

# CHAPTER 12

The apostle, in this chapter, applies what he has collected in the chapter foregoing, and makes use of it as a great motive to patience and perseverance in the Christian faith and state, pressing home the argument,

**I.** From a greater example than he had yet mentioned, and that is Christ himself (v. 1-3).

**II.** From the gentle and gracious nature of the afflictions they endured in their Christian course (v. 4-17).

**III.** From the communion and conformity between the state of the gospel-church on earth and the triumphant church in heaven (v. 18 to the end).

## ~~811~~ HEBREWS 12:1-3

### CHRIST THE GREAT EXEMPLAR

Here observe what is the great duty which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews, and which he so much desires they would comply with, and that is, to *lay aside every weight, and the sin that did so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them.* The duty consists of two parts, the one preparatory, the other perfective.

**I.** Preparatory: *Lay aside every weight, and the sin, etc.*

**1.** *Every weight*, that is, all inordinate affection and concern for the body, and the present life and world. Inordinate care for the present life, or fondness for it, is a dead weight upon the soul, that pulls it down when it should ascend upwards, and pulls it back when it should press forward; it makes duty and difficulties harder and heavier than they would be.

**2.** *The sin that doth so easily beset us*; the sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, our constitution, our company. This may mean either the damning sin of unbelief or rather the darling sin of the Jews, an over-fondness for their own dispensation. *Let us lay aside* all external and internal hindrances.

**II.** Perfective: *Run with patience the race that is set before us.* The apostle speaks in the gymnastic style, taken from the Olympic and other exercises.

**1.** Christians have a race to run, a race of service and a race of sufferings, a course of active and passive obedience.

**2.** This race is set before them; it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that cloud of witnesses with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and directions; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are set before them.

**3.** This race must be run with patience and perseverance. There will be need of patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist or turn aside. Faith and patience are the conquering graces, and therefore must be always cultivated and kept in lively exercise.

**4.** Christians have a greater example to animate and encourage them in their Christian course than any or all who have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ: *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*, v. 2. Here observe,

**(1.)** What our Lord Jesus is to his people: he is *the author and finisher of their faith* — the beginning, perfecter, and rewarder of it.

**[1.]** He is the author of their faith; not only the object, but the author. He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, *he trusted in God*; he is the purchaser of the Spirit of faith, the publisher of the rule of faith, the efficient cause of the grace of faith, and in all respects the author of our faith.

**[2.]** He is *the finisher of our faith*; he is the fulfiller and the fulfilling of all scripture-promises and prophecies; he is the perfecter of the canon of scripture; he is the finisher of grace, and of the work of faith with power in the souls of his people; and he is the judge and the rewarder of their faith; he determines who they are that reach the mark, and from him, and in him, they have the prize.

**(2.)** What trials Christ met with in his race and course.

**[1.]** He *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself* (v. 3); he bore the opposition that they made to him, both in their words and behaviour.

They were continually contradicting him, and crossing in upon his great designs; and though he could easily have both confuted and confounded them, and sometimes gave them a specimen of his power, yet he endured their evil manners with great patience. Their contradictions were levelled against Christ himself, against his person as God-man, against his authority, against his preaching, and yet he endured all.

[2.] He *endured the cross* — all those sufferings that he met with in the world; for he took up his cross betimes, and was at length nailed to it, and endured a painful, ignominious, and accursed death, in which he was numbered with the transgressors, the vilest malefactors; yet all this he endured with invincible patience and resolution.

[3.] He *despised the shame*. All the reproaches that were cast upon him, both in his life and at his death, he despised; he was infinitely above them; he knew his own innocency and excellency, and despised the ignorance and malice of his despisers.

(3.) What it was that supported the human soul of Christ under these unparalleled sufferings; and that was *the joy that was set before him*. He had something in view under all his sufferings, which was pleasant to him; he rejoiced to see that by his sufferings he should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God and give security to his honour and government, that he should make peace between God and man, that he should seal the covenant of grace and be the Mediator of it, that he should open a way of salvation to the chief of sinners, and that he should effectually save all those whom the Father had given him, and himself be the first-born among many brethren. This was the joy that was set before him.

(4.) The reward of his suffering: he *has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*. Christ, as Mediator, is exalted to a station of the highest honour, of the greatest power and influence; he is at the right hand of the Father. Nothing passes between heaven and earth but by him; he does all that is done; *he ever lives to make intercession for his people*.

(5.) What is our duty with respect to this Jesus. We must,

[1.] Look unto him; that is, we must set him continually before us as our example, and our great encouragement; we must look to him for direction, for assistance, and for acceptance, in all our sufferings.

[2.] We must consider him, meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own. We must *analogize*, as the word is; compare Christ's sufferings and ours; and we shall find that as his sufferings far exceeded ours, in the nature and measure of them, so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.

(6.) The advantage we shall reap by thus doing: it will be a means to prevent our weariness and fainting (v. 3): *Lest you be weary and faint in your minds*. Observe,

[1.] There is a proneness in the best to grow weary and to faint under their trials and afflictions, especially when they prove heavy and of long continuance: this proceeds from the imperfections of grace and the remains of corruption.

[2.] The best way to prevent this is to look unto Jesus, and to consider him. Faith and meditation will fetch in fresh supplies of strength, comfort, and courage; for he has assured them, if *they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him*: and this hope will be their helmet.

## ~~8126~~ HEBREWS 12:4-17

### THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTIONS

Here the apostle presses the exhortation to patience and perseverance by an argument taken from the gentle measure and gracious nature of those sufferings which the believing Hebrews endured in their Christian course.

I. From the gentle and moderate degree and measure of their sufferings: *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*, v. 4. Observe,

1. He owns that they had suffered much, they had been striving to an agony against sin. Here,

(1.) The cause of the conflict was sin, and to be engaged against sin is to fight in a good cause, for sin is the worst enemy both to God and man. Our spiritual warfare is both honourable and necessary; for we are only defending ourselves against that which would destroy us, if it should get the victory over us; we fight for ourselves, for our lives, and therefore ought to be patient and resolute.

(2.) Every Christian is enlisted under Christ's banner, to strive against sin, against sinful doctrines, sinful practices, and sinful habits and customs, both in himself and in others.

2. He puts them in mind that they might have suffered more, that they had not suffered as much as others; for they had *not yet resisted unto blood*, they had not been called to martyrdom as yet, though they knew not how soon they might be. Learn here,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus, *the captain of our salvation*, does not call his people out to the hardest trials at first, but wisely trains them up by less sufferings to be prepared for greater. He will not put new wine into weak vessels, he is *the gentle shepherd*, who will not overdrive *the young ones of the flock*.

(2.) It becomes Christians to take notice of the gentleness of Christ in accommodating their trial to their strength. They should not magnify their afflictions, but should take notice of the mercy that is mixed with them, and should pity those who are called to the fiery trials to *resist to blood*; not to shed the blood of their enemies, but to seal their testimony with their own blood.

(3.) Christians should be ashamed to faint under less trials, when they see others bear up under greater, and do not know how soon they may meet with greater themselves. If we have run with the footmen and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses? If we be wearied in a land of peace, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? <sup><2476></sup>Jeremiah 12:5.

II. He argues from the peculiar and gracious nature of those sufferings that befall the people of God. Though their enemies and persecutors may be the instruments of inflicting such sufferings on them, yet they are divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to serve by all; of this he has given them due notice, and they should not forget it, v. 5. Observe,

1. Those afflictions which may be truly persecution as far as men are concerned in them are fatherly rebukes and chastisements as far as God is concerned in them. Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sins of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession.

**2.** God has directed his people how they ought to behave themselves under all their afflictions; they must avoid the extremes that many run into.

**(1.)** They must not despise the chastening of the Lord; they must not make light of afflictions, and be stupid and insensible under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. Those who make light of affliction make light of God and make light of sin.

**(2.)** They must not faint when they are rebuked; they must not despond and sink under their trial, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience.

**(3.)** If they run into either of these extremes, it is a sign they have forgotten their heavenly Father's advice and exhortation, which he has given them in true and tender affection.

**3.** Afflictions, rightly endured, though they may be the fruits of God's displeasure, are yet proofs of his paternal love to his people and care for them (v. 6, 7): *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Observe,

**(1.)** The best of God's children need chastisement. They have their faults and follies, which need to be corrected.

**(2.)** Though God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children; they are of his family, and shall not escape his rebukes when they want them.

**(3.)** In this he acts as becomes a father, and treats them like children; no wise and good father will wink at faults in his own children as he would in others; his relation and his affections oblige him to take more notice of the faults of his own children than those of others.

**(4.)** To be suffered to go on in sin without a rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God; such are bastards, not sons. They may call him Father, because born in the pale of the church; but they are the spurious offspring of another father, not of God, v. 7, 8.

**4.** Those that are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father behave worse towards him than they would do towards earthly parents, v. 9, 10. Here,

(1.) The apostle commends a dutiful and submissive behaviour in children towards their earthly parents *We gave them reverence*, even when they corrected us. It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience to the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when they have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority, but a charge from God, to give their children correction when it is due, and he has commanded children to take such correction well: to be stubborn and discontented under due correction is a double fault; for the correction supposes there has been a fault already committed against the parent's commanding power, and superadds a further fault against his chastening power. Hence,

(2.) He recommends humble and submissive behavior towards our heavenly Father, when under his correction; and this he does by an argument from the less to the greater.

[1.] Our earthly fathers are but *the fathers of our flesh*, but God is *the Father of our spirits*. Our fathers on earth were instrumental in the production of our bodies, which are but flesh, a mean, mortal, vile thing, formed out of the dust of the earth, as the bodies of the beasts are; and yet as they are curiously wrought, and made parts of our persons, a proper tabernacle for the soul to dwell in and an organ for it to act by, we owe reverence and affection to those who were instrumental in their procreation; but then we must own much more to him who is the Father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, not of the most refined sort; they are not *ex traduce* — *by traduction*; to affirm it is bad philosophy, and worse divinity: they are the immediate offspring of God, who, after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul.

[2.] Our earthly parents *chastened us for their own pleasure*. Sometimes they did it to gratify their passion rather than to reform our manners. This is a weakness the fathers of our flesh are subject to, and this they should carefully watch against; for hereby they dishonour that parental authority which God has put upon them and very much hinder the efficacy of their chastisements. But the Father of our spirits never grieves willingly, nor afflicts the children of men, much less his own children. It is always *for our profit*; and the advantage he intends us thereby is no less than our being partakers of his holiness; it is to correct and cure those sinful disorders which make us unlike to God, and to improve and to increase

those graces which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children so that he would have them to be as like himself as can be, and for this end he chastises them when they need it.

[3.] The fathers of our flesh corrected us for *a few days*, in our state of childhood, when minors; and, though we were in that weak and peevish state, we owed them reverence, and when we came to maturity we loved and honoured them the more for it. Our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority, and imperfection, and therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state; when we come to a state of perfection we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now.

[4.] God's correction is no condemnation. His children may at first fear lest affliction should come upon that dreadful errand, and we cry, *Do not condemn me, but show me wherefore thou contendest with me,* <sup><810></sup>Job 10:2. But this is so far from being the design of God to his own people that he therefore chastens them now *that they may not be condemned with the world,* <sup><412></sup>1 Corinthians 11:32. He does it to prevent the death and destruction of their souls, that they may live to God, and be like God, and for ever with him.

5. The children of God, under their afflictions, ought not to judge of his dealings with them by present sense, but by reason, and faith, and experience: *No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness,* v. 11. Here observe,

(1.) The judgment of sense in this case — Afflictions are not grateful to the sense, but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan under them.

(2.) The judgment of faith, which corrects that of sense, and declares that a sanctified affliction produces the fruits of righteousness; these fruits are peaceable, and tend to the quieting and comforting of the soul. Affliction produces peace, by producing more righteousness; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. And if the pain of the body contribute thus to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produce blessed fruits of a long continuance, they have no reason to fret or faint under it; but their



great concern is that the chastening they are under may be endured by them with patience, and improved to a greater degree of holiness.

[1.] That their affliction may be endured with patience, which is the main drift of the apostle's discourse on this subject; and he again returns to exhort them that for the reason before mentioned they should *lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees*, v. 12. A burden of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but this he must strive against, and that for two reasons: — *First*, That he may the better run his spiritual race and course. Faith, and patience, and holy courage and resolution, will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, prevent wavering and wandering. *Secondly*, That he may encourage and not dispirit others that are in the same way with him. There are many that are in the way to heaven who yet walk but weakly and lamely in it. Such are apt to discourage one another, and hinder one another; but it is their duty to take courage, and act by faith, and so help one another forward in the way to heaven.

[2.] That their affliction may be improved to a greater degree of holiness. Since this is God's design, it ought to be the design and concern of his children, that with renewed strength and patience they may *follow peace with all men, and holiness*, v. 14. If the children of God grow impatient under affliction, they will neither walk so quietly and peaceably towards men, nor so piously towards God, as they should do; but faith and patience will enable them to follow peace and holiness too, as a man follows his calling, constantly, diligently, and with pleasure. Observe, *First*, It is the duty of Christians, even when in a suffering state, *to follow peace with all men*, yea, even with those who may be instrumental in their sufferings. This is a hard lesson, and a high attainment, but it is what Christ has called his people to. Sufferings are apt to sour the spirit and sharpen the passions; but the children of God must follow peace with all men. *Secondly*, Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no true peace without holiness. There may be prudence and discreet forbearance, and a show of friendship and good-will to all; but this true Christian peaceableness is never found separate from holiness. We must not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness. *Thirdly*, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. The vision of God our Saviour in heaven is reserved as the reward of holiness,

and the stress of our salvation is laid upon our holiness, though a placid peaceable disposition contributes much to our meetness for heaven.

**6.** Where afflictions and sufferings for the sake of Christ are not considered by men as the chastisement of their heavenly Father, and improved as such, they will be a dangerous snare and temptation to apostasy, which every Christian should most carefully watch against (v. 15, 16): *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God*, etc.

**(1.)** Here the apostle enters a serious caveat against apostasy, and backs it with an awful example.

**[1.]** He enters a serious caveat against apostasy, v. 15. Here you may observe, *First*, The nature of apostasy: it is *failing of the grace of God*; it is to become bankrupts in religion, for want of a good foundation, and suitable care and diligence; it is *failing of the grace of God*, coming short of a principle of true grace in the soul, notwithstanding the means of grace and a profession of religion, and so coming short of the love and favour of God here and hereafter. *Secondly*, The consequences of apostasy: where persons fail of having the true grace of God, a root of bitterness will spring up, corruption will prevail and break forth. A *root of bitterness*, a bitter root, producing bitter fruits to themselves and others. It produces to themselves corrupt principles, which lead to apostasy and are greatly strengthened and radicated by apostasy — damnable errors (to the corrupting of the doctrine and worship of the Christian church) and corrupt practices. Apostates generally grow worse and worse, and fall into the grossest wickedness, which usually ends either in downright atheism or in despair. It also produces bitter fruits to others, to the churches to which these men belonged; by their corrupt principles and practices many are troubled, the peace of the church is broken, the peace of men's minds is disturbed, and *many are defiled*, tainted with those bad principles, and drawn into defiling practices; so that the churches suffer both in their purity and peace. But the apostates themselves will be the greatest sufferers at last.

**[2.]** The apostle backs the caution with an awful example, and that is, that of Esau, who though born within the pale of the church, and having the birthright as the eldest son, and so entitled to the privilege of being prophet, priest, and king, in his family, was so profane as to despise these sacred privileges, and to sell his birthright for a morsel of meat. Where observe, *First*, Esau's sin. He profanely despised and sold the birthright,

and all the advantages attending it. So do apostates, who to avoid persecution, and enjoy sensual ease and pleasure, though they bore the character of the children of God, and had a visible right to the blessing and inheritance, give up all pretensions thereto. *Secondly*, Esau's punishment, which was suitable to his sin. His conscience was convinced of his sin and folly, when it was too late: *He would afterwards have inherited the blessing*, etc. His punishment lay in two things: 1. He was condemned by his own conscience; he now saw that the blessing he had made so light of was worth the having, worth the seeking, though with much carefulness and many tears.

**2.** He was rejected of God: *He found no place of repentance* in God or in his father; the blessing was given to another, even to him to whom he sold it for a mess of pottage. Esau, in his great wickedness, had made the bargain, and God in his righteous judgment, ratified and confirmed it, and would not suffer Isaac to reverse it.

**(2.)** We may hence learn,

**[1.]** That apostasy from Christ is the fruit of preferring the gratification of the flesh to the blessing of God and the heavenly inheritance.

**[2.]** Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the divine blessing and inheritance as now they have. The time is coming when they will think no pains too great, no cares no tears too much, to obtain the lost blessing.

**[3.]** When the day of grace is over (as sometimes it may be in this life), they will find no place for repentance: they cannot repent aright of their sin; and God will not repent of the sentence he has passed upon them for their sin. And therefore, as the design of all, Christians should never give up their title, and hope of their Father's blessing and inheritance, and expose themselves to his irrevocable wrath and curse, by deserting their holy religion, to avoid suffering, which, though this may be persecution as far as wicked men are concerned in it, is only a rod of correction and chastisement in the hand of their heavenly Father, to bring them near to himself in conformity and communion. This is the force of the apostle's arguing from the nature of the sufferings of the people of God even when they suffer for righteousness' sake; and the reasoning is very strong.

## HEBREWS 12:18-29

### NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN ECONOMY

Here the apostle goes on to engage the professing Hebrews to perseverance in their Christian course and conflict, and not to relapse again into Judaism. This he does by showing them how much the state of the gospel church differs from that of the Jewish church, and how much it resembles the state of the church in heaven, and on both accounts demands and deserves our diligence, patience, and perseverance in Christianity.

**I.** He shows how much the gospel church differs from the Jewish church, and how much it excels. And here we have a very particular description of the state of the church under the Mosaic dispensation, v. 18-21.

**1.** It was a gross sensible state. Mount Sinai, on which that church-state was constituted, was a *mount that might be touched* (v. 18), a gross palpable place; so was the dispensation. It was very much external and earthly, and so more heavy. The state of the gospel church on mount Zion is more spiritual, rational, and easy.

**2.** It was a dark dispensation. Upon that mount there were blackness and darkness, and that church-state was covered with dark shadows and types: the gospel state is much more clear and bright.

**3.** It was a dreadful and terrible dispensation; the Jews could not bear the terror of it. The thunder and the lightning, the trumpet sounding, the voice of God himself speaking to them, struck them with such dread that they *entreated that the word might not be so spoken to them any more*, v. 19. Yea, Moses himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. The best of men on earth are not able to converse immediately with God and his holy angels. The gospel state is mild, and kind, and condescending, suited to our weak frame.

**4.** It was a limited dispensation; all might not approach to that mount, but only Moses and Aaron. Under the gospel we have all access with boldness to God.

**5.** It was a very dangerous dispensation. The mount burned with fire, and whatever man or beast touched the mount must *be stoned, or thrust through with a dart*, v. 20. It is true, it will be always dangerous for

presumptuous and brutish sinners to draw nigh to God; but it is not immediate and certain death, as here it was. This was the state of the Jewish church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hard-hearted people, to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God, to wean the people of God from that dispensation, and induce them more readily to embrace the sweet and gentle economy of the gospel church, and adhere to it.

**II.** He shows how much the gospel church represents the church triumphant in heaven, what communication there is between the one and the other. The gospel church is called *mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free*, in opposition to mount Sinai, which tendeth to bondage, ~~Galatians~~ Galatians 4:24. This was the hill on which God set his king the Messiah. Now, in coming to mount Zion, believers come into heavenly places, and into a heavenly society.

**1.** Into heavenly places.

**(1.)** *Unto the city of the living God.* God has taken up his gracious residence in the gospel church, which on that account is an emblem of heaven. There his people may find him ruling, guiding, sanctifying, and comforting them; there he speaks to them by the gospel ministry; there they speak to him by prayer, and he hears them; there he trains them up for heaven, and gives them the earnest of their inheritance.

**(2.)** *To the heavenly Jerusalem* as born and bred there, as free denizens there. Here believers have clearer views of heaven, plainer evidences for heaven, and a greater meetness and more heavenly temper of soul.

**2.** To a heavenly society.

**(1.)** *To an innumerable company of angels*, who are of the same family with the saints, under the same head, and in a great measure employed in the same work, ministering to believers for their good, keeping them in all their ways, and pitching their tents about them. These for number are innumerable, and for order and union are a company, and a glorious one. And those who by faith are joined to the gospel church are joined to the angels, and shall at length be like them, and equal with them.

**(2.)** *To the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven*, that is, to the universal church, however dispersed. By faith we come to them, have communion with them in the same head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope, and walk in the same way of

holiness, grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hasting to the same rest, victory, and glorious triumph. Here will be the general assembly of the first-born, the saints of former and earlier times, who saw the promises of the gospel state, but received them not, as well as those who first received them under the gospel, and were regenerated thereby, and so were the first-born, and the first-fruits of the gospel church; and thereby, as the first-born, advanced to greater honours and privileges than the rest of the world. Indeed all the children of God are heirs, and every one has the privileges of the first-born. The names of these are written in heaven, in the records of the church here: they have a name in God's house, are written among the living in Jerusalem; they have a good repute for their faith and fidelity, and are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, as citizens are enrolled in the livery-books.

**(3.)** *To God the Judge of all*, that great God who will judge both Jew and Gentile according to the law they are under: believers come to him now by faith, make supplication to their Judge, and receive a sentence of absolution in the gospel, and in the court of their consciences now, by which they know they shall be justified hereafter.

**(4.)** *To the spirits of just men made perfect*; to the best sort of men, the righteous, who are more excellent than their neighbours; to the best part of just men, their spirits, and to these in their best state, made perfect. Believers have union with departed saints in one and the same head and Spirit, and a title to the same inheritance, of which those on earth are heirs, those in heaven possessors.

**(5.)** *To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel*. This is none of the least of many encouragements there are to perseverance in the gospel state, since it is a state of communion with Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, and of communication of his blood, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

**[1.]** The gospel covenant is the new covenant, distinct from the covenant of works; and it is now under a new dispensation, distinct from that of the Old Testament.

**[2.]** Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant; he is the middle person that goes between both parties, God and man, to bring them together in this covenant, to keep them together notwithstanding the sins of the people

and God's displeasure against them for sin, to offer up our prayers to God, and to bring down the favours of God to us, to plead with God for us and to plead with us for God, and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven, and to be a Mediator of fruition between them for ever, they beholding and enjoying God in Christ and God beholding and blessing them in Christ.

[3.] This covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the sacrifice. This blood of Christ pacifies God and purifies the consciences of men.

[4.] This is speaking blood, and it speaks better things than that of Abel. *First*, It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him who shed it, but for mercy. *Secondly*, To sinners, in the name of God. It speaks pardon to their sins, peace to their souls; and bespeaks their strictest obedience and highest love and thankfulness.

**III.** The apostle, having thus enlarged upon the argument to perseverance taken from the heavenly nature of the gospel church state, closes the chapter by improving the argument in a manner suitable to the weight of it (v. 25, etc.): *See then that you refuse not him that speaketh* — that speaketh by his blood; and not only speaketh after another manner than the blood of Abel spoke from the ground, but than God spoke by the angels, and by Moses spoke on mount Sinai; then he spoke on earth, now he speaks from heaven. Here observe,

**1.** When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner he justly expects from them the most strict attention and regard. Now it is in the gospel that God speaks to men in the most excellent manner. For,

(1.) He now speaks from a higher and more glorious seat and throne, not from mount Sinai, which was on this earth, but from heaven.

(2.) He speaks now more immediately by his inspired word and by his Spirit, which are his witnesses. He speaks not now any new thing to men, but by his Spirit speaks the same word home to the conscience.

(3.) He speaks now more powerfully and effectually. Then indeed his voice shook the earth, but now, by introducing the gospel state, he hath shaken not only the earth, but the heavens, — not only shaken the hills and

mountains, or the spirits of men, or the civil state of the land of Canaan, to make room for his people, — not only shaken the world, as he then did, but he hath shaken the church, that is, the Jewish nation, and shaken them in their church-state, which was in Old-Testament times a heaven upon earth; this their heavenly spiritual state he hath now shaken. It is by the gospel from heaven that God shook to pieces the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jewish nation, and introduced a new state of the church, that cannot be removed, shall never be changed for any other on earth, but shall remain till it be made perfect in heaven.

**2.** When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, the guilt of those who refuse him is the greater, and their punishment will be more unavoidable and intolerable; there is no escaping, no bearing it, v. 25. The different manner of God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel after a different manner than he does with other men, in a way of judgment. The glory of the gospel, which should greatly recommend it to our regard, appears in these three things: —

**(1.)** It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that the former dispensation and state of the church of God were shaken and removed; and shall we despise that voice of God that pulled down a church and state of so long standing and of God's own building?

**(2.)** It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that a new kingdom was erected for God in the world, which can never be so shaken as to be removed. This was a change made once for all; no other change shall take place *till time shall be no more*. We have now *received a kingdom that cannot be moved*, shall never be removed, never give way to any new dispensation. The canon of scripture is now perfected, *the Spirit of prophecy has ceased*, the mystery of God is finished, he has put his last hand to it. The gospel church may be made more large, more prosperous more purified from contracted pollution, but it shall never be altered for another dispensation; those who perish under the gospel perish without remedy. And hence the apostle justly concludes,

**[1.]** How necessary it is for us to obtain *grace from God, to serve him acceptably*: if we be not accepted of God under this dispensation, we shall never be accepted at all; and we lose all our labour in religion if we be not accepted of God.



[2.] We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*. As faith, so holy fear, is necessary to acceptable worship.

[3.] It is only the grace of God that enables us to worship God in a right manner: nature cannot come up to it; it can produce neither that precious faith nor that holy fear that is necessary to acceptable worship.

[4.] God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel that he appeared to be under the law. Though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; that is, a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates. Under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.