

# Unbelief

## INDEX TO UNBELIEF:

- [Introduction](#)
- [Unbelief Defined - Using A Compendium of Quotes](#)
- [Greek Words for Unbelief](#)
- [Causes/Associations of Unbelief](#)
- [Quotes On Unbelief](#)
- [Unbelief - Hastings Dictionary](#)
- [Torrey's Topic - Unbelief](#)
- [Nave's Topic - Unbelief](#)
- [Thompson Chain References - Unbelief](#)
- [Unbelief - A Marvel - J C Ryle](#)
- [A Discourse of Unbelief. Proving it is the Greatest Sin - Stephen Charnock](#) (In Depth!)

## INTRODUCTION

In English unbelief means lack of belief, a rejection of belief, mental rejection, lack of faith, incredulity, skepticism, disbelief, including disbelief of any claims of absolute or ultimate knowledge. Unbelief is the refusal and/or reluctance to believe.

**Synonyms:** disbelief, distrust, doubt, doubting, hesitancy, hesitation, incredulity, indecision, irresolution, misgiving, perplexity, question, scruple, skepticism, suspense, suspicion, uncertainty

**Antonyms:** assurance, belief, certainty, confidence, conviction, decision, determination, persuasion, resolution, resolve

John gives us a Biblical definition of **UNBELIEF** writing in his description of the work of the Holy Spirit (read context Jn 16:7,8,9,10,11) "concerning **sin**, because they **do not believe** in Me." (Jn 16:9) The New Living Translation paraphrases it "The world's **sin** is that it **refuses to believe** in me." **Marcus Dods** writes "that because ([hoti](#)) is in [apposition](#) (construction in which a noun or phrase is placed with another noun as an explanatory equivalent) with the foregoing [substantive](#) = word or phrase functioning as a noun), and is explanatory of the ground of the conviction ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#)) **Albert Barnes** adds "Sin, in general, is any violation of a law of God, but the particular sin of which men are here said to be convinced is that of rejecting the Lord Jesus (aka UNBELIEF). This is placed first, and is deemed the sin of chief magnitude, as it is the principal one of which men are guilty....Sinners, when awakened, often feel that it has been the great crowning sin of their lives that they have rejected the tender mercy of God, and trampled on the blood of His Son; and that they have for months and years refused to submit to Him, saying that they would not have Him to reign over them....Throughout the New Testament this (UNBELIEF) is regarded as the sin that is pre-eminently offensive to God, and which, if unrepented of, will certainly lead to perdition, Mk 16:16; Jn 3:36+. Hence, it is placed first in those sins of which the Spirit will convince men; and hence if we have not yet been brought to see our guilt in rejecting God's tender mercy through His Son, we are yet in the gall of bitterness and under the bond of iniquity (cf Acts 8:23+)." ([Barnes Notes](#)) **Jamieson** writes "As all **sin** has its root in **unbelief**, so the most aggravated form of **unbelief** is the rejection of Christ. The Spirit, however, in fastening this truth upon the conscience, does not extinguish, but, on the contrary, does consummate and intensify, the sense of all other sins." ([Commentary](#)) **John MacArthur** writes "The singular form of [hamartias](#) (sin) refers not to sin in general but specifically to the ultimate sin of refusing to believe in Jesus Christ. It is that sin that finally damns people, since all others are forgiven when a person believes savingly in Him (cf. Mt. 12:31-32+)." (MNTC-Jn) **Merrill Tenney** writes "The essence of **sin** is **unbelief**, which is not simply a casual incredulity nor a difference of opinion; rather, it is a total rejection of God's messenger and message." Finally, **Leon Morris** sums it up noting that "The basic sin is the sin which puts self at the centre of things and consequently refused to believe in Him." (NICNT-Jn)

**Adrian Rogers** - **Unbelief** is what locked the doors of the Promised Land to the children of Israel (Nu 13:2, 31, 14:11). For all the grumbling, bad attitudes, and discontentment that characterized their demeanor after leaving Egypt, it was their **unbelief** that kept them at a distance from God's promised reward (Nu 14:26-30, 34). Jesus, too, allowed the people's unbelief to tie His hands on His ministry visit to His hometown. The Bible clearly says, "He did not do many miracles there because of their **unbelief**" (Mt. 13:58+). The sovereign God has limited Himself to work according to the faith and belief of the people of God."

**Wendell Johnson** - People who deny or refuse to believe what God has revealed about Himself and eternal life are in a state of

**unbelief.**

**Richard Hawker** - It should seem that amidst the deadly poison infused into our nature by the great enemy of souls, this poison of **unbelief** was his master-piece, of contrivance. And to say the truth, it is of all others, the most diabolical and ruinous. For it denies the sovereignty of divine mercy: it sets at nought, the infinite merit and value of Christ's blood and righteousness. It is said concerning the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, "that he did not many mighty works there, because of their **unbelief**." (Matthew 13:58+) Yea, the Lord declares the sin of **unbelief** to be unpardonable: "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk 16:16) And his servant, the beloved apostle John, confirms the awful account, when in the close of the canon of Scripture, he saith that "the fearful and **unbelieving** shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8+) How solemnly the apostle to the Hebrews sums up the history of those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, when he saith, "So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief**." (Hebrews 3:19+) ([Ref](#))

**American Tract Society - Unbelief** - Of the testimony of God makes him a liar, and is a sin of the greatest enormity. It is the work of a depraved and guilty heart; for no one without this bias could reject the abundant witness God furnishes of the truth of his word, Psalm 14:1 . Especially is **unbelief** towards an offered Savior an unspeakable crime, justly sealing the condemnation of him who thus refuses to be saved, John 5:18+ 1 John 5:10+. (American Tract Society)

## UNBELIEF DEFINED USING A [COMPENDIUM](#) OF QUOTES

**WHAT IS UNBELIEF?** **Unbelief** in the face of evidence is either stupidity or sin (ED: REALLY BOTH!). All **unbelief** is the belief of a lie. In all **unbelief** there are these two things: a good opinion of one's self (A LIE) and a bad opinion of God (ANOTHER LIE). **Unbelief**... is always proud....always conceited. **Unbelief** is in itself the fruit of an evil heart. **Unbelief** was the first sin, and pride was the first-born of it. Disobedience and **unbelief** are two sides of the same coin. **Unbelief** in the biblical view is not *passive*, an innocent but inaccurate view of the world that has unfortunately 'got it wrong' at a few points. Rather, **unbelief** is *active*, driven by a dark dynamism. **Unbelief** is at the bottom of all our staggerings (unsteadiness) at God's promises. The real heart of **unbelief** is seeking your own way while you leave God out. **Unbelief** is the sin most insulting to God. **Unbelief** is the great obstruction to Christ's favors. All **unbelief**, then, is rejection of the Son of God. Whatever be its evasions, and subterfuges, and excuses, and fair pretenses, this is its essence—rejection of Jesus Christ. **Unbelief** is the mother of sin, and misbelief the nurse of it. **Unbelief** may truly be called the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the remedy. **Unbelief** is the shield of every sin. **Unbelief**, or distrust of God, is a sin that is its own punishment. **Unbelief**... makes the world a moral desert, where no divine footsteps are heard, where no angels ascend and descend, where no living hand adorns the fields, feeds the birds of heaven, or regulates events. **Unbelief** is a matter not only of the head but of the heart. The unbeliever's trouble is that his heart is not right with God. **Unbelief** is radically all other disobedience. **Unbelief** is not failure in intellectual apprehension. It is disobedience in the presence of the clear commands of God. The natural man does not want to believe that God has spoken. **Unbelief** makes God a liar and, worse still, a perjurer, for it accounts Him as not only false to His word, but to His oath. **Unbelief** is far, far more than entertaining an erroneous conception of God's way of salvation: it is a species of hatred against Him. **Unbelief** is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime. No sin makes less noise, but none so surely damns the soul, as **unbelief**. **Unbelief** about the existence and personality of Satan has often proved the first step to **unbelief** about God. **Unbelief** is the root of apostasy. We can never be too much on our guard against **unbelief**. It is the oldest sin in the world. **Unbelief** calls itself '*honest doubt*', and not without cause, for we should not have known it to be honest if it had not labelled itself so. **Unbelief** will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us. **Unbelief** is so deeply rooted in the human heart that when God performs miracles on earth, **unbelief** doubts whether He can perform them in heaven, and when He does them in heaven, whether He can do them on earth. Human **unbelief** cannot alter the character of God. Infidelity is the mother of apostasy. Faith unlocks the divine storehouse, but **unbelief** bars its doors. **Unbelief** is the foul medley of all sins, the root and receptacle of sin. The root of all apostasy is the primal sin of **unbelief**. **Unbelief**, on the other hand, is our greatest stumbling block in life. **Unbelief** is the chief wickedness. **Unbelief** is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin. It is the sin of all sins. **Unbelief** caused Eve to sin against God in the Garden of Eden. She failed to believe the Word of God. **Unbelief** will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us. ([Individual Quotes below](#))

## GREEK WORDS FOR UNBELIEF

### THREE GREEK WORDS

## FOR UNBELIEF/DISBELIEVE/UNBELIEVING

(1) **Unbelief** (570) (**apistia** from **a** = without + **pistós** = believing, faithful) means literally not believing = faithlessness, distrust, lack of belief. It describes an unwillingness to commit oneself to another or respond positively to the other's words or actions, in this case the words of the One Who was Himself the Living Word! **Apistia** - Mt 13:58; Mk 6:6; Mk 9:24; Mk 16:14; Ro 3:3; Ro 4:20; Ro 11:20; Ro 11:23; 1 Ti 1:13; Heb 3:12<sup>+</sup>; Heb 3:19<sup>+</sup> = "So we see that they were not able to enter because of **unbelief** (**apistia**). Now read Hebrews 3:18<sup>+</sup> and notice what parallels with **unbelief**. Did you see it? **Unbelief** equates with **disobedient** (**apeitheo**). True belief is obedient! See [Obedience of faith](#)

### NT Uses of apistia:

Matthew 13:58 And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Mark 6:6 And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

Mark 9:24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief."

Mark 16:14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Romans 3:3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

Romans 4:20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

Romans 11:20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;

Romans 11:23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

1 Timothy 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

Hebrews 3:12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

Hebrews 3:19 So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

(2) **Disbelieve** (refuse to believe) (569) (**apisteo** from **a** = without + **pistós** = believing, faithful) means literally without believing. They refuse to believe and thus are unfaithful. To disbelieve, to doubt or not to acknowledge. To betray a trust. Unbelief is a failure to respond to God with trust (**pistis**) and at heart shows, not doubt, but rejection **Vine** feels that "disbelieve" is the best rendering, implying that the unbeliever has had a full opportunity of believing and has rejected it.

### NT uses of apisteo:

Mark 16:11 When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they **refused to believe** it.

Mark 16:16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has **disbelieved** shall be condemned.

Luke 24:11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they **would not believe** them.

Luke 24:41 While they still **could not believe** it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

Acts 28:24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others **would not believe**. (would not be persuaded)

Romans 3:3 What then? If some **did not believe**, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?

(3) **Unbelieving** (571) (**apistos** from **a** = without + **pistos** = believing, faithful) means lacking in faith, without faith, disbelieving, unbelieving - in this [context](#) **apistos** is one who does not believe the Good News about Jesus Christ (1Ti 5:8; Titus 1:15; Rev 21:8). It is used once to describe that which is incredible (Acts 26:8), but most NT uses describe those without faith, not trusting, unfaithful. In secular Greek use **apistos** described reports, etc as *incredible*. **BDAG** gives an example of an ancient secular use of **apistos** in the description of "a patient (who) sneers in disbelief at healings recorded in a shrine of Asclepius and subsequently receives the sobriquet (a descriptive name)" "*Apistos*"

**NT uses of apistos:** Twice in the Septuagint - Pr 17:6, Isa 17:109

Matthew 17:17 And Jesus answered and said, "You **unbelieving** and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me."

Mark 9:19 And He \*answered them and \*said, "O**unbelieving** generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!"

Luke 9:41 And Jesus answered and said, "You **unbelieving** and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

Luke 12:46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the **unbelievers**.

John 20:27 Then He \*said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be **unbelieving**, but believing."

Acts 26:8 "Why is it considered **incredible** among you people if God does raise the dead?

1 Corinthians 6:6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before**unbelievers**?

1 Corinthians 7:12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an**unbeliever**, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

1 Corinthians 7:13 And a woman who has an**unbelieving** husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

1 Corinthians 7:14 For the **unbelieving** husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

1 Corinthians 7:15 Yet if the **unbelieving** one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

1 Corinthians 10:27 If one of the**unbelievers** invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

1 Corinthians 14:22 So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to**unbelievers**; but prophecy is for a sign, not to **unbelievers** but to those who believe.

1 Corinthians 14:23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or **unbelievers** enter, will they not say that you are mad?

1 Corinthians 14:24 But if all prophesy, and an **unbeliever** or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all;

2 Corinthians 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the**unbelieving** so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be bound together with **unbelievers**; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an **unbeliever**?

1 Timothy 5:8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an **unbeliever**.

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and**unbelieving**, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

Revelation 21:8 "But for the cowardly and **unbelieving** and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

## CAUSES/ASSOCIATIONS OF UNBELIEF

## UNBELIEF PROCEEDS FROM R A TORREY

- An evil heart Hebrews 3:12
- Slowness of heart Luke 24:25
- Hardness of heart Mark 16:14 ; Acts 19:9
- Disinclination to the truth John 8:45,46
- Judicial blindness John 12:39,40
- Not being Christ's sheep John 10:26
- The devil blinding the mind 2 Corinthians 4:4
- The devil taking away the word out of the heart Luke 8:12
- Seeking honour from men John 5:44
- Impugns the veracity of God 1 John 5:10

**Adrian Rogers** - Hebrews 3:12. The Bible says, "Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Now notice this, unbelief is not intellectual, it is moral. It doesn't come out of the **head**; it comes out of the **heart**.....Do you know what unbelief is? **Unbelief** is wickedness, consummate wickedness. **Unbelief** is the refusal of Almighty God. **Unbelief** is saying, "God, You go Your way; I'll go mine. It is my life. I will not trust You with it. I will not give it to You. I am my own person." You see, **unbelief** is the parent sin. It is the sin of which all other sins come, from which all other sins come. Why did Adam and Eve sin in the Garden of Eden? Basically, it was **unbelief**. Why does a man tell a lie today? **Unbelief**. He can't trust God to get him out of the mess that he's in. Only the Holy Spirit of God can convict you that there is no greater sin than unbelief. **Unbelief** says, "God, you're not worthy of my faith, you're not worthy of my trust, you're not worthy of my love. I don't want you in my life." "Well, Adrian, ha, ha, I can't help it. I'm just not superstitious. I'm not religious. I can't help it if I can't belief." Friend, that's where you're wrong, that's where you're wrong. The Holy Spirit of God will enable you to believe. That's the reason the Bible says in the Book of Hebrews, the third chapter, "Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." **Unbelief** does not come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. It is a predisposition against Almighty God. It is not trusting the God who loves you.

**Charles Buck** says unbelief is "The refusing assent to testimony. It is often taken for distrust of God's faithfulness, but more particularly for the discrediting the testimony of God's word concerning his Son, John 3:18-19 . John 16:9 . "It includes, " says Dr. Guise, "disaffection to God, disregard to his word, prejudices against the Redeemer, readiness to give credit to any other than him, inordinate love to the world, and preferring to the applause of men to the approbation of God." "Unbelief, " says the great Charnock, "is the greatest sin, as it is the fountain of all sin: it was Adam's first sin; it is a sin against the Gospel, against the highest testimony; a refusal to accept of Christ upon the terms of the Gospel. It strikes peculiarly at God; is the greatest reproach of him, robs him of his glory, a contradiction to his will, and a contempt of his authority." The causes of unbelief are Satan, ignorance, pride, and sensuality. The danger of it is great; it hardens the heart, fills with presumption, creates impatience, deceives with error, and finally exposes to condemnation, John 3:11 . Charnock's Works, vol. 2: p. 601; Case's Sermons, ser. 2; Bishop Porteus's Sermons, vol. 1: ser. 2; Dr. Owen's Reasons of Faith; Hannam's Compendium, vol. 2: p. 26; Churchill's Essay on Unbelief." ([Ref](#))

**John Butler** says **Unbelief is stubborn**. You can have the cleverest argument of all, but if unbelief wants to reject your message it will regardless of the logic of your argument. Unbelief paid no attention to John's righteousness. Unbelief loves its sin and does not accept that which would condemn their sin. In my early ministry, I thought the people of the church would be appreciate the holiness of my conduct. Also I thought the soundness of my message would be appreciated by those working in a large denominational office. I was wrong on both counts. Being righteous and having the right message gains the approval of God, but not necessarily the approval of man.

---

**Stephen Charnock** (commenting on the Spirit's work in John 16:8-9) - The world did not understand the **sin of unbelief**. As the light of nature could not discover a Christ to them, so it could not discover the sin of **unbelief** to them ; how could it convince of their **unbelief**, when it did not discover the object to be believed in. But the Spirit shall convince of a state of sin, of the depths of it in the heart, the streams of it in the life, and especially of **unbelief**, which renders the disease incurable, since there is no other medicine but the blood of Christ, and no other way of partaking of that medicine but by faith; it will evidence they are born in sin, can do nothing but sin, and cannot but by faith be delivered from those bonds of sin, but must die in them ; that if they **believe not** in Christ, that came to redeem fallen mankind, their sins will lie on them, they will perish in them, and lie under the curse of God. Now that sin in general is here meant — the Spirit shall convince of sin. ([John 16:8-9 Conviction of Sin](#))

The sin of unbelief, which is called in Scripture, by way of eminency, sin, and the sin; it is the chief sin the Spirit convinceth of; it is the sin that 'easily besets us.' Heb. 12:1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,' i.e. especially unbelief.

---

## Wendell Johnson on Unbelief

PEOPLE WHO DENY OR REFUSE TO BELIEVE what God has revealed about Himself and eternal life are in a state of unbelief. In describing unbelief the New Testament writers looked back to Old Testament events. Though no specific word for unbelief is used in the Old Testament, there are many illustrations of it. The people in Noah's day were in unbelief and rebellion (Gen. 6:5-7), and so God destroyed them by the Flood. Peter said these people in unbelief were "ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). Unbelief was attributed to the Israelites, whom God had delivered out of Egypt, when they hardened their hearts and rebelled against God (Heb. 3:19). They had failed to respond to what they had seen God do on their behalf (Heb 3:9; Ps. 95:9). Jude stated that God took the lives of those Israelites who did not believe (Jude 5). At the root of their problem was an unbelieving heart (Heb. 3:12).

**Unbelief** is the condition of all those who are without Christ, those who have not believed in the salvation provided by Christ through His death on the cross (John 3:36). As unbelievers they are blinded to the light of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). This unbelief need not be permanent, as illustrated in the life of Paul. This was not something he overcame by his own efforts. Instead, through God's grace and mercy his heart was opened to receive the message about Christ (1 Tim. 1:13-16). Later Paul reminded believers that the unbelief of Israel is not permanent (Rom. 11:20-23).

**Unbelief** was also the reason people rejected Christ's miracles during His earthly ministry (Matt. 13:58; Mark 6:6). The word unbelief was used by a father whose son was possessed by a demon. The man asked the Lord to help him overcome his unbelief (9:24). His request did not come because of a rebellious spirit, for he was humbled in the presence of the Lord. But he did sense his need for divine assistance to believe, possibly because of the power of Satan that had been so evident in his son's life for such a long time. Christians may face difficult challenges in life, but God promises victory because of our faith in Christ (1 John 5:4-5) (Wendell Johnson - Theological Wordbook)

---

**Stephen Olford** - "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."—Matthew 13:58

What an amazing, yet solemn, verse this is! **Purge me, O Lord, that I may never be guilty of such unbelief!** Notice that the verse does not say, "He could not," but rather that "He did not." It was not a case that His power was limited on this particular occasion, but rather that Christ does not work in the presence of blatant or open unbelief. **Unbelief** is the preeminent fruit of the flesh. It is that which emanates from man's corrupt nature. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). **Give me the grace to crucify the natural man in me, Lord, until all unbelief is removed.** Amen

## QUOTES ON UNBELIEF

If you are an unbeliever when you die, Christ did not die for you. - Ambrose

Unbelief questions the truthfulness of God. (2Ki 17:13-15; Ps 106:24; 1Jn 5:10)

Living without faith is like driving in a fog. - Anon.

Unbelief in the face of evidence is either stupidity or sin. - Anon.

All unbelief is the belief of a lie. - Horatius Bonar

In all unbelief there are these two things: a good opinion of one's self and a bad opinion of God. - Horatius Bonar

All unbelief is rejection of the Son of God. Whatever be its evasions, and subterfuges, and excuses, and fair pretenses, this is its essence—rejection of Jesus Christ. - Horatius Bonar

Unbelief is not a matter of lack of evidence or intellectual problem. Unbelief is a heart problem not a head problem. The heart problem can indeed and often does affect the head. But unbelief is rooted and grounded in the heart. - John Butler

Unbelief is a matter of will not wisdom - John Butler

Unbelief is a heart problem, not a head problem. It is the will not wisdom that causes unbelief - John Butler

Unbelief despises the Scriptures. Unbelief will believe just about anything as long as it is not the Bible - John Butler

Can any man perish more justly than they who refuse to be saved? - John Calvin

Infidelity is always blind. - John Calvin

Our own unbelief is the only impediment which prevents God from satisfying us largely and bountifully with all good things. - John Calvin

The blindness of unbelievers in no way detracts from the clarity of the gospel; the sun is no less bright because blind men do not perceive its light. - John Calvin

Unbelief... is always proud. - John Calvin

Unbelief makes us rebels and deserters. John Calvin

Unbelieving and irreligious men have no ears. - John Calvin

As faith is the greatest grace, so that which is opposite to it must be the greatest sin. - Stephen Charnock

Is not he as much guilty of his own death that rejects a medicine as he that cuts his own throat? - Stephen Charnock

Unbelief was the first sin, and pride was the first-born of it. - Stephen Charnock

When God is not believed we must needs give credit to the devil. - Stephen Charnock

The real heart of unbelief is seeking your own way while you leave God out. - Steven Cole

Christ distinguished between doubt and unbelief. Doubt says, 'I can't believe.' Unbelief says, 'I won't believe.' Doubt is honest. Unbelief is obstinate. - Henry Drummond

Disobedience and unbelief are two sides of the same coin. - Ronald Dunn

What loneliness is more lonely than distrust? - George Eliot

Alongside getting faith out of a heart that is utterly hostile and unbelieving, making a silk purse out of a sow's ear or getting blood from a turnip is child's play. - John H. Gerstner

Unbelief is always conceited. - Richard Glover

Unbelief in the biblical view is not passive, an innocent but inaccurate view of the world that has unfortunately 'got it wrong' at a few points. Rather, unbelief is active, driven by a dark dynamism - Os Guinness

God excludes none if they do not exclude themselves. - William Guthrie

Gospel light is justly taken away from those that endeavour to extinguish it. - Matthew Henry

None so blind as those who will not see. . - Matthew Henry

Nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise and despair of the performance of it because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. - Matthew Henry

There are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him...; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief is apt to mistake recruits for enemies, and to draw dismal conclusions even from comfortable premises. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief is at the bottom of what sinners do ignorantly. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief may truly be called the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the remedy. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief, or distrust of God, is a sin that is its own punishment. - Matthew Henry

Unbelief is the shield of every sin. - William Jenkyn

Unbelief... makes the world a moral desert, where no divine footsteps are heard, where no angels ascend and



descend, where no living hand adorns the fields, feeds the birds of heaven, or regulates events. - F. W. Krummacher

Unbelief is a matter not only of the head but of the heart. The unbeliever's trouble is that his heart is not right with God. - R. B. Kuiper

Unbelief is radically all other disobedience. - Robert Leighton

The Bible itself gives us one short prayer which is suitable for all who are struggling with the beliefs and doctrines. It is: Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief. - C. S. Lewis

When you are arguing against God you are arguing against the very Power that makes you able to argue at all. - C. S. Lewis

No difficulty in believing the gospel is intellectual, it is always moral. - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Incredulity robs us of many pleasures and gives us nothing in return. - James Russell Lowell

As no one can give himself faith, neither can he take away his unbelief. - Martin Luther

What greater rebellion, impiety, or insult to God can there be than not to believe his promises? - Martin Luther

Birds lack faith. They fly away when I enter the orchard, though I mean them no ill. Even so do we lack faith in God. - Martin Luther

Unbelief is the mother of sin, and misbelief the nurse of it. - Thomas Manton

Ultimately, the acceptance of the gospel is a moral problem not an intellectual problem. - Will Metzger

Unbelief is not failure in intellectual apprehension. It is disobedience in the presence of the clear commands of God. - G. Campbell Morgan

The natural man does not want to believe that God has spoken. - Tom Nettles

Unbelief is the sin most insulting to God. - Oliver Greene

For the most part we live upon successes, not promises. Unless we see and feel the print of victories we will not believe. - John Owen

Unbelief makes God a liar and, worse still, a perjurer, for it accounts him as not only false to his word, but to his oath. - A. T. Pierson

Unbelief is far, far more than entertaining an erroneous conception of God's way of salvation: it is a species of hatred against him. - A. W. Pink

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime against God. Scripture everywhere attributes it to.... love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. - A. W. Pink

No maniac ever reasoned more illogically than the unbeliever. - William S. Plumer

What sends people to hell today? It is not lying, not murder, not rape, not arson. It is not sexual perversion, not pride, not arrogance. It is this: unbelief! You see, Jesus died for all those other sins. Those sins have been paid for with His blood. It is unbelief—and unbelief alone—that shuts the door to heaven. In the spiritual realm, nothing is possible if you do not believe, but "everything is possible to the one who believes" (Mark 9:23). Just as you live physically by breathing, you live spiritually by faith. As the Bible says, "The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). - Adrian Rogers

Unbelief...is our greatest stumbling block in life. Unbelief is the chief wickedness. Unbelief is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin. It is the sin of all sins. Unbelief caused Eve to sin against God in the Garden of Eden. She failed to believe the Word of God. - Adrian Rogers

Unbelief is wickedness. Unbelief makes God a liar. Unbelief comes from an evil heart. Grace is released by faith. Grace is taken prisoner by unbelief. - Adrian Rogers

The errors of faith are better than the best thoughts of unbelief. - Thomas Russell

If men do not have eternal life it is never because God did not love them, or because Christ was not given for them, but because they did not believe on Christ. - J. C. Ryle

No sin makes less noise, but none so surely damns the soul, as unbelief. - J. C. Ryle



The difficulties of Christianity no doubt are great; but depend on it, they are nothing compared to the difficulties of infidelity. - J. C. Ryle

Unbelief about the existence and personality of Satan has often proved the first step to unbelief about God. - J. C. Ryle

We can never be too much on our guard against unbelief. It is the oldest sin in the world. - J. C. Ryle

God . . . has created us perfectly free to disbelieve in him as much as we choose. If we do disbelieve, then he and we must take the consequences in a world ruled by cause and effect. - Doroty Sayers

Those who deny God are bound to bestow all his attributes on flesh and blood. - Isaac Bashevis Singer

Unbelief is in itself the fruit of an evil heart. - James Smith

The revelation of the gospel is to a world that is already under indictment for its universal rejection of God the Father. - R. C. Sproul

Those who spurn the gospel challenge not the power of the church but the sovereignty of God. - R. C. Sproul

There are no infidels anywhere but on earth. There are none in heaven and there are none in hell. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief calls itself 'honest doubt', and not without cause, for we should not have known it to be honest if it had not labelled itself so. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us. - C. H. Spurgeon

Everything lies in the bowels of this sin (UNBELIEF), the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this, for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this, for you reject Christ because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this, for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this, for you reject a King. You put far from you him who is crowned King of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. - C. H. Spurgeon

Oh, believe me, if you could roll all sins into one mass—if you could take murder and blasphemy and lust, adultery, and fornication, and everything that is vile, and unite them all into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal even then the sin of **unbelief**. This is the monarch sin, the [quintessence](#) of guilt, the mixture of the venom of all crimes, the dregs of the wine of Gomorrah. It is the A-1 sin, the masterpiece of Satan, the chief work of the devil.

If you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you set aside the witness of apostles, saints, and martyrs. You also impute foolishness or deceit to your dearest friends, some of whom died in faith, exhorting you to believe in Jesus Christ. Indeed, you make all of us who preach the gospel to be liars, and we are not so. Neither do you think so badly of us when we speak in everyday life. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief is very hard to kill. God opens the doors and windows of heaven to feed his people; yet, nevertheless, the next time they are in trouble, they begin to stagger at the promise. Oh, shameful unbelief! - C H Spurgeon (comment on Ps 78:21-22)

A great part of our trouble is the fruit of our own unbelief. It is like hemlock in the furrows of the field. They who distrust God are making a rod for their own back; and before they have done with it, they will have to rue the day in which they thought themselves wiser than God. - C H Spurgeon (comment on Ps 78:33)

Avoid anxiously the double sin of **unbelief**. If you do not believe Jesus, you do not believe God. If you reject his Son, you reject himself. If you give the lie to the teaching of Christ, you give the lie to God. Flee from this deadly sin! - C. H. Spurgeon

I have noticed that when-ever a person gives up his belief in the Word of God because it requires that he should believe a good deal, his unbelief requires him to believe a great deal more. If there be any difficulties in the faith of Christ, they are not one-tenth as great as the absurdities in any system of unbelief which seeks to take its place. - C. H. Spurgeon

**Unbelief** calls itself "honest doubt," and not without cause, for we should not have known it to be honest if it had not labeled itself so. - C. H. Spurgeon

**Unbelief** will destroy the best of us. Faith will save the worst of us. - C. H. Spurgeon

O unbelievers, I would not be in your place five minutes for all the world! As the Lord lives, there is but a step

between you and hell! Only a breath, and you may be gone. If I were in your place, I should be afraid to eat a morsel of bread tonight, lest a crumb should go the wrong way, and by causing my death should land me in everlasting misery. One might be afraid to shut his eyes tonight as an unbeliever, lest, as he closed them on earth, he shut them forever to all light and hope. - C. H. Spurgeon

A certain skeptical writer, when in prison, was visited by a Christian man who wished him well, but he refused to hear a word about religion. Seeing a Bible in the hand of his visitor, he made this remark, "You do not expect me to believe in that book, do you? Why, if that book is true, I am lost forever." Just so. Therein lies the reason for half the infidelity in the world, and all the infidelity (UNBELIEF) in our congregations. - C. H. Spurgeon

If one leak sent the vessel to the bottom, it was no comfort to the crew that their ship leaked only in one place. One disease may kill a man. He may be sound everywhere else, but it will be a sorry comfort to him to know that he might have lived long, had but that one organ been sound. If you should have no sin whatever except only an evil heart of **unbelief**, if all your external life should be lovely and amiable, yet if that one fatal sin be in you, you can draw small consolation from all else that is good about you. - C. H. Spurgeon

If there be the virus of diabolical guilt in anything, it must be in the **unbelief**, not of sinners, but of God's own people. For sinners have never seen what saints have seen, have never felt what we have felt, have never known what we have known. If they should doubt, they do not sin against such light, nor do despite to such invincible arguments for confidence as we do. - C. H. Spurgeon

We took our sins and drove them like nails through his hands and feet. We lifted him high up on the cross of our transgressions, and then we pierced his heart through with the spear of our unbelief. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief calls itself "honest doubt," and not without cause; for we should not have known it to be honest if it had not labelled itself so. When a man puts up in his shop window, "No cheating practised here," I should trade next door. He doth protest too much. Your free love, free thought, free life, and so forth, are the empty mockery of freedom. - C. H. Spurgeon

The difficulties of unbelief are ten times greater than the difficulties of faith. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief is very hard to kill, even in hearts that are right with God; so we need not wonder that divine grace is required to expel unbelief from the hearts of the unregenerate. - C. H. Spurgeon (Comment on Mark 16:9-13)

Atheism denies God's existence—unbelief denies his goodness, and since goodness is essential to God, these doubts do, in reality, stab at his very being. - C. H. Spurgeon

Now, I have noticed that, whenever a person gives up his belief in the Word of God because it requires that he should believe a good deal, his unbelief requires him to believe a great deal more. - C. H. Spurgeon

Would it not be better to be dumb when we are doubtful? Muzzle that dog of unbelief! - C. H. Spurgeon

I believe that the most unreasonable things in all the world are doubt and unbelief; in fact, atheists and infidels are the most glibble persons living. - C. H. Spurgeon

Our failure lies in want of faith, not in excess of it. It would be hard to believe God too much: it is dreadfully common to believe him too little - C. H. Spurgeon

The first step astray is a want of adequate faith in the divine inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures - C. H. Spurgeon

To fly from the difficulties of faith to the impossibilities of unbelief, is a singular infatuation. I prefer to believe in a personal, intelligent First Cause. - C. H. Spurgeon

Many a man would have been a missionary, would have stood and preached his Master's gospel boldly, but he had unbelief. Once make a giant unbelieving, and he becomes a dwarf. Faith is the Samsonian lock of the Christian. Cut it off, and you may put out his eyes. He can do nothing. - C. H. Spurgeon

Even if a man had no other sin whatsoever, it is quite sufficient to condemn him for ever, that he neglects his God and turns away from his Saviour; for unbelief is an act of high treason against the divine majesty, plucking at the crown jewel of Jehovah's truthfulness. - C. H. Spurgeon

The angels never doubt Him, nor the devils either; we alone, out of all the beings that God has fashioned, dishonour Him by unbelief, and tarnish His honour by mistrust - C. H. Spurgeon

We often talk of unbelief as if it were an affliction to be pitied instead of a crime to be condemned. - C. H.

Spurgeon

The late Dr. Heugh, of Glasgow, a short time before he breathed his last, said, "There is nothing I feel more than the criminality of not trusting Christ without doubt—without doubt. Oh, to think what Christ is, what he did, and whom he did it for, and then not to believe him, not to trust him! There is no wickedness like the wickedness of **unbelief!**" - C. H. Spurgeon

Whence come our carnality, covetousness, pride, sloth, and **unbelief**? Are they not all to be traced to the corruption of our hearts? When the hands of a clock move in an irregular manner, and when the bell strikes the wrong hour, be assured there is some-thing wrong within. Oh, how needful that the mainspring of our motives be in proper order, and the wheels in a right condition. - C. H. Spurgeon

Nothing will bring you near to God but believing, and nothing can shut you out from God but your **unbelief**. Only trust him; that is the whole of the matter. - C. H. Spurgeon

My peculiar temptation has been constant unbelief. I know that God's promise is true. Yet does this temptation incessantly assail me—"Doubt him; distrust him; he will leave you yet." I can assure you when that temptation is aided by a nervous state of mind, it is very hard to stand day by day and say, "No, I cannot doubt my God." - C. H. Spurgeon

Our prayers have stains in them, our faith is mixed with unbelief, our repentance is not so tender as it should be, our communion is distant and interrupted. We cannot pray without sinning, and there is filth even in our tears. - C. H. Spurgeon

I heard of a man who I was told had walked in holiness for many years, yet he had never uttered an expression which could lead any-one to think that he really believed himself to be saved. As I listened to the story, I could not help asking, "How long has he lived in this state?" "Forty years," was the answer. "Well then," I replied, "he has been living for forty years in grievous sin, for there is no sin which so dishonors God as does the sin of unbelief." - C. H. Spurgeon

One walking with me observed, with some emphasis, "I do not believe as you do. I am an agnostic." "Oh," I said to him, "that is a Greek word, is it not? The Latin word, I think, is Ignoramus." He did not like it at all. Yet I only translated his language from Greek to Latin. These are queer waters to get into, when all your philosophy brings you is the confession that you know nothing, and the stupidity which enables you to glory in your ignorance. - C. H. Spurgeon

Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart that when God performs miracles on earth, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in heaven, and when he does them in heaven, whether he can do them on earth. - Friedrich Tholuck

If the way to heaven is so narrow, and so few seek it, what will become of those who never seek it? - William Tiptaft

Every man will have to decide for himself whether or not he cannot afford the terrible luxury of unbelief. - A. W. Tozer

Human unbelief cannot alter the character of God. - A. W. Tozer

I do not believe there is anybody who ever rejects Jesus Christ on philosophical grounds. The man who continues in his rejection of Christ has a pet sin somewhere—he's in love with iniquity. - A. W. Tozer

It is unbelief that prevents our minds from soaring into the celestial city, and walking by faith with God across the golden streets. - A. W. Tozer

Every man will have to decide for himself whether or not he can afford the terrible luxury of unbelief - A. W. Tozer

A great many believers walk upon the promises at God's call in the way to heaven even as a child upon weak ice, which they are afraid will crack under them and leave them in the depth. - Robert Traill

Infidelity is the mother of apostasy. - John Trapp

Faith unlocks the divine storehouse, but unbelief bars its doors. - Curtis Vaughan

Unbelief is the foul medley of all sins, the root and receptacle of sin. - Thomas Watson

Unbelief is the root of apostasy. - Thomas Watson

The root of all apostasy is the primal sin of unbelief. - Geoffrey B. Wilson

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain."

Source: [Complete Gathered Gold](#), Draper's Quotes, and many other sources

## UNBELIEF

### Hastings Bible Dictionary

One of the great problems of the Apostolic Age was to account for the unbelief of the Jews. Unhappily, it was only too clear that the Jews not only had brought Jesus Christ to the Cross through their representative leaders, but also after Pentecost had refused to listen to the gospel preached by the apostles, and had become the main opponents of the Christian faith. To those whose eyes had been opened to see the glory of God in Christ Jesus, it seemed the strangest of all experiences that those whom God had taken to be His peculiar people, and to whom He had granted so many privileges, should have turned away in unbelieving scorn from the Lord who had come to be their Redeemer. Hence the poignancy of the confession: 'He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not' (John 1:11). In the apostolic history that experience was sadly repeated (Acts 13:45).

Three chief questions were raised by this unbelief of the Jews. (1) Did this unbelief not cancel the early promises made by God? (2) Did this unbelief not defeat God's plan? (3) Could God's salvation be complete apart from the Jewish people? These questions are dealt with by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans in the sympathetic method that might be expected from one whose pride in his ancient lineage was never concealed, and whose faith was clear and enlightened as well as intense. To the three-fold problem St. Paul made reply. (1) The promises of God did not depend upon man, for God would keep His word whatever man might do. God would be true and faithful however His people might be convicted of falsehood and unbelief (Romans 3:4). (2) God's purpose was both narrower and wider than was commonly supposed. In all the Jewish history the purpose of God was to redeem some within the Hebrew race to be the means of blessing, and even in the Christian era, as of old, there was a 'remnant' that believed and shared in the purposes of God. So too God's purpose was wider than was supposed. From the earliest times His plan looked forward to embracing the Gentiles within its scope, and through the very unbelief and defection of the Jews there had come a marvellous fulfilment of this wider purpose. 'By their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles' (Romans 11:11). (3) St. Paul believed with all his heart that the Kingdom of God would not be complete apart from the Jews. This was so far true even in the Apostolic Age. 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace' (Romans 11:5). But in the future there would be a glorious return of the chosen people. St. Paul represented the Jews as being subjects of unbelief and disobedience, so that in the gracious purpose of God they might be objects of the Divine mercy. The Most High would unfold all the width of His salvation when after their period of darkness the Jewish people would come forth into the light. Then would come the final consummation, and the receiving of them would be truly 'life from the dead' (Romans 11:15).

The same problem of the unbelief of the Jews was treated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The discussion in this Epistle centred round the rest of God into which God Himself entered after the work of creation, and to which He called His people. This rest was offered to Israel in the time of Moses and was not realized by them through unbelief. The mere entrance into Canaan under Joshua was no true fulfilment of the promise, for 'if Israel had believed they would have entered in, the Rest would have been appropriated, and God's gracious design satisfied, and a Rest would have been no more "left" for others' (A. B. Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Edinburgh, n.d., p. 98). When their unbelief left this rest still open, it was offered again by God in the new revelation that He made. His voice was heard through His Son in the end of those days in which He had spoken to the early believers on to the time when He should come again. Thus the promise that was unrealized in the Old Covenant was renewed in the New Covenant. These conclusions are largely the same as those reached by St. Paul—that unbelief marked the Jews in all their history, and that their unbelief opened the way to the receiving of the Gentiles. But there is not in this Epistle the forecast of the glorious future yet in store when Israel would turn again, only an insistence upon the need of giving diligence to enter into that rest, 'that no man fall after the same example of disobedience' (Hebrews 4:11).

It is worthy of note that in all these apostolic discussions unbelief and disobedience are almost interchangeable terms. Both words, *πιστις* and *πειθειν*, are derived from the same root and express the intimate connexion that is found between faith and life. What is thus suggested by the use of these words is corroborated by the general apostolic teaching, where unbelief is ascribed to the hardening of the heart (Acts 19:9), to blindness caused by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), to the evil working of the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:1-2), to the corrupt heart that believes a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Hence we read of

the evil heart of unbelief, and of the deceitfulness of this sin (Hebrews 3:12-13). As unbelief sprang from moral causes it could be removed best by the declaration of the gospel wherein Jesus Christ was made known as meeting the moral and spiritual needs of life. It is for this reason especially that St. Paul magnified 'prophesying' in contrast to 'speaking with tongues.' He suggested that an assembly where all were speaking with this strange utterance would seem to an outsider like a gathering of madmen, and would confirm any unbeliever in his unbelief, whereas the general practice of prophesying would reach the reason and the heart of any unbelievers who happened to be present, and would lead such to confess that God was truly present in this Christian assembly (1 Corinthians 14:22-24). From such a passage as this it may be inferred that the apostles distinguished between those who were unbelievers because Christ had not been presented to them fully and those who had resisted the truth when it was made known to them and who had openly denied the Lord. The latter class, who 'denied that Jesus was the Christ,' seemed so base in the eyes of the apostles that St. John characterized it as Antichrist (1 John 2:22), and it seemed so hopeless of change that the same Apostle placed the unbelieving among the vilest, whose 'part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone' (Revelation 21:8). One phase of unbelief caused no little perplexity to the apostles, viz. unbelief among those who had professed their faith in Jesus as Christ and Lord. To the apostles this faith had so wondrously purified their hearts and enlightened their minds that they could hardly conceive of a faith that omitted some of the great essential truths. An example of this phase may be found in the Corinthian church, where many failed to believe in the resurrection of the dead and were not slow to express openly their unbelief. They accepted the common faith in the personal resurrection of Jesus Christ, but they seemed to have assumed that this was a unique occurrence, and to have rejected the general truth of the recovery and resurrection of the body as sharing in the Christian salvation. St. Paul in his reply asserted that such unbelief was destructive of the faith of the Church, and affirmed in some of the most brilliant passages of all his writings that the resurrection of Christians was part of the Christian redemption, gave inspiration to the Christian life, and crowned with glory the Christian experience (1 Corinthians 15).

Two practical questions affecting the relation of Christians to unbelievers in the Apostolic Age are worthy of notice. The higher and nobler conceptions of marriage that arose through Christian teaching suggested to many the question whether relations contracted under pre-Christian conditions should be continued, especially where one spouse refused to accept the Christian faith and became an unbeliever. St. Paul dealt with this question in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he affirmed that the unbelieving spouse was sanctified by the believing member, that the Christian spouse was not to seek divorce from the non-Christian; but, if the latter insisted on separation, then it was to be acquiesced in. But such separation was undesirable, for peace was better for a Christian than disunion, and there was always the possibility that the unbelieving spouse might be won to the faith by the believer (1 Corinthians 7:10-16; 1 Peter 3:1). On the other hand, marriage of a believer after conversion with an unbeliever was deemed an un-Christian act (2 Corinthians 6:14). The other practical question was with regard to the practice of Christians carrying their quarrels before unbelievers. The Corinthians were litigious as well as licentious, and even after they adhered to the Christian faith they were beset by their old weaknesses. They were guilty of quarrelling, and insisted so much on their presumed rights that they did not hesitate to go to law with a Christian brother before pagan judges. St. Paul denounced this practice as showing the lack of Christian love, as bringing disgrace upon the whole Christian community, and as implying that there were none within the Christian fellowship able to settle the petty differences that had arisen. Even the Jews exercised jurisdiction over internal affairs, and reckoned as guilty of impiety any of their number who brought a matter of law before idolatrous judges; much more should Christians shun heathen courts, and seek rather the judgment of their fellow-Christians, especially when they remembered that to believers was given by God the judgment of the world, and even of the angels in heaven (1 Corinthians 6:1-6).

## **TORREY'S TOPIC**

### **UNBELIEF**

- Is sin John 16:9
- Defilement inseparable from Titus 1:15
- All, by nature, concluded in Romans 11:32

#### **PROCEEDS FROM**

- An evil heart Hebrews 3:12
- Slowness of heart Luke 24:25
- Hardness of heart Mark 16:14 ; Acts 19:9
- Disinclination to the truth John 8:45,46
- Judicial blindness John 12:39,40
- Not being Christ's sheep John 10:26
- The devil blinding the mind 2 Corinthians 4:4

- The devil taking away the word out of the heart Luke 8:12
- Seeking honour from men John 5:44
- Impugns the veracity of God 1 John 5:10

## **EXHIBITED IN**

- Rejecting Christ John 16:9
- Rejecting the word of God Psalm 106:24
- Rejecting the gospel Isaiah 53:1 ; John 12:38
- Rejecting evidence of miracles John 12:37, Mark 6:2, 6
- Departing from God Hebrews 3:12
- Questioning the power of God 2 Kings 7:2 ; Psalm 78:19,20
- Not believing the works of God Psalm 78:32
- Staggering at the promise of God Romans 4:20
- Rebuked by Christ Matthew 17:17 ; John 20:27
- Was an impediment to the performance of miracles Matthew 17:20 ; Mark 6:5
- Miracles designed to convince those in John 10:37,38 ; 1 Corinthians 14:22
- The Jews rejected for Romans 11:20
- Believers should hold no communion with those in 2 Corinthians 6:14

## **THEY WHO ARE GUILTY OF**

- Have not the word of God in them John 5:38
- Cannot please God Hebrews 11:6
- Malign the gospel Acts 19:9
- Persecute the ministers of God Romans 15:31
- Excite others against saints Acts 14:2
- Persevere in it John 12:37
- Harden their necks 2 Kings 17:14
- Are condemned already John 3:18
- Have the wrath of God abiding upon John 3:36
- Shall not be established Isaiah 7:9
- Shall die in their sins John 8:24
- Shall not enter rest Hebrews 3:19 ; 4:11
- Shall be condemned Mark 16:16 ; 2 Thessalonians 2:12
- Shall be destroyed Jude 1:5
- Shall be cast into the lake of fire Revelation 21:8
- Warnings against Hebrews 3:12 ; 4:11
- Pray for help against Mark 9:24
- The portion of, awarded to all unfaithful servants Luke 12:46

## **Exemplified**

- Eve Genesis 3:4-6
- Moses and Aaron Numbers 20:12
- Israelites Deuteronomy 9:23
- Naaman 2 Kings 5:12
- Samaritan Lord 2 Kings 7:2
- Disciples Matthew 17:17 ; Luke 24:11,25
- Zacharias Luke 1:20
- Chief Priests Luke 22:67
- The Jews John 5:38
- Brethren of Christ John 7:5
- Thomas John 20:25
- Jews of Iconium Acts 14:2
- Thessalonian Jews Acts 17:5
- Ephesians Acts 19:9

- Saul 1 Timothy 1:13
- People of Jericho Hebrews 11:31

## NAVES TOPIC

### UNBELIEF

#### General scriptures concerning

Ex. 4:1; Num. 11:21–23; Num. 20:12, 13; Psa. 78:19, 21, 22, 32; Psa. 95:8–11; Psa. 106:7, 24; Isa. 7:9; Isa. 53:1 [John 12:38.] Isa. 53:2, 3; Isa. 58:3; Jer. 5:12–14; Mal. 1:2, 7;

Matt. 10:14, 15; Matt. 11:16–19 Luke 7:31–35. Matt. 13:13–15 [Isa. 6:9, 10.] Matt. 13:58; Matt. 17:17, 19, 20; Matt. 21:32; Mark 6:2–6; Mark 9:24; Mark 16:14, 16; Luke 8:12, 18 Mark 4:24, 25. Luke 10:16; Luke 12:46; Luke 13:34; Luke 14:16–24; Luke 16:31; Luke 18:8; Luke 19:41, 42; Luke 22:67; Luke 24:11, 21, 25, 26, 36–45; John 1:10, 11; John 3:7, 11, 12, 18, 32, 36; John 4:48; John 5:38, 40, 43, 44, 46, 47; John 6:36, 60–62, 64, 66, 70, 71; John 8:24, 45–47, 52, 53; John 10:25, 26, 37, 38; John 12:37, 39, 40, 47, 48; John 14:17; John 16:8, 9; John 20:27; Acts 13:40, 41; Acts 19:9; Acts 22:18; Acts 28:24; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 3:3; Rom. 4:20; Rom. 9:31, 32; Rom. 10:6, 7, 14, 16, 21; Rom. 11:20, 30–32; Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 1:18, 22, 23; 1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Cor. 14:22; 2 Cor. 6:14–16; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12; 2 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 3:12, 16–19; Heb. 4:1–3, 6, 11; Heb. 11:6, 31; Heb. 12:25; Jas. 1:6, 7; 1 Pet. 2:7, 8; 2 Pet. 3:4; 1 John 2:22, 23; 1 John 4:3; 1 John 5:10, 12; Jude 5; Rev. 21:8

#### INSTANCES OF

- Eve Genesis 3:4-6
- Moses and Aaron Numbers 20:12
- Israelites Deuteronomy 9:23 ; 2 Kings 17:14 ; Psalm 78:1-72
- Naaman 2 Kings 5:12
- A Samaritan lord 2 Kings 7:2
- Disciples Matthew 17:17 ; Luke 24:11,25
- Zacharias Luke 1:20
- Chief priests Luke 22:67
- The Jewish leaders Mark 1:45; 2:6-11; 8:11,12; 15:29-32; John 5:38,40,43,46,47
- Disciples Matthew 17:20 ; Mark 4:38,40 ; Luke 24:41-45
- The half-brothers of Christ John 7:5
- Thomas John 20:25
- The Jews of Iconium Acts 14:2
- The Thessalonian Jews Acts 17:5
- Jews in Jerusalem Romans 15:31
- Ephesians Acts 19:9
- Saul 1 Timothy 1:13
- People of Jericho Hebrews 11:31

## THOMPSON CHAIN REFERENCE

### Unbelief

#### Religious Men

- Abraham, when promised a Child in Old Age Genesis 17:17
- Moses, when told the Host of Israel should be Fed Numbers 11:21 Numbers 20:12
- The Disciples, in Failing to Heal a Demoniac Matthew 17:19 Matthew 17:20
- Zacharias, when Promised that he should have a Great Son Luke 1:20
- The Disciples, when told of the Resurrection of Christ Luke 24:11

#### General Examples of



- Genesis 19:14
- 2 Kings 7:2
- Psalm 78:19
- Isaiah 53:1
- Matthew 13:58
- Matthew 21:32
- Luke 22:67
- John 3:11
- John 4:48
- John 6:64
- John 10:25
- John 12:37

### Warnings Concerning

- Deuteronomy 32:20
- Hosea 8:12
- Mark 16:14
- John 3:18
- John 3:36
- John 8:24
- John 16:8
- John 16:9
- Romans 11:20
- 2 Thessalonians 2:12
- Hebrews 3:12
- Hebrews 4:11
- Jude 1:5

## Unbelief—A Marvel

### J. C. Ryle

"He marveled at their unbelief." Mark 6:6+

The text which heads this page is a very remarkable one. Of all the expressions in the four Gospels which show that the Lord Jesus Christ was very Man, none perhaps is more startling than this. That He who was born of the Virgin Mary, and had a body like our own, should hunger and thirst, and weep and rejoice, and be weary and suffer pain—all this we can, in some degree, understand. But that He who was truly God as well as truly Man, He "in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," He in whom were, "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," He who "knew what was in man"—that He should "marvel" at anything here below, may well fill us with astonishment! But what says the Scripture? There it is written in plain words, which no ingenuity can explain away, "He marveled at their unbelief."

In handling this subject, I do not propose for a moment to discuss those deep and mysterious articles of the faith which lie at the foundation of Christianity. If I attempted this, I could add nothing to what masters of theology have already said and should probably leave the subject where I found it, if I did not "darken counsel by words without knowledge." What I wish to do is to say something practical about the general subject of unbelief. It must be an astonishing thing, if even our Lord Jesus Christ marveled at it. It must be an important thing, when we hear and read so much about it in the present day. And I shall try to make a few plain remarks upon it.

**1. Let us consider the nature of unbelief. "What is it?"**

**2. Let us inquire why unbelief is so astonishing. "Why did the Lord Jesus marvel at it?"**

#### 1. The nature of unbelief. What is unbelief?

The word so translated will be found twelve times in the New Testament and always, so far as I can see, in one signification. In its fullest sense, of course, it only exists in lands where men enjoy the light of revelation. In heathen lands, where there is little known,

there can be comparatively little unbelief. It consists in not believing something which God has said—some warning that He gave—some promise that He held out—some advice that He offers—some judgment that He threatens—some message that He sends. In short, to refuse to admit the truth of God's revealed Word, and to live as if we did not think that Word was to be depended on—is the essence of unbelief.

**Unbelief** is the oldest of the many spiritual diseases by which fallen human nature is afflicted. It began in the day when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and brought sin into the world. They did not believe what God had told them, would be the consequence of disobedience; and they did believe the Tempter, saying, "You shall not surely die."

**Unbelief** ruined millions in the day of Noah's flood: they would not believe the great "preacher of righteousness," when he warned them for a hundred and twenty years to flee from the wrath to come.

**Unbelief** slew myriads in the day when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven. When righteous Lot called on his sons-in-law to escape for their lives, "he seemed as one who mocked." (Gen. 19.14.)

**Unbelief** kept Israel wandering forty years in the wilderness, until a whole generation was dead. We are expressly told, "They could not enter in—because of unbelief" (Heb. 3.19.)

**Unbelief** brought, finally, destruction on the Church and State of the Jews some fifty years after Christ left the world. They would not believe nor receive Him as the Messiah, but crucified and killed Him. The primary cause why Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple burned, and God's ancient people cast off and scattered over the face of the world—was unbelief.

**Unbelief**, we are taught everywhere in the New Testament, is the grand reason why multitudes of professing Christian men and women in every age are not saved, and die unprepared to meet God. It bars the way to heaven, and makes God's glorious promises of mercy, useless and unavailing. "He who believes not, is condemned already." "He who believes not, shall be damned." "He who believes not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." (John 3.18, 36; Mark 16.16; John 8.24.)

Remember, everyone into whose hands this paper may fall—remember and never forget it—it is not so much heinous sin—as unbelief which ruins souls. "All manner of sins shall be forgiven to the men." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow." (Matt. 12.31; 1 John 1.7; Isaiah 1.18.) But if a man will not put faith in Christ, he places himself out of the reach of mercy. I am bold to say, that even Judas Iscariot might have found absolution, if, after his denial, he had repented and believed. The true cause of eternal ruin is contained in those solemn words which our Master spoke before the Jewish Sanhedrin, "You will not come unto Me—that you might have life." (John 5.40.)

**Unbelief** is one of the commonest spiritual diseases in these latter days. It meets us at every turn, and in every company. Like the Egyptian plague of frogs, it makes its way into every family and home, and there seems no keeping it out. Among high and low, and rich and poor, in town and in country, in universities and manufacturing towns, in castles and in cottages, you will continually find some form of unbelief. It is no longer a pestilence which walks in darkness, but a destruction which wastes at noonday. Unbelief is even thought clever and intellectual, and a mark of a thoughtful mind. Society seems leavened with it. He who avows his belief of everything contained in the Bible, must make up his mind in many companies to be smiled at contemptuously, and thought an ignorant and weak man.

(a) With some, the seat of unbelief appears to be the head. They refuse to accept anything which they cannot understand. Inspiration, Miracles, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, the Future State—all these mighty verities are viewed with cold indifference as disputable points, if not absolutely rejected. Can we entirely explain them? Can we satisfy their reasoning faculties about them? If not, they must be excused if they stand in doubt. What they cannot fully understand, they tell us they cannot fully believe.

(b) With some the seat of unbelief is the heart. They love the sins and habits of life, which the Bible condemns, and are determined not to give them up. They take refuge from an uneasy conscience by trying to persuade themselves that the old Book is not true. The measure of their creed—is their lusts. Whatever condemns their lusts—they refuse to believe. The famous Lord Rochester, once a profligate and an infidel, but at last a true penitent, is recorded to have said to Burnet, as he drew near his end, "It is not reason, but a bad life which is the great argument against the Bible." A true and weighty saying! Many, I am persuaded, profess that they do not believe, because they know, if they did believe—that they must give up their favorite sins!

(c) With far the greater number of people the seat of unbelief is a lazy, indolent will. They dislike all kind of trouble. Why should they deny themselves and take pains about Bible-reading and praying, and diligent watchfulness over thought and word and deed, when after all, it is not quite certain that the Bible is true? This I

have little doubt, is the form of unbelief which prevails most frequently among young people. They are not agitated by intellectual difficulties. They are often not the slaves of any special lusts or passions, and live tolerably decent lives. But deep down in their hearts there is a disinclination to make up their minds, and to be decided about anything in religion. And so they drift down the stream of life like dead fish, and float helplessly on, and are tossed to and fro, hardly knowing what they believe. And while they would shrink from telling you they are not Christians, they are without any backbone in their Christianity.

In days like these, we must count it no strange thing if we meet with a vast amount of unbelief in the world. Rather, let us make up our minds to expect it, and to see it under the most specious and plausible aspects. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. No doubt it is startling, when a young man leaves some quiet secluded country home, and launches on the waves of this troublesome world in some busy town, to hear doctrines and principles denied, or sneered at, which he never dreamed of anyone questioning when he lived at home. But surely this is no more than his old Bible might have taught him to expect. Is it not written there, "There shall come in the last days scoffers?" "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" (2 Peter 3. 3; Luke 18. 8;) Such a young man should say to himself calmly and quietly, "This unbelief is precisely what my father's Bible told me to expect. If I met with no unbelief, the old Book would not be true."

After all, it is some comfort to remember that there is probably less of real, downright, reasoning unbelief than there appears to be. Thousands, we may be sure, do not in their heart of hearts believe all that they say with their lips. Many a skeptical saying is nothing more than a borrowed article, picked up and retailed by him who says it, because it sounds clever, while in reality it is not the language of his inner man. Sorrow, and sickness, and affliction, often bring out the strange fact that so-called sceptics are no sceptics at all, and that many talk scepticism merely from a desire to seem clever, and to win the temporary applause of clever men.

That there is an immense amount of unbelief in the present day I make no question; but that much of it is mere show and pretense, is to my mind as clear as noonday. No man, I think, can do pastoral work, and come to close quarters with souls, visit the sick, and attend the dying, without coming to that conclusion.

## **2. Let us now inquire WHY unbelief is so astonishing.**

What is there in unbelief, which made even the Lord Jesus, the Son of God marvel? No doubt there was something peculiar and extraordinary in the unbelief of the Jews. That the children of Israel, brought up from their infancy in the knowledge of the law and the prophets, trained from their earliest years to look for the Messiah, and to expect a mighty "prophet like unto Moses," taught to believe in the possibility of miracles, and familiar with the story of miracle-working men—that they should reject Jesus of Nazareth, and not be moved by the mighty works which He did among them—all this was truly astonishing and surprising! Astonishing that they should have such privileges—and yet make such a bad use of them! Astonishing that the door of life should be open, and heaven so near—and they should refuse to enter in!

But, I suspect, the Holy Spirit would have us look deeper than this. He would have us know that if we sit down and calmly consider unbelief, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that there is something singularly astonishing about it and never so much so as in these latter days of the world. Let me try to show what I mean.

**(1) For one thing, unbelief is a spiritual disease peculiar to Adam's children** It is a habit of soul entirely confined to man. Angels in heaven above, and fallen spirits in hell beneath, saints waiting for the resurrection in paradise, lost sinners waiting for the last judgment in that awful place where the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched—all these have one point in common—they all believe! The rich man in the parable, when he lifted up his eyes in torment, and asked for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and pleaded hard for his five brethren, had bid an eternal farewell to unbelief. "The very devils," says James, "believe and tremble." (James 2.19.) Hateful, and hating, and malicious, and murderous, and lying as Satan is called in Scripture, we read that his agents cried, "We know You who You are—the Holy One of God!" "Have You come to torment us before the time!" (Matthew 8. 29.)

But man, living man, is the only intelligent creature who is unbelieving! I say "living man" advisedly. Alas! What a waking up remains for many, the moment the last breath is drawn. There is no unbelief in hell. Voltaire now knows whether there is a sin-hating God; and David Hume now knows whether there is an endless hell. The infant of days, by merely dying, acquires a knowledge which the subtlest philosophers, while on earth, profess their inability to attain. The dead Hottentot knows more than the living Socrates. Surely a habit of soul so absolutely and entirely confined to "living man," may well be called astonishing.

**(2) For another thing, unbelief is astonishing, when you consider its arrogance and presumption** For, after all how little the wisest of men know; and none are more ready to confess it than themselves. How enormously ignorant the greater part of mankind are, if you come to examine the measure of their knowledge. The education of the vast majority of people is wretchedly meager and superficial. Most of us cease learning

at twenty-one, and then plunge into some profession in which we have little time for thought and reading, and are annually more absorbed in family cares and troubles, and add little to our stock of knowledge. Fifty or sixty years after this, our part is played out, and we retire from the stage, rarely leaving the world a wiser world than it was when we were born!

And does unbelief befit a creature like this? Is it seemly for him to talk in a skeptical and sneering tone about the revelation which the Eternal God has been pleased to make of Himself, and the unseen future, in that marvelous Book the Bible? I appeal to common sense for a reply. "Honest doubt" is a fine thing to talk about, and men are fond of saying it is "better than half the creeds." But when a man tells you he is troubled with skeptical and unbelieving feeling about Christianity, while he has probably never thought deeply about religion at all, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that one of the most foolish things in much unbelief, is its astonishing self-conceit.

**(3) For another thing, unbelief is astonishing, when you consider its unfairness and one-sidedness.** Who has not known that some of the minor facts and miracles of the Bible are the ostensible reasons which many assign why they cannot receive the Book as true, and make it their rule of faith and practice. They point to the ark, and the passage of the Red Sea, and Balaam's donkey, and Jonah in the whale's belly—and ask you sarcastically if you really believe such things to be credible and historically true. And all this time they refuse to look at three great facts which never can be denied, and which no higher criticism can possibly explain away.

(a) One of those facts is the historical Person Jesus Christ Himself. How He can have been what He was on earth, lived as He lived, taught as He taught, and made the mark He has certainly made on the world—if He was not truly God, and One miraculously sent down from heaven—is a question which those who sneer at Balaam's donkey find it convenient to evade.

(b) Another fact is the Bible itself. How this Book, with all its alleged difficulties, written by a few Jews in a corner of the earth, who wrote nothing else worth reading, can be the Book that it is, so immeasurably and incomparably superior to anything else penned by man, and hold the position it holds after 1900 years' use—how all this can be, if the Book was not miraculously given by inspiration of God, is a knot which cannot be untied.

(c) The third and last fact is the effect which Christianity has had on mankind—the amazing change which has taken place in the state of the world since Christianity—and the difference at this day between those parts of the globe where the Bible is read, and those where it is not known. Nothing can account for this, but the Divine origin of Scriptural religion. No other explanation will stand.

Now these three great facts are coolly ignored by many unbelievers! They will talk by the hour about minor difficulties in the way of faith, while they refuse to touch the weighty, patent facts which I have just been naming. The difficulties of infidelity are a wide and interesting subject, which deserves more attention from the defenders of Revelation than it receives. But the unfair and unreasonable extent to which many nowadays concentrate their minds on small disputable points of revealed religion, while they refuse to look at the great standing evidences of God's truth, is to my mind one of the most astonishing features of modern unbelief!

**(4) Fourthly, and lastly, unbelief is astonishing when you consider how the vast majority of those who profess it drop it, and give it up at last.** Few of us perhaps have the least idea how seldom any man leaves the world an infidel. The near approach of death has a mighty effect on consciences, and brings into fearful relief the utter superficiality of much that is called scepticism. The very people who go through life sneering and scoffing at Christianity, continually break down in their own last hours, and are glad enough to send for the ministers of religion, and seek comfort in the old doctrine of the despised creeds. Some, with a mighty swing of the pendulum, go from one extreme to another, and, after living sceptics for years, are willing to be read to, and prayed with, and receive the Lord's Supper, after neglecting every Christian ordinance and despising God's house for scores of years. Wretched indeed must systems be, which prove so useless and comfortless in the hour when comfort is most needed!

But the wonder of all wonders is, that these failures of unbelief are so notoriously and constantly occurring, and yet men will not see them, and the ranks of scepticism are perpetually filled by fresh recruits. If those who profess to deny Revelation generally died happy deaths, and left the world in great peace and joy, holding their opinions to the last, we might well expect them to have followers. But when, on the contrary, it is the rarest thing to see an unbeliever dying calmly in unbelief and giving no sign of discomfort, while the vast majority of unbelievers throw down their arms at last, and seek for the very religious consolation which they once affected to despise—it is impossible to avoid one broad conclusion. That conclusion is—that of all spiritual diseases by which fallen man is afflicted, there is none so truly astonishing and unreasonable as unbelief.

And now let me wind up this subject, with a few words of kindly advice to all my readers, and especially to the young. I am no longer young myself. It is thirty-five years since I first began to write on pious subjects. But even now I think I know the heart of a young man. I can remember the days when I tried hard to be an unbeliever, because true religion crossed my path, and I did not like its holy requirements. I was delivered from that pit, I believe, by the grace of God leading me to a book which, of late years, has undeservedly fallen out of sight, I mean "Faber's Difficulties of Infidelity." I read that book, and felt it could not be answered. But the remembrance of the struggle I went through in those days is still fresh in my mind, and I always have a deep feeling of sympathy, when I hear of the mental conflicts of young men.

Some of my readers, I dare say, are often troubled with skeptical doubts about the truth of Christianity. You are not professed unbelievers; God forbid that I should say this. But you see many things in the Bible which you cannot quite understand. You see not a few men of powerful and commanding intellect, rejecting Christianity almost entirely. You hear many, slighting things said, and depreciatory remarks made cleverly and smartly about the facts and doctrines of the Bible, which you are unable to answer. All this puzzles you. You stand in doubt. Is it really worth while to pray in private, and read the Bible, and keep the Sunday holy, and attend the Lord's Table? Is it necessary? Questions such as these are the first steps in the downward road. Unless you take heed, they may land you in infidelity. Listen to me while I offer a few FRIENDLY COUNSELS.

**(a) For one thing, let me entreat you to deal honestly with your soul about secret sins.** Are you quite sure there is not some bad habit, or lust, or passion, which, almost insensibly to yourself, you would like to indulge—if it were not for some remaining religious scruples? Are you quite sure that your doubts do not arise from a desire to get rid of pious restraint? You would like, if you could, to do something the Bible forbids, and you are looking about for reasons for disregarding the Bible. Oh! if this is the case with any of you—awaken to a sense of your danger! Break the chains which are gradually closing round you. Pluck out the right eye, if need be; but never be the servant of sin. I repeat—that the secret love of some wicked indulgence, is the real beginning of a vast amount of infidelity!

**(b) In the next place, let me ask you to deal honestly with your soul about the use of means for acquiring religious knowledge.** Can you lay your hand on your heart and say that you really take pains to find out what is truth? Do not be ashamed to pray for light. Do not be ashamed of reading some choice Christian book; and, above all, do not be ashamed of regularly studying the text of your Bible. Thousands, I am persuaded, in this day, know nothing of the Holy Book which they affect to despise, and are utterly ignorant of the real nature of that Christianity which they pretend they cannot believe. Let not that be the case with you. That famous "honest doubt" which many say is "better than half the creeds," is a pretty thing to talk about. But I venture a strong suspicion that much of the scepticism of the present day, if sifted and analyzed, would be found to spring from utter ignorance of the primary evidences of Christianity. For my part, I take my stand on these words of Solomon, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2:1-6.

**(c) Last, but not least, let me entreat you to deal honestly with true religion—and those who profess it.** That there is such a religion in the midst of us, and that there are thousands who profess it, are simple facts which nobody can deny. These thousands believe without doubting, certain great truths of Christianity, and live and die in their belief. Let it be admitted that, in some points, these men of faith do not agree in minor points—such as the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments. But after every deduction, there remains an immense amount of common theology, about which their faith is one.

On such points as sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, and the authority of the Bible, and the importance of holiness, and the necessity of prayer, and self-denial, and the value of the soul, and the reality of heaven and hell, and judgment, and eternity—on such points as these, I say, all Christians are very much of one mind. Now I ask—is it honest to turn away from these men and the Christian religion with contempt, because they have many weaknesses and infirmities? Is it fair to despise their religion, and wrap yourself up in unbelief, because of their controversies and strifes? Mark the fruits of peace, and hope, and comfort, which they enjoy. Mark the solid work which, with all their faults, they do in the world, in lessening sorrow and sin—and increasing happiness, and improving their fellow-men. What fruits and work can unbelief show, which will bear comparison with the fruits of faith?

Look these facts in the face and deal honestly with them. Systems ought to be judged by their fruits and results. When the so-called systems of modern unbelief, and scepticism, and free thought, can point to as much good done in the world by their adherents, as simple faith has done by the hand of its friends—we may give them some attention. But until they do that, I boldly say, that the simple, old-fashioned Christian religion, has just claim on our respect, esteem, and obedience, and ought not to be despised.

After all, I must conclude with the humbling and sorrowful remark, that we who profess faith, and are never troubled with unbelief, are not altogether free from blame. Too often our faith is little better than a mere "useless assent" to certain theological propositions, but not a living, burning, active principle—which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. It is not the faith which made primitive Christians rejoice under Roman persecution, and made Luther stand up boldly before the Diet of Worms, and made Ridley and Latimer "love not their lives to the death," and made Wesley give up his position at Oxford to become the Evangelist of England. We are truly guilty in this matter.

If there was more real faith on earth, I suspect there would be less unbelief. Scepticism, in many a case, would shrink, and dwindle, and melt away—if it saw faith more awake and alive, and active, and stirring. Let us, for Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, amend our ways in this matter. Let us pray daily, "Lord, increase our faith!" Let us live, and move, and have our being, and deal with men, as if we really believed every jot and tittle of our creeds; and as if a dying, risen, interceding, and coming Christ were continually before our eyes. This, I am firmly convinced, is the surest way to oppose and diminish unbelief. Let the time past suffice us to have lived content with a cold tame assent to creeds. Let the time to come find us living, active believers. It was a solemn saying, which fell from the lips of an eminent minister of Christ on his death-bed—"We are none of us more than half awake!" If believers were more thorough, and real, and whole-hearted in their belief—there would be far less unbelief in the world!

## **A DISCOURSE OF UNBELIEF, PROVING IT IS THE GREATEST SIN**

### **Stephen Charnock**

Of sin, because they believe not on me.—JOHN 16:9.

THERE were two observations in this text:

1. The Spirit is the author of conviction of sin.
2. Unbelief is a sin of the greatest malignity against God.

For the second,

Of sin. Not of sins, but sin. The Spirit convinceth of all sins, but chiefly of a state of sin, of unbelief.

First, As the fountain of all sin. It was the first sin of Adam. Not unbelief of a mediator, but the not giving credit to the precept of God, and the reality of God's intention in commanding. There was a jealousy that God had not dealt sincerely and plainly with him in the precept, as if he thought the prohibition was not so much an act of his sovereignty, as an act of his envy. It was the cause also of all the sin that grew up to such maturity in the old world; they had not faith in that first promise made to Adam, and without question transmitted by him to his posterity. The faith of Abel is applauded, Heb. 11:4; consequently the unbelief of Cain, the head of the wicked world, is marked. If Abel's sacrifice was more excellent in regard of his faith, Cain's was more vile in regard of his unbelief.\* The apostle, shewing that faith makes the difference between the godly and the wicked, begins his discourse with the two examples of faith and unbelief in those brothers. Abel's faith seems to be thus in his offering: 1. He considered his own sin transferred upon that innocent victim, thereby understanding the demerit of his sin, as deserving wrath and death for it. 2. He considered that this sacrifice, being the blood of a beast, could not take away sin; but that it was typical of the Lamb promised, upon which his sins were to be transferred, and to whom they were to be imputed, and accordingly acted faith on that promise of the seed, and desired God not to impute his sins to him, but to that Lamb which was to be slain; and this the very nature of his sacrifice, being bloody, and the character the apostle gives of his faith, intimates. Cain had not faith in the promised seed; he brings an offering to God of the fruits of the ground, not a bloody sacrifice, whereby he might signify the acknowledgment of his own desert, and his reliance on that Lamb of God whose heel was to be bruised, who was to be made an offering. The kinds of their sacrifices imply two different conceits in them. Cain's seems to be only a present to acknowledge God the author of the good things he had, at the best, or to oblige God rather; for the ground of all his wrath was, because God did not respect his offering, did not testify a well-pleasedness with it. His offering was do signification of his sin, nor a type of the promised seed; he owned God as creator, not as redeemer.\* Cain and his posterity, which infected the old world, disregarded that promise of the seed of the woman, slighted the offers made in it, and resisted the strivings of the Spirit with them against their unbelief, which was principally the matter of the Spirit's striving, because he acted with them as the Spirit of Christ the Messiah, 1 Peter 3:18, 19, and therefore to accept him with a sense of that sin, which was properly against that person in whose name he came and by whom he acted. The Spirit was then in the world striving against their unbelief in the promise, as he is now in the world striving against unbelief in the performance.

2. As the ligament and band of all sin: John 8:24, 'If you believe not that I am he,' the Messiah sent of God, 'you shall die in your sins;' unless you believe me to be that seed of the woman, promised by the merit of my death to reconcile the world, you will sink with all the mass of your sins upon you. If unbelief be removed from a soul, the guilt of all other sins departs with it; if that remain,

the guilt of all other sins is bound and fastened with an adamant chain upon the soul, and that with more crimson aggravations; where the notices of a mediator have been revealed, there is a superadded guilt to all the rest. As faith is the only means whereby we gain a pardon, so unbelief is the only formal cause of condemnation, though other sins are the meritorious cause of eternal death. As no price had been paid for our redemption, unless Christ had offered his blood, so no application can be made of that price to us without faith in that blood. Upon this, sins are flung into the depths of the sea; upon the other, they remain with their whole weight upon the soul.

**In general. That unbelief is the greatest sin, appears,**

**1. Because God employs the highest means to bring men to a sense of it.** This is in the text. It is the work of the Spirit to convince of this sin. The odiousness of sin to God appears by his sending Christ to expiate it; the odiousness of unbelief to God appears by his sending the Spirit to reprove it. That which calls for the Spirit's descent from heaven, in order to a conviction of it, is attended with black aggravations. This is the great errand of the Holy Ghost to the world; the first thing he does is to open the understanding, the eye of the soul, to see the malignity of other things, in order to convince the conscience of this before he changeth the will. This is the principal fort against which the Spirit plants his battery, and it is the last that is surrendered. A terrified sinner would run from the shot that is showered about his ears; he would reform, he would be holy, but cries out still, loath to believe. The prodigal will be next door to starving, before he will come to his father; and the woman with the bloody issue will spend all her estate before she will come to Christ.

And indeed it is a sin so deeply rooted that,

(1.) Reason cannot convince of it. Christ, the object proposed, is above the reach of a rational eye, and therefore the sin against him is not discerned in its blackness by mere reason. Reason will not inform a man of the stupendous love of God in sending his Son to die for men, that were and would be unprofitable servants. Neither doth it consist with the natural notion men have of the justice of God, to lay upon an innocent person the sins of guilty offenders. It cannot naturally enter into any man's heart, that he that by power and wisdom made the world, should design by the cross and the foolishness of preaching to save it; that he that is infinite in love and mercy should make his Son to suffer. It is not therefore by the sparklings of bare reason men can see the blackness of this sin. Other sins may be known by natural light, because the duties to which they are opposite may be known by the light of nature. As the Spirit only discovers the greatness of Christ, the excellency of his person, the preciousness of his passion, so it also only shews what a sin it is to reject Christ. As faith is 'the gift of God,' Eph. 2:8, a grace more peculiarly the birth of heaven, so the extirpation of its opposite must only be from God.

(2.) Natural conscience of itself helps not in this conviction. It indeed maintains the quarrel against other sins, and plains the way for the Spirit's victory. But in this case there is no auxiliary force from conscience, nothing of a natural interest to plead for faith. It finds all the powers of the soul prejudiced against it, maintaining a war against the doctrine of the gospel; and the tide of our own natures carry us forcibly against it. The Spirit enters the lists singly and maintains the duel alone. So that what was said of the temple may more properly be said of this, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.'

**2. It is a sin against the gospel; not as a killing law, but an healing command; a blacker sin, because against a better covenant.**

It is his peculiar gospel command; a precept of the highest valuation with him: 1 John 3:23, 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' Not only in regard of his authority (for so others were his commands), but in regard of the affection he hath to it, it being most pleasing to him, as ver. 22 intimates. The disobedience of this command, then, is most disgusting and hateful to him; it is his command, as being the last that ever he will give; it is a dispensation from the rigour of those commands in the covenant of works, but is to be followed with no dispensation by any other. The sin against it, then, is against the utmost gracious command that God will ever give. Other sins are against the precepts of his sovereignty, this against the precepts of his grace, as well as his sovereignty. The keeping this command brings him near to us to abide in us, ver. 24, the breaking this command sets him at a distance from us, and makes our persons and services loathsome to him. Wickedness against the gospel is greater than wickedness against the law, because the evangelical revelation hath more of grace and more of glory, the sin against it hath more of contempt and more of heinousness; a sin against that is a sin dyed seven times blacker, and will have a furnace seven times hotter. It is against the gospel, which is so holy a declaration of God's will that there cannot be an holier; so good in itself, so profitable for man, that nothing can be better; the sin therefore against it is so bad, that nothing can be worse. The law or covenant of works never discovered the object of faith, and therefore never enjoined any such formal act of faith in a mediator, and therefore takes no cognisance of this sin of unbelief. It, not making known the person to be believed in, cannot make known the sin of not believing. If the law commanded faith in relation to the object of Christ crucified, it must then acquaint us with Christ crucified. It would be an unreasonable law to enjoin an act about such an object, and never discover one syllable of that object



to us. It doth not appear that Adam had any knowledge of Christ; the revelation of that bears date after his fall, at the time of the first promise. If unbelief were a sin only against the law, then those that reject the gospel would be liable to no more punishment, than if they had been only under the law; but they will, as will appear in the sequel of this discourse. This faith is the peculiarity of the gospel; and when Christ is said to come 'preaching the gospel,' the matter of it is, 'repent and believe,' Mark 1:14, two things that never entered into the heart of the law to conceive. It is therefore a sin against the whole gospel, since the design of that is to remove our suspicions of God, and establish a trust in him; upon which account the Gentiles, that are without the gospel, are described by the title of men 'without hope,' 1 Thes. 4:13. Unbelief is a making ourselves without ground of hope, contrary to all the encouragements of hope which God gives us in the gospel.

### **3. Unbelief is a sin against the highest testimony.**

It is against the two greatest witnesses that ever were, or can be, viz., the Father and the Son. The Father in the Old Testament, the Son in the New: John 8:17, 18, 'I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me.' What did they witness? That Christ was the light of the world, ver. 12. The Father witnessed this in the Scripture: Isa. 49:6, 'I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles;' and by the works he did, John 10:37. Christ the eternal λόγος (the word) bears witness to his human nature. Since the testimony of two men of credit is worthy of belief, much more the testimony of two persons in the Deity, infallible in their testimony, in whom there can be no suspicion of falsity. Therefore Christ saith to Nicodemus, John 3:11, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen.' We, i.e. my Father and I; in answer to Nicodemus, who, ver. 2, acknowledged him a teacher come from God; therefore, saith Christ, we, God who hath sent me, and I, witness this. The witness follows, ver. 15, that 'whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' It is a sin against the witness of the whole Bible.

### **4. As faith is the choicest grace, so that which is opposite to it must be the greatest sin.**

It hath as high a place among sins, as faith hath among graces, and hath the precedency of all other sins, as faith hath the pre-eminence above all other graces; and what faith is in the nature of grace, unbelief is contrary to it in the nature of sin. Faith glorifies God, unbelief vilifies him; one justifies him, the other condemns him. 'Faith works by love,' Gal. 5:6, excites a love of God, and is excited by it; unbelief works by hatred. Faith is the spirit that quickens all obedience; all the fruits of the Spirit grow upon the root of faith; all the fruits of the flesh grow upon the root of unbelief. Faith turns common works into acts of grace, as the chemist doth metals into gold; unbelief turns all into dung and poison. Faith makes every prayer, though weak, an acceptable sacrifice; our prayers can no more enter into heaven by unbelief than the Israelites could enter into Canaan. As Christ is 'precious to them that believe,' 1 Peter 1:7, so is he odious to them that believe not; as faith is a consent to take Christ for an husband, so unbelief is a flat refusal of him. Faith cuts off all self-exaltation: Rom. 3:27, 'Boasting is excluded by the law of faith,' and by the grace of faith too; unbelief supports it. It is a keeping up a pride greater than that of Adam's, a pride against God; it is indeed the Beelzebub, the prince of all those legions of sinful devils that quarter in the heart of a natural man.

### **5. It is more odious and loathsome to God, and hath in some respect a greater demerit in it, than sins against the light of nature.**

'The killing an ox is as the slaying a man,' Isa. 66:3. Not simply the killing an ox, but by reason of the unbelief in the Messiah, the ground of keeping up the ceremonial worship by sacrifices after the exhibition of Christ in the promise, which made a worship formerly instituted as odious as murder, which was a disparaging the image of God. Sodom was not defiled by its pollutions, as Capernaum was by refusing Christ. Who can think of the sin of Sodom without indignation and horror? Yet the punishment of unbelievers being greater than theirs, implies the sin to be more grievous; because the unspotted righteousness of God would not inflict a punishment above the merit of the offence; he exacts no more than iniquity deserves, Job 11:6. Now, 'it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for' a city or person that rejects the offers of the gospel, Mat. 10:15. That city was an epitome of hell both for sin and judgment, yet that defiling sin hath less guilt, less filth than the rejecting, purifying gospel grace. The punishment of Sodom should be like that of the whip to the punishment of rebels under the light of the gospel, which should be as the torment of a rack. The sin therefore is of a lighter tincture, like petty larceny to murder. All other sins indeed strike at some one or two attributes of God, and of God as considered as Creator; but this is a formal injury to God in all his perfections, and as appearing in the richest dress. Other sins being conversant about some created matter, preferring some creature before God, this is a preferring that very sin, the loathsome thing under heaven, before a God of glory and an excellent Saviour. Other sins are conversant immediately about some inferior object, this strikes directly at God himself. It is therefore called the sin: Heb. 12:1, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.' The name of weight is given to other sins, but unbelief is called the sin. Most understand it of original concupiscence; but since it is the use the apostle makes of the former doctrine, Heb. 11, concerning the excellency of faith, I think it is more consonant to understand it of unbelief, the sin contrary to that faith he had been so highly commending. This is the provocation: Num. 14:11, 'How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me?' They were guilty of many other provocations, but God reckons their incredulity as the top of all. It flings most dirt upon all the attributes of God, and doth not only wrong the Deity singly considered, but bears a spite at all the three persons.

In handling this subject, I shall shew,

- 1. What is to be understood by unbelief.**
- 2. Wherein the sinfulness of it consists.**

### **1. What is to be understood by unbelief.**

**First, negatively, what it is not.**

**We must not understand by it,**

First, a want of assurance. Drooping spirits may be believers. There is a manifest distinction made between faith in Christ and the comfort of that faith; between believing to eternal life, and knowing we have eternal life: 1 John 5:13, 'These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.' There is a difference between a child's having a right to an estate, and his full knowledge of the title. There may be a trust in God where there is a walk in darkness, Isa. 50:10. If faith be not assurance, unbelief is not the want of it. If faith were assurance, a man would be justified before he believed; he must be justified before he can know himself justified. The object always precedes the knowledge of its existence; the sun must be risen before I know it is risen. If the want of assurance were this unbelief, a child of God would be an unbeliever every time God is pleased to draw a cloud between heaven and the soul, and deny him the present tastes of the hidden manna. Unbelief is a sin, the want of assurance is not; to have it is not our duty but God's dispensation; he hath obliged the believer to seek it, but not to possess it. Assurance is a fruit that grows out of the root of faith: the fruits in winter appear not upon the tree. Because I see not a flourishing top, shall I deny the existence and sappiness of the root? Mary, when she wept at Christ's feet, had no assurance of his love, yet Christ sends her away with the encomiums of her faith, acted before the comfort dropped from his lips, Luke 7:48, 50. The characters of faith may be written in the heart as letters engraven upon a seal, yet filled with so much dust as not to be distinguished; the dust hinders the reading of the letters, but doth not raze them out.

Secondly, not every interruption of the act of faith. Faith may lie asleep in the habit, when it doth not walk about in the act. A man upon this account can no more be called an unbeliever than a man asleep can be called a dead man. A believer may, like Samson, lose his present strength while he retains his life. Christ's prayer propped up Peter's faith from failing, when there was as little appearance of faith in him at one time as of life in a dead man; yet all that time there was a pulse of faith beating in him, which was made sensible by his Saviour's look. Faith is the vital principle: 'The just shall live by faith,' and where this is, though in a weak degree, such a person cannot be denominated an unbeliever. Fogs and mists darken the sun, but put not out that eye of the world; the sun shines though there be an interception of his beams. Yet this is but temporary. A true believer cannot be long without acting faith, no more than a living man can be without breath and some kind of motion. Thomas was not without faith, though his faith was at present asleep and had a defect in it.

Thirdly, not doubts, which may frequently step up in the soul. Such there are in the beginnings of faith, when the state of the soul is like that of the twilight, a mixture of light and darkness. Such a condition the soul is in, in its first conversion; as the Jews were when the chains of their captivity were knocked off, 'like men in a dream,' Ps. 126:1, 2, scarcely believing the performance of that which they vehemently desired, expected and believed in the promise, scarce imagining that they, so lately dead in a civil sense, should live and return to their land. When men are in a state of nature, they are most swayed by self-love and presumption; when they come into a state of grace, there riseth up jealousy and fear, and they think they cannot run far enough from the other extreme. This is a jealousy principally of themselves, but it redounds upon God. The mother and nurse of it is a secret partial infidelity, the ignorance of the promise, power, and extent of the mediation of Christ. This is not an unbelief habitually settled; it is rather a misbelief than unbelief, and rather a start of passion, a fit of infirmity, as Asaph: Ps. 77:10, 'This is my infirmity,' when he had doubted whether there were any mercy left in God, when he believed God had parted with all his bowels, it was from a sudden storm, not a settled way of argumentation. Not only at the beginning of faith, but after a full-grown faith, there may be some doubtings. David was none of the lowest form; when in a fit he gives the lie to God through the sides of his prophets: Ps. 116:10, 11, 'I said in my haste all men are liars;' I did not seriously, and as my judgment, say so. All men are liars, the prophets too, who have brought to me the message of a kingdom. He casts the dint of his passion in the face of the promise; this was the pang of unbelief, not an evil heart of unbelief. He was a man after God's own heart in his state, though not in that act. Doubting doth not imply a want of faith, but a weakness of faith. Christ acknowledged the few grains of Peter's faith when he reproves him for doubting: Mat. 14:31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising

into a flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ, and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look, and sends forth a cry to his Saviour acknowledging his sufficiency: Mat. 14:30, 'Lord, save me.' Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust, and make us take faster hold on God: Ps. 56:3, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is no relying upon God), not like a boat, carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a comforter against such fears, and to expel those thick fumes of nature.

Fourthly, Neither are temptations to unbelief and unbelieving thoughts injected, the unbelief I mean. If these be not entertained, though in regard of their matter they are unbelieving thoughts, yet formally they are not acts of our unbelief. If such thoughts in themselves were acts of our unbelief, while they are disowned by us, what shall we say to Christ, who had as great incentives to diffidence proposed to him by the devil as are to any of his members, Mat. 4:3, who yet was without the least spot? The proposal is Satan's, the entertainment only makes them ours. A true believer will not harbour such thoughts of God; they may be forced in, and paused upon, but they can find no standing credit in the heart, but will be regarded as the hissings of the old serpent. If you receive them as a flash of lightning in your faces, shut your eyes against them, give them their pass, and command them to depart with a Get thee hence, Satan. If you pour out tears upon every assault, as Asaph did after he had had a multitude of them (Ps. 73:21, 'Thus was my heart grieved, and I was pricked in my reins,' his soul and all his affections were wounded, because of those foolish imaginations of God); I say, if we do thus, and run to heaven for help, it frees us from the charge of a state of unbelief upon this account. That cannot be unbelief that resists unbelief. Whatsoever votes against such thoughts is not a friend to them. If they be entertained with a temporary delight, unless they fully overcome the soul, they do not declare us in a state of infidelity. But if they are received, delighted in, applauded, and grow to a settled and rooted notion, and spread their fruits in the life, the person cannot be excused from the charge of unbelief.

Fifthly, Nor is it an unbelief of some truths through ignorance, provided they be not fundamental. Zacharias was a believer, and expecter of the Messiah, Luke 1:6; he could not else be said to be righteous, walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless, yet believed not that particular word spoken to him by the angel, ver. 20; and the disciples believed not the testimony of those that witnessed the resurrection of Christ, Mark 16:11, 13, 14. Every error in the head doth no more destroy the truth of faith, than every miscarriage in the life through infirmity nullifies the being of grace, or every spot upon the face impair the beauty and features of it. The apostles, those glorious instruments of the propagation of the gospel, and the first commissioned ambassadors of Christ, believed all the time of Christ's life, and after his death too, according to the notion of the Jews, that the Messiah was to rear a temporal kingdom. Herein their errors were the same with the Jews'. But they had a faith in believing this person Jesus to be the Messiah, and resting upon him for salvation; so that they had an habitual faith in the person, with a partial unbelief. The Jews had a total unbelief in the person, though an assent to, and mistaken expectation of the promise; nay, after the Spirit of God descended upon them, they would not believe the conversion of the Gentiles, though the Scripture was more full of promises of that than the conversion of the Jews; and they limited that precept of Christ of preaching to every creature as if it were meant only of that nation; yet those times were the richest for the knowledge of Christ and faith in him that ever were; and though before that they were ignorant of the design of the death of Christ, and did not believe his resurrection upon a declaration of it, yet certainly their habitual faith was not expelled. Peter's faith did not fail at the time Christ lay in the grave, for both the promise and prayer of Christ was a bar against it. Their faith, indeed, was stupefied and nonplussed at present; but it is one thing not to believe through weakness and ignorance, and another thing not to believe through wilfulness and neglect of enquiries. They did not believe the resurrection of Christ; but Peter, when he heard the news of it, did not supinely rest in his unbelief, but ran to inform himself, Luke 24:12. If a fundamental truth be not believed, be not enquired into, if a man is wilfully ignorant of it, I know not how he can be excused from unbelief; nay, if we have a doubt of any truth of God, and cherish that doubt with complacency, and are afraid it should be a truth, and wish it false, I question whether this be consistent with true faith. I am sure such an one is guilty of unbelief in that act, because it is an act of the will, delighting in that which is contrary to faith.

Sixthly, Nor is it a negative unbelief (*carentia simplex fidei*) which is in the heathens, that is here to be understood. The schools distinguish infidelity into *negativa* and *privativa*; the one is in the heathens, who never had the means of faith; the other *privative*, which is *carentia fidei debitæ inesse*, is in those who are

acquainted with the doctrine of the gospel, and therefore are obliged to believe. The heathens' unbelief, say the schoolmen,\* is not their sin but their punishment, arising from the ignorance of divine revelation. There is a natural incapacity of acknowledging and believing that which never was discovered to them. A man may study sun, moon, and stars, yet never learn such a lecture as the death of the Son of God for the redemption of the world. Their ruin is not properly for the sin of unbelief, but for the sins against the first covenant, and against the law of nature, known and accepted by them; yet their ruin is for the want of faith, because those sins cannot be wiped off, but by faith in the blood of the second covenant; but they are not immediately chargeable with it as a sin. But the unbelief of those who live under the gospel, and believe not the report made to them, either from an affected ignorance, gross laziness, not inquiring into the truth, or a desperate contrariety to it, is a sin for which they are condemned. The heathens are under a material infidelity, because they are utterly ignorant of the matter of faith, never had anything of divine revelation; yet their ignorance being so great as to exclude faith, it is a true infidelity. But those who have had sufficient proposals of the gospel, and receive it not in the truth and love of it, are guilty of a formal unbelief. The former necessarily want faith, because they want the object of it; the latter voluntarily want faith, because they have the revelation of the object made to them, and will not embrace it. This is not a sin in the heathens. If it were a sin not to believe, the obligation to believe must arise from the law of nature, or from some new declaration; not from the law of nature, because that could not instruct them in the doctrine of justification by a mediator. There are notions of morality writ in men's hearts by nature, but none of the gospel, and naturally men are obliged to no other obedience than what Adam in innocence was bound to; but Adam in that state was not bound to believe in a mediator, not because of any natural inability in him, but because of the unfitness of such a declaration of redemption to him in such a state, which needed no recovery, he then standing by another title. But since Adam was obliged, as a rational creature, to believe whatsoever God should reveal, and so bound to believe in Christ upon the revelation of Christ to him, such an obligation indeed lies upon all men, as they are rational creatures, and the posterity of Adam, to believe when a revelation is made to them; and when such a revelation is made to the heathens, they would be condemned for not believing, because in Adam they had power to believe, and lost it. But till that revelation be made, infidelity in the heathens is not their crime, no more than it is a crime to disobey a law which was never published and made known to the people. They can no more be condemned for not believing than you would punish a man in the night for not seeing the sun before it is risen, or for not dancing at the sound of music he never heard. The light of the gospel never dawned upon them, nor the sound of it ever arrived to their ears, yet they are condemned for want of believing in Christ, as a sick man dies for want of medicine to cure him, but his own sickness is the cause of his death. They are only obliged by the law of creation, but the gospel was not delivered to Adam by the law of creation, as he was a common person, but after he had put himself out of that capacity by his fall, and the headship put into other hands, the hands of Christ. The Scripture is clear in this. If it be 'the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,' John 3:18, the rejecting this light is not their condemnation, unless it shines upon them. And Christ tells his apostles, John 15:22, that if he 'had not come and spoken to the Jews, they had not had sin;' they had not had the sin of unbelief, which is the highest condemning sin; they had not been guilty of it, if they had not had declarations of the gospel by the mouth of Christ and his ministers. And though some think the heathens will be judged according to the gospel, because of Rom. 2:16, 'God will judge all men according to my gospel,' yet that is to be understood only according as it is revealed in the gospel; for, ver. 12, he speaks of the judgment of the heathens by the law of nature, and the judgment of the Jews by the law of grace. He speaks of their being judged by Christ as it is declared in the gospel, but not of the gospel as the rule whereby they shall be judged who never heard of it; for God doth not bind any to a mere impossibility, nor require more of men than what he hath given man by creation power to do.

## **Secondly, But positively by unbelief we must understand,**

**First, A denial of the truth of the gospel.** When men assent not to the doctrine of the gospel by an act of the understanding;\* when, like Julian the apostate, they regard it as γέλωτα καὶ φλυαρίαν, a matter of laughter, a mere trifle; or, as the Jews call the gospel, ספר שקר, a volume of lies; or as a French papist said of the epistles of Paul, that he believed them no more than he did Æsop's fables. I doubt there may be many such among us. I am sure the practical unbelief among us argues this dissent in the understanding to lurk in more than we imagine, as the foundation of all the other unbelief. The first temptation Satan assaults the soul with, after some awakenings of conscience, is to question the matter to be believed. If he can hinder men from laying the foundation of truth in their understanding, he prevents all the superstructure, which cannot be raised without it. Many there are who, because they cannot comprehend the mysterious ways and counsels of God, which seem unlikely and improbable to reason, deny the whole word; whereas it would be more suitable to submit to God's will than to question it. Such a dogmatical unbelief, which is not very rare among us, is an exploding the

whole doctrine of the gospel, which is inexcusable and irrational, since men every day believe other things upon far less evidence than they have for the gospel, whose divine authority is witnessed by the manner of its propagation in all ages, contrary to the power, strength, parts, and eloquence of the world, and supported by a concurrence of providence against and under the violences of men.

**Secondly, A doubting of the truth of the doctrine of the gospel.** Many who will not openly deny it, yet question whether it be true, and think that which is true uncertain and dubious; this is unbelief. Such a doubtful opinion is no full assent, but a floating judgment, a suspicion that it may be true, and a suspicion that it may be false, like a pendulous weight which swings to and fro, as much on one side as on the other. There is an uncertainty in the speculative judgment, when a man knows not what he should assent to. There is indeed sometimes a doubting of admiration, which riseth not from any contrariety in the heart to the matter proposed, but implies a suitableness of the heart to it; but by the greatness of the thing offered it is dazzled, as the eye by the splendour of the sun. Such an admiration was Abraham's at the power of God to raise seed out of such a dry root, Gen. 17:17; such a doubt had the blessed Virgin, which was joined with a modest inquiry for better instruction, Luke 1:24, her reason being nonplussed in the manner of the thing revealed to her above the course of nature. But where there is a doubt of diffidence of the great truths of the gospel,\* regarding them as of doubtful credit, this is unbelief, because it is a judgment contrary to the doctrine of faith; for we are not only to believe that the things revealed are true, but that they are certain and infallible. As all suspicion is an opinion of evil with light conjectures, so a suspicion in matters of faith is an opinion of falsity upon light conjectures. Such a suspicion includes a judgment contrary to faith, because, without some judgment in the case, there cannot be an opinion of one thing or other. Since all men are in the rank of believers or unbelievers, a suspension of our belief of the doctrine of the gospel cannot be ranked under the banner of faith; it is at best, for the present, a more modest refusal, rather than a downright rejection. As a man is thought to refuse a proposition when he seems unwillingly to comply with it, and will take time to consider, he that is not with Christ is against him, he that receiveth him not refuseth him. If faith be a certain knowledge,—John 17:8, 'They have known surely that I came out from thee,'—then an uncertain opinion is unbelief. In many men there is uncertainty from an acuteness of understanding, whereby they are dextrous in raising objections, as Mark 11:31, 33, which makes them uncertain how to steer themselves, like a needle between two loadstones, which refuseth neither, nor closeth with either of them. Such an unbelief there is among many of us, a believing a probability of the gospel, not the certainty; nay, scarce the probability, but owning it outwardly, as they would do a fashion.

**Thirdly, Refusal to accept heartily of Christ upon the terms of the gospel, which is opposite to justifying faith, when there is not a fiducial motion to Christ as the centre.** There may be assent, and, as some divines say, upon a divine motive, yet a man still under the notion of an unbeliever; for a dogmatical faith is not always accompanied with a justifying, though a justifying faith always supposeth a dogmatical, or assent to the truth as antecedent and preparatory, or else including it in its essence. The devils, from evident experience, believe there is a God, and believe the principles of the Christian religion (as we believe the wind blows, the sun shines, and the air freezeth); and they have had experience of the power of Christ wasting their kingdom. Both these faiths, dogmatical and justifying, must go together. There is a double act of the soul, the understanding to propose, the will to embrace, suitable to the double object in the promise, which must be considered as true, and so move the understanding as good, and so affect the will. This dogmatical faith is necessary, as a glass window that lets in the light. This unbelief is when, though men profess an assent to the truth with their understandings, yet they consent not to it with their wills, and by reason of corrupt habits, embrace it not as good; when, though there is not an evil head, there is 'an evil heart of unbelief,' Heb. 3:12. They may may well be said not to believe a thing, who, though they believe the truth of it, yet have no due estimate of the goodness of it; when there is a sufficient evidence made to them, both of the truth and goodness of the matter revealed, they will not come up to the terms of the gospel. Such as those are in every assembly, who, though they dissent not from the truth of the Scripture, and the dogmatical points in it, yet they never seriously reflect upon them, have not valuations of them. They may have approbations of the truth as it is rational, but not an esteem and application of it as holy. They have no sense of the need of Christ, nor of the worth of Christ; value not the commands to obey him, nor the promises to rely upon him, nor Christ to embrace him, nor the threatenings to fear him. The precepts, as well as the promises of Christ, are the objects of faith, so the precepts, as well as the promises, are the objects of unbelief. The precepts are not the formal object of faith, but of obedience; yet he that believes not the precept believes not the promise, which is an encouragement of obedience to the precept. They then are unbelievers who, though they would have the safety Christ hath purchased, will not pay him the service he hath merited; who postpone the commands of the gospel to the indulgences of the flesh; who would have salvation, but reject the yoke. They renounce the

articles of the gospel, that would preserve their sins, which Christ principally came to save from; and God counts such no less unbelievers than he did the Jews, who cried, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' and would have nothing of the image of the Lord in their hearts. So then unbelief is properly a sin in those places where the gospel is preached; they are guilty of it who have heard the gospel. We must not cast it off from ourselves to the heathens; it is, indeed, their punishment, but our sin. That is disobedience to a law which is against that law, when it is revealed and known; and that is unbelief which is disobedience to the law of faith when discovered to men. Denial of the truth of the gospel, or contempt of the terms of the gospel, are properly and truly unbelief.

But of this practical unbelief I shall speak further in the sequel of this discourse. None will deny that the Jews were guilty of positive unbelief, who, though they did believe the gospel as it was veiled in their Mosaical rites, and firmly believed a Messiah, yet were opposers of him when the mask was taken off. What they believed in the Old Testament they rejected in the New. So among us men believe Christ to be the Messiah; they believe him with their heads and deny him with their hearts; they assent to him in the notion, and deny him in the application; they believe his person, and reject his doctrine.

2. Wherein the sinfulness of unbelief doth consist.

**I. First, It is against God.**

**II. Secondly, It is worse than the sin of the Jews against Christ.**

**III. Thirdly, It hath many other reasons of sinfulness in it.**

**I. First, It is against God.**

It strikes peculiarly at God. Whatsoever is done against any institution of God is interpreted by God as done against himself. When the Israelites, weary of Samuel's government, desired his resignation, and the electing of a king, God calls it a rejecting of himself, 1 Sam. 8:7, that he should not reign over them. The slighting a mortal creature in the ends whereto God hath appointed him, being a contempt of God, by whose authority he acts, a rejecting of Christ, who is the highest ordinance of God, whose words are the words of God spoken in his name, as God foretells, Deut. 18:19, is a breathing forth the highest disdain of God. Though it be an enmity immediately against Christ, it redounds to God, because Christ is his Christ, his anointed. The conspiracy is joint against both, a 'taking counsel against the Lord and his anointed, to break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from them,' Ps. 2:2. Let us cast away the promises of an eternal kingdom, and those threatenings of hell,\* whereby they would allure us or scare us into an allegiance, to submit our necks to the yoke of their laws. Let us slight all those reasons, and spurn away those vain hopes and fears, those cords whereby they would draw us unto their power. It casts a dishonour upon God more than all other iniquities; it is a departing from him after the highest and clearest declarations of his nature, a representation of him under all the disparagements imaginable, and under all encouragements of complying with him. As those that trust Christ are 'to the praise of God's glory,' Eph. 1:12, so those that distrust him are to the dishonour of his name.

1. It is the greatest reproach and undervaluing of God. He calls it a wearying of him more than other sins: Isa. 7:13, 'Will you weary my God also?' The sin of Ahaz, upon which this speech was uttered, was a distrust of God, not properly this unbelief we are speaking of. God had declared his intent to preserve Judah against the invasion of the Syrian, and to defeat the counsels of the league against them. To strengthen Ahaz his belief in the promises, he commands him to ask a sign as a seal of this assurance, and gives him the choice of what sign he pleased; wisheth him to put his power to the utmost trial, either in heaven or earth: ver. 11, 'Ask it either in the depth or in the height above.' Judgments against the enemies, from the bowels of the deep to the windows of heaven. And as he gives him liberty to employ his power, so he assures him of the tenderness of his mercy: ver. 11, 'Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God;' though thou hast been so wicked an idolater, if thou wilt repent, confide in me, walk according to my will, I will be a God in covenant with thee, I will be a God to preserve thee, and a God to judge thine enemies; thy Jehovah in being their Elohim, and manifesting my power for thee against them. Ahaz his answer seems to be a start of a modest humility, though indeed it was disobedience not to do as God commanded him: ver. 12, 'And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord;' he would not tempt God, or as some read the word *אנסה*, I will not exalt God; the words import, I will not trust God, I will send to the king of Assyria, who can better save me than the Lord. As he did, 2 Kings 16:7. I will fortify my cities, train my soldiers, crave assistance of my neighbours. Observe, though God, in his message to him, offered himself to be his God in covenant with him, Ahaz would not accept of the proffer, owns him not as his God in his answer, 'I will not tempt the Lord;' not, I will not tempt my God, which had been an argument of his trust, and so had altered the tenor of his answer to an humble resignation. Ahaz would not be beholden to God, he would not honour God so much as to give him an opportunity to glorify his great power; if we read the words, 'I will not exalt the Lord.' Upon this God promiseth a sign, ver. 14, that 'a virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and call his name Emmanuel,' and this should be a sign. I will not discourse how this was to be a sign to Ahaz, or the body of the people then in being; but take notice, every unbeliever is an Ahaz, reproacheth the kindest offers of God. God calls to men to turn to him, to place their whole confidence in him; but men reject the offer, run to creatures, and thus weary God. If it was so great a scorn of God, not to accept his proffer for

a temporal deliverance, not to regard any sign from him, how great is it not to regard the sign of his greatest power, wisdom, and love, which he hath manifested in that Son born of a virgin, who is Emmanuel, God with us! An unbeliever is such a scorner of God, that he is not willing that that dirt he hath cast in the face of God by his other sins should be wiped off; not willing to sanctify that name by believing, which he hath profaned by other sins against the law; will not embrace that Christ which God offers him, whereby he may in some sense render him a satisfaction for all the wrongs God hath sustained by him. As faith 'gives glory to God,' Rom. 4:20, so unbelief casts reproach and scorn upon him.

2. It robs God of the honour of all his attributes. He that believes not God, doth fling dirt in the face of all those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption: of his wisdom which contrived it, of his righteousness which executed it, of his mercy which is infinitely commended by it, of his truth which is engaged to make good the intent and purchase of it to every one that believes. Either men believe not that God will perform what he saith, and then it is an injury to his truth; or they hope for salvation by some other means, and then it is a contempt of his wisdom; or that the things proposed by him are not amiable and desirable, and then it is a reproach to his goodness; or they trust to some creature helps against his command, and then it is a disobedience to his sovereign authority, or they think him not able to effect the things he hath promised, and then it is a disparaging his power and sufficiency. Whatsoever attribute in God is a ground of, or an encouragement to, faith, is struck at by unbelief. The grounds and encouragements of faith are these: God is infinitely wise, and cannot be deceived; he is infinitely true, and cannot deceive his creature in declaring what is false; he is infinitely good, and will not deceive his creature, for deceit is most opposite to love and goodness; he is infinitely happy, and hath no reason to deceive his creature, which could not add to his happiness; whereas deceit among men sometimes improves their interest, but deceit in God would dissolve the Deity; he is infinitely powerful, and well able to make good what he asserts, to confer what he promiseth, inflict what he threatens. As all these are indisputable grounds of faith, and are owned and honoured by it, so they are blemished in their reputation by unbelief, and marked with a base alloy; they are all foolishly charged by it, and made the common scoff of it. There is not an attribute but may draw up a particular indictment against an unbeliever, for an offence against its crown and dignity. And as there was not an attribute but God intended to glorify in Christ, so there is not one but this sin doth really vilify.

3. It is an undeifying of God, as much as lies within the compass of a creature's power. He that denies any one attribute of God, seems to deny God himself, to ungod him, strips him of the glory of a deity. Take but one pin, necessary to the frame of a watch, and you take away the perfection of it. Those attributes which unbelief stabs, are essential to the being of a deity. God can no more be a God without them, than the sun can be a sun without light, or any of us men without a rational soul. Unbelief is not so indulgent as to divest God of the honour of one perfection, but of many; nor so mild as absolute atheism, which denies the being of a God. It is a less scorn to deny that ever there was such a man as Cæsar, than to affirm indeed there was such a person, but he was a fool, coward, false, cruel, and the vilest man that lived: it is better to deny his being, than to count him infamous. Unbelief strips God of his richest robes, his highest virtues,\* which were more singularly glorified in redemption, than they were in the creation, or could be in the creation of innumerable worlds, more glorious than this without the death of his Son for them. Not to acknowledge God in Christ, is to deny him that glory that the creation and common providence cannot afford him. As our Saviour was tormented by the Jews in every part of his body,—head with thorns, face with spittle, hands and feet with nails, and wholly with reproaches in what was dearest to him,—so is God dishonoured by unbelief in every perfection. As their actions denied Christ to be the Saviour of the world, so the acts of this sin deny God to be the God of the world.

4. It strikes at all the three persons. As all have an hand in the salvation wrought by Christ, so the rejecting that redemption dashes a blot upon all. They all sat in joint consultation about man's redemption; they were joint in counsel, joint in publication of it; the Father in his first promise to Adam, and in a voice at Christ's baptism; Christ in his person, and the Holy Ghost bearing witness by the gifts conferred upon men after the ascension of Christ, which was a testimony of his glorious entertainment: Acts 5:31, 32, 'And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, which God hath given to them that obey him.' The Father sends, Christ dies, the Spirit offers to apply; the neglect of this is against the wisest counsel, the greatest persons in being. The Spirit was the great witness after the ascension of Christ, by the collation of eminent gifts, whereby a divine approbation was given to the doctrine of Christ from heaven. He revealed nothing but what Christ had before done, and wrought, and built upon that foundation, John 16:14, he glorifies Christ, for he receives of his. He discovers the eternal counsels of God, the depths of divine wisdom, which 'the heart of man could not conceive,' 1 Cor. 2:9, 10; The Father bears witness to Christ by undeniable miracles; the Spirit adds his testimony by internal operations, and urging the truths of Christ upon the hearts of men; Christ bears witness to himself by his obedience and death. So then, any slight of Christ is a slight of the Father and the Holy Ghost.

But particularly,

First, It blemisheth the truth and veracity of God. He that believes 'sets to his seal that God is true,' John 3:33, i.e. he approves and declares solemnly the truth of that revelation God hath made.† Men fix their seals to contracts to ratify them; faith is as the subscription to the word of God, protesting that what God speaks is true. And it is the highest glory a creature can give to the Creator, to acknowledge him a God of eternal and immutable verity. Since Christ, 'whom God hath sent, speaks the words of God, ver. 34, since what he declares is not simply his own, but the instructions of his Father; the acknowledging those declarations to be



true, is an acknowledging the truth of God in Christ. Now, as the true believer glorifies not only the truth of the Son, but of the Father, so the unbeliever outrageth not simply Christ, but God the Father, whose counsels and commands are published by him. As assent is a justifying God, as the people and the publicans, by assenting to the truth John Baptist declared, are said to do, Luke 7:39, so a dissent is casting an aspersion of falsity on God. In common sense, when we say we believe not a man, we declare him to be false; and no better a title than that of a liar doth this sin give to God: 1 John 5:10, 'He that believes not God, hath made him a liar, because he believes not that record that God gave of his Son.' It is as certain that he gives the lie to God, as it is certain God cannot speak a lie to him. Thus men write deceit upon the promises when they do not believe them: 'Though I have redeemed them, yet have they spoken lies against me,' Hosea, 7:13; אֶפְסָדָם, though I redeem them, though I have promised them redemption by Christ, yet they slander me as if I were the falsest person in the world. We bely God when we believe not his threatenings, and promise ourselves impunity under sin: Jer. 5:12, 'They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us;' as if his promises were like the picture of a sun, without heat and light; his threatenings like the sound of pot-guns, as if the one were toys, and the other bugbears. This is to represent God a cozen and impostor, though he hath engaged his royal word; to make the whole Bible an heap of fallacies. The glory of a man is his credit; it is an honourable character, such a man is a man of his word; it is a disgraceful character of God to fancy the first truth guilty of lying; it is a title he hath joined with his honour as a Creator, that he 'keeps truth for ever,' not to part with it any more than with any other perfection, no more than with the title of Creator: Ps. 146:6, 'Which made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that is therein, which keeps truth for ever.' These represent him with no truth to keep, or no heart to preserve it.

### **The guilt of it in this regard will appear,**

First, It is in this respect a greater sin than despair. Despair is deservedly counted an horrid sin, a wrong to the mercy of God; but this is greater. Unbelief is against a divine good as it is in itself,\* for as much as in us lies, we make God the author of a lie. Despair is opposed to a divine good as communicable to us, and therefore is a less wrong to God; despair questions not the stability of divine faithfulness in itself, but the communicableness of that good promised to the soul; but unbelief lays a battery against the divine nature. Despair acknowledgeth the truth in regard of the object, but doubteth in regard of the subject; they count the divine proclamation true, but think themselves without the compass of it.

Secondly, It strips God of the glory of his nature, who can as soon cease to be, as cease to be true. Some say that if God should appear in a human shape, light would be his body, and truth his soul; so essential is truth to the Deity, 'it is impossible for God to lie,' Heb. 6:18. If we fancy him a liar, we fancy him no God, because we represent him doing a thing impossible to the divine nature, changing an unchangeable goodness into a hateful unfaithfulness. What is his power, knowledge, sufficiency, if truth and faithfulness, the glory of all, be wanting? As sincerity is the beauty of all graces, so veracity and holiness is the lustre of all divine perfections. To give the lie is incivility to an inferior, insolence to a superior, a kind of treason to a prince; yet this may be done without unmaning a man, or deposing a prince, but it cannot be done to God without degrading him to the condition of those lying vanities we trust to. It is, indeed, so heinous as that it puts upon God the character of the devil, who is called 'the father of lies,' as though God should be projecting nothing else from eternity (as the devil hath been from the time of his fall) but to mock and cozen the souls of his creatures into everlasting destruction. It is to count him worse than the devil, by how much they fancy him more powerful, but equally false. It is strange that a man who knows in some measure what God is, should be so insolent and blasphemous as virtually to charge him with a dissembling nature; yet so unbelievers do, though not in positive opinion, yet by interpretation and practice. And as they make God as bad, so they make themselves worse than the devil, who believes the truth of God, though he feels only the terror of it, and nothing of the comfort.

Thirdly, It makes God guilty of perjury. God hath not only obliged himself by his royal word, but his solemn oath, 'two immutable things,' Heb. 6:17, 18. His promise, considered alone, is of eternal verity; he is true and unchangeable; he doth not promise one thing and purpose another. To this he hath added his oath, to remove all controversy and doubt which may arise in the mind. Not to believe a man of an honest repute, when he swears the truth of a thing before a magistrate, is a gross uncharitableness, unless we certainly know, or have strong presumptions, that what he swears is false. How black is it then not to believe God speaking? how much blacker not to believe God swearing? As the oath of God, the calling all his perfections, his very being as a testimony to the truth of his assertion, is the highest ground of assurance that can be given, so the not believing it is the highest injury that can be offered to a God of truth. He annexeth his oath to his word for the encouragement of sinners to faith and repentance: Ezek. 33:11, 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.' As I am an eternal, immortal being, so surely do I delight not in the death of a sinner, but in his conversion and life. How great a charge of perjury doth unbelief bring against God, whose condescension hath been so infinitely wonderful as to give us his oath for a cure of our mistrust, to invite men to faith and repentance upon the security of his own eternal life and being!

Fourthly, It is aggravated from the clearness of the revelation. The higher the revelation is, the stronger arguments there are of the divine authority, and the greater contempt of the truth and authority of the person so revealing. If an angel should bring a message from heaven, what man would be jealous of the truth of it, when brought by so pure a creature? But this revelation was made by the

Son of God, who lay 'in the bosom of the Father,' John 1:18, and is truth itself; to the propagation of which truth, neither the wit and eloquence, the strength and valour, the wealth and interest of the world can lay any claim. It hath appeared in the whole progress with a divine stamp in the forehead of it. The first declarations of it were laid in the sufferings of the publishers: Could such multitudes be thought to lose their lives, so dear to man, for a mere falsity? No man is so mad as to invent a fable, and to stand to it to the loss of his life, and whatsoever is of most account with him in the world. Would any affection to Christ have animated them to expose themselves to the sharpest sufferings, had they had but any jealousies that Christ was an impostor? No, they would rather have expressed their hatred than their love (who can love another for a gross abuse of him?) or had they been so extravagant as to be desirous to keep up the credit of their Master, would they for it have made themselves the public scorn and off-scouring of the world? It could not be covetousness or ambition, or any other lust, which could be the principle of their publication of Christianity; the little wealth they had, they forfeited for it. No ambition could build any hopes of worldly honours upon the doctrine of a crucified Christ. The Jews had lately crucified the Master, and were not like to honour the servants for a charge of murder against the Son of God. The Gentiles were not likely to receive it, and applaud them for it by any strength of nature. Ambitious men take rational courses for attaining honour; but this was against the rooted customs of the world, which are hardly parted with; and contradicts of ancient religions use to be violently persecuted to death for the honour of their acknowledged gods. But had such principles excited them to a publication of this doctrine, surely they would gladly have desisted, after they had found their hopes without success, when they found blows instead of honours; or they would have armed the professing multitudes, and conquered countries; but they used not their swords against their enemies, but received the strokes of their enemies' swords into their own breasts, for the defence of the doctrine; and that not for a time, but during their whole lives. Not one sword was drawn in the defence of it by any votary to it. They resisted no force used against them, though, by reason of their multitude, they were capable of preserving themselves, and of offending their enemies. Their discipline was strict, the maxims of their doctrines were advantageous to mankind; they thwarted no moral precepts that were amiable by the light of nature, but highly advanced them; there could not be a way of publishing it more clear and full, to manifest it to be the truth and doctrine of God, than this. Had it been uttered by the voices of angels in the air, we might have suspected them to be impure devils as soon as holy angels. When the way of the revelation of the gospel hath been altogether divine, without any taint of worldly means for the propagation of it, the not believing it, the not complying with the precepts and promises of it, is an high contempt of divine truth.

Fifthly, It is aggravated from the performance of God's gospel promises. It is a great sin not to believe the truth of God when it is declared, but a greater not to believe it when it hath been made good. It is not only a word, but 'a tried word, as silver tried in the fire,' which hath been found to be good and sound metal, and free from all mixture of baser metals, as lead or tin, with it, Ps. 18:30. 'The word of the Lord is tried,' Ps. 12:6, and there have been experiences of this in all ages. Not one among all those multitudes that have sincerely professed him, could charge him with falsity. God hath given the highest evidence of his veracity in making good the promises of assistance to our mediator in the exercise of his office. The promises were made to him as mediator and undertaker of that great work of suffering for us. The performance, therefore, of them to Christ is a manifestation of God's truth to us; for though Christ was the immediate subject of those promises, yet God's glory in our good was the ultimate intendment of them; and what was promised and performed in the head, is influential upon all the members, and is the main ground of faith, and so proposed in Scripture. The resurrection of Christ is everywhere set out as the strong foundation of faith in him. God carried him through the gulf to a glorious immortality. Since, therefore, God hath performed the greatest promises, wherein his power could be engaged (for his power and truth were then tried in the highest manner), it is a great disparagement to him to distrust his truth in those things which require less power to effect them, after so great an experiment of his faithfulness. Unbelief denies that truth is crowned with a rich performance.

Again, This sin would frustrate the truth of God in the promises remaining to be fulfilled by Christ, or but in part fulfilled. God promised him a seed, a generation to serve him. This was an article in the covenant of redemption, as the great encouragement of Christ to undertake that work. If all were of the unbeliever's mind, would not the truth of this promise lie in the dust? Every unbeliever would have it so. He is a child of the devil, and like him envies God a glory, the glory of his truth and power; and, like Ahaz, Isa. 7:12, 'I will not exalt the Lord,' if the word tempt may be so read, as some read it.

The power of God was the chief ground of faith in the promise in Abraham's time, Rom. 4:21; but since the performance, not only the power of God, which he had given an evidence of in the creation, but the truth of God, whereof he had given an evidence in Christ; and in this sense the fathers' not knowing God by the name Jehovah is meant, Exod. 6:3. They did know God by that name; for Abraham calls the mount Moriah so, Gen. 22:14. But they knew him not by that name in regard to the faithfulness and truth of God, which that name signifies. As the unbelief of the Jews, after the deliverance from Egypt, where God had manifested himself Jehovah, was greater than before, so it is greater now, because it is against the highest manifestations of God as Jehovah, in accomplishing his promise in the assistance of Christ, and bringing forth the mediation promised.

Sixthly, This is aggravated from our believing creatures before God, whereby we lessen the esteem of his truth below that of a creature. Have not we many times trusted the honesty of man, who in his best estate is vanity, and given him credit for many pounds? Not to believe the great promise of God in Christ, wherein he hath made himself in a sort our debtor, is to debase the credit

of the unerring God below that of a mutable mortal. How corrupted is that nature that will believe man, a wicked man, a lying man, rather than God, who is under so many obligations of promises to make good his word; nay, believe man's falsities before God's verities? Do not men believe often the vain predictions of men, and their premises of help and furtherance of business of concern, and receive them with more gladness and confidence than ever we received the clear promises of the gospel? The credit of God, that cannot lie, is of less value with men, and hath a lighter influence upon them, than the word of a deceivable creature. What a reproach to God is it for a man to give no credit to his word, sealed by the blood of his Son, and confirmed by various repetitions, and yet will trust an inconstant element with thousands, which may be lost by the fury of winds and waves? A patent of an earthly honour from a temporal prince is highly valued, when the great gospel charter, where the truth of God is engaged for security, is slighted, the highest faithfulness not esteemed worth the crediting. When God is not believed, we must needs give credit to the devil; if we believe not Christ, we believe the devil, there being but those two heads, one by God's authority, the other by his own usurpation: Unbelief, then, changeth the devil into a god, a liar from the beginning into truth, and the truth of God into a lie, and the God of truth into a liar; it prefers the dictate of the devil, and so owns the faithfulness of the devil above the faithfulness of God.

Seventhly, It is the greater contempt, because God doth highly value his truth, yea, above all his name: Ps. 138:2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' Whatsoever of God's name should drop to the ground, this shall remain glorious in all successions of ages; it shall stand firmer than the ordinances of heaven, without the staggering of one iota or tittle of it. Nothing is so dear to God as his truth; he will fold up the heavens like a garment, and crumble the earth to dust, before one tittle of his word, of his gospel as well as his law, shall vanish and pass away, Mat. 5:18. God values the promises of the gospel no less than the precepts and threatenings of the law; his truth hath an interest with his love in the one, as well as with his authority and justice in the other. The wrong is greater to us when we are struck through the sides of that which is most precious in our esteem. This sin, therefore, as being against the truth of God, is odious to him. As it is irrational not to love the chiefest goodness, so it is irrational not to believe the supreme truth. No man but disesteems another that will not take his word, when yet himself knows he is a mutable creature. How much greater is the offence against the God of unchangeable faithfulness, to put the lie upon him by not believing those truths he hath so solemnly proclaimed and miraculously confirmed? Has not the eternal truth reason to be offended with men for not believing him, when he promiseth and swears too? It is strange that if God had a deceitful and dissembling nature, he should discover it at no less expense than the royal blood of heaven, and not deceive men without such solicitous entreaties of them to believe in him through his Son. To count a man a liar is to stop all passages to a conversation with him; to conceive of God under such a notion is not only to deny any commerce with him ourselves, but to count all foolish that address to him or are willing to believe him.

Secondly, It casts a black aspersion upon the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God appears not singly in the gospel, but with admirable variety of mysteries and contrivance, Eph. 3:10, 'manifold wisdom of God,' a depth of counsel in the forming it, a glorious contexture of means for the completing it, wisdom in the drawing out the glory of his grace from the rubbish of sin, in breaking the neck of the devil's designs, by those means whereby he wrought our ruin, even by the human nature, in bringing about man's redemption by the disgrace, infirmities, weakness of human nature, means seeming contrary to so glorious an end; the admirable uniting justice and mercy in one point, reducing them to one end with an entire consent, the manifestation of the highest hatred of sin, and the choicest love to the sinner by one and the same act; all these are treasures of wisdom opened in Christ. His wisdom is more glorious in the contriving redemption than in laying the platform and model of creation. That God might create millions of worlds is obvious to the conceptions of men that understand him to be omnipotent, and give more sparkling evidences of his wisdom in the fabric. But how he should make justice and mercy conspire together with a joint consent, and salve the honour of all his attributes in the recovery of guilty man, is an abyss of wisdom which transcends the conceptions of men and angels till it be revealed, and after the discovery most needs leave them in eternal astonishment. This must be no inconsiderable affair, which is the object of the highest wisdom in the Deity.

### **Now, unbelief chargeth God either,**

**1. With folly in regard of the unnecessariness of it.** If men think they have ability to save themselves (as all justiciaries and fondlers of their own righteousness virtually imagine), what a needless work was this in God, to make his Son a sacrifice for man's salvation! No wise man would spend his time to contrive a way to make birds to fly, which have both wings and a power to exercise them to that purpose, or to make cork to swim, which hath an aptitude because of its sponginess. What is the secret ground of the rejecting Christ, but a conceit in man that he hath a power to save himself without him? For since salvation is highly desirable, if we will not accept it from another upon his terms, we imply we can attain it by our own power. What is the language of this, but that God busied himself to no purpose, and was employed from eternity in a needless affair, which is a most unworthy reflection upon God and Christ; since God, being infinitely wise, he would not have purposed it, and Christ, being the wisdom of God, would not have debased himself to death, had it not been for the highest concern both to God and man. It had been inconsistent with the wisdom of both, the one to purpose, the other to undertake, such a task, but for the most weighty necessity and the most advantageous benefit. It was the will of God that Christ should take a body for our sanctification: Heb. 10:10,

'By the which will we are sanctified' (i.e. by the will of God which Christ came in his body to perform) 'through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.' What doth unbelief but blot out the characters of God's wisdom, the orders of his will, accounting it unnecessary for God either to prepare Christ a suffering body, or for Christ to offer up himself to God in it? It imputes the rejoicing of Christ at this body to an ignorance and folly in him, as if it were a folly in God to command it, and a folly in Christ to obey such a command, a fruitless design and an unnecessary employment. Unbelief indeed is nothing else but a cavil with the judgment and reason of God. Upon this score the apostle chargeth the incredulity of the gentiles; they counted the gospel foolishness; the choicest mysteries of divine skill were of no better repute with them than the nonsense of fools and the extravagancies of madmen: 1 Cor. 1:23, 'Unto the Greeks foolishness.'

**2. Or, if men do account the coming of Christ necessary, and so free God from the charge of folly, they at least charge his wisdom with a mistake in the means of salvation, as if it were undertaken without precedent consideration.** Either Christ hath sufficiently performed his office or not; if he hath, why is he not accepted by faith? If he be not accepted, there is a tacit imputation in the refusal of believing that the wisdom of God was defective in the person he appointed, that God was frustrated in his expectations, that he pitched upon a weak and unworthy person, unfit for so great an honour, and unable for so vast a weight. Hereby they impair the credit of Christ and prudence of God. It must be an act of wisdom to entrust Christ with the weight of all his glory, since God can no more be deceived himself than he can deceive his creature. But doth that man think it so, that will not trust Christ with his soul according to those terms upon which he is offered? Doth he not reproach God of weakness by a refusal to imitate him, and deposit the concerns of his soul in the same hands wherein God hath trusted the honour of all his excellent perfections? If God depended upon Christ for his richest glory (for where there is a trust reposed there is a kind of dependence upon that person upon whom the trust is devolved), doth not that man count himself wiser than God, that will not depend upon Christ for the chiefest happiness? He cannot possibly be freed from the guilt of accusing God of an high imprudence, who will not believe in and trust that person to whom God hath given credit for all his glory; that thinks not Christ fit to be trusted by him, who hath been trusted by God with that which is of more value than the salvation of thousands of worlds, and by this ascribes a greater wisdom to his own reason and understanding than he will acknowledge in God's, when he seeth no comeliness in him in whom the wisdom of God beheld the greatest beauty and a fulness of grace and truth; when that which is gold in God's eye is dirt in his, and that which is dirt in God's eye is gold in his.

**3. By this sin the unbeliever doth, as much as in him lies, frustrate the design of God's glorious wisdom, in not consenting to that which the wisdom of God hath contrived.** The wisdom of a man, as also the wisdom of God, lies in choosing the end and suiting the means. When we approve not of the one or contradict the other, we deny the fruit of a man's wisdom to him. In this case we do the like to God, when we neglect the end of his wisdom, salvation, and reject Christ, the means and way to it; it is to defeat his design, and tread under our feet the whole scheme of his counsel; for if all men were of the same mind, God would have discovered himself to be an all-wise God in redemption to no purpose. As faith is a justification of God in his counsel, so is unbelief a condemnation of God's counsel, and rendering it vain: Luke 7:29, 30, 'They rejected the counsel of God in themselves.' It is spoken of the pharisees' not being baptised by John Baptist. They did not publicly condemn it, but their non-compliance with it was a rejecting immediately the doctrine and baptism of John, and ultimately the counsel of God. When God saw man sunk into misery by sin, and under an impossibility to recover himself, God in his boundless mercy and infinite wisdom contrived a way of restoration, proposeth it to men, and acquaints them with his resolve how he would have men saved; when men refuse it, rebel against God's decree, they reproach his counsel as well as his goodness. The word *ῥεῖν*, there used, signifies not a simple refusal, but rejecting a thing with reproach, and a dissolution of it, a bringing it to nought; as the word is used by the Septuagint, Ps. 33:10, 'The Lord brings the counsel of the heathen to nought.' As God brings the counsel of wicked men to nought, dissolves the whole frame of it, and makes their devices of no effect, so doth an unbeliever, as much as it is possible for him to do in himself, unravel the whole web of divine counsel, and would make it utterly insignificant. Against themselves; some render it in themselves, in their own thoughts by inward pride.

Well, then, consider how great a sin unbelief is in this regard.

Here is the wisdom of God making a match in heaven between the divinity and humanity,\* Christ by the wisdom and will of God stripping himself and becoming a worm, that you may be as glorious as an angel. God might have employed his wisdom in contriving your ruin, but he sets it on work to build a scaffold for your salvation. Shall this wisdom be despised, which doth as far surpass the comprehensions of angels as the apprehensions of infants? When a scholar hath made a curious book, wherein he hath wrapped up all his

learning, an artificer a beautiful watch, wherein he hath laid out all his skill, what a contempt of the learning of the one and art of the other is it to tear the book and break the watch! Oh how is the workmanship of God, which is admired by angels, dashed by unbelief! How is the unconceivable art of God blotted by the wilfulness of man! God may well say to us, Is the masterpiece of my counsel of so slight a value as not worth your consent? Have I caused the beams of my adorable wisdom to shine so bright in the gospel, to have no other return but a charge of folly? You see what blackness there is in the bowels of this sin.

Thirdly, It slights the goodness of God. Unbelief vilifies that which God designed to the praise and glory of his grace, and renders God cruel to his own Son, in being an unnecessary shedder of his Son's blood. Unbelief consists either in presumption or despair. Presumption on his absolute mercy, which, while it seems to magnify, it doth slight the constituted methods of his declared goodness in Christ; and, in a relying upon an undiscovered kindness, impairs his sovereignty, by prescribing other ways of communicating himself to his creature than what he hath appointed; or despair, which represents God under the appearance of a cruel tyrant, glad of the destruction of his creature, and changeth infinite mercy into infinite fury; as if a great multitude of iniquities could throw mercy into the depths of the sea instead of being thrown by it; as if the clouds could dissolve the sun instead of being melted by him. Presumption turns mercy into carelessness, and despair into cruelty. Unbelief, in the general notion of it, casts a scorn before men and angels upon the unsearchable riches of grace; it would hew in pieces the throne of grace, and wipe off the blood of Christ wherewith the mercy-seat hath been sprinkled.

First, Thus it is a diabolical sin; a receiving the devil's accusations of God before God's declarations of himself. When the devil was a murderer, he was a liar, John 8:44; he belied God and murdered man. An unbeliever belies God's goodness and murders his own soul. He represented God an hard master, envying man a felicity belonging to him; an unbeliever comes nearest his nature: he slighted God's goodness in forming man; an unbeliever slights God's goodness in redeeming him. The one envied God the glory of his work, and the other envies God the glory of his grace.

Secondly, It is against absolute and sincere goodness. God can have no more addition to his perfections by redemption than he had by creation, but a more illustrious communication of them to his creatures. If he could have any real increase, he had not been the chiefest good, infinitely perfect. The sin might claim some excuse if God had any selfish aims, if his essential glory could have been made brighter by believing. But since he requires faith as a necessary disposition for receiving the communications of his favour, and what he doth offer is an advantage to the offender, none to the offerer, to convey a goodness to us, but not to receive anything from us, it is an inexcusable contempt of sincere goodness, a hewing at that redemption which grew up like a tall cedar from the root of pure mercy, when God needed not have sent his Son to die, nor a messenger to entreat, but have mustered up an army of destroying judgments against sinners.

Thirdly, Against the highest goodness that ever appeared to the sons of men. No greater act of love could spring from boundless eternity, than the parting with his only delight in heaven out of his bosom for the redemption of man; so that he may well say, 'What could I have done more to my vineyard?' Isa. 5:4. Unbelief, then, is a reproach of that love which God designed to commend to the world in the mission of his Son; and therefore the ingratitude in refusing it is as unparalleled in the rank of sins, as the kindness it slights is in the rank of mercy. It is against a law more animated with love than any other dispensation of God was filled with. The giving his Son to die was the most stupendous evidence of his goodness, whence faith draws the highest encouragement, and unbelief contracts the most dismal aggravation; and the greater, since it is a contempt of a greater kindness to us than what was shewn to the ancient patriarchs, who only had a promise of the Messiah, when we have the performance; yet naturally we do as frowardly reject the thing performed, as they did heartily embrace the assurance of it. Christ is a gift, Rom. 5:16, a gift of love, John 3:16, the royallest gift of God, springing from unconceivable treasures of goodness. Is it a little sin to turn our backs upon the choicest gift that God can bestow, as though this pearl were of no more worth than a pebble? What really is the language of this scorn, but as if a man should blasphemously say in so many words, God might have kept his gift to himself, and never have troubled me with such a present?

Fourthly, A goodness ready to flow in upon us. The bosom of God is opened, the treasures of his goodness dispensed, the fountain of his grace running.\* For men to be as deaf adders under such charms, blind moles under such beams, is as great a wonder of wickedness as the mercy is a miracle of goodness. And when the tenders of grace are made with that affection and importunity, that love rides upon wings and meets us at every turn; when we cannot open the Scripture but we see a transcript of his heart as it breathed toward us from eternity, and view the deep counsels of God, and the transactions of old between the Trinity about man's redemption laid open; how great a sin is this, to scorn treasures not only stored up, but ready to be given out, with the most pressing arguments and strongest obligations to an acceptance!

Fifthly, And this perpetually. It is an everlasting goodness, a kindness firmer than the foundations of the earth, or the battlements of the heaven, which God offers; it is an 'everlasting mercy,' Isa. 54:7, like light in the sun that is never diminished, the element of fire never extinguished, water in the sea never emptied.

Sixthly, When we have absolute need of it. How inexcusable is the contempt, when rebels in chains trample under foot declarations of pardon! The necessity of the subject, as well as the excellency of the thing, and the unbounded goodness of the offerer; a necessity accompanied with an inevitable ruin without a leap into the arms of this goodness, still adds blackness to the refusal. How great a sin is it, then, to spurn at the beatings of God's heart, to account all the thoughts of mercy as if they had been thoughts of vanity, to spurn at that which angels wonder at and devils wish for? This is to treat unsearchable riches, bound up in Christ, as we would do the most loathsome dung. For God to find out this way, to offer his Son, to manifest such condescending grace as to entreat us to believe, and for us to make our excuses that we cannot come, to resolve not to handle the word of life, this, this is a sin of the deepest dye, this will at last silence the voice, of mercy, and rouse up a roaring fury. If we could unhinge the world, cast a blot upon the whole creation, raise a sedition of all creatures against God as Creator, dash in pieces the whole frame, consume it to ashes, that no relics of a God should appear in it, it could not be so high an indignity as the striking at his bowels. What is the glory of creation but as a mite to that of redemption? What is the destruction of the world to the contempt of his Son, the demolishing the work of his hands to the spurning at that of his heart?

**Fourthly, Or, it disparageth the power and sufficiency of God.** Man is naturally apt to question God's power, as though he were unable to bring his word into act. God, therefore, doth preface his covenant with Abraham by the title of his almightiness: Gen. 17:1, 'I am God almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' All distrust grows up from a jealousy of weakness or wickedness in the object of it; either that a man is not honest and will not, or weak and cannot, perform. Unbelief, therefore, sometimes strips God of his power, and represents him impotent. It scantles almightiness according to the narrow apprehensions of the creature, as they, Ps. 78:41, who questioned whether that strength that had secured them in the Red Sea, and fed them in the wilderness, could conquer the possessors of Canaan and give them seisin of the country. As though that God who had bridled the waves could not as well fell down the Anakims, who breathed by his leave, as well as the waters moved by his providence. If there be a belief that God hath an intention to perform his promise, the diffidence doth arise then from a doubt of his omnipotence; if there be a belief of his veracity, there must be a jealousy of his ability. The apostle bottoms the faith of Abraham, whereby he believed he should have a son, upon the 'power of God,' Rom. 4:21. Unbelief is then sometimes bottomed upon a secret unworthy conceit of inability in God, as if he could not be as great as his word; as if he were, like the idols of men, without eyes to see and arms to relieve.

Indeed, all unbelief doth entrench upon God's power and sufficiency.

**First, In not coming to him.** It is a departure from God, not simply as God, but as a living God, Heb. 3:12,\* a God that hath life in himself, and is able to communicate it to others; he departs from a spring to a puddle, and denies a fulness of life and satisfaction in that which he departs from. Certainly unbelief, as it respects Christ, is a virtual denial of his deity; discards him from being the living God, from having a power and sufficiency to save, and as it is a sin against his divine person, is a wrong to the power, life, and sufficiency of God. He that runs from a prince that offers to protect him against his enemies, declares to all the world, that either the prince is not sincere in his offers, or unable to give him the protection he promiseth. All unbelief at least denies God the honour of his power, and doth depose him from the exercise of his saving omnipotence as to the unbeliever, and declares he can shift well enough with himself: 'He could not do any great work there because of their unbelief.' If all faith gives glory to the power of God, all unbelief vilifies it. If the power of God, as well as his faithfulness, be the object of faith in prayer (as it was of the faith of Christ: Heb. 5:7, 'He offered up prayers unto him that was able to save him'), then unbelief must needs strike at that which is the great ground and object of the grace which is contrary to it. An unbeliever thinks his soul safer in his own hands than in God's, and therefore will not commit it to his keeping. This is very visible in convinced souls before they come to Christ; how often do they cry out, Can God pardon? Can he remit? Are not my sins too great for him? Upon a diffidence of his power they are loath to lodge their souls in his arms; they cannot believe he hath an arm strong enough to cast a blot and dash upon all their sins,† as though a mighty rock could not bear up a bruised reed.

**Secondly, In trusting to something else.** Man is like a vine, he cannot subsist without some prop. A trust and faith he must have, if not in God, in something else, either in himself or abroad; he cannot depart from God, but he hath recourse to something else. Every motion hath a terminus ad quem, a term to which it tends. What then we trust unto, besides God and above God, we render in our thoughts more powerful than God. We cannot go to anything for relief with a neglect of God, but we depose the true God and create a new one; we acknowledge a greater fulness in some inferior good than in an eternal spring. A man's own righteousness,

weak ordinances relied on with a neglect of faith in God upon his own terms, are as well deified as the belly is made a god by a glutton, or money by a covetous person.

**Thirdly, It receives an aggravation from the demonstrations of God's power exercised about Christ the object of faith.** Unbelief is a contempt of all those attributes which were signally manifested about the effecter of our redemption, whereof the power of God in assisting him in his whole course, and unloosing the bands of death, and setting him at his right hand, was none of the least glorified in our redemption, since the power of God in raising Christ is set forth to us as a ground of faith for the imputation of righteousness: Rom. 4:24, 'If we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' His doing the greater work in the resurrection of Christ, wherein infinite power was manifested, considering what a charge of imputed guilt Christ lay under, is an evidence of his ability to do that which is less. Since it is thus, unbelief is a reflection upon this power of God, depriving it of the due glory which belongs to it. God hereby shewed himself willing to be our God upon our faith, as he shewed himself the God of Israel in bringing them out of Egypt; and doth frequently, upon their incredulity and murmuring, mind them of his power manifested in that deliverance, as if in all their infidelity and unbelief they did unworthily reflect upon the glory of his strength in that work. And, certainly, since we are commanded to believe in him who by the power of God raised the dead to life, restored sight to the blind, conquered the legions of hell; who hath done things impossible to be acted by the strength of men or angels; one that hath made the power of princes and the wisdom of the world to bend to him, and lie prostrate before him, and come under his footstool; the not believing in Christ is a denial and contempt of all this power, or a tacit ascribing those acts to some occult causes rather than the power of God. This is the language of unbelief. If those things were acted by the power of God, why do we not firmly, really believe, and act according to such a faith? If we do not, it is evident that we do not think such things were acted, or that the power of God was engaged in them. What an unworthy charge is this upon God, when we will believe man, who is able to do nothing without God, and will not believe in God, who hath manifested himself able to do all things by his own arm, without any partner?

**Fifthly, It strikes at the sovereignty and authority of God.** It is a debt we owe, as subjects, to God as our sovereign, to give credit to what he doth reveal, and to obey what he doth command. There is not only a revelation to encourage faith, but a command to enjoin it, 1 John 3:23. If men believe not, they pretend some reason for their unbelief. Whatsoever any man's reason is, it deposeth God from the sovereignty in his soul; because it hath a greater power over him to cause him to refuse God, than God's word and command hath to make him accept his Son. He that comes not for shelter, recovery, and protection to that head God hath exalted, disowns the authority as well as the wisdom of that person who constituted him in that office and dignity. Since Christ is enthroned by God, and 'exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour,' Acts 5:31, and acts in it as vicarius Dei, God's vicegerent, he that refuseth to be gathered under his wing casts a contempt not only upon the person of Christ, but the authority of God, who fixed him in his royalty. Murder is a defacing the created image of God, unbelief is a contempt of the natural image of God, a treason against the Head of the redeemed world. It implies either a supremacy over God, or an equality with him; either that he hath not power to make a revelation, a law, or to enjoin a belief of it and obedience to it.

First, It is a contradiction to the resolute and fixed will of God. All unbelief is a dislike of God's terms, Rom. 10:3, a non-submission to the righteousness of God, affecting a power of choice ourselves, debasing the royal authority to our demands, and that not to the demands of our reason, but of our lust. It is to make the Lord of glory kiss the sceptre of our wills, and his sheaf bow down to ours. We would be blotting out what articles he hath drawn, and putting in what conditions we please, when we consent not to what he proposeth, and submit not to what he commands. Is not this to pull down his colours, and set up our own? It is not a simple disobedience, but an evasion of his authority, not to acquiesce in and comply with his conditions, imposing our own upon him, and indenting with him. We will have so much of Christ, and so much of our own righteousness to join with him. Other sins are against his sovereignty as a creator and a lawgiver, this against his sovereignty in a merciful design to reduce his creature to its happiness as well as duty. This sin therefore implies a denial of God's dominion, or having anything to do with his creature. It opposeth the return of the soul under his sceptre, and would keep man at an irreconcilable distance from God. How malicious would this contradiction be, if our redemption had proceeded from some other hand! Such an efflux of goodness, in restoring from slavery upon such light conditions, would have deserved from us an entire subjection. Such a mercy had merited an absolute sovereignty. How much more malicious is it against God, who besides the authority merited by this mercy, has naturally an absolute supremacy over us!

Secondly, It is an imitation of Adam's rebellion against God, in being a god to ourselves, or choosing another. God will have the soul of man in a state of dependence on him; it cannot be otherwise, unless man were a god. To make an independent creature is a contradiction, for that is to make him a god. Adam's sin seemed to be an affecting an equality with God, to be God's companion and equal in knowledge, which would infer an



equality in everything else: Gen. 3:5, 'You shall be as gods,' or Elohim, 'as God'; not as the angels, for God interprets it an affectation of equality with himself in the ironical speech, ver. 22, 'The Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.' Unbelief would still keep up this independency which Adam aimed at, and whereby he quenched his own happiness and that of his posterity, and attempts a salvation by his own righteousness, which God denied him when he drove him out of paradise, that he might not invade the tree of life, after the new covenant made with him of faith in Christ, and so have any hope to attain eternal life by any other means than what God had proposed. This sin is an approbation of Adam's act, in an imitation of it. Pride against God doth as necessarily attend unbelief now as it did then. Unbelief was the first sin, and pride was the first-born of it. Adam first cast away his belief of the precept, and flung away humility at the heels of it.

Thirdly, Unbelief renders God, as much as in it lies, unworthy of any sovereignty. It doth not only deny his authority, but it represents him as false, foolish, careless, cruel to his own Son, and strips him of the honour of his truth, the glory of his wisdom, the designs of his grace, the arm of his power; and so represents him unworthy of obedience from the unbeliever himself or from any else. For who can be obliged in reason to obey a God so coloured as unbelief represents him, one that is not to be credited, that is mistaken in his contrivances, that hath no thoughts of goodness, that is too weak to protect his creature? Nay, God himself would not judge himself fit to be obeyed, if he were any of those which this sin would fasten upon him, since all the perfections in God which are abused by it are declared in Scripture as inducements to obedience; and God makes appeals to the reason of men to judge of his faithfulness, righteousness, wisdom, and goodness in them. To call a prince a fool is by the law of some countries made high treason, because such language concludes the prince incapable of government. The wiser heathens looked upon the fabulous gods of the vulgar, being represented vicious, unworthy of any acknowledgment, and ridiculous deities. Unbelief renders God ridiculous to the world, and more among us than among the heathens, who have absolutely denied Christ to be the Redeemer and Son of God; for they own not the revelation from God, and therefore cast not that imputation upon him, as the practical infidelity of those that believe it to be God's revelation doth; for they acknowledge it in a pretended opinion to be the revelation of God, yet act as though there were nothing but falsity, folly, and unrighteousness in the whole design.

**Sixthly, It affronts the holiness and righteousness of God.** If the setting forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin was to declare his righteousness, Rom. 3:25, i.e. his holiness as well as his justice, what doth unbelief signify but that this act was unrighteous in God, that God was not holy and righteous in punishing his Son as our surety? Continuance in a state of nature by unbelief, after the revelation of God's holiness in so eminent a manner, is an approbation of that sin Christ suffered to expiate, a preferring it before the imitation of God's holiness, so much glorified in the death of his Son; an affecting that which is the just object of God's disaffection, since God, in the highest manner that possible can be, yea more than in the damnation of the whole world, hath manifested his hatred of sin in the death of Christ. The keeping up notoriously gross practices, or unbelief, though attended with morality, is a valuing a state of nature, against which God hath manifested his hatred; and therefore unbelief, after the declaration of Christ, draws a greater guilt upon a man than all sins before the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the declarations of the gospel.

**Seventhly, It is a stripping God, as much as lies in man, of all his delight.** The service Christ did, which was delightful to God, is contemptible to an unbeliever. God's delight and his stand in direct opposition; it is a representing God cruel to the object of his delight; it makes God a murderer of his Son; it taxeth him with the greatest act of cruelty in sacrificing his obedient Son, the object of his delight, and renders that act of God, which was the greatest pity to sinners and the glory of his mercy wherein he rejoiceth, not only a vain and a fruitless, but a tyrannical execution.

**First, It is a refusal of Christ,** the 'man that is God's fellow,' Zech. 13:2, his 'daily delight,' Prov. 8; it is contrary to that which is most dear to God, slights that which is most precious in his esteem. It was all God's aim in all his actions in the world, ever since the first promise, to magnify himself in his Son. The revelation of his righteousness in and through him, and the compliance of men with it, was the chief end of God in the manifestation of Christ to the world. The conversions of men to him are his pleasure: Isa. 53:10, 'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' What, then, is this sin, but a thwarting God in his main end; robbing him of the fruit of his counsel, the incomes of his love; making him a loser by his grace; depriving him of a joy in his works, by slighting Christ, who is the centre of his delight, the joy of his heart, the top of his glory; chasing away all gladness from his soul, that he should have no pleasure in that which he hath contrived with so much wisdom, effected with so much power, but have an eternal grief in the miscarriage of his work? It is true this cannot be actually done; the counsel of the Lord stands firm, the delight of God is above the injuries of men; but this is in the nature of unbelief; and if this sin should have reigned in Adam, and every branch of him, from the beginning of the world to the last man born upon the earth, would not this be the effect of it? Therefore every unbeliever, as to his part, doth that which would really be the issue if all the sons of Adam were in his state. It frustrates the expectation of God, because God, in sending Christ, had an expectation that men would

lay down their arms, accept of peace, reverence his Son, and manifest a joy in the reception of him suitable to the joy of God in his mission: Mat. 21:37, 'But last of all he sent his son, saying, they will reverence my son.'

**Secondly, It is a privation of faith, a grace so pleasing to God.** Next to the delight God hath in Christ, because of the glory accruing to him by it, he hath a delight in faith, because it owns the glory of God in the redemption by his Son, and honours those attributes in a peculiar manner which were eminent in it. Is there any grace he is more pleased with than faith? Is there any grace he hath put such a dignity upon? It is called a justifying faith, Rom. 5:1, a kind of an incommunicable attribute of it; other graces are the attendants, this the mistress. God is so infinitely pleased with it, as it stands in relation to the object, Christ crucified, that upon the appearance of it with a Christ lifted up in its hands, God blots out all the sins that stand upon record, accounts the soul righteous, opens his arms to embrace it, and seems to own it as a recompence for all the wrong he hath sustained. And what a delight it is to Christ I shall have occasion to shew afterward. The soul that draws back by unbelief affords God no pleasure: Heb. 10:38, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' It deprives God of all pleasure in his creature; it disturbs the rest of God. This is spoken of those that were within the church, and made profession of Christianity.

**Thirdly, As it is a refusal of his mercy in Christ.** Because mercy is the perfection he delighted to manifest in Christ, Micah 7:18, it bars all communications of it to such a soul, because he hath linked his mercy only to faith in Christ, where the gospel is revealed. So that when Christ is not believed in, the unbeliever, as far as in his power, frustrates the end of God in sending Christ, deprives him of that delightful glory he intended by his Son's death, makes void the merciful contrivance of God from eternity, which was the stupefaction of angels, the envy of devils, the expectation of the ancient fathers, and the satisfaction of believers, and, above all, the delight and glory of God. So that you see what a vast injury unbelief offers to God.

**Secondly, It is a sin peculiarly against Christ.** It is a piercing him again, Zech 12:10. Some think this prophecy respects, as to the time, the day of judgment; others, the time of Christ's being upon the cross. It respects, I suppose, some time between. The prophet speaks of Christ's piercing as a thing past; and at the time of his passion, there was not such a mourning among the Jews as is here described; neither doth it respect the times of the day of judgment. The mourning, then, of the condemned world, shall not be from a spirit of grace and supplication, but from a spirit of horror and despair. The result will be, since those that had not an hand in the death of Christ's body are said here to pierce Christ, it must be understood of a piercing by unbelief, which is an approbation of the Jews' cruelty towards him. Any man is guilty of an act who doth approve an act, though he was not formally an agent in it. And indeed the Jews did not actually pierce him, but the hand of a Roman soldier; yet they are said to do it, because they consented to the act. It is a piercing of Christ.\* An unbeliever is a Jew in his heart and life, though a Christian in profession; though he doth verbally acknowledge the coming of Christ, he doth really deny it. It is an unworthy usage of Christ; it is a using him, as he speaks of himself in the Psalms, as 'a worm and no man,' trampling upon him with more violence and contempt than they would upon a worm. The vilest man in the world never suffered so many reproaches as Christ hath suffered by notional and practical incredulity since he went to heaven. Judas, that betrayed him, was never so much hated by the highest professor and sincerest Christian, as Christ betrayed by him is slighted by unbelief, as if he were set up for a sign to be spoken against. 'As his visage was marred more than any man's' while he was upon the earth, Isa. 52:14, so his glory is stained more than any man's since he went to heaven. The natural darkness of men is so thick, that instead of being dissipated by the light, as other darkness is, it is so obstinate, that it excludes all the divine brightness of Christ from the understanding and consciences of the most part of men.\* John 1:5, 'The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.' It contemns by a desperate ingratitude the person of the Son of God, the truth of his word, the bowels of his love, the power of his miracles, the ministry of his death, the glory of his ascension, and the majesty of his offices; and accounts the whole history of the gospel no better than a narration of lies.

And though men never saw the person of Christ, yet they offer violence to it by slighting the marks of it he hath left in the world. As a man is guilty of treason by abusing the statue or image of the prince, by defacing his seal, though he never saw the person of the prince;† he violates his authority that regards it not, owns not any act of grace from him, though he never saw his face; so are men guilty of trampling on the blood of Christ when they count it as a trifle, and unprofitable for their salvation, though they never saw Christ, nor ever had any communion with him, Heb. 10:29, when they 'count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.'

**First, It is a nullifying the work of his mediation and death.** It denies him the honour of his meritorious passion, vilifies the glory of his mediation, from the first counsel to the last act, sheds his blood afresh, and pours it slightly upon the ground, and tramples that inestimable sacrifice like dirt under the feet. No sin doth so immediately oppose Christ as mediator. This is the great antichrist in the world; though this sin, among Christians at large, denies him not in his person, it doth in his offices. As faith puts a value upon the

priesthood of Christ, eyes his death as a perfect atonement, leans upon him as a sacrifice upon the cross, and an advocate in heaven; so unbelief, being contrary to this grace, undervalues all that faith esteems. It frustrates the end of his coming, which was to reduce us to God, from whom we had receded by unworthy jealousies of him.

**First,** It renders the design of his coming a vanity, when it receives not the fruits of it. As he that will not use the creatures for those ends for which God created them, that shuts his eyes against the sun, that stops his mouth wilfully against his appointed food, writes a vanity upon the creation of God; so he that doth not receive Christ upon those terms God offers him, and for those ends God sets him forth, writes vanity upon the whole work of redemption, and 'makes the grace of God to be in vain,' 2 Cor. 6:1. Neither the pains of Christ, the blood of Christ, nor the righteousness of Christ, attain their end in such a person, who offers to him the indignity of unbelief, and makes him 'spend his strength in vain and for nought,' Isa. 49:4. Some think it is Christ's complaint of the incredulity of the Jews, and it will extend to all men that make no account of the travail of his soul, his unwearied pains and bloody passion, whereby they argue him to be a fruitless and a needless mediator, working miracles and shedding his blood to no purpose; and fix themselves in a state, as if Christ had never died in respect of benefit, though not in regard of guilt.

**Secondly,** It is a vilifying the price of redemption;\* accounting that blood wherein Christ was sanctified, demonstrated to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and for which he was absolved from guilt, and counted righteous before God, and advanced that he might save them that come unto God by him, a common, an inefficacious thing, Heb. 9:28.

**Thirdly,** Yea, a regarding it as the blood of a malefactor. It is impossible that an unbeliever can regard it only as the blood of an innocent man, that may cry for vengeance like Abel's, and be as weak as Abel's blood to purchase salvation for the soul. It is impossible that this, though bad enough, in denying the efficacy of his blood, can only be the reflection; but he must needs regard it as the blood of the highest malefactor that ever yet was in the world. In not accepting it as the blood of God, he renders Christ more criminal than Judas, and chargeth him with a falsity in declaring himself to be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world. If Christ be the Son of God, and the mediator of the world, why is he not cordially owned to be so? If he be not accepted heartily under those notions, the refusal of him declares he is not the person and officer of God, as he affirmed himself to be, and so renders Christ, not only void of innocence, but guilty of the highest affront to the majesty of God. He that refuseth him, disowns his filiation, denies him to be the Son of God, sees not a glory in him 'as of the only begotten of the Father,' John 1:14; what faith the apostle asserts,† unbelief denies. An unbeliever implies the truth of what the Jews falsely writ to the synagogues after the death of Christ, that he was θεός καὶ νομός, an atheist.‡

Thus do all persons that think to attain salvation by any righteousness of their own. Whosoever thinks he is able to enrich himself with spiritual blessings, to weave a covering of his own righteousness, and make payments of his old debts by a heap of good works, despiseth Christ's payment, slights the righteousness of the God of heaven, abuseth that Saviour who came to knock off our bolts, heal our wounds, and clothe our souls. He that thinks to enter into heaven, and not by him, is a thief and a robber; he robs God of the honour of his own constitution, and Christ of the glory of his mediatory office, and the right of his purchase. And thus do all persons who walk contrary to the end of Christ's coming, who are enemies to that spiritual life Christ came to set up, and friends to that sensual life he came to pull down. Such may pretend friendship to his person, but are enemies to his cross, Philip. 3:18, 19; they defame the end of his suffering, as much as the Jews defamed him in it.

**Secondly, It is a denying the love of Christ.** It is a stab at his heart, an outrage of his tender bowels. He suffered willingly all those torments which were inflicted on him, to remove from us the necessity of suffering, which sin had involved us in, had he not stepped in to take our burdens upon his own shoulders. If we will not believe in him, we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking, and were illustrious in the execution. It is as if we should think the covenant of grace more severe than that of works; as if Christ were our enemy rather than our Redeemer, and came rather to kindle a hell for our torment, than to quench hell for us by his blood; as if he came to suffer for our misery, and not for our happiness. Was there any need of his coming to make us more miserable than we were before? Did it consist with the goodness of God to expose his Son to suffering, to make the creature more wretched, since the misery we were sunk into was more than we were able to bear? If it were an act of love in Christ, why is he not embraced by the choicest and most affectionate faith? If he be not thus embraced, it clearly implies that you have no imagination of any affection in him, that he is rather a formidable person than an affectionate Saviour. It is as great a slight of his love, as if he should open heaven and make the proffers of the gospel from thence. If Christ should speak from heaven in an audible voice, and propound the gospel articles in the most affectionate strains, would not the contempt of it be judged by all men to be an ungrateful scorn of his love? He doth speak from heaven in his word, as really as he bled upon the cross in his person (Heb. 12:15, 'If we turn away from him that speaks from heaven'), and unbelief doth insolently abuse the riches of his unspeakable goodness, and

slight the blood shed with an adorable love, without which the anger of God could not be appeased, nor the fire of hell, prepared for sinners, extinguished, without which the filthiness of the soul could not be cleansed, nor the glories of heaven opened. In despising this love, we despise all the fruits of it which the believer enjoys. Since Christ was so willing to offer up himself to death that we might be freed, and the power of the devil put to an end in us, the keeping up the power of the devil in its full strength, as unbelief doth, is a slighting the main kindness our great benefactor intended to bestow upon us.

**Thirdly, It denies the wisdom of Christ.** It chargeth him with folly and inconsiderateness, in undertaking a task that was not worth his pains, in suffering for the purchase of pardon and salvation, which might be gained without so much ado. What did Christ aim at in the shedding of his blood, but the appeasing of the wrath of God, sanctification of the souls of men, the opening the gates of heaven, which justice, provoked by sin, had barred against them? If men do not believe, certainly they have some conceits, that either these benefits are not desirable and worth the inquiring after, and labouring for, or that they may be procured by other means at an easier rate than faith in the blood of Christ. And is not this a charge of folly brought against Christ, who paid so dear for that, which they suppose they can have upon a cheaper account, and without being beholden to him? Thus some interpret that place, Isa. 42:19, 'Who is blind as my servant, or deaf as my messenger that I have sent? who is blind as the Lord's servant?' As if God should introduce the unbelieving Jews, charging Christ with blindness and folly, who is the wisdom of God, and regarding that as contemptible, which was honourable in God's account. And, indeed, it seems to be the true sense of the place, since all the foregoing part of the chapter is a proclaiming of Christ, who, ver. 1, is particularly called God's servant. An unbeliever injures the wisdom of Christ in not following his pattern; he trusted God upon his bare word, and oath, and promises of assistance in his work, and a good issue and success. He that will not give credit to the promise of God for salvation by Christ, implies that God is unworthy to be trusted, that his word is of no value, that all that trust him are unwise, and consequently that Christ himself, who exercised the greatest trust of any in the world, was the most unwise of any. When we follow not the practice of another, we imply some defect in the wisdom of that person we refuse to imitate. This is truly the language of unbelief; and the Gentiles at the first preaching of Christ were so besotted with their own imaginary wisdom, that they thought the preaching of the cross foolishness, and a mere extravagancy of man.

**Fourthly, It wrongs the authority of Christ.** It receives an aggravation from the greatness of the person that published the doctrine of faith. All laws are to be attended with a greater veneration, by how much the more eminent the wisdom and authority of the person is. It was the Son of God who died by the command and commission of the Father. It is the Son of God that hath left the command of faith upon record. It is the Son of God who is the object of that faith we are commanded to have and exercise. The not believing, therefore, is a crime of the highest nature, in denying all the authority derived to Christ from the Father. Upon this score Christ chargeth the unbelieving Jews: John 5:43, 'I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not;' you have evident marks of a divine authority in me;\* but because my doctrine accords not with the interests of your ambition and imperious lusts, therefore you receive me not. 'If another shall come in his own name,' who shall flatter your ambition, and preserve the dominion of your beloved lusts, 'him you will receive.' Thus is the authority of Christ slighted by this sin, when the terms upon which he offers himself are disliked, when we would bring down Christ from his throne, to condescend to the conditions we would impose upon him; when we set the crown upon the head of some darling sin, which we should set upon the head of Christ.

**Fifthly, It denies the excellency of Christ.** To work faith there is necessary, first, a clear proposal of the object, supported with such reasons and allurements that have a strength in themselves to work upon the mind. But unbelief denies any such attractives in the nature of the object presented, to move the will to the embracing of it; it sees more righteousness in a Barabbas, soul-murdering lusts, than in a soul-saving Redeemer, when all the labour, study, thoughts, are for the pleasures of sin, the satisfaction of self, the increase of profit, and men scarce let Christ have a thousandth part of the thoughts. If drab and swill be preferred before a pearl, it is because a swine sees no excellency in it. As faith 'counts all things dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' Philip. 3:8; so unbelief accounts the person, offices, doctrine, and laws of Christ dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-dependence, pleasing temptations, and gilded nothings. As faith accounts all things dross to Jesus Christ, so unbelief accounts Christ dross to self. How injurious is this to the worth of an heavenly object! to value a feather above a mountain of gold, a box of poison before a pearl of the greatest price, when nothing can come in competition with him, but what is infinitely inferior to him! This unbelief sees no glory, tastes no pleasure, conceives no fulness, in that which God hath furnished with an unconceivable glory, and rests in with an eternal delight; it represents Christ empty, whom God stored with a communicable fulness, a poor nothing who is a rich treasure; it esteems Christ, who is an overflowing fountain, as if he were no better than a broken cistern. It is most certain that, while God is not chiefly affected, whatsoever is in esteem above him is valued as more excellent than God; so when Christ is not trusted, but a creature hung upon as the object of reliance, that creature so received is more excellent in esteem than that Christ who is refused.

**Sixthly, It denies the sufficiency of Christ** the greatness of his priesthood, the fulness of his satisfaction, the sufficiency of him as the Son of God to make a prevailing intercession, as if he had not a fulness of living waters to bestow, or not goodness enough to communicate them; as though he were too scanty to free us from all misery, and fill us with all felicity. Where no trust is reposed in him, it implies that no benefit can be expected from him. The satisfaction of Christ was more efficacious to take away sin and please

God, than the sin of man had guilt to displease him, and of more value to outweigh the sins of the whole world, than they had weight to press man down to the lake of fire; because of the marriage between the divinity and the humanity, whereby that person, who was man, was infinite in regard of his divine nature. Faith owns the fulness of this satisfaction, pleads it to God, acquiesceth in it. What doth unbelief? It either thinks the satisfaction too short, or that a man hath no need of it, or that he hath some other invention to content the creditor; but the first is as likely as any else, for, since Abraham's faith respected the power of God, Rom. 4:21, unbelief questions the ability of God. The apostle, pressing the Jews with many arguments to make them sensible of the ability of Christ to 'save them to the utmost,' Heb. 7:25, witnesseth that the secret sentiment in the heart of this sin is the insufficiency of the blood of Christ for this great end of salvation: that it is of no more efficacy to the purging away of sin than the blood of bulls and goats; nor can reach the soul any more than the waters of a river can purge the filthiness of the Spirit. This sin therefore receives a mighty aggravation from the dignity of Christ's person, whereby he was able to make a valuable satisfaction, and actually did so. It is a 'light esteem of the rock of salvation,' Deut. 32:15, *ישעתי* of his Jesus who conducted them in the wilderness; as if the rock of God's salvation had no more strength than a feeble pebble. It disgraceth his power in the whole web of his design, as if his merit were not strong enough, his satisfaction full enough, to procure our discharge, but we must have something of our own to eke it out. The blood of Christ cries to us, we regard it not; it streams out fresh from his heart in the virtue of it, and flows through the pipes of the gospel in the offers of it, yet unbelief stops the ears against the voice, shuts the heart against the approach of it, as if the sacrifice of Christ were a sacrifice of no value. And since this sin denies the virtue of the sacrifice of the Son of God for the expiation of sin, the justification and sanctification of the soul, it would expose him to another death to make his blood efficacious; since there is no means imaginable for the attaining those ends but the death of the Son of God.

**Seventhly, It denies Christ his right and reward.** The restoration of souls is a part of his reward for his work: Isa. 53:11, 'He shall be satisfied with the travail of his soul;' God promised it to him. Unbelief would make Christ a loser, as well as God a liar; for, if this leprosy did totally overspread the hearts of every son of Adam, all the travail of Christ's soul would have been in the service of the devil. Christ would take the pains, and the devil have the harvest. What an injury is this, to steal Christ's reward from him, to bestow it upon his enemy; to gratify the destroyer, as though they envied the honour of the Redeemer! It is his glory to have a numerous posterity; when 'he was taken from prison and judgment, who shall declare his generation?' Isa. 53:8. Generations, in Scripture, are put for a people or family: 'the generations of Adam,' 'the generations of Noah,' i.e. the posterity of Adam and Noah. It is the glory of Christ to have his dying body spring up into a multiplied seed: John 12:23, 24, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' How? In his dying, that he may bring forth much fruit, as ver. 24 intimates. The occasion of our Saviour's speech was the desire of some Greeks to see him, ver. 20, and, in his answer, he intimates that the conversion of the Gentiles after his death was part of his glory, and the end of his death was to draw a train of believing disciples to him, ver. 32. If the faith of men makes the thoughts of Christ's death pleasant, and the death itself glorious to him, unbelief doth in its nature snatch this honour from Christ, and would hale him down from heaven, to stake him in a humiliation-state for ever, to continue him the scorn and derision of men, which, as it is injustice in depriving him of his right, is also ingratitude to him, who hath done so much to make himself dear to men. If the hire of a labourer was to be given him the same day, and the sun was not to go down upon it, because he had 'set his heart upon it, and lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be sin unto thee,' Deut. 24:15; if the depriving a labourer of his hire, for a small time, is a sin God marks, how black is that sin in the eye of God, which hath not once, but often, defrauded Christ of the hire he laboured for, both in his life and death, and will not return the soul to him for whose welfare he travailed? What is this but to defeat him of the fruit of his sweat, pain, blood and death, to disappoint him of the satisfaction he hath set his heart upon; or, as it is in the Hebrew, lifted up his soul unto, has a vehement desire for? What made him bear up in his dreadful sufferings, but the joy and hopes of having a generation to serve him? It was to this purpose he did groan and bleed. But unbelief would have him an unattended Redeemer, a man of sorrows without a spark of joy, when it will not come to Christ that the soul might have life, and Christ might have glory.

**Eighthly, It puts Christ to the greatest grief** His soul was never more deeply impressed with grief before the hour of his passion than when he saw men would not come to him that they might have life. That his table was spread, and his invited guests would not accept of his feasts, did both grieve and incense him. When he gave his disciples so sharp a check, and calls them fools, it was not for their timorous and ungrateful forsaking him, but for their slowness of heart in believing, Luke 24:25. Not their leaving him in the hands of his enemies, or their present charging him with imposture, but their not giving credit to what was predicted of him by the prophets. It was not the buffets he received, the thorns whereby he smarted, the reproaches of his enemies, the wounds from the hands of the soldiers, which did so much damp his soul, as the unbelief of his disciples; he seemed not to be afflicted with them so much as with this. This seems as grievous to him as the wrath of his Father, not to be trusted, and to be charged with falsity. To be ungratefully dealt with is more bitter to a generous spirit than death. This grieved him before ever he came into the world, when he conducted the incredulous generation of the Israelites through the wilderness;\* it may now grieve him more, since it is against more incomparable marks of his kindness. Is there any grace that Christ doth more earnestly inquire after than that of faith? If he finds it, he regards nothing else, John 9:35. When he had found him that was excommunicated by the pharisees, he saith, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' He inquires not after this poor man's zeal in defending him so strenuously before the council, vers. 30–33. 'Dost thou believe?' is the only question he asks him in order to his admission into his family. What other grace doth he admire in the

centurion? Mat. 8:10. Humility, marching in the first rank, 'I am not worthy,' &c. seems more obvious to view. But Christ looks at the faith which gave birth to his humility. If faith be the grace on which he fixeth his eye with affection and delight, unbelief must be the object of his greatest grief as well as anger; it is a grieving him after God hath wiped tears from his eyes.

### **3. As unbelief is an injury to God, as it is a particular injury to Christ, so it is also a wrong to the Spirit of God.**

It slights the witness he bears by his common illuminations to the dignity of Christ and the truths of the gospel, and therefore when men refuse to yield obedience to the terms of the gospel, they are said to 'resist the Holy Ghost,' Acts 7:51. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any; it is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, but the sin against the Holy Ghost may be without many other sins, as it was in the pharisees, who were free from many immoral vices, but it cannot be without this as the main ingredient. It is a sin more against the Spirit of God than any, because it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to receive of Christ's, and shew it to men, to declare of the things of Christ, to bring the truths of Christ to a remembrance, to convince men of the necessity of Christ and his righteousness. Unbelief crosseth all those purposes of the Holy Ghost, the end of his coming into the world, writes vanity and folly upon his mission, by not subscribing to his motions. As it reflects upon the Father for sending Christ, so it reflects both upon the Father and the Son for sending the Holy Ghost. The more honourable the messenger is, the more base is the affront both to the messenger and to him that sent him. This sin, as it is against Christ, is also against the Spirit of God, because Christ was fitted by the Spirit, and furnished with all fulness in his human nature, for the accomplishment of his work in the world. It was by the strength of the Spirit that he first entered the lists with our great enemy, who had first moved the rebellion of man, Mat. 4:1, and the same Spirit acted Christ in the whole course of his prophetic office. It was through the eternal Spirit that he offered up himself a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, Heb. 9:14; but it is also more immediately against the Spirit exhorting to faith, pressing the doctrine and truths of Christ upon the souls of men, repeating again and again the things which concern salvation, offering himself to change the soul that is without form and void into a comely and beautiful workmanship. How great is this sin, then, that gives the lie to the Spirit of truth, who is infallible himself and cannot deceive, nor could no more be employed about a trivial and unworthy affair than Christ about an unnecessary redemption! And since this sin is that which the Spirit directs his battery against, it is more peculiarly a maintaining the fort against the power of heaven and the summons of that Spirit, whose least motions we ought to obey to a full surrender. To cast away his solicitations, to put bars in his way to hinder him an entry, is to quench the Spirit,' 1 Thes. 5:19, as if the resisting his office were a blowing out his life, and as much a stifling of him in the soul as when the Jewish fury crucified Christ upon the cross. This is as great a sin, as appears by the punishment of the Jews, who were not cast off so much for the crucifying the Lord of life as for resisting the Spirit, who would have applied for their cure that blood they had shed in their madness. Thus Stephen charged them when they stoned him, 'Ye always resist the Holy Ghost.' The Spirit is the ambassador of the Father and the Son too; he is sent by the Father, John 14:26, 'whom the Father will send in my name;' and sent by Christ, chap. 15:26, 'whom I will send unto you from the Father.' To stand against an ambassador that represents two states or princes is more than to resist him that represents only one. Christ was sent by the Father, and it is nowhere in Scripture said that the Spirit sent Christ, though it was given to him, not by measure, for the fitting him for his mediatory work, and so it is against the Spirit, as furnishing Christ with gifts and graces for his employment. But there is a further aggravation in its redounding upon the Holy Ghost, as authoritatively sent both by the Father and the Son, to build upon that foundation which Christ laid.

## **II. The second thing in the demonstration of the sinfulness of this sin was, that it is as bad, or worse, than the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ.**

It is as bad as the Jews' crucifying Christ. It is as if we had been partners with that cursed generation at Jerusalem, that stained their hands in the blood of the Son of God. There is a spiritual crucifixion of Christ as well as a corporal one: Rev. 11:8, 'And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.' It is a speech concerning the death of the witnesses, and a description of Rome, the seat of antichrist. As it is spiritually called Sodom, and spiritually called Egypt, so the crucifixion may be understood spiritually, though there be something also literal in it; for Christ may be said to be crucified at Rome, not in regard of the place, where Christ never was, but in regard of the Roman authority, whereby he suffered, all power of capital punishment being taken away from the Jews after their subjection to the Roman empire. The crime pretended against him was against Cæsar, the Roman magistrate; he was crucified by Pilate, a Roman president, and crucifixion was a Roman punishment. It is called Sodom because of luxury and lust, in regard of the idolatry of it, which is spiritual uncleanness (as Jerusalem is called Sodom in regard of her filthiness, Isa. 1:10, Isa. 3:9, Ezek. 16:49, 50), and called Egypt in regard of idolatry, and in regard of the similitude between the oppressions of Israel in Egypt, and Christians under the Roman jurisdiction. Now, as the name of one place is metaphorically translated to another, because of the likeness of their sin, so, by the same rule, the similitude in sin transfers the name of one sin to another. Christ is crucified by the Romish power, when he is deprived of the honour of his mediatory office, by justling in the intercessions of the virgin and other saints; of the glory of his satisfaction, in mingling with it the merits of other creatures; in his kingly office, by assuming the power of dispensations for sin, and pardoning the punishment due by his laws to it. And Christ is as much crucified by an unbeliever, when he rejects or doth not accept him as a sufficient sacrifice, a propitiating priest, a commanding king, and a teaching prophet. A man is as deeply guilty of crucifying Christ in a spiritual manner, as the Jews were in the reproaches and scoffs of him and the nailing him to the tree. As there is a spiritual entertainment of Christ, and

supping with him by believing, and a spiritual bringing forth Christ in the womb of a soul, as a mother doth an infant, so there is a spiritual lifting up Christ upon the cross, and piercing his side.

Another place which proves this, is 1 Cor. 11:27, 'Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' If a man hath the guilt of any known sin upon him unrepented of, if he comes not with a suitable frame, when he hath no high thoughts of the excellency of Christ's body in the sacrament, he is partaker of the Jewish crime instead of a Saviour's merit, and acts as one that nailed him to the cross, and pierced his side,—as an affront to the picture or statue of a prince is interpreted an affront to his person. Now if the unworthy receiving the signs of the body and blood of Christ, when a man hath no formal intent to be guilty of so great a crime in his approach, but he hath some pretences of holy ends, and addresses himself to it with some kind of seeming seriousness, make him guilty of the death of Christ how much more must he be guilty of it, who hath no value for it, doth not accept of it as the death of the Son of God, and mediator of the world?\* He intimates that Christ did not suffer as a propitiation for sin, but as a malefactor, and so is like to them that crucified him. So that there are other ways of being counted before God the murderers of Christ, than if our hands had been as deeply imbrued in the blood which ran in the veins of his body, as the hands of the Jews were. It is true, all had a hand in the killing Christ, for our sins armed the hands of the executioners; they put the hammer into the right hand of the instruments, and the nails into their left hand, and, as it were, compelled their cursed hands to pierce his body.\* Our sins demanded the death of the Son of God. But only unbelievers are guilty of his death, because they make that blood to be shed again in vain, which they shed when he was crucified for them.

**1. Unbelief is as bad as the Jews' act in crucifying him.**

**2. It is worse.**

**1. It is as bad, in being a virtual approbation of what they did.** Every voluntary sin is a justification of all acts of the same nature done in the world. The sin of the Jews was a justifying the sins of Samaria and Sodom: Ezek. 16:51, 'Thou hast justified thy sisters in all thy abominations;' those sisters, ver. 46, were Samaria and Sodom.

(1.) It comes from the same root. There is the same disposition of soul in one as in the other. They were no more of Adam's descent than we are, and no more corrupted in their nature than any other nation. We have no more good naturally than was to be found among them, and they had no more evil naturally than what is to be found among us. Unbelief was the principle from whence all their rigour against him did arise; and had they not first been unbelievers, they had not been the Redeemer's murderers.

If there be the same disposition, and an interpretative approbation of an act, there is the same guilt in the exact eye of God's justice; for God doth not judge by outward fact, but by the inward frames of the heart, and dispositions of the soul. The blood of all the prophets, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, was to be required of that generation of the Jews in whose times Christ lived, though not a man of them had ever known Abel or Zacharias but by the history of the Scripture, Mat. 23:35, Luke 11:51; yet Christ tells them they had shed the blood of Abel, and all the rest to Zacharias. Neither did they formally approve of those actions; no doubt but they would in words have testified an abhorrency of Cain, as well as many among us will their indignation against the traitor Judas, and would have disowned the wicked and cruel facts of their ancestors, who had dyed their hands over and over again in the blood of the prophets and messengers of God; yet they were still guilty of all that blood, because they had the same disposition of heart, by their unbelief, to do the same act as Cain did, who was the head of the unbelieving world; and they did imitate Cain in his hatred of his brother, by hating Christ, who was to be the grand sacrifice typified by the sacrifice Abel offered, and by Abel's blood too; and, having such a frame, would have used the same person with as much rigour, were he then alive, as Cain did. So no doubt but there is the same disposition in every unbeliever to use Christ as cruelly, were he now alive upon the earth in the same state as he then was, and should fall foul upon the reigning sins of men's hearts, as the Jews did then use him; for the reason is the same. If those Jews, notwithstanding all their glavering affection to the prophets that had been slain by their ancestors, would have handled them as sharply, and persecuted them to the death, had they been alive in their time, and had as faithfully performed their office and message as they did then, no doubt but men having the same disposition would do as much to Christ; and, having the same root in them, and bringing forth the same fruit, where it is in their power, they would do the same to Christ or any other object, if it were as obvious to them as that which is the mark of their fury. As those Jews had the spirit of their murdering fathers in them, though themselves did not believe it, so every unbeliever hath the spirit of the crucifying Jews in him, though they themselves think no such thing, and would with as much abhorrency detest such a fact as the Jews did that of their fathers. There is still the same rancorous root of bitterness latent in the heart and nature, as was in theirs.

(2.) It hath the same object now, the person of Christ, though in another manner. Whatsoever is done against the commands, and doctrine, and people of Christ, against his inward motions in the soul, is done against the

person of Christ: Acts 9:4, 'Why persecutest thou me?' How could the persecution of believers by Saul be more against the person of Christ than unbelief, the root from whence that furious zeal did branch? As the Father appeared principally in the creation of the world, forming the design of it, and upon that occasion settled the law as a rule of man's obedience, every sin against the law is an offence against him, a blasphemy of the Father. But redemption being the work of the Son, by his suffering and resurrection, and the Son being the matter and subject of the doctrine of the gospel, and set forth as an object of faith, and appointed by the Father the lawgiver of the world, the gospel refers properly to the person of Christ; and unbelief is a sin committed against the person of the Son, and an outraging him. Apostasy and denying Christ to be the Messiah is by the apostle called a crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh: Heb. 6:6, 'They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' It is such an act as is by interpretation a crucifying the person of the Son of God; it is a rejecting his person and offices, and counting him a deceiver, as the Jews did, Mat. 27:63, and not the Son of God; for if we do count of him as one sent from God, why do we not believe in him? why do we run from him? αὐτοὶ δὲ, to themselves, or in, or with themselves, as much as in them lies. All his common works, which were upon their hearts, they kill, which is as much as a killing his person; what they do to his truth, and the convictions they have, they would do to his person were he in their power. They put him to an open shame, for as he was derided and reproached as an impostor when he was upon the cross, so men by their unbelief shame him before the eyes of men. The action in refusing him and departing from him asserts that there are no allurements in him, nothing worthy of love, but worthy of that reproachful usage he had among his crucifiers. As apostasy is attended with this guilt in the account of the apostle, so is all unbelief, according to the degrees of it, more or less, because it is a virtual denial of Christ's being what really he is, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; which was that the Jews denied, and therefore crucified him, and therefore is a sin against the person of Christ as well as theirs. As faith pitcheth upon the person of Christ as its proper object, so the refusal of the person of Christ is that which doth constitute this sin of unbelief.

(3.) It hath the same end, the indulgence of some carnal lust and end. Is not our love naturally as strong to those corruptions which lie nuzzling in our natures? Are we not as fond of them, as indulgent to them, as the scribes and pharisees were to theirs? They did not pay a greater homage to their beloved sin, and adore their heart-idols with a greater veneration, than every one of us endeavour to pleasure ours naturally; and this is the main end of every unrenowned unbelieving person. Therefore, if Christ were among us in the same garb as he was among the Jews, and shewed his dislike of our vices and corruptions, and laid the axe to the root of them, though edged with so many miracles as he did among them, what reason have we to think that he should not meet with the same rude entertainment among us as he did among them? Our nature is no better than theirs, our lusts as dear to us as theirs, principles of education as strong in us as theirs; we have the same spiritual progenitor by nature as they had, even the devil, and his lusts we do as well as they: John 8:44, Eph. 2:2, 3, 'The spirit that works in the children of disobedience (παιθλας, unpersuadableness), among whom also we had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind,' and are as much guided by his inspirations as they; for the apostle pronounceth it of all, of himself and the Gentiles, as well as Christ had before of the Jews. Would we not befriend our father, especially when he would put forth his utmost power and malice in us upon such an occasion, as he did at that time in them? And we rather should use him more despitefully, because if he did come in the flesh, it would be contrary to expectations, whereas they expected the Messiah, and gloried in the promise of his coming. Had any told them before, that they should have used him so barbarously as they did, they would have thought themselves wronged and defamed. What! to crucify him whose coming they longed for, and had expected in their successive generations, from the time of Adam's being cast out of paradise! Yet for all this, you know how they used him, because he came in another garb than they expected. They looked for him to come as a conqueror, and he came as a person not knowing where to lay his head. And what unbeliever is there among us that can assure himself he would not do the like, were Christ in person present, and struck as cross a blow at his darling corruptions as he did at those of the Jews in that time? What pharisees would not swell against him, if he should tell them of loading men with grievous burdens, and charge them with their hypocrisy and formal devotions, and thunderingly tell them they should die in their sins? Is there not the same reason? Have not men the same love to their vices as they had then? What can alter their affections? Nothing but faith. While men, therefore, remaining in unbelief, have the same dispositions, the same ends, and the same motives to unbelief as they had, they would do the same acts against Christ, out of the same disposition, and for the same ends, which managed them in all that tragedy. They would still fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Those that sacrifice the truths, precepts, ordinances of Christ to their Delilahs, would sacrifice Christ himself, whose truths, precepts, and ordinances they are. If Christ were again upon the earth in the same state, he would be as faithful to his Father's



instructions as he was then; and unbelievers would be as faithful to their father's, the devil's, instructions, as the Jews were then.

As we see in what sense unbelief now is as bad as the Jews' crucifying, as having the same disposition, being set against the same object and guided by the same ends and motives, so we shall see that

**2. Unbelief now is worse than the unbelief of the Jews, and worse than that act of crucifying Christ, and more grievous to him.** They crucified him by the authority of Pilate, and pretended a law among them whereby he ought to die. But what pretence can there be for any man's unbelief among us? Our unbelief at the last day will be an excuse of theirs.\* The Jews resisted a truth offered to them, but we resist the force and power of that truth which in the notion we own. While we receive it in our assent, we reject it in our consent; we profess him to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world in our doctrine, and proclaim it a mere imposture in our practice. Theirs was a rejecting him; ours a scorn and mocking of him. Besides, we by our baptism are obliged votaries to him; we have given up our names to Christ in an outward profession, and promised faith in him and obedience to him. The Jews did not formally so, though implicitly they did, as the doctrine of it was contained in the ceremonies of the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. But our unbelief is manifested after solemn promises to stick to him.

(1.) Our unbelief is against the spiritual discovery of Christ; theirs was not. Their sin was against his personal discovery, ours against his spiritual, in the miraculous appearance of the Spirit in the apostles' preaching. The coming of the Spirit depended upon Christ's glorification, John 7:39; their sin therefore could not be so great as ours, it being against a less, and ours against a greater, discovery of Christ by the effusion of the Holy Ghost. It is a contempt of Christ after a full revelation. The Jews had better excuses to plead for the mitigation of their crime, the prophecies concerning the Messiah were obscure till cleared by the event, and delivered in such expressions that a natural understanding might conceive them to be meant of an outward splendour rather than a spiritual glory. The condition of Christ was so mean and disguised in the world, that they could scarce discern the Lord of glory for the mask of infirm flesh, could not tell how to imagine him to be the Son of God, who was meaner than an ordinary man in his outward appearance. There were, indeed, some sparks of his divinity flashed out in his words and actions, but short of those illustrious beams wherewith he afterwards chased away the darkness of the world, short of that power whereby afterwards he broke open the gates of hell, and hurled Satan, the prince of it, from his long-possessed throne. They crucified him, when as yet the Spirit had not spread the light abroad, discovered the reason of all the foregoing methods, had not yet shewed him to be the Lord of glory, nor animated some men to preach him in the world and bear witness to the truth of his mission against their worldly interest, and whatsoever was dear unto them there. Not a nation in the world had then submitted their sceptre to the Son of God; the world as yet lay steeped in idolatry, and wallowed in the sink of hell. But our unbelief being after the clearest discovery of him, and his appearance in the power of his royalty, since he hath a long time reigned in the midst of his enemies, is rendered more vile, unreasonable, and inexcusable. The Spirit doth not speak of Christ to come in an obscure style, as the prophets did, but manifests things past, things accomplished, in unveiled and clear expressions, and with an undeniable light. He discovers not Christ on earth in a mean flesh and form of a servant, but in the glory of the Son of God, and as a mediator for man, invested with the government of the world, and hath sealed the truth of his mission with the conversion of many nations, and spread it over all parts of the world, contrary to human methods, whereby false religions and errors have been propagated in the earth. The promise of the Spirit's mission, made by our Saviour on earth, being performed, is an evidence of the acceptance Christ finds with the Father, and of the stability of all his declarations as a foundation of faith. It is against this appearance of his our present unbelief is, which makes it more criminal than that of the Jews in crucifying him when he was under a veil. We have seen the conquest he hath made by his Spirit for so many ages since his being upon the earth; how prodigious, then, is our heart-refusal of him after so many records of his power, and troops of miracles wrought by the strength of his name!

(2.) They crucified him when he was in a state of humiliation; our unbelief is against him, since he is exalted at the right hand of his Father. There is a great deal of difference between the contempt of one upon a dunghill and upon a throne. They sinned not against a Christ crucified for them; he had not then died for them when they apprehended him and sought his death. Theirs was against God's act in sending Christ; ours against God's act in sending him, and glorifying him also. Theirs was against Christ in his low estate; ours against Christ in his exalted nature. Theirs against Christ as a man on earth; ours against him as the Son of God in heaven, and in his approaches to the fulness of his kingly authority in judging the world. They crucified his humanity, and we, in a manner, his divinity. They believed not in him when he was clouded in the form of a servant; we believe not in him when he hath reassumed the glory of the Deity. He was as a contemptible shrub among them, making no appearance of rising into a full-grown tree; there was not that manifest grandeur wherein he seemed to be promised: he appeared not in such a garb as to seem desirable to them: Isa. 53:2,

'He was as a root out of a dry ground.' But we have heard of him in his glory mounting above the violences of men, dropping off the infirmities of the flesh, shaking off the fetters of death by a victorious resurrection, and triumphant ascending above the heavens to live for ever, and all this that he might be believed on, confided in as the Redeemer of the world. Judge, then, which unbelief is more sinful. They crucified him whom they supposed to be a man and a malefactor; we crucify him who was glorified after he was crucified for us. We crucify him since his divinity hath been manifested above his humanity; they when his humanity had veiled his divinity. Which of the Jews, that should have seen Christ at the right hand of God, as Stephen did, would have dared to utter those words, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'<sup>\*</sup> Every unbeliever, that dares not speak it, dares do it. They will be confounded, when they see him glorious whom they have pierced. Many of them bewailed their crime when they believed his resurrection; we reproach him while we pretend to believe him glorious, and crucify him again by rejecting his promises and precepts, whom we confess to be risen from the grave. Had the Jews had the Messiah only promised them by the prophets,<sup>†</sup> and had not believed it, it had not been so great a sin as not to believe him after he came, and prefer Cæsar, an earthly king, before him, and the life of Barabbas, a murderer, before his. It was an higher sin to refuse him, not only since he was promised, but was come, and had preached and wrought miracles among them, and had lived holily; yet it was a greater sin than of crucifying him, not to believe on him after he was dead, raised again, ascended into heaven, had sent the Holy Ghost and converted a world. Peter denied Christ, Judas betrayed him, Pilate condemned him, the Jews crucified him, but not one of them had then seen him dead, raised, and ascended into heaven, and sending the Holy Ghost, as we have full evidences of. As if the Jews did not believe Moses, when he pretended in Egypt to deliver them, by taking the Israelite's part, and killing the Egyptian, it was no such great thing. But after he had been, as it were, dead by his absence, and returned again, by a course of miracles, knocked off their chains, brought them through the Red Sea, for them then to carry themselves so to him, as if he had not delivered them, was a great injury to God and him. So it is a greater injury, since Christ, by his death, hath freed us from evil, brought the kingdom of heaven, his gospel, among us, and that for many years, that we should not heartily comply with his terms, but behave ourselves towards him as if he were a mere man, an unworthy man, had done nothing for us, had not been taken notice of by God, but in a way of punishment. So to carry ourselves after his high exaltation, is unparalleled, even among devils, and by the sin of the Jews in crucifying him. And our notional owning him, or assenting to the articles of the creed concerning his death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead, is so far from alleviating the crime, that it renders it more base and unworthy, not to cast ourselves upon him for salvation, resign up ourselves to be saved in his way, and guided by his precepts, after our acknowledgments of his death and exaltation. I say, it renders it more unworthy than the Jews' murder, or the present unbelief of their posterity, because it is a contradiction to our own professed sentiments.

**(3.) Our unbelief is more palpably against the offices of Christ than theirs was: it was not of that black hue then.**

Christ had not a full investiture in his offices, he had not all royal power settled upon him, till after his sacrificing himself. For the full exercise of those offices belonged to his state of exaltation, and he was not perfected till he was offered up, Heb. 5:9; it is now against his priestly office settled upon him for ever, and against a special part of it, his intercession. They sinned against Christ ready to offer up himself a sacrifice; we against Christ who hath offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God; we sin against him as an advocate settled at the right hand of God. It is true, Christ did intercede before his coming in the flesh, and evidences of it there are in Scripture, but that was not evident to the Jews. It was then upon the account of what he was by compact to suffer, it is now upon the account of what, according to that compact, he hath suffered; it is a sin, therefore, more peculiarly against his priestly office, in his pleading for all the fruits of his oblation, and appearing in the presence of God for us, as well as appearing for God to us; theirs was against the latter, and ours against both; theirs was against Christ, when as yet the contract was to be performed; ours against him, when, according to the contract, the price and ransom is paid; theirs was when the debt due to God remained unsatisfied; ours when God hath given Christ an acquittance for the payment of it, and made him king, priest, prophet, prince, and saviour, and for ever invested him in each particular office. It was not by any force, but with the greatest willingness, that he offered up himself 'to destroy the works of the devil,' 1 John 3:8, and to be, in all respects, an officer of mercy at the right hand of his Father. If we shall endeavour to preserve him, whom Christ came to cast out by his death; if we preserve any of those works by unbelief, Christ came to destroy; if we continue the sceptre of Satan in his hands by our want of faith; nay, if we preserve that unbelief, which was the first work that the devil framed in our first parents by his subtlety, we do that which hinders the glory of his offices, and that which is more contrary to his honour than the death the Jews inflicted on him.<sup>\*</sup> His death did not discontent him, he was highly willing to bow down his head under it, it was the way to the glory

of all his offices; he was to pass through the cross to the throne, and be first a sacrifice before he could be an advocate, and yield up the Ghost before he could send the Spirit. Unbelief, then, which would deprive him of the glory of all this, is more injurious than those Jews were which nailed him to the cross, and more grievous than the ignominious death he suffered.

**(4.) Our unbelief is against Christ after he hath finished his work, their act was against him when he was moving towards the performance of it.**

He had not then manifested the grandeur of his affection; he had, indeed, taken human nature, and humbled himself to the infirm condition of our flesh; but his death, which was the commendation of his love, and the discovery of his affection in redemption, was not then suffered; their sin could not be against this, because it was not yet manifested; they made way by their sin for a discovery of that love we sin against. They sinned against Christ as he was preparing himself to be a sacrifice for them, and sanctifying himself to be an atoning offering; we sin against him as already consecrated by his own blood, and consecrating for us 'by his own flesh a living way,' Heb. 10:20. In the crucifying of him they sinned against Christ as the Son of God, but not against Christ as a sacrifice; they rather contributed, though not intentionally, to this oblation of himself. but we sin against the only sacrifice for sin, which hath been offered for us, so that there is a greater ingratitude and contempt in our sin than theirs; neither the priests nor people, Pilate nor Judas, had seen Christ dead for them, before their own act in crucifying him. Judas betrayed him, the people voted him, and Pilate condemned him to death; but an unbeliever betrays, votes, condemns the death of Christ to death; he betrays the ends of it, condemns that to a nullity which God accepted as a price, and votes against those offices which were founded upon his death, and which he could not have exercised if he had not died, and thereby virtually pulls him from his throne, unto which he was to pass by the cross: for 'ought not Christ first to suffer, and so to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:26.

**(5.) Our unbelief is against a more signal manifestation of God's attributes in their highest perfection.**

God hath not opened the treasures of his wisdom to man till the sufferings of Christ were over, nor was his love manifested in the highest manner till our Saviour bled, nor his justice discovered till the stroke was given, nor did his power triumph but in the resurrection of our Saviour. The glory of those attributes lay hid and wrapped up in him, till Christ came down from the cross, and rose from the grave. We sin against that goodness which pitied us more than it seemed to pity his own Son. We sin against that justice that sheathed a sword in his bowels to spare our souls. We sin against that blood that sealed our pardon, against that truth which had brought the promises upon record for so many ages to an happy accomplishment, and made them yea and amen, fully irreversible, by our Saviour's blood; against a wisdom that astonished angels more than that in the whole creation, and against an almighty strength that never bared its arm so much as in raising our surety laden with our guilt. Since nothing of those appeared so eminent but in and after the crucifixion of Christ, their sin could not so sully the honour of those which did not then appear. They were ignorant instruments in the hands of God to promote rather than violate the honour of those attributes. But doth not our unbelief endeavour to take off the wheels of their triumphant chariot, and lay the honour of them in the dust? The Jews, indeed, after the death of Christ, sinned against all these in their brightness as well as any of us; but not in the very act of crucifixion, because by the death of the Son of God these excellencies were brought in all their glories to our view, which had else lain invisible in the secret place of the Most High, and never should have shewn their faces to the sons of men. Without it, neither men nor angels could have had any prospect of them. And though we imitate not the Jews in the act of crucifixion, it is not for want of natural disposition, but for want of opportunity. Christ is not here in person to be crucified by us, but we tread in the steps of the Jewish unbelief, which was more gross after the passion of Christ than before; and we crucify the glory of those attributes of God, which received their life from the blood of the Redeemer.

**(6.) Our unbelief is aggravated from the accomplishment of the promises and threatenings for unbelief, which their sin was not against.**

We have greater assurances since Christ's ascension of the performance of promises than they had before. The gospel hath, according to the prediction of Christ, from a grain of mustard-seed, risen up to a mighty tree. It hath been by various providences carried into remote corners, spread farther than the Roman eagles. It hath been made known in the then unknown parts of America. It hath visited all nations, Mat. 24:14, and a great harvest hath sprung up in all ages since, from the seed of our Saviour's body cast into the ground, according to his prophecy, John 12:24. We have known the Jews sinking under the truth of his threatening, and the destruction of Jerusalem, the fatal place of his suffering. We see them to this day stripped of the badges of God's ancient favours, without a king or prince, without a sacrifice, without image, ephod, or teraphim.\* We

see the scars of God's just anger upon them for above 1600 years, not yet seeking the Lord their God, and David their king, Hosea 3:4, 5. And besides, we have known churches degenerate in their faith, and (as the fruit of it) laid in the dust; the tabernacle of God removed from them; their lands desolated, and their posterity laid in thick darkness. How have we known him in the glory of his mercy and truth, and the rigours of his justice! Have we not seen him with his iron rod crushing his beloved people, and alluring with his golden sceptre nations alienated from the life of God, and strangers to the covenant of promise? There hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised by the hand of Moses, the prophets, and his own Son, 1 Kings 8:56; no, nor one word of all those sad threatenings which were thundered out against that unbelieving nation, who lie yet under that wretched distemper of slighting the Son of David, the promised seed, and under the fearful curse of God's oath, that they 'shall not enter into his rest,' Heb. 3:18, 19. And is our unbelief, that spurns at all those evidences of his truth or faithfulness, and his wrath against incredulity, less criminal than theirs was? They sinned against the word of his promise and threatening, and we against the work and performance of both. They believed not, when no nation had been cast off, nor could be cast off, for that sin. But we believe not, when we know that for this sin God hath taken away the birthright from the Jew. Our sin is therefore against the mercies which believers upon record have had for their faith, and against the judgments God hath poured out on the Jews and others for their unbelief. How grievous is it to commit that sin, for which persons bear the tokens of God's wrath before our eyes! And never palliate the business by pleading that none of us are as the Jews, because we profess Christ to be the Messiah, and own him to be the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world; our unbelief is worse than theirs, because we orally own him, and cordially deny him. It is the same with theirs in the inward disposition, though not in the outward profession.

**(7.) Our unbelief is against greater knowledge than theirs was.**

[1.] The act itself. They put him to death through ignorance, whom, if they had known in the excellency of his person, they would not have crucified, 1 Cor. 2:8. Peter bears the same witness, Acts 3:17, 'I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers;† and Christ himself in his dying prayer bore witness to this: Luke 23:34, 'They know not what they do.' They crucified him when his divinity was under a veil, and therefore there are milder expressions of their crucifying Christ than there can be of ours. Would the apostles speak truth were they living, and should utter the same expressions of our infidelity, 'Had they known him, they would not have slighted him'? or can Christ put up the same prayer now for those that condemn him under all the glorious marks of his deity? can he say, 'Father, they know me not, have not had any revelations of me to be the Son of God'? Without question, no. It must be thus, Father, they have seen the trophies of my death in the world, they have known the transcendent effects of my glorification, they have read, and read again, in the records of Scripture (which they confess they do not question) the conquests I have made, the multitude of disciples I have gained, and the treading devils under my feet; yet remain worse devils than those I have subdued. We do believe his ascension and session at the right hand of God, and answer not the ends of them. We refuse Christ against knowledge, which they did through ignorance. It was a mitigation of Paul's sin that he persecuted 'ignorantly in unbelief,' 1 Tim. 1:13; he did not believe Christ to be that person that really he was. Theirs, as well as his, was an ignorant unbelief, ours a knowing one; theirs was a crucifying Christ ignorantly in unbelief, ours a rejecting Christ knowingly in faith; i.e. we consent not to that unto which we profess our assent. They thought him to be mere man and a criminal, and did not assent to the dignity of his person; we acknowledge him to be God and Redeemer, and we consent not to the reasonableness of his terms. The guilt is greater when it is against clear manifestations, gracious offers, sweet wooings, multiplied essays of love and power, than when against some few tastes; and to heighten it, a guilt under a self-condemnation.

[2.] The examples of converts more. The examples of converts in the time of Christ were produced as living witnesses against the Jews in that time: Mat. 21:32, 'Publicans and harlots believed John, and you, when you had seen it, believed not;' and no doubt they will be brought as testimonies at the last day. Was it so high an aggravation then, and is it less now, against those who have had not only those testimonies upon record, but many other testimonies of faith in the ages since and their own age; yea, the turning the scales of the whole world, and the glorious conquests of Christ by ways different from the methods of men? The unbelief after the sight of Christ's converting power upon any heart is a charge as great, if not greater, than the refusing to believe upon a single declaration of the doctrine, because every conversion in our sight is an evidence of the power of Christ, and the end of his coming and suffering. Such works are his standing miracles now, which bear witness of him. The evidences whereby Christ chargeth the Jews' unbelief with a greater guilt come short of those which we have had: John 10:25, 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' It is in this respect against greater miracles than Christ

performed among them; for greater works were done by the apostles than by Christ, John 14:12, which must be meant of the conversion of men, and the great success they had in that work, more than Christ while he was upon the earth in his person. The Jews had great means, the power of his miracles, the sweetness of his conversation, to assist against their infidelity, yet they vilified his person, misinterpreted his doctrine, ascribed the sparks of his divinity to the powers of hell and the strength of Beelzebub, and at length exposed him to the cross. Is not our unbelief a virtual approbation of all that they did against those hints and means which might have persuaded them to another kind of carriage? But ours hath something to make it more base and unreasonable, it being against the power of his doctrine in converting a world, and supporting myriads of martyrs in bearing their testimony to his truth under the flames and severest punishments. The conversions in the days of his flesh were some few sprinklings within the compass of Judea and Samaria; the evidences we have had have been whole shoals upon the surface of the earth. The miracles he wrought were unanswerable testimonies of his mission, but altogether not so great as that of his resurrection, which was a miracle after they had put him to death. It is this we sin against, which they did not in the crucifixion of him.

[3.] Theirs was against a shorter time of instruction than ours. It was but between three and four years; about three years and a half Christ taught among them. It is ten, twenty, or more years Christ hath been polling at our hearts, and proposing the terms of the gospel. We sin against the instruction they had, for we have them transmitted to us by faithful witnesses; against the teachings of the apostles, which were comments upon the gospel; against multitudes of sermons sounding in our ears. What is the crucifying Christ after three years' hearing of his words and seeing his miracles, to twenty or thirty years' vilifying his person, and disparaging his office, and treading under foot the Son of God?

[4.] Suppose they had known what they did, yet their crucifying of him was but one act. But since every act of unbelief, and every single refusal of his gracious terms, is a crucifying the Son of God afresh, is the guilt of multiplied acts put together less than one single one, especially when every act hath a knowledge to aggravate it?

**(8.) They in crucifying Christ did what God had determined, what Christ was willing to, but it is not so in our unbelief.**

I do not intend this to lessen their sin (for they had no respect to the decree of God in the execution of Christ) but it aggravates ours. God is said to deliver up Christ (Acts 2:23, 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain') not only as an act of his prescience, but his counsel, and that determinate, i.e. stable and irreversible. He makes a distinction between these two acts; in God it was an act of counsel, in them an act of wickedness, 'by wicked hands.' There was a previous act of counsel, and after that an actual tradition: Rom. 8:32, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.' God decreed the sufferings of Christ, but he never positively decreed any man's unbelief, though he decreed to permit it.

[1.] It was necessary. It is not imaginable that the death of Christ could be brought about but in some such way as it was, by the wickedness of man, to answer all the gracious purposes of God. There was a necessity of it to the satisfaction of his justice, in regard of the sanction of the law, and the inability of any or all mere creatures to restore the damaged honour of the law. He could not in his own person deserve death; for could it be supposed that our Saviour should be guilty of any capital crime, whereby, according to the righteousness of the Jewish laws, he had forfeited his life, the whole frame of redemption had cracked asunder, the person wanting that innocence in himself which was necessary to make satisfaction for others? Had God put him to death by some remarkable stroke from heaven, without the intervention of man, the voluntariness of Christ, which was necessary to the perfection of his oblation, had not been evident, his innocence would not have been assured to us. The remarkable stroke would have presented him to man under the notion of a notorious sinner, that heaven could patiently bear no longer. The gospel could not have been propagated. Who would have entertained that person as a Saviour, whose innocence could not be cleared? None who, according to the common sentiments of men, appeared as a malefactor, would have been embraced as a Redeemer. If it be said, God might have raised him again after such a stroke, and his resurrection would have made him entertainable as one beloved of God, but what evidences could there have been that it was a resurrection, or that he had been really dead? But in this way of God's procedure, the innocence of Christ, his freeness to suffer, the reality of his death and resurrection, are undeniably assured to us. There was therefore a necessity of the death of Christ, and in some such way as that whereby it was executed, both in regard of the counsel of God, and the fulfilling of the predictions which had foretold the circumstances. But our unbelief is in no manner necessary, either

necessitate pacti, by necessity of contract, as that was, or necessitate medii, of means, as that was to the salvation of men. For this sin is point blank against any covenant of God, and renders damnation certain, and salvation impossible. The death of Christ was necessary for the satisfaction of God's justice, though it was not formally necessary that those very persons should crucify him. The sufferings of Christ were necessary to his glory; his heel was to be bruised by the devil, as well as the devil's head by him. But unbelief is not a due to him as a means for the glory of his person; he was to suffer, for 'ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' But ought cannot be set on unbelief. It cannot be said, Ought not Christ to have been rejected, contemned, and so to have entered into his glory? His death was necessary in order thereunto, but not our unbelief.

[2.] Besides, there was an 'obedience unto death' enjoined to Christ,\* and his will complied with it, both his divine and human will; his will as he was the Son of God, and his will as he was the Son of David. But his will neither as he is the Son of God, nor as he is the Son of man, is for unbelief. Since he was to be obedient to death, the suffering the death then inflicted on him was a part of his obedience; but the suffering a new crucifixion and disparagement by infidelity, since he went to glory, is no part of the obedience owing by Christ to his Father. We do that in not believing which doth more displease him, and is more against the interest of his glory, than they did in putting him to death, to which his will, with the greatest freeness, and the impulse of a divine law in his heart, persuaded him, and which indeed was the chief end of his coming.

[3.] If we may judge of sin by the consequences of it, our sin is far greater than theirs. The salvation of man, the glory of God's love, justice, wisdom; the glory of Christ's patience, tenderness, the mission of the Holy Ghost, the accomplishment of promises, prophecies, were the consequents of this; not simply fruits of the Jews' action, but of Christ's passion; not the consequents intentionally of their wickedness, but of God's grace. God extracted this glory to himself, and an immense good to man, from the malice of the devil and the Jews. Can any man's unbelief, since Christ hath suffered, be ever an occasion of so great a good? It cannot be imagined how the infinite power of God can make any man's unbelief instrumental to such glorious ends, unless he should send a Saviour to suffer the same tragedy over again in his own person. Nothing but the glory of God's justice, the manifestation of his truth in his wrathful threatenings, the satisfaction of the devil's malice, and the eternal misery of the immortal soul, can be the consequents of present infidelity. Their sin was a means ordered by God to do that, which procured the most inestimable blessings for us; but our sin is against all the blessings purchased by that death, and all the tokens of Christ's love bestowed upon the world at his ascension.

**III. The third thing in the sinfulness of this sin was, besides the sinfulness as it respects God, and as it is as bad, and in some sense worse, than the sin of the Jews; so there are many other reasons which manifest the sinfulness of this sin of infidelity.**

1. This sin of unbelief is much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils. It is probable by the Scripture that pride was the sin: 1 Tim. 3:6, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' If we take it passively, lest he fall as the devil fell by his pride against God, there is indeed pride in every sin, but the formality of the devil's sin seems by this place to consist in pride, who being puffed up with his dignity in the creation, was hurled into a lake of fire. What was the occasion of his pride, or the particular formality of his pride, is not easily determinable.

**There are four ways\* of his sinning conjectured by men.**

(1.) That seeing himself the highest of created beings, and most approaching in likeness to God, he affected an equality with God, Ezek. 28:12, 13, &c. to 17, which, though literally it be spoken of Tyre, yet some understand it allusively of the chief angel; because he speaks of his being in Eden, the garden of God, an anointed cherub that covers, and was upon the holy mount of God, perfect in his ways, till iniquity was found in him. He set his heart as the heart of God, his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness, wherein, say they, the sin of Tyre, as well as his excellency, is compared to the excellency of the devil in his creation, and his sin at his fall.

(2.) That the devil endeavoured to obtain a blessedness by his own strength, without dependence on grace. As if he had been sufficient to make himself happy by the strength of those natural perfections God had first endowed him with at his creation. He apprehended nothing else needful for him but the portion at first bestowed upon him, and trusted to obtain that by himself which he could only have by the grace of his Creator. He would be like God in being the fountain and principle of his own happiness, and equal himself to God in deserting any dependence upon God's sufficiency to rely upon his own.

(3.) Others say, that the devil affected a pre-eminence over every creature; and seeing the legions of angels created with him, and

himself in the highest rank, he would be singular, subject to none, and ruler over all; choosing rather, saith Austin, to delight in the subjection of others to him, than in his subjection to God; affecting that royal dignity which was only due to the Son of God, and would not be a ministering spirit to the heirs of salvation, creatures of an inferior rank and baser alloy than himself, over whom he expected an absolute authority, when all the angels, without exemption of any, were designed to this office: Heb. 1:14, 'Are they not all ministering spirits?' as the elder children are ordered to take care of the younger in a family. He envied Christ the dignity of being set in the human nature 'above principalities and powers,' Eph. 1:19, 20. This hath a likelihood in it, since he sets himself chiefly against mankind, as having a particular enmity against them, whose dignity in the hypostatical union was envied by him, which was his sin, and the cause of his fall. Men always have the greatest animosity against them, upon whose account and occasion they suffer.

(4.) Others say, that the sin of the devil was a refusal to be subject to Christ, when the revelation was made to him and the other angels of his future incarnation: Heb. 1:6, 'And again, when he brings in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him,' πάλιν εσαγάγ. This particle again they join with brings in, and the Greek favours this, 'when he again brings in his first begotten into the world;' signifying that he had brought his Son into the world before as an object of worship, by a particular revelation made to the angels, and required the worship of him in a peculiar manner, not only as one with himself in the Deity, which they could not be supposed to refuse, but under another relation, as the head of their confirmation, and the fountain from whence they were to derive their blessedness. God intended to 'gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even unto him,' Eph. 1:10; this being proposed to them was refused by Satan and his adherents, glorying in their own natural perfection, and conceiving they had strength enough of themselves, and needed no additional grace, and were loath to be subject to a nature inferior in natural perfections to their own, and worship an inferior nature to theirs in union with the Son of God. 'Let all the angels of God worship him,' is as much as to say, Let all the angels of God follow his direction, which, upon the account of their natural perfection, they refused to submit unto, because they were then to be subject to the human nature.

In all these ways unbelief has a resemblance to the devil's sin. It affects an equality with God in a self-dependence, rests in the sufficiency of its own righteousness, without bowing down the will to the acceptance of grace, delights not in subjection to God, refuseth Christ, the head and mediator of God's appointment. In all which pride is signal; and indeed pride of reason, and pride of will, are the two arms wherein the strength of unbelief lies.

This latter way, whereby the devil is said to sin, seems to be more probable. They are said to fall through pride; not a pride of aspiring to be equal with their Creator, for they, being created with the clearest intellectuals, and knowing themselves to be creatures under an almighty power, would not attempt that which they could not but know at the first appearance to be an utter impossibility. This would suppose an error in their understanding, which their perfect nature could not incline to. It is not, therefore, likely that their sin was to desire the Godhead, or to be partaker of the nature of God in an equality with him. Nothing in God or his nature could displease them, or be any occasion of their pride, and they had power over corporeal things; but there might happen something in the disposal of the lower things of the world which might not be so agreeable to them, and therein their desires might be averse from that which was the design of God; and so it is easy to conceive that a revelation of the incarnation of Christ being made to them, and the human nature being deputed in that union to rule over the angels, this might displease them; for among all objects whereby any occasion of aversion from God might arise in them, this is most likely. It was the most considerable thing to preside and rule over mankind, and God's disposing of it otherwise in subjecting them to that nature, which, because of the excellency of their own nature they expected to rule over, is the most probable ground of their aversion. It was pride, and pride immediately against God cannot so easily be supposed, as pride upon this occasion we have spoken of.

And that such a rejecting Christ might be their sin may have some reasons for it; however, they will evidence this sin to be a conformity to the devil,

(1.) Because of the constant and uninterrupted opposition he has always manifested to the Son of God. He hath always discovered more enmity to the nature and mediation of Christ, and the faith of men in him, than he hath against the nature of God. He never so much opposed the notion of one supreme God in the world; supremacy of one God was acknowledged by all the heathens; but he endeavoured to block up any way of their entertaining the true mediator, by filling them with notions of many mediators between God and mankind, in which rank all the deities they worshipped were accounted by them, and looked upon but as mediators between the one supreme God and his creatures in the world. He hath always set himself in opposition to Christ, both among Jews and Gentiles, that he might not be believed to be the Messiah. Though he be against the whole Trinity, yet he seems to have a more particular spite against the second person, as if he had suffered more upon his account, for some crime against him, than against any other of the blessed persons in the Trinity. He raised up persecution against him from his coming into the world; he sets Herod against him when he was an infant; the rulers and rabble of the Jews, when he entered into his office; singles him out to shoot his greatest temptations against; acted Judas to betray him; raised storms against the apostles and his disciples in all parts of the world; broached errors against his deity, against his humanity, and corrupted his ordinances; so that Christ in his doctrine hath not been at quiet from this great enemy since he came first into the world. Upon which account Christ and Satan are set in direct opposition in Scripture; Christ is called the Son of man, as being the friend of man; the devil is called Satan, as being the adversary of man; he

endeavours to destroy man, and Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; he is the accuser of man, and Christ the advocate of man. Upon the account of this opposition he is said more particularly to work in the first time of the gospel: Eph. 2:2, 'Now works in the children of disobedience;' now, the gospel is come, and a crucified Saviour preached as the mediator between God and man, and the fountain of grace, he works with more strength and vigour than before. He had his empire formerly in the world; but now he works as if he had not wrought at all before; now he works in the children of disobedience (or *πειθιας*, of unpersuadableness), to hinder them from the embracing Christ. The angels are the ministers of Christ in his mediatory kingdom; if the service of Christ be the office of angels, it is probable, the refusal to serve Christ in that office was partly the sin of devils.

(2.) Satan is the head of the unbelieving world, and men are said to be the children of the devil with a respect to this particular sin: John 8:44, 'You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.' And the first murder committed in the world, by the power of the devil in the heart of man, was in contempt of faith and the object of it, as viz., the murder of Abel by Cain, the head of the unbelieving world. They had been disputing against the doctrine of faith which Christ had preached to them, ver. 12 and ver. 24, and with respect to his discourse with them, and their unbelieving disputes against him, he tells them they were the devil's children, and they did his lusts. The lusts of the devil were suitable to the lusts the pharisees acted in this dispute; 'he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth;' he was a moral murderer of the angels that adhered to him, and were solicited by him to a revolt and mutiny; he brought them as well as himself into a spiritual death; he abode not in the truth, the truth which the pharisees now opposed, and which Christ had heard of God, ver. 40; and when they charged him that he had a devil, ver. 48, he renders a reason why he had not a devil, ver. 49, 50, because he sought not his own glory, intimating thereby that the devil's sin was a seeking his own glory; and certainly he may be well said to seek his own glory, that resolves to stand by his own natural righteousness. This place doth intimate to us, that the pharisees, in their opposition to Christ, sinned that sin which the devil sinned from the beginning, i.e. the beginning of his sin; and that sin must be a resemblance to this of the pharisees, which was an unwillingness to own Christ as their head to stand by. And the whole mass of unbelievers are included in Satan as their head: Gen. 12:8, 'I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.' Them, in the plural number, him in the singular. Him respecting Satan, cursed in that first promise, as opposite to the seed of the woman in a peculiar manner; this him the Jews understand of Satan; he was the first unbeliever in the world, who draws a train after him, and propagates that interest of unbelief among the sons of men. He is the curser of all those who have any faith in Christ, and may well be counted the head of all unbelievers, as he was the first broacher of that sin of unbelief which is directly contrary to the blessing of Abraham. And in regard of this unbelief in Christ, Judas is called a devil: John 6:70, 'I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.' He hath the devil's nature and spirit in him in this sin.

(3.) The peculiar sense and reflection the devil hath upon himself at the appearance of Christ, seems to intimate this: Mat. 8:29, 'They cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?' They intimate their great sin in a slighting of him, 'What have we to do with thee?' which is a speech of contempt and indignation, as 2 Sam. 16:10, 'What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?' so Joshua 22:24, 'What have you to do with the Lord God of Israel?' They could not endure the sight of that person they had peculiarly refused, and for the refusal of whom they were involved in their misery. The expecting a signal torment at his hands upon his appearance, implies that their sin was more particularly against him; it flying in their face at that time, and filling them with a fresh expectation of indignation at the sight of the Judge, whom they had offended, by refusing his headship and direction.

Now, this sin of the devils, which seems to be this of refusing Christ as the foundation of their standing, and which was anciently generally supposed to be their crime, is not formally the same with our unbelief, but materially it is. They rejected not Christ as redeemer, because they stood in no need of redemption, having not then sinned, but rejected Christ as confirmer, choosing rather to stand upon their own bottom and righteousness than have any assistance from confirmation by grace in the method of God's proposing.

So that unbelief,

(1.) Is first an imitation of the devil's sin. It is a particular invasion of the rights of God as a governor and benefactor, who hath power in both regards to appoint his own ways and methods of doing his creatures good, and directing them how they should serve him, and be preserved or saved by him; so it is an imitation of the devil, who would not be subject to God's direction, but either not serve him, or else serve him according to his own understanding. We are like him in this, when we would save ourselves according to our own methods. If the sin of the devils were a priding themselves in their own created excellency, as their chief good and ultimate end, depending upon those admirable perfections of their nature by creation, and refusing the grace offered to them for their continuance in their created happiness, then unbelief is still the same with the sin of devils, because the root of it is a seeking our own glory, a glorying in our own natural or moral perfections, or sinful affections, and thereupon refusing to come under the rule of God, and submit to his grace discovered in Christ. The building ourselves and hopes upon our own righteousness, is equivalent to that of the devils, resting upon their own natural perfection in a way of independence upon God. But howsoever, since the first sin the devil discovered upon the earth after his fall was a questioning the truth of God, which he particularly contradicted in his discourse with Eve, fastening a lie upon God,—Gen. 3:4, 'You shall not die,'—our unbelief is a resemblance to him in this, which though it slights all



God's attributes, yet strikes sorest at his truth, both in his promises, precepts, and threatenings.

(2.) It is an obedience to Satan. The devil roles in every unbelieving person. His lust we do in this sin, John 8:44. And this sin is his stronghold whereby he governs men according to his pleasure. It is faith he chiefly assaults in the believer. The truth of God's commands he disputed with Eve, and the truth of the gospel promises he disputes with every true Christian. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and he obeyed him; he puts it into the heart of every unbeliever to condemn Christ, and he submits to him. Every sin indeed is an obedience to the devil; but since the height of his malice is to cast dirt upon God's glory in the work of redemption, infidelity is a compliance with him in his principal design. He aimed at nothing more in his first temptation of man than to draw him into an ill opinion of God, and designs nothing more than to keep him in it.

All his endeavours were to hinder the redemption of man by the Son of God. Since he hath failed in that, his skill and pains are employed to stop the application of it, and stave men off from the acceptance. To that purpose he solicits men to continue under his banners with hopes of better pay than under the standard and yoke of Christ. Every unbeliever implicitly swears an allegiance to him; there are but two heads, disobedience to one is obedience to the other; he that is not with Christ is against him; he that comes not under his government is a sworn vassal of the devils.

(3.) It is like the sin of devils in the manner of their sinning. They sinned in a state of entire felicity, we sin in a capability of the highest happiness in regard of divine offers. They 'forsook their own habitation' with God, Jude 6, and we condemn a return to the fruition of God, after many experiences of the miseries of our fall, and the gracious indulgence of our offended Creator. And by how much the more unmerited the grace is, and the less claim can be pretended to it, by so much the more contemptuous is the violation and refusal of it.

(4.) It is a sin greater than that of devils. They refused the headship of Christ over them, when they had no experience in themselves or others of the miseries attending their refusal, till their lost happiness was past recovery; we refuse it, when we know in some sort what devils suffer, and unbelievers will suffer for their contempt. How may the devils plead, Lord, we sinned but against one covenant, we never were under a covenant of grace, we were offered to come under the head of thy appointment, but our pride ruined us. Howsoever, this head never assumed our nature, nor was punished in our stead; we were left to the doleful sound of our own chains, while those had liberty again and again proclaimed to them; thou didst stand ready to strike off their fetters and fasten ours. Had we had the mercies offered to us which those wretches have despised, and had we had hopes after some ages to be delivered from our punishments, we should have lived joyful in our future hopes, though in present misery. Our sins were not at such a rate as the sins of those guilty unbelieving souls. We did indeed refuse the covert of the wings of the Son of God. But we never refused a Christ bearing our sins in our nature, for none was offered to us, after the experience of the misery of our first contempt. Can any such plea be made by an unbeliever under the sound of the gospel?

The devils never sinned against God, that was made an angel for them; nor ever experimented so great a goodness;\* they never sinned against a God that conversed with them thirty years in the midst of sorrow and misery, repeating instructions to repentance, and encouraging them with hopes of pardon; but our unbelief is against a God who hath multiplied his goodness, lamented our sins in the garden, and bore the guilt of them upon the cross. The contempt of such astonishing goodness renders our unworthy carriage towards him more inexcusable than that of devils.

2. It is of the same nature with the first sin of Adam and Eve, which so highly provoked the anger of God, and brought such a deluge of miseries upon mankind; and in some regard it is greater than theirs.

(1.) It was the first sin of Adam. Not that it appears that Adam had the same formal object of faith as we have, viz., Christ a mediator; since there appears no discovery of Christ till after the fall, in the promise of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. Some, indeed, say that Christ was typified by the tree of life in paradise, because he is called in Scripture 'the true vine,' 'the bread of life;' and by 'the tree of life,' Rev. 2:7 and 22:14, they understand Christ the foundation of all happiness of man in innocency. This seems to have no foundation in the history of Adam's creation and fall, yet I know not what may be in it upon the supposition of many, and most of the schoolmen, that the devil's sin was, as hath been spoken before, a pride against Christ as their head; and perhaps, had Adam waited, Christ had been revealed as head of his standing. But this is clear, that Adam endeavoured to stand upon his own bottom, to be a rule of righteousness, and of the knowledge of good and evil to himself, and was not content to wait upon God in the way of his precept for a farther revelation from him of his mind and will. To wait upon God in the revelations he hath made, and believe his veracity in his promises and threatenings, is one part of faith; not to depend upon him, but choose a dependence on ourselves, to turn our backs upon his revealed will, to be our own carvers, is unbelief, which Adam was highly guilty of. The first poison which was diffused by the breath of the serpent, brought forth this cursed monster: Gen. 3:1, 'Yea, hath God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' exciting Eve to a diffidence of the mind of God, that he had not so contracted a goodness, and so little love to his creature, as to deny him the enjoyment of that fruit which seemed so good for food and pleasant to the eyes above any tree of the garden; that since God had created paradise for man, and put him in possession of it, man surely mistook the speech of God to him, and was a wrong interpreter of God's intentions. Afterwards, the serpent descending from a

question, ver. 1, 'Hath God said?' to a plain assertion, ver. 4, 'Ye shall not surely die,' engenders unbelief, and consequently the misery of all mankind. Some anciently did,† and the papists now do, assert the first sin of Adam to be pride; who hearing from his wife, that upon eating that fruit he should be as God, conceived aspiring thoughts in his own mind, affected a self-excellency and dependence, and left waiting upon God to bottom upon himself; for unless he had aimed higher than he ought to aim, he had continued in his innocent state. But what was the cause of this pride? Was it not giving credit to the words of the devil before the command and commination of God, regarding the precept as a falsity, and the threatening as a bugbear?‡ The first solicitation was to doubt of the veracity of God in his threatening, which they greedily swallowed, without any reflections upon the word of God spoken to them before; whence there was first an error in the understanding, before there was a corrupt appetite in the will: for since the devil's assertion, that they 'should be as gods,' was contrary to God's threatening, that they should die, they could not receive that assertion for a truth, unless they first doubted of the truth of the divine threatening, or had quite forgot it. So that it can scarce be imagined how Adam should have a proud appetite without some act of infidelity preceding; though after that pride grew up to some strength, the infidelity and aversion to God was increased. Pride and unbelief do mutually support and prop up one another. The first bait the devil laid was for unbelief: ver. 4, 'Ye shall not die.' And pride followed upon the heels: ver. 5, 'Ye shall be as gods.' Pride had scarce rose so high, had not infidelity first given it a lift. Now, when the fallen spirit had got more credit with man than the Creator, and had instilled into him a false notion of God, nothing appeared as a bar to any rebellion. When infidelity had set foot in the breach, it prepared the way for all the black legion which followed; then the dominion of God is slighted, the law of creation broken, dependence on God rejected, man would be his own lord, his own all, and God should be nothing to him. And upon the account of this unbelief, and the consequents of it in Adam, he is not reckoned among those heroes commended for their faith, Heb. 11, not that Adam was void of faith in the promised Messiah; for had he not believed that promise of a Redeemer, he would not have been careful to have transmitted it to his posterity, nor have taught Abel to sacrifice, who was instructed by his father in that religious service, as typical of the mediator, since we read of no new revelation made to Abel about him.\* And it appears that God had instructed Adam in the offering of him; whence should he be clothed with the skins of beasts, without the killing them, and that not for food, since no license was for that granted, that we read of, till after the deluge, but for sacrifice: and it cannot be supposed that Adam should be one hundred and twenty-nine years without regarding the great type of the mediator in sacrifices; for in that year it is supposed Abel was killed, because Seth was born the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam, Gen. 5:3.† But the reason perhaps is, because his first unbelief, whereby he was the author of the ruin of mankind, obscured the glory of his after faith, the Scripture continually setting him forth as the original of all our miseries, and opposing him to Christ the restorer: Rom. 5:14, 'Death reigned from Adam,' 1 Cor. 15:22, 45, as also because the Scripture records no personal act of Adam after his fall, whereby his faith is evidenced to us. Unbelief was the sin of Adam, and faith the grace of Christ. Adam did not believe either the necessity of the precept, or infallibility of the threatening; our Saviour believed the precepts, both of the moral and mediatory law, to obey them, and the promises of God in the covenant of redemption, to rest upon God in them. And by the way, we may see a reason why God will recover us in a way of faith, because we first apostatised from him for want of it; he will have his honour restored by the creature's believing him, as it was first sullied by the creature's belying him.

[2.] Our unbelief is greater than Adam's, either than that before his fall, or in any act of it after the promise of redemption, or greater than his could be, supposing him to be a total unbeliever.

(1.) Greater than that before his fall. His was against a threatening, for we read of no promise made him before, though a promise is implied: Gen. 2:17, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,' and he was to live by his obedience; ours against threatening and promises also; his sin was against creating goodness, not against a crucified Saviour; that was ingratitude to God as Creator, ours ingratitude to God as Creator and Redeemer; our redemption was with greater difficulty than our creation; this was done by a word, and it was a verbal declaration Adam denied credit unto; but the other was not without the death of the Son of God, a real testimony of God's veracity, superior to a bare verbal one. The creation met with no reluctance in any attribute of God; this, according to the scheme of divinity, for our more clear apprehension of the order of redemption, met with a reluctance from justice. It could be no spot on the honour of God to create, it was a manifestation of his goodness, without any appearance of contradiction; it might seem a blot upon his honour and kindness to his Son, to prefer the rebel world before the life and peace of his only begotten: his goodness to his creature seems to interfere with his goodness to his best beloved. Our unbelief and sin against the gospel, is of a more grisly hue in this respect than his, because against a manifestation of greater goodness. Ours is against a better covenant; and if that brought confusion on the world, much more will this increase our confusion, as well as our sin. That was but against one threatening, ours against many threatenings and promises; that, when the only person he had to converse with, viz., Eve, persuaded him to it; ours, when many dissuade us from it; not but that Adam's sin was very great, he not having a corrupted nature, the task appointed him being not hard, abstinence from one tree only enjoined him, with more ease to be kept than broken. To break it, therefore, was a presumptuous sin,\* which is aggravated in that he received the restraint immediately from God, which Eve did not; neither doth God speak with an audible voice from heaven to us, but by the mediation of his word transmitted to us from age to age; yet in the former respects, our unbelief is of a deeper aggravation than his.

(2.) Greater than any act could be after his fall, or supposing him to be a total unbeliever. It had been still only against a word, and

ours against a deed; it had been against the mediator in a promise, ours against a mediator on the cross, and on the throne; it had been against God promising, ours against God performing; his had been against God assuring it, ours against God acting it; his had been but against one promise, ours against many; it had been when there was not one to give him an example of faith, ours is when we are encompassed with a 'cloud of witnesses,' Heb. 12:1, referring to the catalogue of believers mentioned in chap. 11. Indeed, Adam's faith, and the faith of believers in the old world, condemns our want of it. He believed, when he had no experience of the performance of any truth but that in the threatening, nor the experience of any other that went before him; but we have had the experience of God's making good his promise, and maintaining his gospel. We find the promise made to Adam, and all those concerning the Messiah made to the fathers, eminently performed; the threatenings of God upon the unbelieving Jews, the crucifiers of the Redeemer, executed; additional incentives to believe more than Adam had. We read but of one promise Adam and Abel, and the rest of the patriarchs before the flood, had, and we find not any one promise upon record made to the old world besides that first to Adam; and, therefore, supposing Adam and the rest had been unbelievers, their unbelief had not been so black as ours, because we have so much more encouragement than they had, by how much a real performance doth exceed a verbal promise.

Consider, then, upon the whole, that every act of unbelief in us is an acting over the sin of Adam, an approbation of his miscarriage, which provoked God to pour down so many miseries upon the corrupted world. It is a sin, indeed, of that magnitude, that it equals everything in greatness, but that infinite mercy which can pardon it, and embrace the returning penitent.

### **(3.) Unbelief is a sin against the law of nature. There are two principles evident to man by the natural law;—**

#### **1. That God is to be believed.**

#### **2. Our happiness is to be desired and secured.**

[1.] As unbelief is against a divine revelation, it is against the light of nature. Though nature cannot ascend to many truths before a revelation by God, yet, when the revelation is made, and reason sees the characters of divine authority upon it, or hath no cogent arguments against it, to deny it to be the mind and promise of God, not to believe it is a violation of the law of nature; because the poorest reason dictates this, that supposing God hath made a declaration of his will in any promise, or precept, or threatening, man is to believe what God promiseth or commands; because reason will tell him, that God cannot deceive, that veracity or truth is a necessary perfection of the divine nature; that God is able to perform what he promiseth, and therefore man is bound to believe what God promiseth, assent to it, accept of it; and believe what he commands, assent to it, and obey it. No reason can be rendered to prove anything in the world so certainly true as this principle, that I should believe God; if I do not believe him, I offend against the most indisputable principle of reason, against that which nature dictates. As no nation changeth their gods which they think to be gods, Jer. 2:11, so no people can slight that which they think to be the mind of their God, without making a breach upon their own reason. In this case faith is to be considered two ways: as it is an assent to a revelation of God, or as it is a special instrument of apprehending, and laying hold on Christ for justification, &c. In the first sense, faith is a virtue we are obliged to by the light of nature; in the second sense, it is purely an evangelical grace. Now, the law of nature tells us, our Creator is to be credited in any proposition he makes; that our belief of him is a carriage due to him; that it is infinite goodness, he will condescend to reveal himself in ways of mercy to his creature; and that this divine goodness requires an answerable and suitable return; that whatsoever is revealed ought to be entertained by all the faculties of the soul, believed in the understanding, embraced by the will, and welcomed by all the affections; for all the faculties of the soul being created by God, ought, by the law of their creation, to rise up in a due respect to everything that flows from him. If so be, then, men do assent to the gospel to be of divine revelation, and pretend to believe the promises, precepts, and threatenings contained therein, to have the stamp of a divine authority upon them, and yet rise not up in a heartily welcoming the terms of it, and pay not a suitable allegiance to that which they account the will of God, they must needs consider themselves as violators of the law of nature, and have reason to be sensible that the law of the creation will strengthen the evangelical sentence against them; for it is against the nature of a rational creature to neglect that which he is satisfied the author of his reason doth propose to him. And those that are not allured to God by that which they think to be an act of his love, are worse than beasts: they are not men, because they neglect that love which is the cord of a man, proper for the drawing him to God. Unbelief is a plain contradiction to divine revelation. If a man think the gospel to be of divine authority, his not embracing it ariseth from a conceit that the things proposed in it are not necessary to the attaining of happiness, or that they are not as conducing to it as other means of his own invention; that they are either useless, or not necessarily useful; and in this he contradicts the law of nature, which prescribes an acquiescence in, and veneration of, anything which we have ground to think is of divine authority.

[2.] As it is against the principles of self-love. Since God hath revealed the way of the gospel, and men fancy to themselves either that they are not miserable, or that they can have some other remedy for their misery, they offend against that natural principle of self-preservation, and that in the highest concern imaginable, their eternal happiness and avoiding an eternally doleful misery. In the gospel, there are set forth pardon, peace, blessedness in heaven to the believer; death, hell, judgment to the unbeliever. The natural principle of self-love, if listened to, will direct a man to dread the misery and thirst for the happiness. There is so much light in every man, as to affect and desire a blessed immortality; for he believes there is a God, he believes that his soul is immortal, he hath natural arguments to evince that there is a state of happiness or misery after this life. He may know that he could never come out of God's mint in such a rude and filthy posture wherein he finds himself, that he was created for higher ends than those he doth

commonly pursue; that there is no blessedness but in the enjoyment of some higher good than any he finds in the world; that this blessedness doth consist in the fruition of God; that there must be some way of attaining this: Ps. 4:6, 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?' Who will free us from this labyrinth of misery wherein we are involved? is the voice of sensible nature. Then, natural reason may step in and conclude that this way proposed in the gospel is the most rational way, and though there be some mysteries in it above the ken of natural reason, and too dazzling for it; yet, taking it in the whole combination, it gives a fuller content to natural and unbiassed reason, with salves for the honour of God, and means for the happiness of the creature, than any religion doth. Now, when the gospel proposeth things naturally desirable by man, with means to attain those good things, and motives, from the transcendent love and grace of God to the creature, to excite his industry, for a man not to believe, is to put himself in a way of contradiction to his own natural desires, to cross his own happiness, fall out with himself, and stifle that principle of self-preservation which is natural to him, with all other creatures in their several kinds; and this principle is contradicted in every step unbelief takes in the world. I do not, by this discourse, ascribe any clearness to natural reason in the things of the gospel, or that man hath by nature a principle of a ready compliance with it, but that the happiness the gospel proposeth is naturally desirable and desired by all men; but it is not entertained by men because of their natural enmity against it, not against the good things proposed in it, but against the means and methods which God hath ordered for the attainment of them, viz. by a way of faith, a principle the pride of reason cavils with. It is man's enmity, and not his ignorance, makes him reject that in the gospel, which he desires by his natural constitution as a rational creature; and this is such a folly, which admits of no excuse, to refuse those things which are the most gratifying excellences in themselves, for a vanishing trash, a lust, which is but a magazine of torments, and treasury of everlasting wrath.

So that to conclude this, since it is confessed, I suppose, by all of us, that the gospel is of divine revelation, that the happiness the gospel doth propose is desirable, if we do not heartily embrace it in the terms of it, we contradict the two clearest principles acknowledged by all men in the world by the light of nature; we practically deny that what God reveals ought to be entertained, and we act against that natural love to ourselves, which is the rule of the love we owe to others, and which is so riveted in the creature that it cannot cease, but with a dissolution and annihilation of its being. It can never be blotted out of the damned in hell, and in both respects we violate the clearest dictates of nature.

(4.) Unbelief is the cause of all the abominations and neglects of God committed by men under the gospel. Besides that unbelief hath been the cause in Adam of all the sins whereby the law is violated and God grieved, it is the cause of all sins where the gospel is preached. As man first fell because he did not believe God's threatening, so, since the revelation of Christ, he continues in sin, because he will not believe God's promises. He is not like to be controlled by any reason, or diverted from letting loose the reins to any lust, who will not give any credit to God, either promising, commanding, or threatening; for as faith unites us to an holy God and a spotless Saviour, whereby we become holy, so unbelief unites us to an impure devil, who, by the help of this, engenders monstrous iniquities in the soul; so that it may be said of this, as the apostle, James 3:6, saith of the tongue, 'It is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defiles the whole soul, sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.' It is the ringleader of all sin in the world, and the common incendiary that puts to the fire when any bullet is shot against God, and therefore hath a sinfulness in it above other sins, because it gives life and spirit to them all. The reason is plain, because the will moves to the embracing of things according as the understanding judgeth them to be good, and refuseth them as the understanding judgeth them to be evil.\* If the motion of the will, therefore, be not towards God, but to the filth of the world, it is because the understanding is erroneous, not fully possessed with a belief that God is, and that he hath promised those good things declared in the gospel; for the will cannot have any motion which is not one way or other determined by the understanding; and when the understanding is possessed by ill notions of things, it is an ignis fatuus, and the will is apt to be misled by it into any slough.

Which appears several ways.

[1.] Faith is the root of all other graces; unbelief must, therefore, be the foundation of all other sins.† Faith and unbelief are contrary, and therefore have contrary effects; fear of God, or faith in God, is the beginning of wisdom, Prov. 9:10; infidelity is the flood-gate through which all impiety enters. When we want faith to give credit to God, we shall have enough to give credit to the devil, who suits our humour. By faith Abraham obeyed God, Heb. 11:8. Had not Abraham had faith in the promise, he had never obeyed God in sacrificing his Isaac; and where there is a want of faith in God, there will not be a sacrificing one Isaac for him. Not one sin but will be engendered in the womb of this, as well as not one grace but grows up from the womb of faith. As faith purifies the heart, so unbelief fills it with loathsome guests. No grace can be planted where unbelief is rooted, no more than corn can thrive where the ground is overgrown with weeds. Branches may as well flourish without a root, as any grace be planted without faith. An unbeliever is a dead man, deprived of the image of God, and liable to all kind of putrefaction, bearing the mark of the devil upon his soul, void of the Spirit of God, which is the principle of life. As it is the property of faith to work by love, so it is the contrary property of unbelief to work by enmity to, and hatred of, God. As faith is a going out of ourselves to God to please him, so unbelief is a departing from the living God, to ourselves and everything that is at variance with him.

[2.] If we consider every particular sin, this of unbelief will appear to be the cause of it. Why are men proud? Because they believe

not God resists them. Why are men covetous? Because they believe not that God abhors it at the same rate with the sin of idolatry. Why are men uncharitable to others in their necessities? Because they believe not that he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord. Why are men ignorant? Because they believe not the word concerns them; therefore ignorance and unbelief are put together, 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Why are men lulled in security in their treacherous ways with God? Because they bely the Lord, and count the prophet's words no firmer than wind, Jer. 5:11–13. Why do not men fear him? Because they believe neither his goodness nor justice. Why do not men seek after God? Because his judgments are far above out of their sight, Ps. 10:5; they believe not their march towards them. What is the reason men neglect addresses to God, or pray so rarely or coldly? Because they believe him not to be a God hearing prayer, or believe not Christ to be an advocate. Why do men make show of religion to serve an interest or lust? Because they believe not God to be a searcher of the heart and a trier of the reins. Why did Sarah laugh and mock at the promise of God? Because she considered more the weakness of her age than the faithfulness and power of the promiser, Gen. 18:11, 12; she first imagined the promise false, that God mocked her, thence she fell to mocking God, and then to lying. Why did the Israelites murmur against God? Because they did not believe him for all the signs he had shewn among them, Num. 14:11. Do not our hearts in afflictions sink into fears, because we believe not God's sovereign wisdom and fatherly love in the ordering of them? Why do we fear man that shall die? Because we forget the Lord our maker, Isa. 51:12, 13. And why do we seek unlawful means to help ourselves? Because we believe not either the tenderness or all-sufficiency of his providence. What is the reason men are unreasonable and wicked, always persecuting them that would live godly? Because they have not faith, 2 Thes. 3:2. Apostasy and hardness of heart are the births of this fruitful monster, Heb. 3:12, 13. The evil heart of unbelief causeth to depart from the living God; he that undervalues the promise will not cleave to the precept, and makes no scruple to hurl away that which he believes not to be true, and change religion as the state changes profession. All miscarriages may be traced to this as their prime spring; it is therefore called not simply unbelief, but an evil heart of unbelief, that which gives advantage to the devil to pour all the floods of wickedness into the heart. What rebellions against God, resistance of the Spirit, contempt of ordinances, will he not engage in who believes God a liar? Not any sin in the world but may be found in this sink; I may therefore call it the original sin under the gospel, as infidelity was the original sin in Adam under the covenant of works. Where this unbelief is partial, all defects in believers themselves must be ascribed to it. Whatsoever deviations there are from the precepts of the gospel are either from an habitual unbelief, or the remainders of it in the heart; they are either from a want of faith in the habit or in the act. Christ evidenceth this in his prayer for Peter, that his faith might not fail, Luke 22:32. Where faith fails, the soul will sink into any sin. His weakness of faith was the cause of his sad fall, and a total want of it had kept him under the power of it for ever as well as Judas; and though a total dissent from or a contradiction to the truth of the gospel, as considered as truth, be inconsistent with the nature and temper of a true Christian, yet there is too often such an unbelief, which is a want of a due esteem and value of the things of the gospel, which is the wicket and breach whereby sin enters, and plays rex sometimes in them.

[3.] Unbelief slights that which can only enable us to conquer sin. The end of Christ's coming was to 'finish transgression and to make an end of sin,'\* to stop the flood of iniquity which had overflowed the world from the day of Adam's fall, to restrain it from exercising that empire and authority it had usurped in the earth. Though this was not the motive to God to send Christ, yet it was a main end of his mission; for it consisted not with the holiness or sovereignty of God to have a satisfaction made for sin without a destruction of the body of sin. It had also been a design below the love the Redeemer bore to his Father and to us, to free us only from our guilt, and let us remain under the power of our sin. And indeed Christ freed us from the curse of the law, that we might with more cheerfulness walk in the precepts of it; and reconciled an offended God, that we might be capable of a new and spiritual service of him. Faith is the first grace wrought in the soul in pursuance of the end of the death of Christ, to pull down thereby the corruption which had swayed the sceptre so many ages. Unbelief, then, being contrary to this, slights all those helps and assistances against transgression, and preserves sin in its full authority and command in the soul. It keeps a man from complying with this design of God in Christ, and stakes the soul down in its slavery to sin. An unbeliever cannot perform any real service to God, because where the tree is not good, the fruit cannot be good. He is off from, and hates the root, which can only convey sap to him for the bringing forth such fruits which are acceptable to God: John 15:3–5, 'Without me you can do nothing,' nothing savoury to God. 'As the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine,' and partake of its juice. They cannot pray, which is a main help against the power of sin; for 'how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed?' Rom. 10:14. It keeps in vigour all the principles of sin, encourageth and welcomes all the motions to sin, though it doth not always put them forth visibly into act, because of some external impediments. It bars the heart against true principles of service, and the assistances the Holy Ghost proffers, and thwarts God in that which was one of his principal designs. It repels those promises and threatenings which are the arms of the gospel; promises of life to the believer, and denunciations of death to the unbeliever, Mark 16:16, whereby souls are conquered to a submission to it, and a war against their lusts. The promises are alluring, the threatenings affrighting; both suited to the nature of man for the restoring his affections. Unbelief now disparageth the promises of the gospel, slights the threatenings of the gospel, pulls back from any consideration of them, whereby they lose their edge and efficacy. Who will ever spend time in the consideration of that which he thinks to be false? As the life of grace lies in consideration, so the life of sin lies in a neglect of it, which is occasioned by unbelief. It is by the means of the promises the heart is cleansed, 2 Cor. 7:1, and by the not believing them the heart is kept stuffed with that filth it had.† For it supposeth a want of faith, that intrinsic principle whereby we can only obtain help and remedy against sin. The word cannot be operative, because there is not faith to believe. Had not Adam believed that promise

God made him after his first infidelity, of the seed of the woman, he had approved of his former unbelief, and rejected God's design of restoring him to his service and duty; which every son of Adam doth, that complies not with the performance of that promise. God's end in sending Christ was to bruise the serpent's head; unbelief would either shield his head, or apply a plaster to it for a cure.

[4.] Unbelief maintains every sin in strength. Unbelief being a departing from the living God, the further the separation from God, the stronger the empire and tyranny of sin. For as grace is most vigorous when faith is most firm, so, on the contrary, sin must be strongest when unbelief is most powerful. It is the great support and pillar of the devil's kingdom, which must totter and fall to the ground if this did expire. So much strength, therefore, as unbelief hath in any, so much strength hath every sin, which either the constitution inclines to, or the temptation allures to. It is the protector of every sin, which would else lie bare to the strokes of the Spirit. As faith is a shield against the darts of the devil, Eph. 6:16, so this is a shield against the sword of the Spirit. Faith is 'the victory whereby we overcome the world,' 1 John. 5:4. Unbelief is the victory whereby the world and every sin overcomes us. There is no unbeliever but, being in his natural condition, hath the strength of all sin in his heart lying in garrison. Where unbelief reigns, the heart is evil, Heb. 3:12; though this strength is not always in exercise, as the forces of a garrison are not always in action; restraining grace may check it, but nothing but faith can kill it. Not one sin could maintain its ground without unbelief. This, as a stout general, spirits the whole army. No sin can receive its death's wound till this Goliath be laid grovelling in the dust; then doth the army of the Philistines lose both their hopes and courage. Sin, indeed, may suffer some damage by moral considerations, and the soul be wrought upon by some affectionate discourses; but as long as this champion stands in defence, sin will not be utterly defeated: it will rally and recover its ground; for while the main cause of drawing back from God continues, the effect will follow upon occasion. And, therefore, when men, after much profession, glowing affections, and godly reformations, and continuance some time in them, fall back again to their old styles, you may conclude they never had faith, which would have wounded their lusts with a deadly blow, as well as moral considerations curbed them with a weak bridle. Such reformations proceed from a work upon the affections, not upon the judgment, which perhaps hath a suspicion that the things of the gospel may be true, but never was possessed with an entire belief of the truth of them. Unbelief is the purveyor to feed sin, and the protector to defend it. As faith grows, all other sins decay; as unbelief grows, all other sins, by virtue of that, maintain their standing.

[5.] It excites all kind of sin in the heart. As the gospel received by faith opposeth all sin, 'teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Titus 2:12, so this principle, opposite to the gospel, teacheth us to cherish all sin. As the more faith is exercised, the more other graces traverse the stage (for as they depend upon faith in regard of their being, so they do also in regard of their exercise), so the more unbelief is exercised, the more all kind of sin is stirred up and quickened in the heart. As the gospel is enriched with all motives and directions to what is righteous before God, and comely before man, wherein whatsoever hath moral beauty, or is of honourable esteem among men, that desire to walk according to right reason, is commended and pressed with the highest injunctions, which, if observed by men under the gospel, would make the earth a paradise, restore the honour of God, and the beauty of the creation. So unbelief disgraceth these principles, degrades them from that esteem they deserve in the hearts of men, discountenanceth that which is spiritually noble and worthy, alarms the corrupt nature, brings the force of it into the field against the principles of the gospel. Therefore, where the gospel doth not refine and reform men by the operation of faith, men are rendered worse, more awkward towards God, and spiritually wicked by the operation of unbelief, which is, per accidens, the effect of the gospel; as physic that doth not work and expel the humours, gives them advantage to rage more in the body. As the gospel profits when mixed with faith, so it is wholly unprofitable when mixed with unbelief. Sin thereby draws rather an encouragement from it, and takes occasion from thence to become more furious. Hence is that rage commonly against the gospel, when it comes into any place where before it was not. The devil works by the unbelief of man to excite all the strength of corrupt nature against it, to stop the course of it; and what hath been done in the world in the times of the apostles, and will be done to the end of the world, is a picture of what men do secretly in their own hearts against the principles of it, by the strength of their infidelity, which stirs up all the serpentine principles in the heart against it.

[6.] It denies all that evil which God hath testified that there is in sin. When God, by the sending of Christ, hath witnessed to the world what a boundless filth there is in sin, that could not be washed off by oceans of blood, or purged by the firing of the whole world, or pardoned upon the solicitations of men and angels, no, nor can by the intercession of the Son of God, without his death too; as faith by closing with Christ, and the terms of the gospel, acknowledgeth all this evil in sin, so unbelief, by rejecting him, avows the contrary, regards that as good which God declares to be the greatest evil, respects that as comely which God hath declared to be most loathsome and monstrous, prefers its own judgment of sin before the holiness and judgment of God, which he hath manifested of it in the death of Christ.

(5.) Unbelief possesseth the choicest faculties of the soul. Other sins are more seated in the sensitive appetite: this in the understanding and will. Other vices may arise from the humours of the body; anger and pride owe their birth to a predominant choler; wantonness and lust to a fulness of blood; laziness and idleness stream from a lake of phlegm; fearfulness, jealousy, covetousness, and envy, from a dusky melancholy; but unbelief ariseth from the ignorance of the understanding and perversity of the will, and most from the latter, where it hath its principal seat: John 5:40, 'You will not come to me that you might have life.' In the proposal of the gospel there are two things to be considered, the truth and the goodness; under which double consideration it is

proposed. As it is true, faith embracing it, and unbelief rejecting it, are in the understanding; as it is good, faith entertaining it, and unbelief refusing it, are in the will. The falsity and ignorance of unbelief is subjective in the mind. Contraries are conversant about the same subject. Faith is in the understanding, and therefore infidelity, which is opposite to it, is in the same subject; the malice of unbelief is in the will, as the principal act of faith, whereby it receives Christ, is in the will. A man's wilfulness is the cause that he doth not believe; he doth not believe because he will not believe. That is a great sin which possesseth the supreme faculties, and taints them more than any; and the more of the will is in any sin, the blacker is that sin.

(6.) It is most odious to God. If he delights in 'them that hope in his mercy,' Ps. 33:18, he must abominate them that think scorn to entertain it. It would bar God from all opportunities of dispensing his chiefest goodness; the fullest fountain would run in vain, and the richest feast be in vain provided. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God,' Heb. 11:6. Though a man had the quintessence of all the moral virtues that any heathen was ever enriched with, no man can please God but by Christ, no man can have Christ but by faith. Those therefore that hear of Christ, and embrace him not in the whole latitude as he is proposed as an object of faith, are the highest displeasers of God. Without some sort of faith it was impossible to please God, even in a state of innocence; Adam could not observe a precept, fear a threatening, nor hope in a promise, unless he believed him.\* But unbelief, since Christ is proposed, contains in it the greatest ingratitude to God, when God prevents the creature by the offers of love, and when God is offended, yet seeks reconciliation, not only with those who have offended him and begin to cease from it, but with those that actually offend him while he is seeking peace with them, 'when we were yet sinners,' Rom. 5:8. Men are called while they are actually in arms. Christ doth most reprove his disciples for this; they had ambition and passion, many infirmities; yet we find our Saviour chiding them for nothing but their unbelief, or, at least, not so severely, Mark 16:4, and 9:19, Luke 24:25. He upbraids those cities wherein mighty works were done, 'because they believed not.' God was most angry with Moses for his unbelief. This affronts God most; this is the object of his greatest anger and greatest hatred, and therefore the greatest sin.

## **Use. If unbelief be the greatest sin.**

### **I. Of information.**

**1. We may here take a view of the infinite patience and condescending grace of God, to those that have a weakness of faith with a great mixture of unbelief.**

#### **(1.) His patience.**

This sin being so black as hath been described, a reproaching him in all his attributes, and Christ in his gracious design, worse than the unbelief of the Jews, much of the same nature with the first sin of the devils, it is a wonder of patience that God suffers such a mountain of sin to cumber the ground, since it reacheth as high as heaven and dares the glorious throne of God, that God should not cut off those thorns which are continually galling him, and fling them into the fire. Man is not so impatient under anything as disgrace; God bears infinitely more reproaches by this sin than all the men in the world ever bore, yet he hath as infinite a patience to bear them as he hath power to punish them. None but a God could spare such affronting sinners, and endure so many scornings without evidences of wrath, and have an unwearied patience under such a wearying sin: Isa. 7:13, 'Will you weary my God also?' which is spoken of Ahaz his unbelief, as was explained in the beginning of the discourse.

#### **(2.) His grace and condescension,**

**[1.] In the continuance of his gracious offers where the unbelief is total.** Astonishing kindness! that after the first refusal of Christ, and repeated acts of infidelity, God should still call and cry, come down from heaven and knock; that grace should still solicit the sinner, when that, and all the train of attributes attending it, are thrust off and violently struck at by this sin. The first offer of Christ is a fruit of amazing grace, but the repetition after such indignities is more hyperbolical, when he quickens his solicitations of men under a sin of so high a provocation. Not any man possessed with the grace of faith but hath withstood many invitations, disgraced the wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, and holiness of God; accused him of the greatest falsity, represented him more base and deceitful than the worst of men or devils; and this after God hath raised the strongest bulwark against it, and given the fullest assurance to make void their suspicions of him; himself contriving redemption, his Son acting it, his Spirit applying it, as if all their employment were about this affair; yet they have maintained their incredulity. When we consider this, and the doubts and jealousies when we first set foot toward heaven, we cannot cease from wonder that ever God should receive us.

**[2.] In his gracious communications where there is a partial unbelief.** It is admirable that when this, though partial, is such a reflection upon God, that he doth not alter his methods, forbear the communications of his grace, when we are often doubting of the stability of that grace. He is firm to his truth in the midst of

men's falseness to him, Rom. 3:3; the unbelief of men shall not make the faith or fidelity of God of none effect; the unbelief of that nation did not hinder his entrusting his oracles with them. As the truth of God was immutable to those that believed of the Jewish nation, though the unbelief of the most was very gross, so he will be faithful to the believer, though there be a mixture of the sin contrary to that faith wherewith he is endowed. Moses and Aaron believed not God to sanctify him, Num. 20:12. Moses his unbelief was great, in striking the rock twice when he should have but spoken to it; yet God was so gracious as not to deny that effect to his unbelief which he had assured to his faith; he stopped not the influence of his power, though Moses had weakened the hand of his faith; 'he caused waters to gush out of the rock abundantly,' ver. 11. When this hath put forth itself in act, God hath been so indulgent as to repeat his promise for the strengthening of a fainting faith. When Abraham, after a twofold promise, Gen. 12:2, 13:16, began to question God's truth, because he did not yet see the seed promised him, and his years increased, Gen. 15:3, 'What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' a, querulous speech, discovering an act of infidelity immediately after a third gracious promise from God, ver. 2, 'Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' To this his answer seems to be, What reward wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the Saviour of the world is not like to come out of my loins, since I have not that seed promised so long since? God doth not chide him for this so severe a charge, but graciously renews his promise and strengthens his faith, vers. 3-6, 'He that shall come forth out of thy own bowels shall be thy heir; and thy seed shall be as the number of the stars.' And when after this no seed came so suddenly as he expected, he listens to Sarah's counsel and goes in to Hagar, Gen. 16:4, as if he was resolved to wait upon the promise no longer; yet God is so far from stripping him of that glorious title of father of the faithful, that he condescends to shore up his faith by a new promise, Gen. 17:1, 2, &c.; and the more to strengthen his drooping faith, changeth his name Abram into Abraham,\* which signifies a father of my people, that he might remember the promise every time he should think of his name. It was given him after his distrust of the former promises in the business of Hagar. David takes notice of the indulgence of God to him in this case, when his diffidence of God hath hurried him so far as positively to assert that he was 'cut off from before the eyes of God,' Ps. 31:22, that God had no more kindness for him, or remembrance of his own promise, 'yet nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.' Though he had had so many promises from God of a kingdom, yet he said in his haste all men were liars, Samuel too, and in that reflected upon God, whose errand Samuel delivered. Some of those weapons brandished against me will one time or other reach me, and little hold is to be taken of the words of the prophets, which are but a pack of lies; yet as long as he left not praying, God left not answering. Scarce a gracious answer a good man hath but he may put a nevertheless to it, because of that distrust of God which is mixed with his petitions. When by a partial unbelief, starting from us, we question his truth, bespot his wisdom, forget his kindness, have low thoughts of his sufficiency; yet all the aggravations in this sinful act (if there be a true faith, as a grain of mustard seed), silence not the voice of his bowels, dam not up the torrent of his love, he will take occasion from thence to magnify his grace. When Peter seemed to have had his little faith covered with the rubbish of his unbelief, and the faith of the disciples seemed to be dead and buried, with the apprehension of Christ by the Jewish officers, he was then going to pay their debts, redeem their souls, bind up their bones, and make an everlasting peace between God and them. And when Thomas persisted still in his infidelity of the resurrection of Christ, he doth not only shew himself to him with particular evidences of the reality of his resurrection in the marks of his hands and feet; but inspires him with a particular sentiment of his Deity, which no man before did so explicitly acknowledge: John 20:28, 'My Lord, and my God.' Not that unbelief is a motive to Christ to do so, but he will take occasion from it to make his grace triumph over the worst of sins. Since the nature of this sin is full of so horrid a malignity, it makes the condescensions and indulgence of God appear more admirable.

## 2. Information.

Here is a high encouragement to faith and acceptance of Christ. We cannot sin worse by coming to him than by not believing in him. How many stave themselves off from an acceptance of God's offers by a sense of their own unworthiness! Suppose it were an offence to approach to him with a humbled unworthiness, can there be that blackness in it as there is in drawing back from him? We do not then fling dirt in the face of those attributes which were illustrious in the work of redemption; we do not then blemish his truth, and represent him as one that hath no care of his royal word; we debase not the credit of his promise, nor do we cast any aspersion upon his wisdom, or go about to frustrate the design of his contrivance, nor do we vilify his grace, or spurn at his beating heart, nor count the unsearchable riches of his mercy as loathsome dung. Nor do we disparage the power of God, as if he could not be as great and as good as his word; nor do we declare that we can shift well enough without him, neither do we strike at his sovereignty in contradicting his fixed will and royal law of faith, nor do we rob him of his delight; nor do we pierce our Saviour afresh, nor vilify the price he paid for our redemption; we deny not his love, his wisdom, his excellency, sufficiency, or reward; we cast no dirt in the face of the contriver and executor of redemption. But all this we do in as gross a manner as if we should verbally disown him, if we believe not. Nor can our sins be diminished one article in their guilt by keeping from him. Can we pay the debt out of our small



revenue? A farthing a year cannot pay the interest of a thousand pound, much less the principal. Doth God command us to believe in Christ? Why should we disobey our God, add a greater weight to our load? Have we not sinned against justice, wisdom, common providence? Shall we draw the black colours of unbelief over all the rest, and despise all his attributes in a higher manner by refusing the blood of his Son, which his love offers us? Can we lessen our sins by turning our backs upon his bowels, and have the fruit of the death of Christ by endeavouring to disappoint him of the end of it? Is it not, then, an encouragement to us to come over to Christ by faith, since in doing it we come out of the territories of the most malignant sin, and the most desperate enemy of God, and pay the honour which is due to his glorious perfections from every creature?

### **3. How unworthy is the carriage of every unbeliever!**

He is digging at the very foundation of the throne of grace. The delights of Christ were among the sons of men, yet naturally we run from him as if it were a death to be with him, as if he were our greatest enemy. We cannot pull God out of heaven, we cannot nail Christ again to the cross, we cannot pierce his heart with a spear, we cannot revile him to his face as the Jews did; but slighting the purchase of his death, despising the conditions upon which it is to be enjoyed, disowning his authority granted by heaven over us, is the only thing, and it is too much, that we do against him. This every unbeliever doth; he despoils him, as much as in him lies, of his reward; frustrates the design of his suffering, the expiation of sin, the propagation and observation of his evangelical law. He that disowns and would destroy the dearest thing Christ hath left in the world, that which he gave the greatest charge for the preservation of, would act all the villanies against his person were he again in the world. He doth as much as the devil himself can do. All that he can do is to trample upon his law, increase the unbelief of men in the world. He can do no more, and every unbeliever doth as much: 'The lusts of your father you will do,' John 8:44.

The dignity of Christ's person greatens the enormity of unbelief, because 'he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,' John 3:18. It outrageth not a man, nor an angel, but the only Son of God, in the truth of his word, the majesty of his person, the greatness of his undertaking, and the kindness of his sufferings.\* God hath but one Son, and him it despiseth, and in his person contemns the Father. It is no less than marriage to his Son that he propounds when he offers Christ; and who would not contemn† the carriage of a beggar, that should refuse being a prince's spouse? This is to refuse the imitation of angels who worship him, for the imitation of devils who hate him.

Now the carriage of unbelief to God in Christ is,

- 1. Irrational.**
- 2. Ingrateful.**
- 3. Inexcusable.**
- 4. Miserable.**

#### **1. Irrational.**

(1.) In those that own not the gospel as a revelation of God, which many of the heathen philosophers regarded as a piece of folly, 'to the Greeks foolishness,' 1 Cor. 1:23; they could not imagine a crucified God, or so little affection in God to an only Son, as to let him be put to death, and an infamous death too. But, alas! they had more unreasonable notions of their gods than this could possibly appear to be. It is true, their notions are exploded out of the world, but we may thereby see how unreasonable men are in the rejecting the gospel upon any principles whatsoever. They talk of their adulterous gods, their cheating Mercuries, hectoring Marses, and lustful Venuses, and of gods wounded in battles. Is not a dying God for the ends of virtue, more reasonable than an adulterous god for the ends of vice? Is not a God pierced for the happiness of mankind, and preservation of human nature, more reasonable than a god wounded in skirmishes? Is it not as reasonable to be believed that God should become man, as a man become a god? which was a notion frequent among them in their deifying men; but none now have such gross conceits of the divine Majesty. But as some scarce own the being of a God, so they quite disown the design and reasonableness of the gospel, which is as ancient as the world within a few hours, transmitted from one age to another by a succession of promises, frequency of prophecies, all centring in, and receiving their accomplishment in Christ. So that if any will receive the ancient testimonies of the prophets, which no reasonable man can deny, there being more clear evidence of the antiquity of the books of the Old Testament, than for any writing whatsoever, owned by the heathens to have something divine in it, and preserved by the Jews' enemies, or that which they represented, and represented so clearly, that whosoever shall read of a Messiah to be cut off after sixty-two weeks, Dan. 9:26, from the building of the temple, and that to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to put an end to any prophecy of the Messiah, the Jews not being able to shew one prophet since the crucifying of Christ; whosoever shall read the 53d of Isaiah, of the tender plant without comeliness, despised and rejected of men, acquainted with grief, carrying our sorrows, bearing iniquity, oppressed and not opening his mouth, making his grave with the wicked, and the rich in his death, making his

soul an offering for sin, and after having a portion divided with the great, because he poured out his soul to death; whoever shall read the prophecy of one pierced, one born in Bethlehem, 'whose goings out were from everlasting,' Micah 5:2, and afterwards consider the story of our Saviour's life and death, cannot reasonably deny that this is the very person described in the prophecy.\* Whosoever shall consider the prophecies of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and the sanctuary, with a flood of desolation, Dan. 9:26, after the cutting off the Messiah, and see that people now without a king, without a prince, or high priest, an image, an ephod, without a sacrifice, Hosea 3:4 more years than ever both their temples stood, must reasonably conclude it a fruit of their own wish, that the blood of him whom they would not own as their Messiah, might be upon them and upon their children, Mat. 27:25. One great reason men do not believe the gospel, or believe in Christ, is because they are unacquainted with the prophetic part of Scripture. Buxtorf, in his *Synagoga Judaica*, conjectures this is a great reason of the Jews' obstinacy, they are so intent upon the law that they scarce mind the prophets; and Christ himself, in his rebuke of his disciples, intimates this, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken!' Luke 24:25. To deny a gospel that hath been propagated with a glorious success, confirmed by a train of miracles, acknowledged in the writings of the heathens who lived in the primitive times, witnessed by the blood of martyrs, and those of the wiser and learned sort, who could not all surely be a parcel of melancholy fools! And shall this have no better a reception, than if it were a mere romance, and an impertinent fable? Common reflections upon ourselves after this revelation, will lead us to think some divine stamp upon it. It is obvious to a considering rationalist, that man is not upon a right basis, that he is strangely amiss, that it is inconsistent with the goodness and holiness of God, to let man come in such a posture at first out of his hands. He sees how little he can determine anything with certainty in his understanding, that he hath not that affection to God which nature will teach him he ought to have, that he doth not glorify God as his own reason will inform him he ought to do; he must conclude, that if ever divine goodness hath designed and revealed a way for the restoration of man to his service, the restoration of the world to the end of his glory, for which it was created, he can find nothing that doth propose it, promise it, and assure it, but the gospel. But let such that disown the gospel consider (and though perhaps there are none here that opinionatively are infidels, yet there is no man but hath some motions sometimes against the authority of the gospel, as well as atheistical thoughts against the being of a God, which need sometimes some consideration to stop the tide); I say, let them consider, that those things they prefer before the gospel, are not in their own account of any great and durable worth; they cannot attend any beyond the gate of death; some thing there is of concern in another world; the opinions they entertain have as little ground of certainty, as anything else which the gospel doth not declare. The best account of things, with the most likely reason that ever was extant, is in the Scripture; for there is nothing seems to be wanting for the glory of God, and the duty and happiness of a creature. And therefore it is but a reasonable proposal that we should entertain that, and conform our judgments and practices to it, till we meet with a better account, that makes more for the divine honour and the creatures' welfare. If any scheme more satisfactory for such high and glorious ends can be proposed, it is fit it should be entertained. But till such a one be found out, and have as many, and as manifest confirmations as this hath had, it is reason that till then this should have the pre-eminence. Who, that were under a raging disease, would not use the best remedy he could find, till he met with a better? For as it is unreasonable for any man to deny that debt of obedience he owes to God as Creator, so it is unreasonable to deny a rule to guide him in the way of obedience to, and worship of, God, till he can find one more rational in itself, more honourable for God, and more serviceable to the creatures' interest. Is it not unreasonable to require the same evidence in things of faith as in matters of nature? Is it not unreasonable to deny that which hath stronger arguments to back the authority of it, than what can be drawn from sense and reason, for the proof of the being of anything in the world? Is it not unreasonable for us to follow our own humours, fancies, purblind reason, groping for happiness in other things, while we refuse the way that hath the clearest characters upon it of anything in the world? It were worth our knowledge what religion such men would have, who will not believe the matter of the gospel; a religion it is supposed they would have, if they own the being of God; for a religious worship is a natural consequence from such an acknowledgment. The worship of the heathens cannot but appear ridiculous; there is not a man to be found, unless among the more stupid sort of nations, that will apologise for that. The Jewish cannot, according to the rules of that religion, be practised; for they cannot sacrifice, since they have no temple wherein to perform that service. Besides, sacrifices being practised in all nations, for the expiation of sin, it cannot be supposed that the blood of any creature can make atonement for the sin of the soul, or outward purifications by water wash off the impurities of an immaterial spirit. The Mahometan is too sensual for any rationalist to embrace. There is none then left but the Christian to be embraced: the great command of that is faith; it forbids all those sins which moral nature loathes, and unbelief besides. The rule of it is the Scripture, and whatsoever is not according to that, whatsoever worship or doctrine men coin that is not according to that rule, is not religion, is not worship, it is no revelation of God.

(2.) No less irrational is it in those that own the gospel to be a divine revelation for such high ends, and do not in heart and practice subscribe to the goodness and methods of it. For men that hear the language of God, pretend they believe the voice of the gospel to be the voice of God, that Christ is the Son of God, that he shed his blood for a ransom for souls; yet not to accept of this ransom, to slight the benefit of it; not to conform to one of those conditions upon which it is offered; not leave a lust for Christ, or forego a pleasure for him; to believe no more than agrees with their humour, interest, or fancy,—this is a most unworthy carriage to God, and to a man's self, to pretend one thing, and do another; to profess an acknowledgment of it in our understandings, and refuse a subscription to it with our wills. It is a thousand times better for a man to strip himself of the name of a Christian, than to have a practical unbelief inconsistent with the truth of a Christian. With what face can a man profess Christ to be his Lord and master, and yet regard not any order he gives? The heathens will stand up in judgment against such a nation, for they will confide in their idols, believe and conform to their oracles: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah 4:5; and shall we deal worse with God than heathens did with idols? Shall we believe wicked men? why else do we make contracts and bargains? Shall we believe the earth? why else do we sow? Shall we believe the winds and waves? why else do we traffic? And is it not more reason to give credit to an infallible God? It is a great madness not to come up to the terms of that, which we confess is sealed by the blood of Christ, confirmed by the power of miracles, proclaimed by the apostles, admired by the angels, and confessed too by the devils themselves to be from God. What more unreasonable than to profess that Christ was appointed by God to remove our miseries, relieve our wants, purchase our happiness, expiate our sin, procure our peace, which we could not find a way ourselves to obtain, had we been befriended by the wit of angels, yet not comply with any one condition upon which he offers those transcendent blessings? Profession of him without a sound faith in him, is like the pharisees' garnishing the tombs of the prophets, while they hated the Redeemer they prophesied of. Gilded Bibles will not serve the turn with leaden hearts; and is it not as unreasonable in an humble soul to doubt of mercy? Surely as unreasonable as in an impenitent sinner to presume upon it. What hath God commended more than his mercy? What pleaseth him more than an humble confidence in it? What offends him more than for such an one to distrust it? Have we not in Christ the greatest encouragements to faith and confidence, since he is so near us, of the same nature with us, and came from heaven on purpose to 'take not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham,' Heb. 2:16, and felt the misery of our nature, Heb. 2:18, to the very end that he might have compassion on us; and hath offered himself up as a sacrifice for our sins? Shall not, then, that unbelief, that kicks against those foundations of hope, and disparages that which hath letters of commendation from heaven, be accounted an unreasonable thing?

## **2. It is also ungrateful.**

What else is it, to fly in the face of that love, which hath wrought out the way for us by blood? To slight him that would relieve us, wound him that would cure us; to live as if redemption had never been wrought, and disobey him for shewing love to us, is an ungrateful frenzy. When the Jews preferred Barabbas before Christ, and Judas valued thirty pieces of silver above him, was it not an ingratitude as well as an indignity? And is it not as great to value a soul murdering lust above him, to be allured by a beastly pleasure to offend him, rather than by the heart-blood of the Son of God to please him? How often do we see, when the sun riseth to comfort the drooping earth, the earth sends out vapours and mists, as if it scorned any assistance from that heavenly body, and would strip it both of its life and influence, so necessary for the fruit it bears, and the inhabitants it nourisheth? Do not men send out the black vapours of their enmity and unbelief, at the appearance of the Sun of righteousness, as if they had a mind to choke in him all sentiments of kindness to them? Is not this unworthy, to dishonour him that would honour us, smite him who hath been wounded for us, pierce the heart of him who hath bled for our health? For 'by his stripes we are healed,' Isa. 53:5, as if the cup he had drunk for us were not bitter enough. What wounds he received, were for the satisfaction of God's justice, which was armed against him; what wounds our unthankful unbelief gives him, is to the disparagement of that satisfaction. God did not stick to send his Son, but the world sticks at receiving him. The world is lost in Adam; by the blood of his Son he finds them when they do not seek him, Isa. 65:1; and the unthankful world will not receive him when he offers himself to them, nor refuse it with a common civility; not so much as a No, I thank thee, in the case, which is common among men upon refusal of an offered kindness.

## **3. It is inexcusable.**

There is no plea for it. The Jews had some plea for theirs; he that was clothed with infirmities, and had no outward form or comeliness, nor any beauty and glory according to their expectations, might better indeed be 'despised and rejected' of them, Isa. 53:2, 3. What plea can we have, since he hath shaken off his infirmities,

ascended to heaven in his majesty, hath propagated his gospel, and hath been honoured, one time or other, in every part of the then known world? They were under a law of riddles, could not well tell the meaning of the types that represented him; nor were the things the prophets spake clear to themselves, 1 Peter 1:10, 11, much less to the people. The curtains now are opened, the veil removed, the dusky cloud hath ended in a clear day; yet the ancient Israelites and patriarchs had many of them so much faith as will render our unbelief without any ground of apology. If those that lived under shadows and the star-light of ceremonies had so much sight, and so much faith, as is reckoned, Heb. 11, and proposed to us for an example and encouragement to run our race, and 'lay aside that sin of unbelief, which doth so easily beset us,' Heb. 12:1, what plea can we have for our unbelief, since the Sun of righteousness hath scattered the shadows of the night, cleared up the face of the heavens, accomplished what they believed and wished for, destroyed him that had the power of death, rooted up the foundation of the devil's empire, and 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'? 2 Tim. 1:10. Their faith under shadows will render our unbelief under substance inexcusable.

#### **4. How great will be the misery of unbelievers!**

The greatness of the misery will be proportionable to the greatness of the sin; it is a sin both against the law and against the gospel. By the law, we are bound to believe God, and whatsoever revelation he makes; we are bound to trust him, as he is a God of truth: by the gospel, we are bound to believe that Christ came into the world to lay down his life as a ransom. If the breach of the law makes us eternally miserable, the rejecting the gospel makes the wound the deeper, and the smart the sharper. No man refuseth the remedy, but he sharpens his wound. If the sins of men, who have no knowledge of the gospel, condemn, how much more shall the sins of those, who sin both against law and gospel, have a severer recompense of reward for neglecting salvation, and so great salvation? Heb. 2:2, 3, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first was spoken by the Lord?' Refusing the covenant of grace, he puts himself upon the trial by a covenant of works; and what hope an exact law often transgressed can give a malefactor, is easy to imagine. Millions have perished by it, none can be secure in it: 'There remains no more sacrifice for sin,' if this be slighted, Heb. 10:26. They are not in so good a state as they had been if Christ had never died, but worse, for they have his blood to answer for, as well as sins against the natural and written law, and render themselves utterly unworthy of that grace they disparage. Because of this, the Jews were broken off; the refusing this corner-stone was the cause their foundations were tore up, and they hurled down, from being a people, to become the reproach of the world. Though God punished them for their sinful idolatries, yet he never rejected them till they rejected his Son, and then 'wrath came upon them to the uttermost,' 1 Thes. 2:16; and our unbelief comes not short of theirs, but exceeds it. If we deny Christ, it is just he should deny us, Mat. 10:33. It is an equitable law to have the same measure meted to us that we mete to others. If unbelief oppose God, no wonder God will oppose and punish unbelief. No man can imagine but that God will be sensible of the wrong done to his bleeding Son, and our dying Redeemer. How can he be regardless of the contempt of his glorious nature, and let a final indignity to his majesty pass with impunity? An indictment will be brought against such by every abused attribute of God; all will condemn them, since all have been condemned by them; not one will appear as an advocate for them. Holiness must hate him that is filthy, and will not be otherwise; truth will be glorified in the execution of the gospel threatening, since the sinner would blemish it in not resting upon the promise, and observing the precept; justice will punish such as will not accept of the satisfaction appointed to be applied by faith; wisdom will frame a hell for them that despised the great masterpiece of it; power will be glorious in keeping them for ever under that punishment, and burning up the stubble that would rise up against it. As there is a power to save, so there is a 'glorious power' to destroy, 2 Thes. 1:9. When wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, truth, shall not be owned, in the glory of them, in Christ, they shall make themselves glorious upon him to the cost of the unbeliever; for God hath a sovereign right to the glory of his attributes; since the creature will not actively honour him, God will make him passively to glorify the perfections disparaged by him. The blood of Christ shed by this sin, in regard of an implicit approbation, cries with as loud a voice to God for vengeance as Abel's blood did against Cain, and to as good purpose, for he that heard the voice of the one, will not be deaf to the cry of the other. It speaks the language of mercy to him that receives it, and the roaring of justice to him that refuses it.

#### **2. Use of exhortation.**

Let us be sensible of the malignity in this sin. It being a sin against the gospel, we should be more sensible of it than of sins against the law. Those are transgressions against a rule; this a transgression against a rule and a remedy. There is more reason we should be sensible of this, than if we had shed the most innocent blood, ravished the chastest bed, or made an explicit compact or covenant with the devil; these are sins mankind generally frown at, and think such persons fit to be thrown out of the society of mankind. Yet behold here an evil worse than all those singly or jointly considered in themselves. These are against the sovereignty

of God, but not as this, a trampling upon the blood of his Son, infinitely above the most innocent creature. Those against the authority of God, this against his commanding authority and his condescending grace; those against common sentiments of nature, this against special revelations of a rich goodness. A murderer slays a man, an unbeliever crucifies a God; a thief robs a man of worldly goods, an unbeliever strips a God of his greatest glory; an adulterer defiles the bed of his neighbour, an unbeliever defiles a soul which is courted to be the spouse of God. Besides, unbelief is the breeder and fomentor of such sins which are committed by any under the light of the gospel.

### **1. Believers ought to be sensible of it.**

True faith is always attended with a sense of unbelief, a weariness under it, a longing to be rid of it. The poor man in the Gospel owned his faith, and yet confessed his unbelief with tears in his eyes, Mark 9:24. And are there not heaps of infidelity lie in our breasts? Is not the power of God sometimes distrusted, his goodness unregarded? Is Christ valued according to his transcendent worth? Do we always relish the excellency of the gospel? Do we never value and love a creature almost at the same rate we do the Creator and Redeemer? Are we not often more forgetful of God than we are of ourselves? Is not the word and oath of God too little sometimes to prop up a tottering faith? Are we not often more confident of men than we are of Christ, and bestow more credit upon the promises of men than we do on the promises of God? Do we always pay as much respect to God as we do to ourselves, as we do to men that shall die? How often do we find Christ complaining of the littleness of his disciples' faith, and the slowness of their hearts to believe, which were the only Christian church then in the world? And are any of us yet got beyond the merit of such rebukes? Are there no scents of this sin in the most cleansed vessels? Have not the best here a partial unbelief? And can there be one grain of it in the heart, without a proportionable sinfulness of it? The least unbelief hath the sinful nature of unbelief, as well as the least grain of poison hath the nature of poison. So much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we strip God of the glory of his nature, blemish his truth, asperse his wisdom, slight his goodness, disgrace his sufficiency, snatch away his delight; so much as we want of a perfect faith, so much we pierce the Redeemer, null the work of his mediation, undervalue the price of redemption; so much we deny those choice affections which engaged him in the undertaking and were illustrious in the execution, so much we deny the excellency of his person and design, so much we grieve him, so much we dishonour him. If all this be clearly in a total unbelief, it is some degrees in a partial unbelief, and every act of it. And ought this to be suffered in the heart without sense, shame, confusion, and deep humiliations? Let us pour out our tears for it, as we have poured out our Saviour's blood by it. The fat of a sacrifice, which was a part without sense, was to be consumed by fire; so should we endeavour that our insensibleness should be wholly burned up by the Spirit.

**2. Those that are yet in a state of unbelief ought much more to be sensible of it; that we may not deceive ourselves, and raise hopes contrary to the word, to bless ourselves when God curseth.** Without a sense of this there is no meeting can be between Christ and us. It is as much a bar to any gracious work in our souls, as it was in the days of his flesh to many mighty works in his own country, Mat. 13:58. Every man that sits under the gospel is bound to believe the divine truths revealed therein; he is bound to believe his infection by original sin, and that the curses of the law are due to him; he is bound to believe that God hath sent his Son to be crucified for the sins of men that believe in him; that repentance and turning from sin is a necessary duty; he is bound to repent, forsake sin, and with a contrite heart cast himself upon Christ, expecting salvation from him, and resolving sincerely to observe his commands, renounce his own righteousness, and rely upon his power; and therefore ought to be sensible of this obligation, and of that which is contrary to it and keeps him from performing it. A sense of this sin will lead the way to a sense of all the rest; this once quelled, the others expire; the death of the mother viper is the destruction of the young litter.

(1.) Christ was most sensible of this sin in others; should not we, then, be sensible of it in ourselves? It was a great part of his sorrow that men refused him, and would not accept of him, and salvation by him, Luke 19:42. It made him sigh more pathetically, and made him speak as if he were weary of all his pains: Luke 9:41, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?' His anger was for the most part raised against this, and this only; and still it must, upon the same account, be more painful to Christ than all the thorns which were upon his head, and wound him more deeply than the nails did his hands and feet. Should we not, then, write after our Master's copy?

(2.) It is a sin easy to be slipped into by a believer. Man is born with jealousies of God, which cause a distance, and render our particular closing with him more difficult. Sin in the nature makes us suspect every approach of God to be for our hurt: Luke 5:8, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' The best have not been free from unbelieving starts against God. David had a desperate reflection on God: 1 Sam. 27:1, that he should 'one day perish by the hands of Saul.' Though God had assured him of the possession of the kingdom, and daily experiences of God's providence in his preservation under the pursuits and armies of Saul might have confirmed him, yet he feared that some of the stones flung at him might reach him, and make him incapable of the designed royalty. Asaph, too, in regard of his spiritual condition, questions the mercy and faithfulness of God: Ps. 77:3-8, 'Is his mercy clean gone for ever; doth his promise fail for evermore?' The interrogation is at least a questioning of it, because, ver. 10, he acknowledgeth it to be his infirmity, which he would not have entitled his subscription to the eternal mercy of God, and the truth of his promise. We should therefore be sensible of that unbelief which yet remains in our natures, that we may be preserved against the

encroachments of it.

(3.) No man can labour for faith till he be affected with the sinfulness of unbelief. The sense of this is the first step to faith. We cannot have a sight of the amiableness of a moral virtue, till we are sensible of the deformity of the vice which stands in opposition to it. A conviction of the sinfulness and misery of unbelief will make us endeavour after the grace and happiness of faith.

(4.) Nor can any reformation secure us while we remain insensible of the evil of this. Conviction of other sins leaveth a man in his natural state as it found him. All men that are not sensible of this, though convinced of all their other guilt, are in a state of sin. It is the work of the Spirit to convince men of it if they do not believe. Reformation takes away the ill savour of our lives, which made us stink above ground; yet the life may be reformed, and the state not changed, but be as deplorable as before. Though atheism and profaneness may be left, yet a man by that is no more a member of Christ, and of the family of God, without faith, than he was when he was besmeared with his grossest vices; no more than the moral Jews were, to whom Christ denounceth a dying in their sins because of their unbelief, John 8:21. The guilt of all former sins cleaves to the soul under a new life, till upon faith in the blood of Christ it be wiped off. We are still in God's debt-book, without one farthing of our score crossed out; for God must have his satisfaction, either from Christ or ourselves. He hath none from Christ for us while we remain in unbelief; it is not applied to us or pleaded for us; no remedy for this disease but in the blood of Christ, and no way of having that blood sprinkled upon us but by faith. Reformations garnish our lives, but the soul remains still unsanctified if unbelief reigns. That clears the outward rubbish, but doth not cleanse the inward sink. No true sanctification without Christ; for 'in him we are sanctified,' 1 Cor. 1:2. Faith only is the band that unites us to him, whereby we get cleansing virtue from him. As faith only engrafts us into Christ, so unbelief alone keeps us off from that bottom; as by this engrafting our actions become good, so without it our best actions are bad. An ignorant heathen may as well please God as a painted unbeliever, Heb. 11:6; this sin makes us utterly incapable to please God. The world is apt to lie under this error; because they have amiable qualities in the eye of man, they think they have no spot in the eye of God; but, alas! this doth render us more deformed in the eye of God, than all outward reformations can render us beautiful.

**2. As we ought to be sensible of it, so we should watch against it.** This is a lesson for believers. It is easy to distrust God; our own hearts have dealt treacherously with him, and therefore we think he will requite us in our own kind. Let us watch against the first motions of it, because the devil by them endeavours to draw us to it. As all good works spring from faith, so all evil works from a defect in it. If there be a disturbance in the heart, other members cannot well do their office. Habitual faith lays the first stone of a heart sanctification—'their hearts purified by faith,' Acts 15:9—and every act of faith raiseth it higher. So much of unbelief, so much of impurity; watch therefore against everything that may weaken the foundation of your sanctification. Unbelief only makes us sink under a temptation. Jacob wrestled with an angel, or with the Son of God; yet still kept up his faith in God's promise against the fear of his brother, and became a conqueror, Gen. 32:24, &c.; Hosea 12:4. Jacob's fight was a corporeal conflict,\* because his thigh did shrink with his wrestling; but it was also a fight of faith. Why else should the angel so value a corporeal wrestling, as to give him a new name thereupon, and call him Israel, because he had prevailed with God? Besides, who can think a poor mortal could overcome an angel with an assumed body in a corporeal wrestling? It was an internal conflict of the spirit of Jacob with God, and the external wrestling was only a symbol of the inward contest. As he wrestled against a man by the strength of the body, so he wrestled against distrust by the strength of his spirit. For Jacob hearing of his brother Esau's march against him, and remembering his cruel threatening upon his forestalling the blessing, he was afraid of the ruin of himself and family, and consequently that the promised seed should be extinguished; and therefore wrestles with God upon the account of his promise, desiring him to defend his family from Esau's fury. Unbelief sinks us under devils, faith makes us wrestle with God. In case of any fall into sin, watch against this master sin.† Though our fall calls for sorrow, it calls not for unbelief. To throw off an humble faith, is to gratify the author of sin, the devil, by despair and unbelief, but doth not please him that wrought the redemption; this is to heap a mountain of sin upon the former. If a man sin, it is not said presently we have a devil to destroy, but an advocate with the Father, who is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John 2:1. Watch therefore against every stirring of it upon all occasions; and the more since you have found how gracious Christ hath been, and that your former unbelief could not dispute away his grace, and send it back to heaven from whence it came. Let not a distrustful heart have more credit with you than a Saviour's promise. And that we may watch against it, let us think meanly of ourselves. He that esteems himself something, will quickly esteem Christ as nothing. Regard the things of the gospel as the most substantial things, of the greatest moment. Let the word dwell more richly in us than the notions of nature. Meditate often on it; rest not upon the knowledge we have by education, consider things in their reasons, not by interest or affection, without Scripture reason; work such arguments upon the mind as may strengthen the assent to the word; weak consents of will spring from imperfect assents in the understanding. The deeper truths are in our understandings by an explicit, and formal, and renewed assent, the warmer and stronger will they be in our affections and will; every wind or violent storm will blow down a house that is weak in its foundation. There is an 'assurance of understanding' precedes the 'acknowledgment of the mystery of the gospel,' Col. 2:2. The fuller the assurance of understanding, the closer the affiance of the will; a floating cork cannot be stable. Be well acquainted with the nature, terms, and riches of the covenant of grace, the mediation of Christ, his offices, the ends and fruits of his death. This is the way to watch against unbelief, so great a sin. This is necessary. As Christ will do no more miracles without faith, so the devil can do no mischief without unbelief. The more of faith, the closer our union, and the fuller our communications.

3. Let such as are in a state of unbelief endeavour to come out of it. We shall then lay by the most offensive sin, the object of God's greatest hatred, the dishonour of his attributes, the main prop of the devil's empire. We shall not till then please him; nor will he sheathe his sword, nor open his bowels. We then approve of the counsel of God, who is as tender of the honour of his Son as of his own; for he will have 'all men honour the Son as they honour the Father,' John 5:23. It will be the best return we can make to Heaven for the message of joy heaven hath sent to us in the gospel. The success of the gospel in the heart doth cheer the heart of Christ in his exaltation, as well as the news of it did in his humiliation: Luke 10:21, 'he rejoiced in spirit.' This is the way to add another throne for him to sit upon (as every believing heart is), instead of pulling him from what he had. None but an unbeliever is despised by God; no man but an unbeliever shall ever taste of his fury. Hath not God often by his Spirit entreated us to consider what is for our peace? Hath he not met us, and instead of offering to kill us, as the Lord did to Moses, he hath opened his heart, shewed us the wounds of his Son, desired nothing of us but that we would believe he had a design of kindness for us, and that we would give him such an entertainment as his affection doth deserve; that we would give credit to his assertion, and walk according to it? He complains only of your drawing back from him; he never quarrels with any man for sucking the breasts of his goodness; his only grief is, that you will not come, that you might have life. And can the spurning his grace be a means to our blessedness, or this desperate sin instate us in the glory of heaven? Shall the lions be ashamed to tear Daniel, and an unbeliever not ashamed spiritually to tear his Redeemer? Shall the ox know his owner, and man not know his crucified Saviour? Shall the stones rend in pieces at his death, and our hearts stand unshaken at his sufferings for us? Doth not God denounce a woe to them that remember not the afflictions of Joseph? Can any less be expected by those that increase the afflictions of Christ, and kick against the greatest design God had to honour himself? Doth not our nature gasp for a felicity? Is it not the sole inquiry of man, 'Who will shew us any good?' And when the gospel presents us with the most satisfactory blessedness, shall we resist it, and shut our eyes against the light that would conduct us to bliss? If we will dishonour God by unbelief, we shall vilify our hopes; were the gospel of no concernment to us, yet unbelief in regard of the Author of it were a sin worthy of the sharpest reproof. A belief of him we owe to him as creatures; but when it is of the greatest moment to our souls to believe the gospel, as that whereupon depends eternal happiness or misery, shall any of us that acknowledge it to be of God, that hath been bred up in the midst of its light, be so cruel to our souls as to make light of the conditions of it? It is unreasonable, as it dishonours our Creator, for whose glory we were made; as it disgraceth our Redeemer, by whose blood we are ransomed; uncharitable to ourselves, by murdering our souls, to which we owe the greatest care. Or dare any persist in this way, and venture heaven and blessedness upon a conceit that the gospel is not true? What hurt can there be in believing it? An eternal mischief may be in refusing it. There is no dishonour to God by believing it; we own one God by acknowledging it; we own whatsoever is comely and praiseworthy, by the rational sentiments of mankind, in regard of the precepts. By casting it behind our backs, we hazard ourselves if it may be true; we destroy ourselves if it be absolutely true. A resolution to persist in unbelief is such that no man in his wits would ever think of.

4. Let such as are got out of the sink of this sin, bless God and prize their faith. God only dispersed that cloud of darkness which seized upon you, and drew you out of that mire, hateful to Heaven, wherein your hearts were soaked. What a gulf hath God delivered you from! He might have left you in that state, so reproachful to himself and so dreadful to you. Prize your faith above all your treasures; above all keeping, preserve and strengthen it. Before you could not but displease him, now you may be a pleasure to him; before you warred with every perfection of his nature, now you join issue with him in the exalting of them. By this you are interested in the fruit of his glorious counsels, the blood and mediation of his Son, the glory of his attributes. By this he snatcheth you from a league with hell, sets you above the head of the captain of unbelievers, knits your hearts to himself, and fits you to be monuments of his grace, to be placed with him for ever in heaven.