

## CHAPTER 6.

### THE MANNER OF APPROACHING THE THRONE.

**IV.** BUT this will yet be further manifest by what we have yet to say of THE MANNER OF OUR APPROACH unto the throne of grace.

**1.** First, then, we must approach the throne of grace by the second vail; for the throne of grace is after the second vail. So, then, though a man cometh into the tabernacle or temple, which was a figure of the church, yet if he entered but within the first vail, he only came where there was no mercy-seat or throne of grace.

And what is this second vail, in, at, or through which, as the phrase is, we must by blood enter into the holiest? Why, as to the law, the second vail did hang up between the holy and the most holy place, and it did hide what was within the holiest from the eyes or sight of those that went no further than into the first tabernacle. Now this second vail in the tabernacle or temple was a figure of the second vail that all those must go through that will approach the throne of grace. And that vail is the flesh of Christ.

This is that which the holy Apostle testifies in his exhortation, where he saith we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh. The second vail, then, is the flesh of Christ, the which until a man can enter or go through by his faith, it is impossible that he should come to the holiest, where the throne of grace is, that is, to the heart and soul of Jesus, which is the throne.

The body of Christ is the tabernacle of God, and so that in which God dwells; for the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. Therefore, as also has been hinted before, Christ Jesus is the throne of grace. Now, since his flesh is called the vail, it is evident that the glory that dwells within him, namely, God resting in him, cannot be understood but by them that by faith can look through, or enter through his flesh to that glory. For the glory is within the vail; there is the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace: there sitteth God as delighted, as at rest in, and with sinners that come to him by and through that flesh, and the offering of it for sin without the gate. "I am the way," saith Christ. But to what? and how? Why, to the Father, through my flesh. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated, and

enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” But how? “In the body of his flesh.” That, then, must be first. To what? “To present you holy and unblamable, and unreprouable in his sight;” that is, when you enter into his presence, or approach by his flesh, the mercy-seat, or the throne of grace.

This, therefore, is the manner of your coming — if we come aright to the throne of grace for mercy. We must come by blood, through his flesh, as through the vail, by which, until you have entered through it, the glory of God, and that he is resolved that grace shall reign, will be utterly hid from your eyes.

I will not say but, by the notion of these things, men may have their whirling fancies, and may create to themselves wild notions and flattering imaginations of Christ, the throne of grace, and of glory; but the gospel knowledge of this is of absolute necessity to my right coming to the throne of grace for mercy. I must come by his blood, through his flesh, or I cannot come at all: for here is no back door. This, then, is the sum: Christ’s body is the tabernacle, the holiest: “Thy law,” saith he, “is within my heart.” In this tabernacle, then, God sitteth, namely, on the heart of Christ, for that is the throne of grace. Through this tabernacle men must enter, that is, by a godly understanding of what by this tabernacle, or flesh of Christ, has been done to reconcile us to God that dwells in him. This is the way, all the way; for there is no way but this to come to the throne of grace. This is the *new* way into the heavenly paradise, (for the old way is hedged and ditched up by the flaming sword of cherubims,) the new and *living* way, (for to go the other, is present death;) so, then, this new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, is the only way into the holiest, where the throne of grace is.

**2.** We must approach this throne of grace, as having our hearts first sprinkled from an evil conscience. The priest that was the representator of Israel, when he went into the holiest, was not to go in, but as sprinkled with blood, first. Thus it is written in the law: “Not without blood;” thus it is written in the gospel; and now since by the gospel we have all admittance to enter in through the vail, by faith, we must take heed that we enter not in without blood; for if the blood, (virtually,) be not seen upon us, we die, instead of obtaining mercy, and finding the help of grace.

This I press the oftener, because there is nothing to which we are more naturally inclined, than to forget this. Who, that understands himself, is not sensible how apt he is to forget to act faith in the blood of Jesus, and to get his conscience sprinkled with the virtue of that, when he attempteth to approach the throne of grace? Yet the Scripture calls upon us to take heed

that we neglect not thus to prepare ourselves. “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience,” that is, with the blood of Christ, lest we die. In the law all the people were to be sprinkled with blood, and it was necessary that the pattern of things in the heavens should be purified with these, (that is, with the blood of bulls,) but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these, that is, with the offering of the body and shedding of the blood of Christ. By this, then, must thou be purified and sprinkled, who by Christ wouldst approach the throne of grace.

**3.** Therefore, it is added, “and our bodies washed with pure water.” This allusion the Apostle taketh also out of the law; where it was appointed, as was showed before. Christ also, just before he went to the Father, gave his disciples a signification of this, saying to Peter, and by him to all the rest. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” This pure water is nothing but the wholesome doctrine of the word mixed with Spirit, by which, as the conscience was before sprinkled with blood, the body and outward conversation is now sanctified and made clean. “Now ye are clean through the word,” saith Christ, “which I have spoken unto you.” Hence, washing, and sanctifying, and justifying, are put together, and are said to come by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. Thou must then be washed with water, and sprinkled with blood, if thou wouldst orderly approach the throne of grace: if thou wouldst orderly approach it with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; or if thou wouldst, as the text biddeth thee here, namely, “come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

To tell you what it is to come boldly, is one thing; and to tell you *how* you should come boldly, is another. Here you are bid to come boldly, and are also showed how that may be done. It may be done through the blood of sprinkling, and through the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, which are here by faith to be received. And when what can be said shall be said to the utmost, there is no boldness, godly boldness, but by blood. The more the conscience is a stranger to the sprinkling of blood, the further off it is of being rightly bold with God, at the throne of grace; for it is the blood that makes the atonement, and that gives boldness to the soul. It is the blood, the power of it by faith upon the conscience, that drives away guilt, and so fear, and consequently that begetteth boldness. Wherefore, he that will be bold with God at the throne of grace, must first be well acquainted with the doctrine of the blood of Christ; namely, that it was shed, and why; and that it has made peace with God, and for whom. Yea, thou must be able by faith to bring thyself within the number of those that are made partakers of this reconciliation, before thou canst come boldly to the throne of grace.

There is a coming to the throne of grace *before*, or without, this boldness; but that is not the coming to which by these texts we are exhorted. Yet that coming, be it ever so deficient, if it is right, is through some measure of an inlet into the death and blood of Christ — and through some management, though but very little, or perhaps, scarce at all, discerned of the soul, — to hope for grace from the throne: I say, it must arise, the encouragement must, from the cross, and from Christ as dying there. Christ himself went that way to God, and it is not possible but we must go the same way too. So, then, the encouragement, be it little, be it much, (and it is little or much, even as the faith is in strength or weakness, which apprehendeth Christ,) it is according to the proportion of faith. Strong faith gives great boldness; weak faith doth not so, nor can it.

There is a *sincere* coming to the throne of grace without this boldness, even a coming in the uprightness of one's heart without it. Hence a true heart and full assurance are distinguished: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Sincerity may be attended with a great deal of weakness, even as boldness may be attended with pride. But be it what kind of coming to the throne of grace it will, either a coming with boldness, or with that doubting which is incident to saints; still the cause of that coming, or ground thereof, is some knowledge of redemption by blood, redemption which the soul seeth it has faith in, or would see it has faith in: for Christ is precious, sometimes in the sight of the worth, sometimes in the sight of the want, and sometimes in the sight of the enjoyment of him.

There is an *earnest* coming to the throne of grace, even with all the desire of one's soul. When David had guilt and trouble, and that so heavy that he knew not what to do, yet he could say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." He could come earnestly to the throne of grace; he could come thither with all the desire of his soul: but still this must be from that knowledge that he had of the way of remission of sins by the blood of the Son of God.

There is also a *constant* coming to the throne of grace: "Lord," said Heman, "I have cried day and night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; for my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave"

Here you see his constant crying before the throne of grace — crying night and day; and yet the man that cries seems to be in a very black cloud, and to find hard work to bear up in his soul; yet this he had, namely, the knowledge of how God was the God of salvation; yea, he called him his God as such, though with pretty much difficulty of spirit, to be sure.

Wherefore, it must not be concluded that they come not at all to the throne of grace, that come not with a full assurance; or that men must forbear to come, till they come with assurance: but this I say, they come not at all aright, that take not the ground of their coming from the death and blood of Christ; and that they who come to the throne of grace, with but little knowledge of redemption by blood, will come with but little hope of obtaining grace and mercy to help in time of need.

I conclude, then, that it is the privilege, the duty, and glory of a man, to approach the throne of grace as a prince, as Job said, could he but find it, he would be sure to do. "O that I knew where I might find him!" saith he, that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered forever from my judge."

Indeed God sometimes tries us. He holdeth back sometimes the face of his throne and spreadeth a cloud upon it. And this seems to be Job's case here, which made him to confess he was at a loss, and to cry out, "O that I knew where I might find him!" And this God doth for trial, and to prove our honesty and constancy; for the hypocrite will not pray always. "Will he always call upon God?" No, verily, especially not when thou bindest them, afflictest them, and makest praying hard work to them.

But difficulty as to finding God's presence, and the sweet shining of the face of his throne, doth not always lie in the weakness of faith: strong faith may be in this perplexity, and may be hard put to it to stand at times. It is said here, that God did hold back the face of his throne, and did spread a cloud upon it; not to weaken Job's faith, but to try Job's strength, and to show to men of after ages how valiant a man Job was. Faith, if it be strong, will play the man in the dark, will, like a mettled horse, flounce in a bad way; will not be discouraged at trials — at many or strong trials. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is the language of that invincible grace of God.

There is also an aptness in those that come to the throne of grace, to cast every degree of faith away that carries not in its bowels self-evidence of its own being and nature; thinking that if it be faith, it must be known to the soul; yea, if it be faith, it will do so and so, even so as the highest degrees of faith will do; when, alas! faith is sometimes in a calm, sometimes up, and sometimes down, and sometimes at it with sin, death, and the devil, as we say, blood up to the ears. Faith now has but little time to speak peace to the

conscience; it is now struggling for life, it is now fighting with angels, with infernals! all it can do now, is to cry, groan, sweat, fear, fight, and gasp for life.

Indeed the soul should now run to the cross; for there is the water, or rather, the blood and water that is provided for faith, as to the maintaining of the comfort of justification. But the soul whose faith is thus attacked, will find hard work to do this, though much of the well-managing of faith, in the good fight of faith, will lie in the soul's hearty and constant adhering to the death and blood of Christ: but a man must do as he can.

Thus now have I showed you the manner of right coming to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace to help in time of need.