a comfortless spot, a dreary waste, a pathless wilderness, a barren desert and solitary place, destitute of a blessed sense of God's righteousness and the sweet-fruits of the Spirit. But spiritual joy and heavenly melody shall yet fill the heart, when the blessed Spirit shall come down upon it and speak into it the Lord's righteousness, which shall not be abolished, and His salvation, which shall be for ever. And therefore the Lord kindly invites such to partake freely and abundantly of His covenant mercies, without money or price. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money;

come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Song v. 1).

And poverty is another characteristic of the Lord's people. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Spiritual poverty consists in feeling that we "come short of the glory of God," that we cannot pay the just demands of the law—that we "owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing wherewith to pay" (Matt. xviii. 24), are reduced to insolvency and beggary; that there is nothing in us by nature truly good: "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing." We see the riches of the glory of grace, feel how little of it we possess, and labour under a deep sense of the want of the fruits of the Spirit in the heart, being poor in faith, in prayer, in hope, in joy, in love, in peace, and righteousness; having no spiritual wealth nor ability to purchase heavenly food and clothing; laid at the posts of mercy's doors, covered with rags and sores, craving the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table" (Luke xvi. 20, 21); and sometimes so beggarly and vile that we both fear and are ashamed to ask, and sometimes so helpless that we cannot ask, but groan out our wants, and sometimes cannot groan, but sigh, and sometimes faint in our sighing, fearing that these sighs are not of the right kind, and have to sigh over our sighs. But God will raise such beggars from the dust of death and confusion, and take them off the dunghill of corruption, and set them among princes, and cause them to inherit the throne of glory (1 Sam. ii. 8). Sorrow of spirit, and seeking but not finding for a season, accompany soul poverty: "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit;" "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." In times of deep soul trouble, the Spirit will put a fervent calling upon the Lord into the heart; then the very feelings of his soul will correspond with these scriptures: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13); "The Lord is nigh until all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalm cxlv. 18, 19); and the Spirit will bear testimony in his heart that he is the person that calls on the Lord in truth, which causes a little hope and comfort to spring up.

Captive exiles, prisoners, debtors, the distressed, the father-

less and widows, mourners, the meek, the bruised reed and smoking flax, the diseased, the sick, the broken, the driven away, the lost, the bound in affliction and iron, the broken-hearted, weak hands, feeble knees, and stammering tongues, the destitute, afflicted, and tormented, the blind, the lame, the deaf, the dumb, the lepers, the withered, the palsied, the bleeding, the wounded, and the dead—these are the characters of the Lord's great company that shall return, and come with weeping and supplication, "and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd; and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all" (Jer. xxxi. 12).

iv. He believes in the total helplessness of the creature to do anything spiritually good. And he does not believe this merely because he reads that "without Me ye can do nothing," but from a process of painful inward teaching under the Spirit. There are three distinct stages in a Christian's experience, in which he learns the important but trying lesson of creature helplessness. (1) When under the law and the conviction of sin, and labouring for heaven by his works; (2) After he has had a faith's view of the salvation which is in Christ, and felt the necessity of having special promises and blessings applied to the heart, and pardon and assurance of salvation sealed upon the soul, but withheld for a season; (3) After his soul is sealed with the Spirit, and come to an assurance of salvation. In the first he sees the utter inability of being saved by works, by feeling the spirituality of the law and holiness of God therein, and his own fallen nature. In the second, by being convinced he must have pardoning mercy manifested to his soul for himself, and favours and blessings sealed upon his heart, and labouring to obtain these things but cannot, and forced from inability to wait for them, groaning and sighing, fainting and sinking, till the Lord is pleased to rend the heavens and come down. In the third he learns more clearly and perfectly his utter and entire helplessness to perform any spiritual thing whatever, and to resist and stand against the power of the devil, and the lust of sin in the heart in the hour of temptation, without the special power of God in his soul. The lesson of soul-helplessness proceeds thus:—(1) The soul is convinced by the Spirit of the truth of a thing; (2) It is convinced of the want of that thing; (3) Of the absolute

necessity of having that thing; (4) Of its total inability of creating or obtaining that thing, by endeavouring and utterly failing; (5) Then it is made to sigh and groan, and with labouring pangs ardently desires it, but feels no faith in the heart to believe that it will be given; then the Lord in His good time works in the heart the prayer of faith, and in due time answers that prayer: "He will exalt you in due time." There is sensibly felt in the soul the spirituality and divine nature of all the fruits of the Spirit, and the great difference there is betwixt them and their natural counterfeits, and a sense of the want of them is painfully felt. The beggary and vanity of natural religion are clearly seen. He feels that God is a Spirit, and must be "worshipped in spirit and in truth;" but he feels he cannot so worship Him. He feels an inward sense of utter inability to believe, hope, trust, pray, rejoice, and give thanks spiritually. He is bowed down and oppressed with sin, guilt, unbelief, distrust, and fears; nor can he create one single grace of the Spirit in his heart, or take one step in the spiritual path, if he were threatened with hell or rewarded with heaven for it. Thus convinced of the spirituality and necessity of true religion, and his having a feeling sense of his great want of it, and his inability to produce it, he sighs and groans under the weight and helplessness, is at times almost pressed out of measure, and is even sometimes suspicious of the genuineness of his sighs and groans, because he feels a degree of insincerity and self-pity mixed with them. And how distressed, desponding, and sinking the soul will now feel! With Baruch he says, "The Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I faint in my sighing, and I find no rest" (Jer. xlv. 3).

Nor has he in his feelings any faith to believe God will work the fruits of the Spirit in his heart; nor can he raise up the prayer of faith in his heart to ask the Lord to work them in him, but with longing and desponding desires he sighs after them, and groans under the want of them, and prays to be enabled to pray with the prayer of faith for them. The Spirit will throw a light upon the reality and solemn nature of true spiritual prayer, the prayer of faith which prevails with God, and reveal to him what a supernatural and divine thing it is; how deep it is hid in the heart; how sincere, single-eyed, and earnest it is, and how near it brings the soul to God, to believe, talk, plead, and wrestle with the Almighty. And when he feels how little of this solemn and blessed prayer is in his heart, he sinks down in helplessness.

But how this strips him from fleshly prayer, both in himself and others! "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few," is engraven upon his heart. Long, dry, formal prayers harden and sicken his soul. A few simple and broken sentences from a feeling and tried heart in prayer will touch and refresh his soul, when the dry, formal repetitions of others will cast him into wretchedness. Every ordinance of the gospel, however precious in itself, is a laborious and irksome task to him, unless the Spirit is pleased to come down and cause the dew of heaven to rest upon it to his soul. There is life in his heart and nothing short of life and spirit in the ordinances touching the life in his heart will satisfy him. Preaching, praying, singing, baptism, and the Lord's Supper are all an irksome task unless God be in them; but when a blessing is in them, the soul is blessed and refreshed. Another particular wherein he is made to feel his helplessness is, that he has never felt pardon sealed upon his soul to his satisfaction—never felt that assurance of his salvation and the work of grace in his heart that he wishes. He has had Jesus blessedly revealed to him as the salvation of the Church, and with all his heart he has believed in Him as such; but he has never had Him revealed as his own personal Saviour, formed in his heart for himself as his hope of glory; and though he has much light, some hope, comfort, and sweetness in Christ as the salvation of God, he has not got what he wants, nor can he rest easy without it.

He feels he must have the "one thing needful," the kingdom of God established in his soul, the Pearl of great price fixed in his heart, the treasure hid in the field in his hand, the Spirit bearing witness to his spirit that he is one of the children of God, "Abba, Father" coming from his lips, the earnest of heaven sealed upon his soul. This, from the Word of God, he sees must be experienced; and this he feels he has not experienced. Then his soul desires, prays, and wrestles for it; but the Lord is pleased to withhold it for some time, and in the interim he learns a deep and painful lesson of soul-helplessness. He will sigh, groan, long, watch, wait, and ardently desire it; but the Lord still withholds it. Then he sinks in his feelings, and desponds of obtaining it; and is ready to give up all praying, waiting, or hoping for it. Then his heart faints because of the way, and he halts in it. He experiences the truth of that scripture, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." But fresh necessity of having the

blessing will come down upon the soul; then fresh groans, prayers, and desires go up out of the heart, with "strong cries and tears to Him that is able to save;" but still it is withheld. Then he fears his cries, prayers, and tears are only like those of Esau, which will never be heard, because he "found no place" but Mount Sinai for them. He thinks surely his prayers and desires cannot be right because they are not heard and answered.

At times a hope will strengthen, revive, and encourage him from Scripture descriptions of his case; or some promise will be sweetly applied to his soul; then he thanks God, and takes courage, and prays, and watches, and waits again. Thus he goes on long; sometimes gladdened, revived, and encouraged, at other times dismayed and sunk in misery; sometimes a bright hope, then again sunk in fears and despondency, and utter helplessness; fretting, desponding, and rebelling; then distressed with the guilt of rebellion; then the poor soul falls down totally helpless, a lump of sin, guilt, unbelief, distrust, confusion, and wretchedness, neither able to pray nor let it alone, to get up nor lie still, but rolls about as if in "the belly of hell" (Jonah ii. 2), and cries, My heart is disquieted within me; and with Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him;" "I will speak in the bitterness of my soul;" "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!" And with Hannah, "I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit." And with Hezekiah, he "chatters like a crane or a swallow, and mourns as a dove; and his eyes fail with looking upward," and he turns his face to the wall. His heart says, "He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; He hath made my chain heavy. Also, when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer; He hath enclosed my way with hewn stone, He hath made my paths crooked" (Lam. iii. 7—9). But although this is a painful place, it is a profitable one. It is here that the blessed Spirit applies much of the Word of God to the soul. When it is sinking in misery, yet reading the Word, the Spirit will move in it with glorious life and power, causing the soul to feel it, and the heart will be dissolved with a peculiar feeling of mingled grief, gratitude, and love, while the eyes flow with tears from the heart-melting feelings;

many precious promises, kind invitations, and sweet descriptions of the feelings of the soul are applied to his heart, all which strengthen him and hold him up in his helplessness till the fulness of the blessing comes; for though the visits and applications to his soul are great things, yet none of them contain that of which he is in pursuit. All the desires of his heart seem to be condensed into these two sweet and brief petitions, "O satisfy me early with Thy mercy;" "O visit me with Thy salvation." The legal exhortations of letter professors irritate his mind, and the fleshly comfortings of his friends only add to his misery. He understands the feelings of Job's heart, when he answered his friend Bildad, saying, "How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? how hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?" And he understands a little of the spiritual meaning of Ezekiel's dry bones scattered in the open valley, and of Jacob when he was faint and without might, complaining that his way was hid from the Lord, and his judgment passed over from his God (Isa. xl. 27, 28). But there are intervals when the soul is neither thus sunk in helplessness, nor wrestling hard after the blessing, but slipped into a lifeless, unfeeling kind of neutral state, yet dissatisfied in this state.

v. He believes in the total depravity, deceit, and vileness of the human heart by nature. The fall of man and original sin he believes to be solemn truths, because he feels the spirit of them in him. Pride, self-love, and unbelief are the three great units Satan set up in the heart of Eve when he deceived her, and he feels them set up in his heart. He feels that his very nature was shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa. li. 5), and that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9). The throat is an open sepulchre, steaming forth corruption and death; the poison of asps is under the lips, the mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (Rom. iii. 10—18); the heart is "altogether become filthy" (Psa. liii. 3); "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually;" "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21); "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man" (Matt. xv. 19, 20); "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"

(James i. 15). This black testimony which God gives of the heart of man, he feels to be in his fallen nature the fruits of the flesh (Gal. v. 19—21), the law of sin in his members, sin which dwelleth in his flesh (Rom. vii. 20).

From the first communications of spiritual life, something is known of the depravity of the heart, but it is very faint at first compared with what it is in after states of experience, and as he proceeds he knows more of it. He learns the distressing lesson of a sinful and vile nature, vile in proportion as he is led to see and feel the blessed divinity and godliness there is in the fruits and graces of the Spirit, and by that light he discovers the vanity, death, carnality, deceit, and lust of his heart, how little of the former he possesses, and how much of the latter; he feels that sin mars all he says and does, and defiles all the operations of the blessed Spirit within him which He "works in him to will and to do of His good pleasure;" and that though the work and fruits of the Spirit in the heart are in themselves pure and heavenly, no sooner are they produced in us than sin rises up and mixes with them. Unbelief mingles with faith, doubt with hope, misgivings with trust, formality and insincerity with prayer, lip service with praise, self-will with submission, and infirmity with preaching and hearing; thus all the blessed fruits of the Spirit in us are, from time to time, spotted with the sins of the flesh; and this the tender conscience and enlightened mind often painfully feels, and there are times when the soul by faith sweetly views Jesus, "Holiness to the Lord, that He may bear the iniquity of the holy things of the children of Israel in all their holy gifts, that they may be accepted before the Lord" (Exod. xxviii. 36—38).

Having a knowledge of what is truly good and evil, and a tender conscience, he feels the evil of his heart by its motions, and learns its dreadful power by its entangling and overcoming him so often, and bringing him into captivity, guilt, and distress. There are times when he feels as if he was left almost entirely to self and Satan; and O what dreadful work then takes place in the heart! The devil stirs up all the vile abominations in the heart, and the heart seems as willing to allow it. All kinds of vain, vile, foolish, carnal, sensual, earthly, and corrupt thoughts fill the heart, and they ferment and work up to such an extent, and so repeatedly, that he will stagger like a drunken man under them, and solemnly fear that he is only a white-washed hypocrite, and will inwardly say, "Can ever God dwell here?" Can my heart be

changed by grace, seeing that I feel such a sink of sin within? and sin will thus work within him in spite of all he can do. Satan has power for a season over him. This is the "evil day" with him, but he will be delivered out of it all by the glorious power of the blessed Spirit. This is Satan's "hour of temptation" and of the power of darkness, in which he needs to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, having on the whole armour of God" (Eph. vi. 10, 11); but he feels neither armour nor might. Yet the Lord enables him to sustain the fight by His visible and invisible power, though it be but with tears and groans, and rebukes, mingled with a little mercy, till He grants him a complete victory. But O how his vile sins and depraved nature grieve and distress him! How they bring him to his knees in tears again and again with solemn and contrite confessions from his heart; with fervent cries to the Lord to keep him from sin, to deliver him from the power and dominion of evil, and wash his conscience from the guilt of it! Another thing grieves and perplexes him much, and that is, he not only feels a spirit of sin in him, but a nature that loves sin; and yet at the same time he feels a spirit that hates sin, and hates himself for loving sin. He will feel remorse and anguish from the guilt of sin, but he will also feel grief and godly sorrow for sinning against a holy and good God. Reprobates can have the former (as Cain and Judas), but a gracious heart only has the latter.

This law of sin in the members is "the plague of leprosy." "There seemeth to me there is, as it were, a plague in the house" (Lev. xiv. 35), which Solomon calls, "the plague of the heart" (1 Kings viii. 38). It was the sin which dwelt in Paul's flesh, the law in his members, which warred against the law in his mind, and brought him into captivity (Rom. vii.). It is the flesh which lusts against the Spirit (Gal. v. 17), which wars against the soul (1 Peter ii. 11); one of the two armies in the Shulamite (Song vi. 13); the Canaanites in the land (Judges i. 27; iii. 1); the iron chariots in the valley that could not be driven out (Judges i. 19); one of the nations in Rebekah's womb, but the elder shall serve the younger (Gen. xxv. 22, 23); the troop which overcomes Gad, but he shall overcome at last (Gen. xlix. 19). "Sin shall not have dominion over you; grace shall reign through righteousness. Sometimes the Lord enables him to overcome sin and temptation by His fear: "So did not I, because of the fear of God" (Nehem. v. 15); and sometimes by the

pain and chastening we suffer from it. "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, so do stripes the inward part of the belly" (Prov. xx. 30); or by removing the temptation, and God's invisible grace keeping the heart: "They knew not that I healed them" (Hosea xi. 8). But the love, and blood, and glory of God, brought into the soul by the Lord the Spirit, heal and cleanse most powerfully and sweetly the wounds and filth of sin and guilt, root up and cast out the power of it, separate the heart and affections from flesh and all below, and set them "on things above," "Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. iii. 1, 2); and thus heal all diseases, and redeem our life from destruction (Psa. ciii. 3, 4).

vi. He believes in the precepts of the gospel. Some obey the precepts from a legal spirit, making no difference betwixt them and the law of works. Others obey them merely in the letter, because their natural faith sees them commanded; and some, who believe in the doctrines of grace and creature inability, will acknowledge them, but are never much concerned about obedience to them. The first are work-mongers, the second are dead-letter professors, the third Antinomians, and all of them are out of the secret. The precepts of the gospel are to be known, felt, believed in, and obeyed by the power of the Spirit in the very same way that the other truths of the Scriptures are to be experienced and believed in; if otherwise it is legal or letter obedience, and will pass for nothing with God. All religion not done in the Spirit will fall to the ground. The doctrines of grace, promises, special invitations, and characters, are only truly useful when the Spirit applies them to the soul; so also must the precepts of the gospel be revealed and applied to the heart with power, before they can be properly obeyed. Then it is "the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). Thus Abraham obeyed in faith when he went to offer up Isaac; Noah when he built the ark, and Rahab when she received the spies.

At times the Spirit will shine with peculiar light on the precepts of the gospel, and accompany the importance and reality of them to the heart with power; we then feel the necessity of spiritual obedience to them, and learn how much we come short of them. Then the heart feels guilty and reproved; and cries and desires come from it to be enabled to walk in them. A tender conscience, spiritual fear, the light of the Spirit, and the love of God experienced, will lead to the obedience of the precepts with singleness of eye. An

upright conduct and conversation becoming the gospel before the world and the church will be aimed at and desired. The conversation will then be without dissimulation, hypocrisy, and cunning; in unaffected sincerity and truth. Masters will be just to their servants, servants honest to their masters; the wife affectionate to the husband, and the husband to the wife. Such precepts as these will also be felt with power: 1 John ii. 15, 16; iii. 17, 18; iv. 7. 1 Peter ii. 1, 2, 11—20. Matt. v., vi., vii. Luke xxi. 34. Rom. xii. 1, 2. Eph. iv. 2, 3, 25—32; v. 1—5. The walk of others is no rule for him; he feels everyone must give an account of himself to God (Rom. xiv. 12), nor does he feel any more union to a person who lightly esteems the precepts than he does to an enemy of the doctrines of grace.

II.—*On Sealing.* Having noticed a few particulars in which faith mostly believes previous to sealing, we shall briefly notice the sealing mentioned in the text. We may experience many sealings of the Spirit before we attain to the sealing in the text. A soul, panting and sighing with fervent longings and supplications going up out of the heart to the Lord, to visit it with His salvation and satisfy it early with His mercy, will, at times, feel such scriptures as these sweetly sealed upon his heart: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God;" "My soul fainteth for salvation, but I hope in Thy word;" "Mine eyes fail for Thy word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me?" When sinking and desponding under guilt and helplessness, while reading the Scriptures, some words of comfort and encouragement, such as, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me;" "Fear not, I will help thee;" "For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them," will sweetly crumble the soul at the feet of Jesus, strengthening and reviving it, raising up a little faith, hope, and patience. Sometimes the description of our feelings in the Word will bear such evidence to our character, that we feel fully assured we are the person God speaks to; and this begets hope and gladness in the heart, a sweet promise will come into the heart with assurance of its fulfilment, working life, power, and trust; but it will not give that assurance of pardon and earnest of glory that is desired and longed for; it is but the *promise*, not the *fulfilment* of it sealed home; and though it gives the soul much relief, comfort, and strength,

it does not give full satisfaction. When the vile, ungodly workings of fallen nature are painfully felt within, such truths as these are solemnly sealed upon the heart: "Behold I am vile;" "My wounds stink, and are corrupt;" "I am as a beast before Thee;" "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores;" "We are all as an unclean thing, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." And when he sees the Lord's longsuffering and tender mercy to him from day to day, notwithstanding all his vileness, those parts of Scripture expressive of His forbearance and longsuffering will be blessedly applied to his soul. At times the Spirit will gloriously shine upon the precious truths of rich discriminating grace; on the gracious, merciful, immutable, and eternal love of God; on the blessed mediatorship of Jesus, in His life, death, sufferings, resurrection, and priestly intercession; and on the glory that awaits the saints, and will seal them with demonstration on the heart with sweetness and power.

Now, to have the word of God thus applied from time to time, is to have the Spirit sealing the truth on the heart, which the Holy Ghost calls "binding up the testimony and sealing the law among the disciples" (Isa. viii. 16). Many precious truths of God's Word may be thus sealed on the heart, and yet the sealing intended in the text may never have been experienced. Some do not believe in this sealing at all, others do not understand it, and some think if they have had truth sealed on the heart, as mentioned above, they have had the sealing intended in the text; but this I believe to be an error, and one that the quickened conscience bears testimony against, for while we have not attained to this great blessing, and whatever we may attempt to take shelter under, or rest in, short of it, the conscience secretly whispers out remonstrances, and desires in a tone of uneasiness and dissatisfaction something more than the soul has ever yet experienced, something clearer, fuller, stronger, and more decided, containing assurance, pardon, peace with God, and the earnest of eternal bliss. Before this sealing is experienced, I believe the Spirit generally reveals to the understanding the truth and reality of it, and causes the soul sensibly to feel its want and need of it; then strong desires and fervent petitions rise up out of the heart for it again and again, and that often long before it is given. Perhaps many blessings, and great and distinct ones, have been experienced, many sweet

visits, love looks, and kind intimations; many heart-touching words and soul-dissolving truths have been spoken into the soul by the blessed Spirit, but this excelleth them all, and while it is withheld the soul goes in doubt, in suspicion and fear, unsettled and dissatisfied. He has had Jesus as the Christ of God, the way to heaven, and the salvation and eternal life of His people, sweetly and clearly revealed to his understanding, and his heart anointed and comforted by it; he has had many promises, gracious invitations and scriptures sealed on his heart, delivering his soul to a certain extent, and strengthening and encouraging him.

But he has not yet fully touched the mark "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ." The blessed and sacred seal of immortality, glory, and eternal life, containing in it assurance, pardon, and peace with God, has not been impressed on the heart by the hand of the Spirit. Like Ruth he has left his native country, come to trust under the wings of the Lord God of Israel, found and entered into the field of Boaz, and had his heart softened with the kind intimations and gracious encouragements he has had from his lips; his soul has been greatly emboldened and strengthened with the special orders he has had given on his behalf, and in reaching him parched corn with his own hand at meal-time. But Boaz has not yet in the threshing floor spread the skirt of his righteousness over his soul, and sworn to him with an oath that he will perform the part of a kinsman, and do to him all that he requires, thus betrothing the soul unto himself for ever in faithfulness, in righteousness, in judgment, in lovingkindness and in mercies (Ruth ii., iii.; Hosea ii. 19, 20). The seed of immortal life has been sown in the heart under the earthly clods of corruption and death: it has softened, germinated, shot root downwards, and the tender blade upwards into the open atmosphere of gospel light and some good degree of liberty, and the seed of particular enjoyments, special applications of scriptures, and love comforts is forming in the ear, but the season of the full corn in the ear, ripening into life eternal, is not yet come (Mark iv. 28).

He has heard the voice of the Lord in the law, and walked forth after his beloved into the field of truth and grace, and gone forth with Him into particular portions of Scripture, special promises, and sweet invitations; but he has not got up early to the vineyards to see the vines flourish, the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud forth, where Jesus

abundantly ravishes the heart with His love (Song vii. 11, 12). He has ascended the steps of repentance, contrition, helplessness, prayer, fear, desire, and hope, which lead up to the two-leaved golden gate of the temple, but the gates are not yet opened to him, he has not had access into the sanctuary, into the presence of His glory. The glory of the gates are precious to his sight, but they are shut, and he is watching at the gates, waiting at the posts of the doors (Psa. cxviii. 19, 20). But though the soul may long go without this sealing, and be much and sorely tried, at times sinking and desponding, drooping, withering, and dying, all strength apparently gone, and the heart sick with hope deferred, yet the desire will come, and it will be a tree of life to the soul with all manner of fruit for the taste, and leaves for the healing of all soul-diseases. The time of love will come. Where He has begun the work He will surely finish it. "The bruised reed shall He not break and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." But some impotent and helpless souls lie so long at the brink of the pool, with none to help them in, that their hope seems almost cut off, and their patience quite worn out; and O the fretting, anxious groans and desires that will then squeeze out of their wretched and troubled heart; but Jesus knows, and hears, and registers them all, and will unexpectedly come, and blessedly surprise them with His love and mercy. But they must be tried before He will come. "He waters the earth," but it is after He has made it to desire it, and gives the corn after He has prepared for it (Psa. lxxv. 9).

From the Scriptures it appears that sealing was formerly used for various purposes. Sometimes it was used to give authority and effect to royal mandates. Thus the wicked Jezebel sealed the death-warrant of Naboth with king Ahab's seal (1 Kings xxi. 8); and Haman sealed the decree of the Jews' destruction with the king's ring (Esther iii. 12). Things were sometimes sealed up in bags to preserve and secure them: "Is not this laid up in store with me and sealed up among my treasures?" And Job feeling his sins treasured up against him, complains that his "transgression is sealed up in a bag." And the church is called "a fountain sealed," secured from the use of strangers, poison, and dirt. Books of secret and valuable records were sealed up (Rev. v. 1).

The secrets of the gospel are a sealed book to blind professors: "The vision of all is become unto you as the word of a book that is sealed." The purchase deeds of property were sealed to ratify or confirm the agreement stated therein, and folded up and sealed to prevent alteration, and preserved to the day of redemption. A copy was also kept open to be seen at any time (Jer. xxxii. 6, 15). This last sealing appears to be a type of the sealing mentioned in the text. When the Spirit has written the laws of justice, truth, and grace in the heart, in the fulness of time He ratifies and confirms the truth and experience of them to the conscience by the sacred seal. When his heart is sealed with this seal he feels all the covenant agreements of God confirmed and made sure within. As these seals, when stamped upon the softened wax, left the impression and image of the sealer's signet, so the Holy Ghost softens the heart, and stamps and impresses it with the earnest of heaven, and seals up the soul as His own property "unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). The heart is the wax, the earnest of our inheritance is the seal, and the Holy Ghost is the Sealer that stamps the impression.

As to the immediate act of this sealing on the heart, and the peculiar feelings under it, they are better known and understood by the sweet experience of them than can be conveyed by words, or conceived in ideas. I shall, however, endeavour to speak of it briefly and plainly according to the manner that the blessed Spirit was pleased to impress my soul with it after He had prepared me for it. The Spirit is not confined to any particular means in giving this rich blessing; He may give it under the preaching or reading of the Word, or neither. But whatever outward means He may please to use, or should He, without any, come suddenly and sovereignly down upon the heart, the soul will feel fully assured it is the blessed Spirit within him. Nor is it anything in us, or done by us, that thus causes the blessed Spirit to descend upon the heart. It is the will and work of His own good pleasure (Phil. ii. 13) in His own set time to favour Zion (Psa. cii. 13). "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name's sake." The sealing in the text is "the earnest of the heavenly inheritance," which is a part and pledge of the immortal glory of God in Christ, sealed or impressed on the heart by the Holy Ghost. And when the Spirit seals the heart with this blessed seal, He descends, and softens; and anoints it, and sheds abroad therein the love and rich mercy

of God, and the life and love and blood and death of Jesus, so that the heart will be dissolved and overwhelmed, the soul melted in the flames of love, mercy, glory, and heavenly blessedness, and the eyes flowing with tears of love and joy. Every attribute of God is endeared to the heart, till it burns with love to Him; and this feeling contains a peculiar heavenly and sacred delight and blessedness, and it will be so powerfully and sensibly felt on the heart, that it will be enjoyed as the earnest of immortal glory, a part of that glory that the souls of the redeemed will enjoy to all eternity. And the feeling is so distinct and powerful, that it bears evidence to the heart of its own divinity, and that it is the blessed sealing of the Spirit, the earnest, pledge and foretaste of heaven. It brings with it assurance, pardon, and peace with God, and joy unspeakable and full of glory rises out of it. He feels that the blessed Spirit has come down and taken possession of his heart, and consecrated it as a sacred place to God, and sealed him up as His own property unto the day of redemption. He feels he is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwells in him, and the glory of the Lord has filled the house (1 Kings viii. 11). He feels that part of heaven is let down into his soul. And O the peculiar inexpressible sweet feelings of love, gratitude, contrition, and humility, mingled together, which fill the heart. He feels no sin, guilt, wrath, or fears; these are all put away; a sweet peace and calmness rest in his mind. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost have taken up their abode with him. "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." It couches in it "the love of God shed abroad in the heart;" "the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father;" "the Spirit bearing witness to our spirit that we are the children of God." And this causes the soul sweetly to rest in God, satisfied with His salvation and delighted with the abundance of His glory. He now understands in a sweet measure that precious scripture, "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). This sealing enlarges the heart, enlightens the eyes, instructs the understanding, and puts into the soul a meek independence of men and things.

Before this sealing is experienced, God is often viewed and felt as a righteous judge, and His absolute Deity appears unapproachable and forbidding; but now by faith he sees Him

all love, grace, pardon, mercy, long-suffering, faithfulness, and abundant in goodness and truth (Nehem. ix. 17). Faith is willing and obedient. Working by love, it works free and easy, and believes every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It lays the honour and glory of God and the doctrines of grace near to heart, and produces sympathy and love to and forbearance with the people of God, especially the tried and tempted. The eye of faith beholds glorious things in the law of love. The sweetness and power of truth rest upon the heart for many days, and the Word of God, from time to time, is enjoyed as the bread of heaven. It does not lift the soul up into pride, bombast, vain conversation, doctrines in the letter merely, lightly esteeming trials and afflictions, but it humbles the soul, and gives a placid, meek, and child-like spirit. It separates the heart from pride, presumption, vain show, and insincerity in self and others; it gives "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" and produces discretion, sobriety, chastity, sincerity, honesty, and godly fear. It makes the conscience exceedingly tender, and afraid of sin, inward and outward. But as Satan hates the power of God in every shape, he will try and blot from the memory the sweet feelings and peculiar impressions of this sealing, or to confuse and becloud the particulars of it, and lessen down its glory. He will oppose its reign and influence over the heart by stirring up sin in some form or other. He will present all manner of temptations to the soul, and lay siege to it with all the powers of the bottomless pit. To darken, overthrow, and destroy this great blessing in the heart is the devil's warm desire and determined design. He therefore goes about like a roaring lion to devour it. He will spread the allurements of the world, lay the snares of temptation, excite the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and stir up all the filthy abominations of fallen nature. He will use every stratagem, visible and invisible, to overcome or overtake the soul with sin, whether inward or outward. But this he does not attempt till the power and influence of this blessing begin to lessen, and the heart is growing cold; and then what awful storms of sin and abomination are raised in the heart, and he will try to lead the soul into some public or private sin that will be an intolerable burden to the conscience, which will pierce it with the anguish of guilt, and make the heart exceedingly sorrowful with bitter lamentation and woe. Thus Satan will endeavour to bring the soul into guilt and bondage, that he

may put out the power and sweet enjoyment of the sealing of the Spirit, and bring the soul into fears, darkness, and doubting again. And if the Lord does not uphold the soul, he will succeed to a certain extent; and O then, what grief and godly sorrow are felt for sinning against a kind and gracious God, with sincere confession and self-abhorrence, and cries to be kept from the power of sin, and washed from the guilt of it, and for the restoration of the joys of God's salvation! "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit." But when the soul backslides, it will surely be visited with the chastening rod. "The Lord said, I have pardoned according to Thy word: but truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. xiv. 20, 21). "If His children forsake My law and walk not in My judgments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psa. lxxxix. 30—32). "Yet will I not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. xxx. 2). The Spirit will cause the Lord's solemn threatenings and judgments to rebuke the conscience keenly and powerfully; and His faithful dealings with His people of old will be painfully felt as his own case; then he fears, trembles, and sincerely confesses his sins and pleads for pardoning mercy, for some kind and forgiving word to be spoken to the heart to forgive, heal, and comfort it. And after he has borne his shame for his transgressions (Ezek. xxxix. 26), and accepted the punishment of his iniquity (Jer. xxvi. 41), the Lord will not cast him away, neither will He abhor him, to destroy him utterly and to break His covenant with him; for He is the Lord his God (Lev. xxiv. 44). Jesus in His blessed righteousness, sufferings, blood, death, and intercession will be made precious to his soul. His kind, tender, compassionate, and forgiving heart will be opened, and willingly receive the returning and lamenting prodigal (Luke xv. 18—24), and heal the unclean, but worshipping and beseeching leper (Mark i. 41—43). A glance of His loving-kindness and forbearing mercy will melt the heart; but before He grants this, He brings the soul to cry and plead with David, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow; make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sin and blot out all my iniquities" (Psa. li. 7—9); and in the Lord's good time He heals his backsliding, and loves him freely (Hosea xvi. 4). But Satan may tempt and overcome and bring the soul into

bondage and guilt, darkness and confusion; and the world and the carnal mind may conspire to deface and destroy this blessed celestial seal, but I believe nothing will entirely erase it from the heart. It may be buried under the load of sin, blackened with guilt, covered with the filth of iniquity, obscured in the mist of confusion, and removed out of sight in the hour of temptation, but the blessed Spirit, who stamped it on the heart, will clear all these away, and shine upon the work of His own hands again and again. It is a seal which seals the soul "unto the day of redemption," and a pledge of God's eternal faithfulness. He will not forsake the work of His own hands (Psa. cxxxviii. 8).

Having pointed out a few of the particulars which are generally experienced and believed in previous to the sealing, and stated something of the nature of the sealing as I experienced it, I conclude by observing that I do not mean to lay it down as a fixed rule that all the particulars I have enumerated must be experienced previous to the sealing, nor that they must all be experienced in the same order I have stated them; but I believe many experience the most of them, and while some experience less, others experience much more.

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