

satisfied, and the hungry soul may be filled with goodness. The delight and contentment that is to be found here, passeth understanding, and is unspeakable and full of glory. It is impossible for those who have tasted of this fountain, and know the sweetness of it, ever to forsake it. The soul has found the river of water of life, and it desires no other drink; it has found the tree of life, and it desires no other fruit.

Secondly. The manifestation of the love of Christ gives the soul abundant contentment. This love of Christ is exceedingly sweet and satisfying, it is better than life, because it is the love of a person of such dignity and excellency. The sweetness of his love depends very much upon the greatness of his excellency; so much the more lovely the person, so much the more desirable is his love. How sweet must the love of that person be, who is the eternal Son of God, who is of equal dignity with the Father! How great a happiness must it be to be the object of the love of him who is the Creator of the world, and by whom all things consist, and who is exalted at God's right hand, and made head over principalities and powers in heavenly places, who has all things put under his feet, and is King of kings and Lord of lords, and is the brightness of the Father's glory! Surely to be beloved by him, is enough to satisfy the soul of a worm of the dust.

This love of Christ is also exceedingly sweet and satisfying from the greatness of it; it is a dying love; such love as never was before seen, and such as no other can parallel. There have been instances of very great love between one earthly friend and another; there was a surpassing love between David and Jonathan. But there never was any such love as Christ has towards believers. The satisfying nature of this love arises also from the sweet fruits of it. Those precious benefits that Christ bestows upon his people, and those precious promises which he has given them, are the fruit of this love; joy and hope are the constant streams that flow from this fountain, from the love of Christ.

Thirdly. There is provision for the satisfaction and contentment of the thirsty longing soul in Christ, as he is the way to the Father; not only from the fulness of excellency and grace which he has in his own person, but as by him we may come to God, may be reconciled to him, and may be made happy in his favour and love. The poverty and want of the soul in its natural state consist in its being separated from God, for God is the riches and the happiness of the creature. But we naturally are alienated from God; and God is alienated from us, our Maker is not at peace with us. But in Christ there is a way for a free communication between God and us; for us to come to God, and for God to communicate himself to us by his Spirit. John 14:6. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Ephesians 2:13, 18, 19. "But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For through him we both have access by one Spirit

unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Christ by being thus the way to the Father, is the way to true happiness and contentment. John 10:9. "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Hence I would take occasion to invite needy, thirsty souls to come to Jesus. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." You that have not yet come to Christ, are in a poor, necessitous condition; you are in a parched wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. And if you are thoroughly awakened, you are sensible that you are in distress and ready to faint for want of something to satisfy your souls. Come to him who is "as rivers of water in a dry place." There are plenty and fulness in him; he is like a river that is always flowing, you may live by it for ever, and never be in want. Come to him who has such excellency as is sufficient to give full contentment to your soul, who is a person of transcendent glory, and ineffable beauty, where you may entertain the view of your soul for ever without weariness, and without being cloyed. Accept of the offered love of him who is the only-begotten Son of God, and his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. Through Christ, come to God the Father, from whom you have departed by sin. He is the way, the truth, and the life; he is the door, by which if any man enters he shall be saved.

III. There are quiet rest and sweet refreshment in Christ Jesus, for those that are weary. He is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The comparison that is used in the text is very beautiful and very significative. The dry, barren, and scorched wilderness of Arabia is a very lively representation of the misery that men have brought upon themselves by sin. It is destitute of any inhabitants but lions and tigers and fiery serpents; it is barren and parched, and without any river or spring; it is a land of drought, wherein there is seldom any rain, a land exceedingly hot and uncomfortable. The scorching sunbeams that are ready to consume the spirits of travellers, are a fit representation of terror of conscience, and the inward sense of God's displeasure. And there being no other shade in which travellers may rest, but only here and there that of a great rock, it is a fit representation of Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us from our misery. Christ is often compared to a rock, because he is a sure foundation to builders, and because he is a sure bulwark and defence. They who dwell upon the top of a rock, dwell in a most defensible place; we read of those whose habitation is the munitions of rocks. He may also be compared to a rock, as he is everlasting and unchangeable. A great rock remains stedfast, unmoved, and unbroken by winds and storms from age to age; and therefore God chose a rock to be an emblem of Christ in the wilderness, when he caused water to issue forth

for the children of Israel; and the shadow of a great rock is a most fit representation of the refreshment given to weary souls by Jesus Christ.

1. There is quiet rest and full refreshment in Christ for sinners that are weary and heavy laden with sin. Sin is the most evil and odious thing, as well as the most mischievous and fatal; it is the most mortal poison; it, above all things, hazards life, and endangers the soul, exposes to the loss of all happiness, and to the suffering of all misery, and brings the wrath of God. All men have this dreadful evil hanging about them, and cleaving fast to the soul, and ruling over it, and keeping it in possession, and under absolute command: it hangs like a viper to the heart, or rather holds it as a lion does his prey.

But yet there are multitudes, who are not sensible of their misery. They are in such a sleep that they are not very unquiet in this condition, it is not very burthensome to them, they are so sottish that they do not know what is their state, and what is like to become of them. But there are others who have their sense so far restored to them that they feel the pain, and see the approaching destruction, and sin lies like a heavy load upon their hearts; it is a load that lies upon them day and night, they cannot lay it down to rest themselves, but it continually oppresses them. It is bound fast unto them, and is ready to sink them down; it is a continual labour of heart, to support itself under this burden. Thus we read of them "that labour, and are heavy laden." Or rather, it is like the scorching heat in a dry wilderness, where the sun beats and burns all the day long; where they have nothing to defend them; where they can find no shade to refresh themselves. If they lay themselves down to rest, it is like lying down in the hot sands, where there is nothing to keep off the heat.

Here it may be proper to inquire who are weary and heavy laden with sin; and in what sense a sinner may be weary and burdened with sin. Sinners are not wearied with sin from any dislike to it, or dislike of it. There is no sinner that is burdened with sin in the sense in which a godly man carries his indwelling sin, as his daily and greatest burden, because he loathes it, and longs to get rid of it; he would fain be at a great distance from it, and have nothing more to do with it; he is ready to cry out as Paul did, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The unregenerate man has nothing of this nature, for sin is yet his delight, he dearly loves it. If he be under convictions, his love to sin in general is not mortified, he loves it as well as ever, he hides it still as a sweet morsel under his tongue.

But there is a difference between being weary and burdened with sin, and being weary of sin. Awakened sinners are weary with sin, but not properly weary of it.

Therefore, they are only weary of the guilt of sin, the guilt that cleaves to their consciences is that great burden. God has put the sense of feeling into their consciences, that were before as seared flesh, and it is guilt that pains them. The

filthiness of sin and its evil nature, as it is an offence to a holy, gracious, and glorious God, is not a burden to them. But it is the connexion between sin and punishment, between sin and God's wrath, that makes it a burden. Their consciences are heavy laden with guilt, which is an obligation to punishment; they see the threatening and curse of the law joined to their sins, and see that the justice of God and his vengeance are against them. They are burdened with their sins, not because there is any odiousness in them, but because there is hell in them. This is the sting of sin, whereby it stings the conscience, and distresses and wearies the soul.

The guilt of such and such great sins is upon the soul, and the man sees no way to get rid of it, but he has wearisome days and wearisome nights; it makes him ready sometimes to say as the psalmist did, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." But when sinners come to Christ, he takes away that which was their burden, or their sin and guilt, that which was so heavy upon their hearts, that so distressed their minds.

First. He takes away the guilt of sin, from which the soul before saw no way how it was possible to be freed, and which, if it was not removed, led to eternal destruction. When the sinner comes to Christ, it is all at once taken away, and the soul is left free, it is lightened of its burden, it is delivered from its bondage, and is like a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler. The soul sees in Christ a way to peace with God, and a way by which the law may be answered, and justice satisfied, and yet he may escape; a wonderful way indeed, but yet a certain and a glorious one. And what rest does it give to the weary soul to see itself thus delivered, that the foundation of its anxieties and fears is wholly removed, and that God's wrath ceases, that it is brought into a state of peace with God, and that there is no more occasion to fear hell, but that it is for ever safe! How refreshing is it to the soul to be at once thus delivered of that which was so much its trouble and terror, and to be eased of that which was so much its burden! This is like coming to a cool shade after one has been travelling in a dry and hot wilderness, and almost fainting under the scorching heat. And then Christ also takes away sin itself, and mortifies that root of bitterness which is the cause of all the inward tumults and disquietudes that are in the mind, that make it like the troubled sea that cannot rest, and leaves it all calm. When guilt is taken away and sin is mortified, then the foundation of fear, and trouble, and pain is removed, and the soul is left in peace and serenity.

Secondly. Christ puts strength and a principle of new life into the weary soul that comes to him. The sinner, before he comes to Christ, is as a sick man that is weakened and brought low, and whose nature is consumed by some strong distemper: he is full of pain, and so weak that he cannot walk nor stand.

Therefore, Christ is compared to a physician. "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick." When he comes and speaks the word, he puts a principle of life into him that was before as dead: he gives a principle of spiritual life and the beginning of eternal life; he invigorates the mind with a communication of his own life and strength, and renews the nature and creates it again, and makes the man to be a new creature.

So that the fainting, sinking spirits are now revived, and this principle of spiritual life is a continual spring of refreshment, like a well of living water. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Christ gives his Spirit, that calms the mind, and is like a refreshing breeze of wind. He gives that strength whereby he lifts up the hands that hang down, and strengthens the feeble knees.

Thirdly. Christ gives to those who come to him such comfort and pleasure as are enough to make them forget all their former labour and travail. A little of true peace, a little of the joys of the manifested love of Christ, and a little of the true and holy hope of eternal life, are enough to compensate for all that toil and weariness, and to erase the remembrance of it from the mind. That peace which results from true faith passes understanding, and that joy is joy unspeakable. There is something peculiarly sweet and refreshing in this joy, that is not in other joys; and what can more effectually support the mind, or give a more rational ground of rejoicing, than a prospect of eternal glory in the enjoyment of God from God's own promise in Christ? If we come to Christ, we may not only be refreshed by resting in his shadow, but by eating his fruit: these things are the fruits of this tree. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Before proceeding to the next particular of this proposition, I would apply myself to those that are weary; to move them to repose themselves under Christ's shadow.

The great trouble of such a state, one would think, should be a motive to you to accept of an offer of relief, and remedy. You are weary, and doubtless would be glad to be at rest; but here you are to consider,

First. That there is no remedy but in Jesus Christ; there is nothing else will give you true quietness. If you could fly into heaven, you would not find it there; if you should take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, in some solitary place in the wilderness, you could not fly from your burden. So that if you do not come to Christ, you must either continue still weary and burdened, or, which is worse, you must return to your old dead sleep, to a

state of stupidity; and not only so, but you must be everlastingly wearied with God's wrath.

Second. Consider that Christ is a remedy at hand. You need not wish for the wings of a dove that you may fly afar off, and be at rest, but Christ is nigh at hand, if you were but sensible of it. Romans 10:6, 7, 8. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." There is no need of doing any great work to come at this rest; the way is plain to it; it is but going to it, it is but sitting down under Christ's shadow. Christ requires no money to purchase rest of him, he calls to us to come freely, and for nothing. If we are poor and have no money, we may come. Christ sent out his servants to invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. Christ does not want to be hired to accept of you, and to give you rest. It is his work as Mediator to give rest to the weary, it is the work that he was anointed for, and in which he delights. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Third. Christ is not only a remedy for your weariness and trouble, but he will give you an abundance of the contrary, joy and delight. They who come to Christ, do not only come to a resting-place after they have been wandering in a wilderness, but they come to a banqueting-house where they may rest, and where they may feast. They may cease from their former troubles and toils, and they may enter upon a course of delights and spiritual joys.

Christ not only delivers from fears of hell and of wrath, but he gives hopes of heaven, and the enjoyment of God's love. He delivers from inward tumults and inward pain from that guilt of conscience which is as a worm gnawing within, and he gives delight and inward glory. He brings us out of a wilderness of pits, and drought, and fiery flying spirits; and he brings us into a pleasant land, a land flowing with milk and honey. He delivers us out of prison, and lifts us off from the dunghill, and he sets us among princes, and causes us to inherit the throne of glory. Wherefore, if any one is weary, if any is in prison, if any one is in captivity, if any one is in the wilderness, let him come to the blessed Jesus, who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Delay not, arise and come away.

2. There are quiet rest and sweet refreshment in Christ for God's people that are weary.

The saints themselves, while they remain in this imperfect state, and have so much remains of sin in their hearts, are liable still to many troubles and sorrows, and much weariness, and have often need to resort anew unto Jesus Christ for rest. I shall mention three cases wherein Christ is a sufficient remedy.

First. There is rest and sweet refreshment in Christ for those that are wearied with persecutions. It has been the lot of God's church in this world for the most part to be persecuted. It has had now and then some lucid intervals of peace and outward prosperity, but generally it has been otherwise. This has accorded with the first prophecy concerning Christ; "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Those two seeds have been at enmity ever since the time of Abel. Satan has borne great malice against the church of God, and so have those that are his seed. And oftentimes God's people have been persecuted to an extreme degree, have been put to the most exquisite torments that wit or art could devise, and thousands of them have been tormented to death.

But even in such a case there are rest and refreshment to be found in Christ Jesus. When their cruel enemies have given them no rest in this world; when, as oftentimes has been the case, they could not flee, nor in any way avoid the rage of their adversaries, but many of them have been tormented gradually from day to day, that their torments might be lengthened; still rest has been found even then in Christ. It has been often found by experience; the martyrs have often showed plainly that the peace and calm of their minds were undisturbed in the midst of the greatest bodily torment, and have sometimes rejoiced and sung praises upon the rack and in the fire. If Christ is pleased to send forth his Spirit to manifest his love, and speaks friendly to the soul, it will support it even in the greatest outward torment that man can inflict. Christ is the joy of the soul, and if the soul be but rejoiced and filled with divine light, such joy no man can take away; whatever outward misery there be, the spirit will sustain it.

Secondly. There is in Christ rest for God's people, when exercised with afflictions. If a person labour under great bodily weakness, or under some disease that causes frequent and strong pains, such things will tire out so feeble a creature as man. It may to such an one be a comfort and an effectual support to think, that he has a Mediator, who knows by experience what pain is; who by his pain has purchased eternal ease and pleasure for him; and who will make his brief sufferings to work out a far more exceeding delight, to be bestowed when he shall rest from his labours and sorrows.

If a person be brought into great straits as to outward subsistence, and poverty brings abundance of difficulties and extremities; yet it may be a supporting, refreshing consideration to such an one to think, that he has a compassionate Savior, who when upon earth, was so poor that he had not where to lay his

head, and who became poor to make him rich, and purchased for him durable riches, and will make his poverty work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

If God in his providence calls his people to mourn over lost relations, and if he repeats his stroke and takes away one after another of those that were dear to him; it is a supporting, refreshing consideration to think, that Christ has declared that he will be in stead of all relations unto those who trust in him. They are as his mother, and sister, and brother; he has taken them into a very near relation to himself: and in every other afflictive providence, it is a great comfort to a believing soul to think that he has an intercessor with God, that by him he can have access with confidence to the throne of grace, and that in Christ we have so many great and precious promises, that all things shall work together for good, and shall issue in eternal blessedness. God's people, whenever they are scorched by afflictions as by hot sun-beams, may resort to him, who is as a shadow of a great rock, and be effectually sheltered, and sweetly refreshed.

Thirdly. There is in Christ quiet rest and sweet refreshment for God's people, when wearied with the buffetings of Satan. The devil, that malicious enemy of God and man, does whatever lies in his power to darken and hinder, and tempt God's people, and render their lives uncomfortable. Often he raises needless and groundless scruples, and casts in doubts, and fills the mind with such fear as is tormenting, and tends to hinder them exceedingly in the christian course; and he often raises mists and clouds of darkness, and stirs up corruption, and thereby fills the mind with concern and anguish, and sometimes wearies out the soul. So that they may say as the psalmist; "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion."

In such a case if the soul flies to Jesus Christ, they may find rest in him, for he came into the world to destroy Satan, and to rescue souls out of his hands. And he has all things put under his feet, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth, or things in hell, and therefore he can restrain Satan when he pleases. And that he is doubtless ready enough to pity us under such temptations, we may be assured, for he has been tempted and buffeted by Satan as well as we. He is able to succour those that are tempted, and he has promised that he will subdue Satan under his people's feet. Let God's people therefore, when they are exercised with any of those kinds of weariness, make their resort unto Jesus Christ for refuge and rest.

REFLECTIONS

1. We may here see great reason to admire the goodness and grace of God to us in our low estate, that he has so provided for our help and relief. We are by our

own sin against God plunged into all sort of evil, and God has provided a remedy for us against every sort of evil, he has left us helpless in no calamity. We by our sin have exposed ourselves to wrath, to a vindictive justice; but God has done very great things that we might be saved from that wrath; he has been at infinite cost that the law might be answered without our suffering. We by our sins have exposed ourselves to terror of conscience, in expectation of the dreadful storm of God's wrath; but God has provided for us a hiding-place from the storm, he bids us enter into his chambers, and hide ourselves from indignation. We by sin have made ourselves poor, needy creatures; but God has provided for us gold tried in the fire. We by sin have made ourselves naked; and when he passed by, he took notice of our want, and has provided us white raiment that we may be clothed. We have made ourselves blind, and God in mercy to us has provided eye-salve, that we may see. We have deprived ourselves of all spiritual food; we are like the prodigal son that perished with hunger, and would gladly have filled his belly with husks. God has taken notice of this our condition, and has provided for us a feast of fat things, and has sent forth his servants to invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. We by sin have brought ourselves into a dry and thirsty wilderness; but God was merciful, and took notice of our condition, and has provided for us rivers of water, water out of the rock. We by sin have brought upon ourselves a miserable slavery and bondage; God has made provision for our liberty. We have exposed ourselves to weariness; God has provided a resting-place for us. We by sin have exposed ourselves to many outward troubles and afflictions; God has pitied us, and in Christ has provided true comfort for us. We have exposed ourselves to our grand enemy, even Satan, to be tempted and buffeted by him; God has pitied, and has provided for us a Savior and Captain of salvation, who has overcome Satan, and is able to deliver us. Thus God has in Christ provided sufficiently for our help in all kinds of evils.

How ought we to bless God for this abundant provision he has made for us, poor and sinful as we were, who were so undeserving and so ungrateful. He made no such provision for the fallen angels, who are left without remedy in all the woes and miseries into which they are plunged.

2. We should admire the love of Christ to men, that he has thus given himself to be the remedy for all their evil, and a fountain of all good. Christ has given himself to us, to be all things to us that we need. We want clothing, and Christ does not only give us clothing, but he gives himself to be our clothing, that we might put him on. Galatians 3:27. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Romans 13:14. "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

We want food, and Christ has given himself to be our food; he has given his own flesh to be our meat, and his blood to be our drink, to nourish our soul. Thus

Christ tells us that he is the bread which came down from heaven, and the bread of life. "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." In order to our eating of his flesh, it was necessary that he should be slain, as the sacrifices must be slain before they could be eaten; and such was Christ's love to us, that he consented to be slain, he went as a sheep to the slaughter, that he might give us his flesh to be food for our poor, famishing souls.

We are in need of a habitation; we by sin have, as it were, turned ourselves out of house and home; Christ has given himself to be the habitation of his people. Psalm 90:1. "Lord, thou has been our dwelling-place in all generations." It is promised to God's people that they should dwell in the temple of God for ever, and should go no more out; and we are told that Christ is the temple of the new Jerusalem.

Christ gives himself to his people to be all things to them that they need, and all things that make for their happiness. Colossians 3:11. "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." And that he might be so, he has refused nothing that is needful to prepare him to be so.

When it was needful that he should be incarnate, he refused it not, but became man, and appeared in the form of a servant. When it was needful that he should be slain, he refused it not, but gave himself for us, and gave himself to us upon the cross.

Here is love for us to admire, for us to praise, and for us to rejoice in, with joy that is full of glory for ever.
