

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE THRONE OF GRACE DISTINGUISHED.

**II.** WE will therefore come to the second thing, namely: That THE GODLY CAN DISTINGUISH ONE THRONE FROM ANOTHER. And the reason why I so conclude, is, as I said, because the throne here, is not set forth unto us here, by where, or what signs it should be known; it is only propounded to us by its name — a throne of grace — and so left for saints to make their approach thereto; “Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace.”

We will therefore take this conclusion into two parts, and consider it under this double position.

1. That there is a throne of grace.
2. That it is the privilege of the godly to distinguish from all other thrones whatever, this throne of grace.

**1.** There is a throne of GRACE. This must be true, because the text saith so. It is that of which the mercy-seat so often made mention of in the Old Testament was a type, shadow, or figure; nor are the terms of seat and throne, of any strength, to make this supposition void. For it is common for the antitype to be put forth in words unto us, more glorious than is the figure or shadow of that thing. And the reason is, that the heavenly things themselves are far more excellent than the shadow by which they are represented. What is a sheep, a bull, an ox, or calf, to Christ? or their blood to the blood of Christ? What is Jerusalem that stood in Canaan, to that New Jerusalem that shall come down from heaven? or the tabernacle made with corruptible things, to the body of Christ, or heaven itself? No marvel then if they be set forth unto us by words of an inferior rank; the most full and aptest being reserved to set out the highest things withal.

Before I proceed to give you a more particular description of this throne of grace, as also how it may be known; I will a little touch upon the terms themselves, and show briefly what must be implied by them.

By this word, *grace*, we are to understand God’s free, sovereign, good pleasure, whereby he acteth in Christ towards his people. Grace and mercy therefore, are terms that have their distinct significations. Mercy signifies pitifulness, or a running over of infinite love to objects in a miserable and helpless condition. But grace signifies that God still acts in this as a free

agent; not being wrought upon by the misery of the creature, as a procuring cause, but of his own princely mind.

Were there no objects of pity among those that in the old world perished by the flood, or that in Sodom were burned with fire from heaven? Doubtless, according to our apprehension there were many. But Noah, and he only, found grace in God's eyes, not because that of himself he was better than the rest; but God acted as a gracious prince toward him, and let him share in mercy of his own sovereign will and pleasure. But this, at first, was not so fully made manifest as it was afterwards. Wherefore, the Propitiatory was not called as here, a throne of grace, but a mercy-seat, albeit there was great glory in those terms also; for, by mercy-seat, was showed, not only that God had compassion for men, but that also to be good, was as his continual resting-place, whither he would at length retire, and where he would sit down and abide, whatever terrible or troublesome work for his church was on the wheel at present. For a *seat* is a place of rest, yea, is prepared for that end; and in that here *mercy* is called that seat, it is to show, as I said, that whatever work is on the wheel in the world, let it be ever so dreadful and amazing, yet to God's church it shall end in mercy, for that is God's resting-place. Wherefore, after God had so severely threatened and punished his church under the name of a whorish woman, as you may read in the prophet Ezekiel, he saith, "So I will make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry." And again, speaking of the same people, and of the same punishments, he saith, "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant." And again, "I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayst remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." These with many more places show that mercy is God's place of rest, and thither he will retire at last, and from thence will bless his church, his people.

But yet these terms, "a throne," "the throne of grace," do more exceed in glory; not only because the word grace shows that God by all that he doth towards us in saving and forgiving, acts freely as the highest Lord, and of his own good will and pleasure; but also because he now saith, that his grace is become a King. A "throne of grace." A throne is not only a seat for rest, but a place of dignity and authority. This is known to all. Wherefore, by this word, a throne, or "the throne of grace," is intimated that God ruleth, and governeth by his grace. And this he can justly do. "Grace reigns, 'through righteousness,' unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." So

then, in that here is mention made of a “throne of grace,” it showeth, that sin, and Satan, and death, and hell must needs be subdued. For these last mentioned are but weakness and destruction; but grace is life, and the absolute sovereign over all these, to the ruling of them utterly down: “a throne of grace.”

By this, then, God plainly declareth that he is resolved this way to rule, and that he pointeth at sin as his deadly foe; and if so, then, where sin abounded, grace must much more abound. For it is the wisdom and discretion of all that rule, to fortify themselves against them that rebel against them, what they can. Wherefore, he saith again, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Sin seeks for the dominion, and grace seeks for the dominion; but sin shall not rule, because it has no throne in the church among the godly. Grace is king, grace has the throne; and the people of God are not under the dominion of sin, but of the grace of God; the which they are implicitly bid to acknowledge, in that they are bid to come boldly to it for help: “That we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help;” to help, “in time of need.” For as from the hand and power of the king come help and succor to the subject, when assaulted by an enemy; so from the throne of grace, or from grace as it reigns, come the help and health of God’s people. Hence it is said again, “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.” Here, then, the saints take shelter from the roaring of the devil, from the raging of their lusts, and from the fury of the wicked. That also is a very notable place, “He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all our sins into the depth of the sea.” He speaks here as of God solacing himself in mercy, and as delighting himself in the salvation of his people, and that without comparison. “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” Thus are mercy and grace got into the throne — reign, and will assuredly conquer all; yea, will conquer, and that with a shout. Mercy rejoiceth against judgment; yea, glorieth when it getteth the victory of sin, and subdueth the sinner unto God and his own salvation; as is yet more fully showed in the parable of the prodigal son. But this briefly, to show you something of the nature of the terms, and what must necessarily be implied thereby.

We will in the next place show what is to be inferred from hence. And,

**1.** To be sure this is inferred, that converted men are not every way, or in every sense, free from the being of sin. For, were they, they need not betake themselves to a throne of grace for help. When it saith, there is grace in God, it inferreth, that there is sin in the godly; and when it saith, grace reigns, as upon a throne, it implies, that else sin would ascend the throne,

would reign, and would have the dominion over the children of God. This also is manifest, when he saith, “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” And the only way to prevent it is, to apply ourselves, as by the text we are directed, to the throne of grace for help against it.

**2.** The text implies, that at certain times the most godly, man in the world may be hard put to it, by the sin that dwelleth in him; yea, so hard put to it, as that there can be no way to save himself from a fall, but by imploring heaven, and the throne of grace, for help. This is called the needy time, the time when the wayfaring man that knocked at David’s door shall knock at ours; or when we are got into the sieve into which Satan did get Peter; or when those fists are about our ears which were about Paul’s; and when that thorn pricks us that Paul said was in his flesh. But why, or how comes it to pass, that the godly are so hard put to it at these times, but because there is in them, that is, in their flesh, no good thing, but consequently all aptness to close in with the devil and his suggestions, to the overthrow of the soul?

But now here we are presented with a throne of grace, unto which, as David says, we must continually resort; and that is the way to obtain relief, and to find help in time of need.

**3.** As Christians are sometimes in imminent danger of falling, so sometimes it is so, that they are fallen, are down, — down dreadfully, and can by no means lift up themselves. And this happeneth unto them because they have been remiss, as to the conscientious performance of what by this exhortation they are enjoined to. They have not been constant supplicants at this throne, for preserving grace; for had they, they should, as the text suggests, most certainly have been kept from such a fall; help should have been granted them in their needful time. But that is it of which such are guilty, which is written in the prophet Isaiah: “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Therefore, thou art profaned; therefore, thou art given to reproaches.”

Now, as they which are falling are kept from coming down, by coming to this throne of grace; so those that are fallen must rise by the scepter of love extended to them from thence. Men may fall by sin, but cannot raise up themselves without the help of grace.

Wherefore, it is worthy of our inquiry after a more thorough knowledge of this throne of grace, whence, as we may well perceive, our help comes, and by what comes from thence we are made to stand.

I therefore, come now to a more particular description of this throne of grace; and to show how the godly know, or may know it, from other thrones of God.

First, then, This throne of grace is the humanity, or heart and soul of Jesus Christ, in which God sits and resteth forever, in love towards them that believe in him; forasmuch as Christ did by the body of his flesh, when here, reconcile them unto the Father. “The key of David,” saith God, “will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his Father’s house.” “For a glorious throne to his Father’s house;” that is, for his Father’s family, to come to their Father by; for they shall always find him thereon; or, as another Scripture saith, “in him, reconciling them unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses.”

Nor is it possible, if we lay aside the human nature of Christ, for us to find any such thing as a throne of grace, either in earth or heaven; for then nothing can be found to be the rest of God. “This is my well beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” is God’s own language; but there is none other of whom he hath so said. Wherefore he resteth in him towards us, and in him only. Besides, grace cannot be extended towards us but in a way of justice; for the law and our sin obstruct another way. Lay the human nature of Christ aside, and where will you find that which shall become such a sacrifice to justice for the sin of men, as that God, for the sake of that, shall both forgive and cause that grace forever should reign towards us in such a way? It reigns through righteousness, or justice, by Jesus Christ, and no way else. Christ Jesus, therefore, is this throne of grace, or him, or that, by which grace reigns towards the children of God.

That Scripture also gives us a little light herein: “And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain.” This is to show the cause why grace is so freely let out to us, even that there stands there in the midst of the throne, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb, as it had been slain, or, as it was made a sacrifice for our sin; for, as a Lamb slain once, he now lives in the midst of the throne, and is the meritorious cause of all the grace that we enjoy. And though it seems by this text, that the throne is one thing, and the Lamb another, yet the Lamb of God is the throne, though not as a lamb or sacrifice, but as one that by his sacrifice has made way for grace to run like a river into the world. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is all. He is the throne, the altar, the priest, the sacrifice, and all. But he is the throne, the priest, the altar, and the sacrifice, under diverse considerations. He is not the throne as he is the priest; he is not the priest as he is the sacrifice; he is not the sacrifice as he is the altar; yet is truly all these. Yea,

there is no throne of grace, no high priest, no propitiatory sacrifice, but he. Of all which we may yet speak further, before we conclude this treatise.

I conclude, then, that Christ Jesus, in his human nature is this throne of grace. In his human nature, I say; he has by that completely accomplished all things necessary for the making way for grace to be extended to men; and that which is not only God's place of rest, but that by, and from which, as upon a glorious throne, his grace shall reign over devil, death, sin, hell, and the grave, forever:

This human nature of Christ is also called the tabernacle of God; for the fullness of the Godhead dwells in it bodily. It is God's habitation, and his dwelling place, his chair and throne of state. He doth all in, and by it, and without it he doth not anything. But to pass this, let us come to the next thing.

Secondly, We will now discourse of the placing of this throne of grace, that we may discover where it is erected. And for this we must repair to the type, which, as was said before, is called the mercy-seat; the which we find, not in the outward court, nor yet within the first vail; which signifies, not in the world, nor in the church on earth, but in the holy of holies, or after the second vail, signifying the flesh of Christ. There, then, is this throne of God, this throne of grace, and no where here below. And forasmuch as it is called the throne of God, of grace, and is there; it signifieth that it is the highest and most honorable. Hence Christ is said to be "far above all heavens, and to have a name above every name."

Wherefore, he that will come to this throne of grace, must know what manner of coming it is by which he must approach it; and that is, not personally, but by runnings out of heart; not by himself, but by his priest, his high priest; for so it was in the type. Into the holiest, where the mercy-seat was, went the high priest alone, that is, personally, and the people by him, had intercession made for them.

This, then, must be done by those that will approach to this throne of grace: they must go to God, as he is enthroned in Christ; by Christ, as he is the high priest of his church; and they must go to him in the holiest, by him.

But again, as this throne of grace is in the holiest, not in the world, not in the church on earth; so it is in this holiest set up above the ark of the testimony: for so was the mercy-seat. It was set up in the most holy place, above the ark of the testimony. The ark of the testimony! What was that? Why, it was the place of the law; the ark in which it was kept. The testimony was the law; the ark was prepared to put that in. This ark in which was put this law, was set up in the holiest, and the mercy-seat was set above it; for so was

Moses commanded to place them. “Thou shalt make an ark,” saith God, “and thou shalt make a mercy-seat: the ark shall be called the ark of the testimony, and there thou shalt put the testimony, which I give thee;” (that is, the law;) “and thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and there will I meet with thee, from above the mercy-seat, between the two cherubims which are upon,” that is, above, “the ark of the testimony, shadowing the mercy-seat.”

Thus, then, were things of old ordained in the type, by which we gather what is now to be minded in our worshipping of God. There was an ark made; and the two tables of stone, on which the law was writ, were put therein. This ark, with these two tables, were put into the holiest; and this mercy-seat was set above it. The Holy Ghost, in my mind, thus signifying that grace sits upon a throne; that is, higher than the law, above the law; and that grace, therefore, is to rule before the law, and notwithstanding all the sentence of the law; for it sitteth, I say, upon a throne, but the law sits on none; a throne, I say, which the law, instead of accusing, justifieth and approveth. For although it condemneth all men, yet it excepteth Christ, who in his manhood is this throne of grace. Him, I say, it condemneth not, but approveth, and liketh well his doings; yea, it granteth him, as here we see, as a throne of grace, to be exalted above itself; yea, it cannot but do so; because by wisdom and holiness itself, which is also the Lord of the law, it is appointed so to do. Here, then, is the throne of God, the throne of grace, namely, above the ark of the testimony. On this, God in his grace sits, reigns, and gives sinners leave to approach his presence for grace and mercy. He gives leave, I say, for those sinners so to do, that have washed before in the brazen laver that is prepared to wash in first; of which we may speak more anon.

Now, behold the wisdom of God in his thus ordaining things, in his placing, in the first place the law and Christ; the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat or throne of grace, so nigh together; for doubtless, it was wisdom that thus ordained them; and it might so ordain for these reasons:

1. That we that approach the throne of grace, might, when we come there, be made still to *remember that we are sinners*; (for by the law is the knowledge of sin;) and behold just before us is this ark, in which are the two tables that condemn all flesh: yea, we must look that way, if we look at all; for just above it is the mercy-seat or throne of grace. So then, here is a memento for them that come to God, and to his throne of grace, for mercy, namely, the law, by which they are afresh put in remembrance of themselves, their sins, and what need they have of fresh supplies of grace. I read that the laver of brass and the foot of it, were made of the looking-glasses of the women that were assembled at

the door of the tabernacle; methinks to signify, that all might see their own soilures when they came to wash: so here you see the law is placed with the mercy-seat, (only that stood above,) whereby those that come to the throne of grace for mercy, might also yet more be put in mind that they are sinners.

2. This also tendeth to *set an edge upon prayer*, and to make us the more fervent in spirit when we come to the throne of grace. Should a king ordain that the axe and halter should be before all those that supplicate him for mercy, it would put yet an edge upon all their petitions for his grace, and make them yet the more humbly and fervently implore his majesty for favor.

But, behold, the mercy-seat stands above! is set above the ark and testimony that is in it. Here, therefore, we have encouragement to look for good. For observe, though here is the law, and that too in the holiest of all, whither we go; yet above it is the mercy-seat or throne of grace triumphant, unto which we should look, and to which we should direct our prayers. Let us, therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, notwithstanding the ark of testimony is by; for the law cannot hurt us when grace is so nigh; besides, God is now not in the law, but upon the throne of grace that is above it, to give forth pardons, and grace, and helps at a time of need.

This, then, may serve to inform some whereabout they are, when they are in their closets and at prayer. Art thou most dejected when thou art at prayer? Hear me: thou art not far from the throne of grace; for thy dejection proceedeth from thy looking into the ark, into which God hath ordained, that whosoever looks shall die. Now, if thou, indeed, art so near as to see thy sins, by thy reading of thyself by the tables in the ark, cast but up thine eyes a little higher, and behold, there is the mercy-seat and throne of grace, to which thou wouldst come, and by which thou must be saved. When David came to pray to God, he said he would direct his prayer to God, and would look up. As if he should say; When I pray, I will say to my prayers, ‘O my prayers, mount up, stay not at the ark of the testimony, for there is the law and the condemnation; but soar aloft to the throne that stands above; for there is God, and there is grace displayed, and there thou mayst obtain what is necessary to help in time of need.’

Some, indeed, there be that know not what these things mean. They never read their sin nor condemnation for it, when they are upon their knees at their devotion; and so are neither dejected at the sight of what they are, nor driven with this sense of things to look higher for help at need; for need, indeed, they see none. Of such I shall say, they are not concerned in our

text, nor can they come hither, before they have been prepared so to do as may appear before we come to an end.