

Certain Observations upon Hosea the Second,

**the 7th & 8th verses, as they were Delivered
at a Friend's House who had broken his leg,
for which Meeting the Author was Committed
to the White Lion Gaol, by Sir Thomas Malet,
late Judge of Assize, for the County where he
remains a Prisoner of Jesus Christ.**

By William Kiffin.

*"Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he
will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But
if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak;
then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary
unto thine adversaries." Exod.23:21-22.*

*"Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had
walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their
enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries."
Psal.81:13-14.*

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Brief Biographical Sketch

William Kiffin, 1616–1701, wealthy London Merchant, and English Particular Baptist. At a very young age he began to attend the preaching of a number of celebrated London ministers, including Mr. John Davenport, John Norton, and Jeremiah Burroughs. When the famous Mr. John Goodwin settled in London, about the latter end of 1632, Kiffin found himself regularly attending his ministry, which he at that time found much to his benefit. {Note: This was before Goodwin openly apostatized from the Gospel of God's Grace, for it was not until 1638, that Goodwin broached from the pulpit of St. Stephen's his opinions on justification by faith, taking a view which was already regarded as practically Arminian; and his defence of general redemption did not appear until 1651.} After some time, Kiffin joined himself to a Society of Independents, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Lothrop, and afterwards of Henry Jessey, who was then a prominent spokesperson on the behalf of those who dissented from all organized forms of institutional or state religion, also becoming a Fifth Monarchist around 1649. This assembly was to become the first Independent Church in London, a congregation of around sixty members which met at Southwark. Historians sometimes call this assembly the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church, named for its first three pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lothrop and Henry Jessey. Around 1641-2, during the ministry of Henry Jessey, Kiffin and few others adopted anti-paedobaptists principles, though remaining members of Jessey's congregation till around 1644. In 1644 Kiffin was one of the twelve signers of the London Confession of Faith; and also in 1646, of the slightly revised London Confession, essentially the first statements of faith, written by Particular Baptists, although addressing themselves as the "churches of

Christ in London, which are commonly, but unjustly called Anabaptists." Kiffin preached occasionally, which brought him into difficulty with the London Authorities, who were then bent on crushing any unauthorized or unlicensed preaching. For this reason, he was arrested for a meeting that had taken place in Southwark, and carried before Judge Thomas Mallet who committed him to the White Lion Prison, where he remained for some time a prisoner, from which situation the following sermon, {Observations on Hosea 2:7,8, &c.,} was given to the printers, namely to vindicate his person, as one attempting to simply proclaim the Gospel of Christ, without any other motives. In the years following Kiffin would become a successful London merchant, chiefly dealing in the woolen trade. In 1653 he was instrumental in establishing the Particular Baptist Church at Devonshire Square, of which he became its first preaching elder, an office which he held for over 40 years. Kiffin was on friendly terms with Oliver Cromwell, who appointed him a Member of Parliament for Middlesex in 1656. Throughout his long life Kiffin had his full share of hardships and persecution suffered by Non-Conformists in those early days. He was denounced as the ringleader of the Baptist 'sect' and had to endure many fines and imprisonments on that account. During his final years he continued to have an active part in many areas of life, but his chief concern throughout was the cause of God and Truth, for which he was held in great esteem by his brethren, who loved him in Christ. He died on December 29, 1701, and his body laid to rest in Bunhill Fields Graveyard.

**To the Right Worshipful, the Justices of the Peace
for his Majesties County of Surrey, the Author
Wishes Increase of the Knowledge of Jesus Christ,
Together with all Good Things.**

Right worth, it may seem strange unto you that such a one as I who have been judged an offender should be so bold as to go about to shelter anything under the shadow of your protection, as it may seem both to yourselves and others, I now do in resigning the ensuing matter unto you, but give me leave I beseech you a little to excuse my boldness herein, being induced hereunto by these considerations.

Because the providence of God so ordered it to call me before you, to give an account of my last practice in this thing, {namely,} why I should take unto me to preach having never been at the Universities, nor received orders from the Bishops.

To the which question, I answered, that I conceived I had a warrant for what I did from the Scriptures, namely I Peter 4:10, where it is said, "as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," where it appears to be manifest, that as no man in the things of God is to speak above what he knows, but according to the proportion of faith, so likewise ought no man to hide any of the things of God which he hath received from the Lord, but seasonably to declare them to the glory of God and the edification of others, lest he be found in the number of those who hides his talent in a napkin, and therefore being thus by the providence of God called before you to give a reason of my

action, and the hope that is in me, I made bold to present the perusal of what had been delivered unto your attention.

The second reason inducing me hereunto is because it was the request of some of you before whom I was examined, upon the hearing of the subject that I was upon, that you might see the notes of what was delivered upon it, which I promised to do, and have herein faithfully done it, not adding or detracting anything from it so far as possible I can remember, either in matter or manner, therefore have I made bold in this sort to present it to you.

The third and last reason is, because I apprehended by what I heard from you, that God hath given you in a good measure, knowledge by which you are able to judge of things that differ, and therefore have I presented these few things unto you which God was pleased to help me to deliver, not from any principles of any greatness that I perceived therein, but in observing that they were the truths of God, and such as ought to be embraced, I therefore present them to yourself, and to all to whom the providence of God hath directed them to, desiring your perusal thereof and requesting your observations thereupon; acknowledging with that suffering Apostle, and that with joy and comfort, though in a prison, that after the way which men call heresy, worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. Acts 24:14. Pardon I beseech my boldness, and if any terms have passed

from me which either derogates from your persons or places, impute it to my weakness rather than to the least willfulness or disrespect, for the Lord is my witness, I desire to honour both, as likewise all men in place of authority, as I am bound by the word of God to do, and though I'm accused and condemned for being at a conventicle, truly if praying for the King and Parliament and edifying one another in our most holy faith, be keeping conventicles, then I am guilty; but if a conventicle be such a meeting as in the least measure is against any of those, then I detest it and abhor it, desiring the Lord of Mercies to fill you with the knowledge of himself, that you may be faithful in your places of trust, your unworthy servant shall remain, your worships to command, to his power in the Lord, though a prisoner,

William Kiffin
White Lyon, 25 March 1642.

Certain Observations upon Hosea the Second

"And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them; then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." Hosea 2:7-8.

The Lord intending to set forth his own majesty and greatness, together with his love and goodness to the world, makes choice of a people whom in special he displays his glories before, and makes known his love and goodness unto, amongst the rest of God's ends and designs which he had in so doing, this is one, that he makes known to us, {namely,} that they might declare, and hold forth these excellencies of God to the world, which people were the children of Israel, as appears; and that these might excel above others he makes covenant with their fathers and them, Gen.17:7, and therefore claims a special interest in them, expecting more than ordinary things from them, as appears by Deuteronomy 14:1,2, where Moses tells them, "ye are the children of the LORD your God; ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." As if he should say, you are the peculiars of my love, and therefore I would have you

be peculiar in your carriages; and that there might be nothing wanting on God's part to make them complete herein, he therefore gives his laws unto Jacob, and his statutes unto Israel, not dealing so with any other nation. "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for his judgments, they have not known them." Psal.147:19-20. But now he having planted this noble vine, and expecting fruit proportionable to the means; but behold and see how soon they degenerated and fell from God, and followed the inventions of their own brain, and the suggestions of their own spirits. For no sooner were the ten tribes rent from Rehoboam to Jeroboam, but they were rent from the profession of God's truth, to the following of Baal! Which was occasioned by the subtle counsel of Jeroboam, who having gotten a kingdom thought to keep it by his own policy, rather than going in a way of truth, for if we look into the books of the Kings, you shall there find, that that which was the great masterpiece of policy, proved to be the great masterpiece of his misery, and the truth of God herein appearing to be made good, is well specified by the Apostle, Rom.8:7, the wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God.

But to come as briefly as I can unto the things intended in the words, you shall therefore find after their apostasy from God, the Lord is pleased to walk in a course of means towards them, which means was the sending of his prophets amongst them, to discover their evils unto them, that so they might be

reduced unto their former state and condition; amongst the rest this prophet Hosea was one, who doth in this first, and second chapter, declare unto them their sin, as likewise the threatenings of God against them for that sin, and that he might not bestow labour in vain there is therefore, {in the sixth and seventh verses of the second chapter,} declared the special means that God took which should take effect to reclaim some of them to himself, the means is laid down in the sixth verse, and further amplified in the seventh. In the sixth he saith that he will stop her, that he will hedge up her paths, and whereas it might be objected though they may be stopped and hedged up, yet love will make men leap through hedge and ditch, {as we say,} to which question is answer made in the seventh verse, although she doth follow her lovers, she shall not come at them, as if he should say, there shall not be left so much as a probability or possibility of means to come at them, so that in this seventh verse we may observe these four things.

1. The strength of these people's spirits in cleaving to affect her lovers, expressed in these words, following after them and seeking them.

2. The means which the Lord here uses to reclaim her from them, expressed in these words, "though she do seek after them, yet she shall not find them," she shall be disappointed of her ends therein.

3. The effect that this means wrought, {by the blessing of God upon it,} expressed in these words,

then she shall say, "I will return to my first husband, &c."

4. Here is laid a main motive or consideration that wrought upon her spirit expressed in the latter clause of the verse, "for then {saith she} it was better with me than now."

From the former part of the words we may observe thus much, namely, that there is an aptness of spirit even in men professing religion, which are in the visible Church of God, to forsake God, to follow other lovers, other gods, and this we shall see plainly proved to us, if we do but a little examine the Scriptures. In Jeremiah 2:13, the Lord there complains that my people have committed two evils, "they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," to dig them pits, even broken pits that will hold no water. We see here those that God owned for his people, even these forsake him, but before we further prove it, some may object and say, but what is it to forsake God, or how and when may men be said to forsake God? Answer, that usually in Scripture men are said to forsake God when they forsake the Law of God, the commandments of God, or the worship of God, and therefore saith the Lord to Moses, this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of a strange land, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them, as if he should say, by breaking my covenant they forsake me, and so in all which Scriptures prove, I Sam.8:8, Psal.78:56-59, 106:21, Num.14:2-4, that a people in outward

covenant with God have forsaken God, and that when they are said to forsake God is when they forsake the worship of God.

Now I come to the reasons how it comes to pass that such an aptness of spirit doth appear. First reason. Because the terms which other gods propound are most suitable unto men's carnal reasonings than the terms propounded by the Lord. Therefore in Ezekiel chapter 23, we read that, "Aholah played the harlot when she was mine," and she was set on fire with her lovers, the reason is given in verse six, which "were clothed with blue," and so indeed that honour and preferment which is held unto men, by the hand of the whore, as a cup of gold, draws all men, high and low, rich and poor, to commit spiritual fornication with her, whereas the terms which the God of heaven tenders to men {if they will follow him} is that they must suffer for his name's sake, and that foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not whereon to lay his head, the consideration of which terms, makes men many times turn off the profession of Jesus Christ, when tribulation or afflictions come, men are offended. Mark 4:17.

Second reason. Because men have more conversements with other gods, the hearts of men naturally have more commerce with the world and sin, and so with the worship set up by the men of the world, rather than with God and the things of God; and certainly where a man's thoughts are most pitched, there is his love and delight, for where the treasure is there will the heart be also, Matt.6:21,

and therefore saith the apostle, Demas hath forsaken us and embraced this present world, II Tim.4:10, as if the apostle should say, he hath considered things beforehand concerning the world and hath found by his conversements with it, that the world is good, and therefore now he hath embraced this present world, he hath given up the strength of his heart and affections to it, as on the contrary, when the soul begins to have his thoughts pitched upon the Lord, and hath his spirit raised up, to behold the loveliness and glory, fullness and excellency that is in Jesus Christ, the soul upon these considerations closes with Jesus Christ, embraces Christ, and saith concerning him, as the Church saith in the like case concerning Christ, "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Song.1:13. Oh saith the soul, Christ shall have the chiefest seat of residence in my heart, and his laws shall bare sway in my life; what though I am imprisoned, reproached, disgraced, counted a sectarian, one that troubles the state, yet this is no trouble at all unto such a heart, for he looks up to Christ, desiring with him to endure the cross, and despise the shame; but on the contrary men's hearts being set upon the creature, and their desires being set upon excellencies here, reject the excellency of Jesus Christ, and the profession of his truth.

Third reason. And last, why men in an external covenant with God, those that God owns as his, may fall back and degenerate, is because that men may, and, {they which have more in them than

ordinary men, even the saints of God themselves, } neglect their spiritual watch, and suffer their spirits to wander, and then it's no marvel that he who wanders up and down the whole earth seeking whom he may devour, I Pet.5:8, doth meet with this wandering spirit, and turn it out of the way, and so we see David's eye was as wandering upon Bathsheba, and Satan soon caught him in a snare, as you may see in II Sam.11:2-4, these with many other reasons might be laid down for the confirmation of this truth, but I judge these may suffice.

The second thing observable from the words is the means itself used by God to reduce them to their former state laid down in these words, "though she seek after her lovers she shall not come at them," as if he should say, I will take a sure course with them to reclaim them to myself, though she do go a whoring after her lovers and follows other gods and loves to do so, she shall not find them, that is, she shall have no contentment, nor satisfaction in them as formally she hath done. From whence we may observe, that when God intends to do any soul good, either to reclaim them from a fallen condition, or to bring persons to the knowledge of Himself, the usual way that he takes herein is to discover to them the emptiness and insufficiency of all things that are here below; as not being able to give any contentment or satisfaction to the soul. There is something of this truth appearing in the 14th verse of this chapter, where the Lord saith, "I will bring her into the wilderness." Hos.2:14. Now we know

that a wilderness condition is a condition destitute of all help, as nothing is to be found therein but wild beasts ready to devour, and no help is to be expected in the wilderness from it; so indeed when men are brought into a wilderness condition having neither penny nor pennies worth as the prophet saith, Isa.55:1; then is God pleased to speak comfort to his people and then doth he cause them to look upwards. But for fuller proof, see there the ground of their return to God, truly {say they} "in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains, truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." Jer.3:23. When they were brought to see the strength of all things to help them was but weakness, then they cry, in the Lord our God is the health of Israel. Likewise in Ecclesiastes 1:2, Solomon after his setting his heart to find contentment in the creature and after his following other gods and forsaking the Lord who had appeared twice unto him, you shall find upon his return that this is the account that he leaves behind him, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The reason why God takes such a course with men is because while the soul sees any fullness in anything in heaven or earth whereby to lean to besides Christ, it will fasten at the horns of that altar; be it what it will, and never make any further search or inquiry after Christ. The carriage of the soul in this case is like the carriage of Jacob in another, for while there was corn in Canaan, Jacob never thinks, nor mentions going into Egypt, but when there was none there, then saith old Jacob,

“behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.” Gen.42:2. So indeed, while there is any food to be gotten for the soul here below it looks no higher, and therefore it is that the Lord is pleased to cut off all springs of comfort and peace to be had from anything here below, that so the soul may see Jesus Christ to be he who has all the wellsprings of comfort, peace, joy, and refreshment to the soul.

Let us a little from the consideration of this doctrine examine our own spirits, and see how our hearts stand affected, or what our spirits are fraught with, whether with high conceits of the world, of the excellency and fullness and glory thereof; or whether with the excellent fullness and goodness that is in Jesus Christ? Certainly this is an undoubted truth, that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in them, let them profess what they will; therefore it behooves every man to look about him, and see whether God hath ever yet made this discovery to the soul; namely, that all the things of the world are empty, poor and weak, not able to give out the least dram of true comfort to the soul. I beseech you, let us again ask our hearts this question, as Christ did in the like case, “are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” Matt.20:22.

We do not know what employment Christ may put us upon, certain it is, that that heart which is in the last engaged to the world, will never do any

great matters for Jesus Christ, for he will play fast and loose with Christ, and this we all profess to know that we cannot serve two masters. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." These being so opposite one to each other, that if we obey the one, we must reject the other. Wherefore let us commune with our own hearts, and see a little how our spirits stand affected to Christ. Do we find upon serious examination that Christ and his laws do bear sway in our hearts and the excellency that is in them doth in the eyes of our souls weigh down all those riches, honors, pleasures and desires of the world? Nay, more than this, do you see so much excellency in God's ways as that it will bear your charges with great allowance through those miseries, sorrows, reproaches and losses that you shall sustain in this life; yea, even life itself. Paul when he cast up his account of matters of this nature, triumphs in that glorious allowance that he saw provided for him by God, "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." II Cor.4:17. Wherefore let us not rest satisfied with a face of profession, but let us labour to make inquiry into our own heart and see what discoveries God hath made to us of the creature emptiness, and of his own fullness in Christ.

We may from the doctrine delivered see the reason why the Lord many times is pleased to strip his own people naked of creature comforts, it is that so the Lord may discover to his people, the emptiness, the shallowness and vanity of all things outside of Christ, so that they may see more

fullness, yea even all fullness in himself, and therefore though the world misconstrue God's meanings to his saints in his carriages towards them in the passages of his providence, in saying that they are poor and mean, and the off-scouring of the world, and the Lord regards them not; yet let not the servants of God misconstrue his meaning too, for this will but aggravate their sorrow, but let us see what the Scripture saith, and consult therein. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." Jas.2:5. This is a thing worthy of serious attention, that God should choose poor nothings of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; and this is most usually found, that the meaner the saints conditions are in the world, the fuller and richer are they in faith, and in communion with Jesus Christ; and therefore if God be pleased to take away wife or children, or friends, or liberty, or estate, if God be pleased to take away any of these from us and to empty us of these, we should labour to make that use of it which the Lord expects that we should, namely, to see more fullness in him from whom we have all our mercies.

The third thing laid down in the words, is the fruit or effect that the means wrought upon her, expressed in these words, "then shall they say, I will go and return to my first husband," where we may take notice under what consideration she returns home to God, and that is here declared under the consideration of a husband; she doth not say, I will

return to my Saviour, and so expect salvation from him, but to my husband, to him, to whom I desire to yield subjection and obedience as a loving spouse ought to do, from whence we may observe thus much.

That Jesus Christ is the only Head and Husband, Lord and Lawgiver of his church and people, for proof of which let us examine the Scriptures. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," Eph.1:22-23, that fullness which the body hath it hath from the Head. So in Ephesians 4:15,16, where the apostle exhorts them, that they would not be tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men that lie in wait to deceive, and that they might prevent this evil, he lays down this means, "but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church," Eph.5:23, and so in Colossians, "and he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Col.1:18. "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us." Isa.33:22.

Now for the reasons how it comes to pass that Jesus Christ is the only Head and Husband, Lord and Lawgiver of his church.

First reason. Because the church of Christ is sprung up from the loins of Christ, they have been taken out of the very sides of Christ, for alas this we are all to know, that though we were glorious in the loins of our first parents in the day of our creation, for though God made man righteous, yet he sought out many inventions. Eccl.7:29. The creature man soon lost his glory and became vile and miserable, and so had continued, had not Jesus Christ stepped between the misery of the creature and the wrath of his Father, and by his own blood made up that great breach which sin had made between the creature man, and the great Creator, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Had it not been for Christ, there had not so much as the name of the Church of God been heard of upon the face of the earth; therefore as Adam claims propriety in Eve because she proceeded from his side, saying, this is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, she shall therefore be called woman, so may Jesus Christ claim a propriety and interest in the church to be the Lord and Husband thereof, because it proceeds from his very loins and his very side.

Second reason: Because Jesus Christ hath bought his Church, they are the travail of his soul, the glory of his Mediatorial work; and seeing that Jesus Christ hath travailed for his Church, and by his travails hath brought forth a glorious deliverance to his Church; that now his Church should be subject

to him, and yield obedience to his laws; seeing Christ hath satisfied God his Father by his own blood, is it not reason that we should live to his praise and honour. Is it reason that when a mother hath undergone a sore travail and pain with a child, and at last when the child is through many difficulties and hazards of the woman's life brought forth, that another woman that stands by, when the child is delivered, should snatch it up and say, "this child shall be subject unto me and own me for its mother; and what I command it, so shall it do; and what I command it to wear, it shall wear." Would not this be counted injurious dealing with this poor woman that hath suffered so much in bringing forth the child; that now she should be deprived of the comfort of bringing it up; and is it not as injurious dealing with Jesus Christ, that seeing he hath travailed for his Church, and brought forth his Church, that now other men should snatch it from his hands and prescribe laws unto them, which they would force their consciences to be subject unto? Therefore by way of use, in the first place this serves to reprove all these persons that so do; for certainly Jesus Christ will one day take vengeance upon all such persons; and sure it is, that the Church being the glory of his Mediatorial work, he will not give his glory to any other, nor his praise to graven images; but though men do now labour to dis-throne Christ, yet there is a time coming wherein Jesus Christ will dis-throne all his enemies and will reign gloriously in the midst of them all; as he will make his enemies his footstool, and "the mountain of the house of the

LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills." Therefore let all men for the time to come take heed how they prescribe any laws for the government of the Church, that they step not up in Christ's stead, but this let all men know, that Christ hath prescribed laws already which are perfect and pure, by which he both hath, doth, and will govern his Church, and therefore let this be the duty of us all, to labour to know what these laws and rules are, that so we may be more and more subject unto them, that we dishonour not Jesus Christ, by giving anything to any other, which is only of right due unto Him.

If it be so that Christ is the Head and Husband of his church and people, then in the next place we may take notice of the wonderful and singular love of Jesus Christ towards a poor company of creatures; that Christ should stand under such a near relation to them as a husband, there is no reason can be given, in respect of us why Christ should do it, we may find reason enough in ourselves why Christ should loathe us, condemn us, reject us; but that he should love us, stand as a husband to us, we must seek a reason of this elsewhere than from ourselves, and truly the Scripture doth declare the reason fully to us in the second chapter of Hosea. "And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the LORD." Hos.2:19-20. The Lord marries his church unto himself in mercy and

compassion, it has been the mere mercies and compassions of Jesus Christ working in his own breast, which hath brought this great and mighty work to pass, and truly the serious consideration of this thing, were it well weighed by us, would cause us to be willing to be anything, to do anything, yea to suffer anything for him, who has been and done and suffered so much for us. "But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes," Ezek.36:21-23, and, "then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." Ezek.36:31.

This exhorts all of us, that seeing Jesus Christ is the Head of his church, &c., we should from hence be exhorted to yield subjection to Jesus Christ and his laws in all things. And first of all, our subjection to Christ must be free subjection. Secondly, it must be universal subjection. Thirdly, it must be perpetual subjection.

First, our subjection to Christ and his laws must be free, that is, it must be raised within us from

the very consideration of that excellency that is in Christ and his laws, and from no by-end whatsoever. This was David's frame, for saith he, "I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts," Psal.119:94, as if he should say, I seek them merely for that excellency that I see in them, for many may outwardly be subject to Christ, but yet not under this consideration, but as Christ saith, "you seek me for the loaves," Jn.6:26, so may Christ say to many, you seek me, you yield outward subjection to me, not freely from that excellency that is in me, but for your own by-ends and respects, but we must know that that subjection which Christ calls for must be free.

Secondly, our subjection must be universal, for Christ calls for all, "for there is one God; and there is none other but he, and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12:33. "For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." I Cor.6:20.

Thirdly, it must be perpetual, Christ cannot endure that any should deal deceitfully with him, but we must prove constant unto him whatever it costs us. "Be thou faithful unto death," Rev.2:10; "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Lk.1:74-75. Christ expects that his people should serve him in holiness and

righteousness all the days of their lives. Not just a little season for a time, but constantly, and if we do but a little cast our eye upon Christ, we shall see that which may engage us hereunto, as Christ's love was a free love; secondly, it was a full love; and thirdly, it was a durable love, for whom he loves once he loves to the end. "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." John 13:1. And therefore we should be engaged freely and universally and constantly to submit to Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, is for consolation to the servants of God that have given up themselves to be swayed by the scepter of Christ; I say consolation in divers particulars; as first if Christ be thy husband, then be comforted in this, that he will provide for thee. "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing." Psal.34:10. "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." Isa.54:4-5.

Thirdly, as we may expect provision and protection from Christ, so preservation also. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb.13:5. It is not anything that men or devils can do that can in

anyway, by any of their subtleties or persecutions separate Jesus Christ from the soul, but as Christ saith, because I live you shall live also, John 14:19, and therefore when there was but such a conception raised in the heart of the church, "but Zion said, the LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me," Isa.49:14-16, as if he should say, it's as possible for men to pull away my strength from myself, as to pull away my people from me, which seems to be held out in these words, "behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Now that which is engraven in a man's hands, is as it were made one with the hand; for you may as well pull away the part of the hand as the inscription in the hand, so indeed so deeply are the people of God interested into that great attribute of God's strength, that men and devils may as soon pull God out of heaven as the saints out of God's hands.

The fourth thing which is observable in the words, and that is the motive by which she is provoked to return to her first husband, laid down in these words, "for it was better with me than now," the consideration of that goodness that formally she had found in God's ways, did mightily provoke her to return again, from whence we may observe thus much.

That it is ever best with the servants of God and churches of Christ when they keep closest to God. What it is to keep close to God we have already showed, that to keep close to God is to keep close to the Law of God, the Commandments of God; now that it is best both with persons and churches, when they so do, will appear by the Scripture. Saith the Lord by Jeremiah, "go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." What then did they lose anything by it? No certainly, in the following verse we find that Israel was a thing hallowed to the Lord, and his firstfruits, "Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase, all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD." Jer.2:2-4. We see that God takes special notice of it, and tells them that Israel was hallowed to the Lord, God himself sets them apart as people excellent in his eye, and so did he esteem of them, that men had better have taken a bear by the teeth {as we say} than to have meddled with them, "evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord." In Exodus, see what the Lord there saith, "now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Exod.19:5-6. Those that God owns as his chief treasure, are such as obey his voice, and keep his covenant, "but this

thing commanded I them, saying, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." Jer.7:23. It is and hath been well with the Saints, when they have closely walked in the ways of God. "And say thou unto them, thus saith the LORD God of Israel; cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you, so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God, that I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, so be it, O LORD." Jer.11:3-5.

Reason One. Why it's best with the servants of God when they cleave closest to Christ is because those who so do are kept by God from that disaster of sorrow, and shame, and confusion that engulfs others who forsake him, therefore saith David, "then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psal.119:6, whereas he likewise says, "confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." Psal.97:7. In Jeremiah we find these words, "we lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us, {the reason is given,} for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God." Jer.3:25. It's sin that

brings shame and confusion of face, and when the soul walks closely with the Lord, it shall be sure to be kept from shame, for what is it that makes men ashamed and confounded? It is when they are frustrated of their hopes, of their expectations, of what they thought to enjoy in the way wherein they walked, but now the servants of God shall be sure never to be frustrated of their hopes, for what they expect from any promise of God made by God unto them, they shall be sure it will be performed in its season. It's true that there may be many things which are imposed upon them by men, as reproaches and scoffs and imprisonments, &c., which they think is matter of shame, but even these things are looked upon by the Saints as matter of honour and joy. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5:41.

Reason 2. Is because those that keep closest to the commands of God, are most honoured by God, and it must needs be well with those whom the Lord will honour, for these are they whom God will employ in his special service, being made vessels of honour fit for every good work, for those which walk closest to God in the doing of his will, are those whom God most usually employs in that most honourable service of suffering for his namesake, and you shall always find {since the coming of Christ in the flesh} that those churches and persons that have most shined in the way of innocency and holiness towards God, have been most liable to

persecutions and afflictions from man; you shall see that church of Smyrna, which Christ had nothing against, Rev.2:9-10, was that church which of all the rest had suffered, and was like to suffer most for his namesake; and therefore as faith is the gift of God wherein those who have it bestowed upon them excel other men, so suffering for Christ is as well an excellent gift of God, given as a special favour to some of the saints. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake," Phil.1:29, by which they walk as it were upon a higher ground above their brethren, having the spirit of glory and of God resting upon them, I Pet.4:14, and so in Revelation 3:4, "thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments," and did they lose anything by cleaving to God, by keeping their garments undefiled? No saith the Lord, these are they that I own, "they shall walk before me in white, for they are worthy." And therefore though this may be a reason which may seem to beat off some from the profession of Christ, yet it should rather engage the saints to follow Christ, and to keep close to his ways, as knowing, that those that honour God, he will honour them; and wherein can men honour God more than by a close walking in conformity to his will?

Reason 3. Why it is best with the Saints when they cleave to the Lord is because that those who so do are not only kept from shame and confusion, but likewise they are kept from those distracting fears that are ready to lay hold on persons of all sorts in

times of danger, and therefore saith David, "I will not be afraid of evil tidings," and what was the reason thereof? He gives it himself, "because, {saith he,} my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Psal.112:7. It's like if David's heart had been wandering anywhere else, then he would quickly have feared evil tidings, but he now, {having his heart engaged, cleaving to the Lord,} feareth them not, and in the 23rd Psalm, David exclaims, that the Lord, "restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Psal.23:3-4. Mark I pray, when once David was brought to walk in the paths of righteousness, then, {saith he,} though I walk even in the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear, as if he should say, "though my life be as near taken away from me, as the shadow of a man is to a man, yet I will not fear, for I walking in the paths of righteousness know, that thou art with me." And truly it is no small privilege, {especially in times of fears,} to be kept and secured from fears, for many times the consequences that fears produce upon a person brings more dangerous events along with it, than if the very thing feared had come upon them, and more is required to keep a man from the fear of danger than from the danger itself, as for instance, a little apparel will keep a man from nakedness, when a great deal both of money and apparel will not keep him from the fear of nakedness, and therefore if ye would be kept in times of trouble from

overflowing fears of trouble, then keep close to the Lord, for in so doing you will see so much fullness of strength, and mercy and love in Christ, as will swallow up all other inordinate fears.

If it be so, that it is best with the servants of God when they keep closest to him, let us then who profess the name of Christ, and appear to be in the number of those who are made nigh unto God by the blood of Christ, let us be exhorted therefore to take heed of backsliding, and let us labour to know that first it is an easy thing to backslide, if we consider the many provocations hereunto by reason of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the snares of the world, with the subtleties of Satan. And secondly, it is a dangerous thing to backslide if we do but consider, from whom we backslide, namely God, who is the fountain of life and the giver of all mercies.

Secondly, to that which we backslide, namely, to that which is not able to relieve us, nor help us in any misery or straight that we shall fall into.

Thirdly, if we consider what the carriages of God hath been, and is to backsliders, you shall see that it is dangerous, "now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb.10:38. We shall therefore for the preventing of this great evil, lay down some signs of a soul declining from God; and secondly, we shall lay down some means of prevention.

The signs of declination are these, first a disregarding of the truth of Christ, when the minds of men grow weary of the truths of Christ, and their

estimations of truth, {which formally hath been,} slackens, it's one sure sign of declination. "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, thus saith God, why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you." II Chron.24:20.

A second sign is, when men begin to grow distrustful of God, and his truth, when many things which God hath said in his words seems harsh to men's spirits, so that they cannot well relish them, as of those in the Gospel according to John, when the sayings of Christ began to be hard and harsh unto them, and they drew back. "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, this is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." John 6:60-66.

A third sign is unfruitfulness under the means and mercies which God bestows. Luke 13:7. When

men shall rather turn the truth of God which they have received into notions, and please themselves more with talking of truth than of practicing what they know, then it is a sign that truth is bidding them farewell, and they it.

The fourth sign is the love of the world, when men's spirits begin to hanker after the world or the honour thereof, they will soon lose Christ and his truth. "For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith," I Tim.6:10, and therefore from love to Christ, for he that loves the world had rather lose Jesus Christ than the world, and it must needs be so, because he loves it.

Fifthly, and lastly, another sign is spiritual pride, self-confidence, for "before destruction the heart of man is haughty," Prov.18:12, when a man is proud of that which is of his own, it's no marvel if he soon prove a spiritual bankrupt, therefore I beseech you, let us look to ourselves and if any man think that he stands, let him take heed lest he fall. I Cor.10:12. Therefore to prevent it let us consider of some means.

First, let us labour for soundness of judgment in the truths of God, that so we may receive nothing upon other men's judgments, and reports, but trying all things we may hold fast to that which is good, for ignorance is the mother of error, and a corrupted life doth soon follow an erroneous judgment; wherefore let us be often in searching the Scripture and seeking of God by prayer, that he would be pleased to unfold those glorious mysteries of his will in his

Word unto us by his Spirit, that so we may be enabled to judge of things that differ.

Secondly, let us also labour to receive the truth in the love of it, for when truth is received by men under this consideration of love; when men see an excellency in truth and love the truth from that excellency that they see in it, they will labour after it. It is the property of love to do much, and suffer much; and yet it looks upon all that it doth; and suffers as little, because where true love is, it will produce effects suitable to itself. See this in that love of God, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, &c." John 3:16. Mark, if once God cast an eye of love upon a creature, this very love will produce an effect suitable to its nature, even the giving of Jesus Christ to die for that creature; so indeed if once the love of our souls be given unto the excellency of the truth, then our lives, our liberties, our estates, or friends will follow roundly; but if there be a defect in our love to the truth, there will soon be a defect in our standing to, or suffering for truth.

Thirdly, let us consider that the truth of God is the portion of the Saints, and if we lose truth we lose Jesus Christ. Where will you have comfort and where will you have salvation, if you lose truth? And therefore saith Solomon, "take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life." Prov.4:13. Therefore David also hath recourse upon all occasions to the Word. Psalm 119. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in

my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me," Psal.119:49,50, as if he should say, I have no other companion in my troubles but it; and so in the 92nd verse of the same Psalm saith he, "unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." And therefore as worldly men surround themselves with all they have, by what they have and are in the world, so let the servants of God surround themselves with what they have and are; that is, by nothing but what they have in Jesus Christ, who dwells in the truth, and conveys himself through the truth into the hearts and consciences of his people, and therefore let us labour to possess it as our portion, and if Naboth would rather incur the displeasure of the King than part with the inheritance given him by his fathers, I Kings 21:3,4, how much more should we be willing to incur the displeasure of all men, rather than to lose any part of the truth of Jesus Christ given unto us, and purchased for us, as so dear a rate as his own precious blood.

Now we should come to the next words expressed in the eighth verse, "for she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal." These words seems to be a main reason here given by God of this people declining from him, and that is laid down in the general to be the not taking notice nor observing the mercies and favours of God given unto her. In which words four things are to be considered.

First, the mercies themselves laid down in these words, "corn, and wine and oil, &c." secondly, the Author of these mercies, under the term, "I gave them," that is, God. Thirdly, the persons to whom these mercies were given, they were the children of Israel. Fourthly, the carriage of this people towards God, in the enjoyment of these mercies, and that is here declared.

First, they took no notice of them, from what hand they came, expressed in these words, "for she did not know that I gave her corn, &c." Secondly, in spending them, it should seem she taking no notice from whom the mercies came, takes as little notice or care how they go, which appears in these words, "which they have spent upon Baal," the words being thus considered, we may observe several things from them, for our instruction and comfort.

First, that God is the only giver of every mercy and favour that the creature doth enjoy. Secondly, that it is the duty of the saints to take special notice of the mercies and favours which God gives them. Third, that the not taking notice of the mercy and favour of God is a special means to occasion men to depart from God.

As concerning the first observation, that God is the only giver of every mercy and favour that we enjoy, I conceive none will deny the truth thereof, because it is both a common truth, and that which all generally will acknowledge. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," Jas.1:17,

and therefore the consideration of this truth should teach all of us to take notice of the mercy of God in all the good things we enjoy, to behold God in all the passages of his providence to us, and so if we have any riches, any honours, any friends, any grace, any gifts, all come from God. And therefore we should take heed of sacrificing anything to our own nets, Acts 7:41, but as all mercies we receive come from God, so we must give the glory of all only to him who is only worthy of all honour and glory and praise for evermore.

These being the observations, and this the substance of all the matter which God was pleased to help me to deliver, whereof I was apprehended as I am publicly called to suffer for the truth I was enabled to set forth, so I am not unwilling being requested to declare them to all, to such, and unto any it pleases God by his good providence to dispose of them, desiring that all persons should try all things, and hold fast to that which is good. I Thes.5:21.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Rom.1:16.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

II Tim.1:8.

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