

THE PRIEST ORDAINED BY THE OATH OF GOD.

NO. 1597

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1ST, 1881,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) by so much Was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.” —
Hebrews 7:20-22.

THOSE Of you who read Scripture carefully will have noticed that the word “better” is one of the key-words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. You are constantly meeting with it. In the opening character we read that our Lord Jesus Christ is “made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” Look a little further and you are taught that he is better than Moses, inasmuch as Moses was faithful as a servant in the Lord’s house, but Christ as a Son over his own house. Further on we find our blessed Lord described as better than Aaron, while his blood is mentioned as speaking better things than that of Abel; and he is declared in our text to be the surety of a better covenant, of which it is said that it is established upon better promises. It would be a very delightful subject to work out the betterness of Christ, and of his blood, and of his covenant, and to show that however good other things may be they must all yield in excellence to him. It is implied in the use of the word “better” that the ordinances of the ceremonial law were good in their place, but Jesus is better than the best of all visible things: the eternal Christ is better than the best of all the temporal arrangements which God has made for the good of man. How much better what heart shall

conceive? “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.”

It behoves us, my dear brothers and sisters, to have a firmer faith than Old Testament saints, because we see more clearly our ground of trust. Those who lived in the comparative darkness of the previous dispensation were saved by faith, and among them there were not a few eminent believers, surely we also ought to excel in our confidence in God. Let the eleventh of Hebrews stand as a triumphal arch with the names of ancient believers recorded thereon: these all died in faith, and they were no mean men; but inasmuch as we enjoy a brighter light, and are living under a better economy, we are called upon to be their superiors in faith. Our faith should be clearer, calmer, stronger, more effectual in working; we should do greater things than these in the name of Jesus. Being endowed more richly with the Spirit of God, the modern church should attempt grander works than Israel ever thought upon, and so there should be a shining more and more unto the perfect day. If better are the promises, better and yet better should we be under accumulating obligations.

My object at this time will not be so much to enter into details of doctrine concerning our Savior’s priesthood as to utter practical truths, and press them on the heart. I shall not attempt to exhaust so wonderful a subject as the parallel between Melchisedec and Christ, but I shall try to strengthen the faith of believers, and also to leave unbelievers without excuse if they will not believe in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, confirming his mission by an oath. We want practical results this morning, and no practical result will content us but this, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. To this end were the Scriptures written, as saith the evangelist John, “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.” The object of the written word is also the object of the spoken word; we would have you hear, believe, and live. Vain are your reading and hearing unless they lead you up to a sincere reception of the witness of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ. Oh that you may not on this occasion hear in vain!

To our text, then, and may the Spirit of God graciously be with us in speaking upon it.

I. Men should believe in Jesus Christ with their whole heart, and rely upon him with unstaggering confidence: first, because of OUR LORD'S SPECIAL ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD. The Lord Jesus Christ was ordained to the priesthood, according to the hundred and tenth Psalm, in a manner distinct from all others. His ordination was unique, for neither Aaron, nor his sons, nor any of the priests of the tribe of Levi were ever ordained by an oath. Ceremonies most important, imposing, instructive, and impressive were performed, but there was no oath. God gave promises to the house of Levi, but he expressly stopped short of anything like an oath to them, not because his promise can be broken, but because that promise was conditional, and must not be confirmed by an oath, as though it constituted a perpetual engagement. But our Savior is made a priest by an oath, and it is written, as if to make it exceeding sure, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent"; not because God ever can or doth repent, or run back from his oath in any case, but for the confirmation of our faith in the immutability of his word it is expressly added, "He will not repent." By an oath which standeth fast for evermore Christ is made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

But why, my brethren, an oath for Jesus and none for other priests? First, because of the greater dignity of Christ above all other priests that ever were, for he is the Son of the Highest, as they were not. They were men that had infirmity, but he is sinless: they lived and died, and so were changed, but "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." They were ordained to be types and emblems, serving for the time of Israel's infancy, but he came as the "I am," the substance of the whole. They were mere men and nothing more, but Jesus counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though for our sakes he assumed our nature. It seemed becoming that God should settle him in the priesthood by an oath, seeing he is above all, and infinitely superior to all others that have ever exercised the priesthood. I tremble while I speak of the oath of God; for God's lifting his hand to heaven and swearing by himself, because he can swear by no greater, is something so solemn that one scarcely dares to think of it. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. The devout soul is full of awe at the bare thought of God in his most fatherly and ordinary acts, but how shall we think of the Lord girt with solemnity, resolute in purpose, stern in truth, as lifting his hand and taking an oath? Surely this is the innermost sanctuary of mystery, the holy of holies. This oath was for the honor of his dear Son as he assumed the sacred priesthood on behalf of the

sons of men. The glory of his character, the dignity of his work, the certainty of its accomplishment, and the supreme excellence of his motive in entering upon it, all lift up the priesthood of Christ out of the category of all human priesthoods, and therefore the eternal Father signalises it by a special mark of distinction, and himself makes oath that his only begotten Son is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Another reason is found in the eternal character of his work. The priesthood of Aaron and his successors was intended to be temporary. God did not confirm the priests of old in their offices, because he held in reserve the right to set them aside when he pleased, and he from the first intended that their functions should be abolished when the fullness of time should come for another and better priest to take their place. They were candles for the darkness, but the sun was to rise, and then they would not be needed: they were pictorial representations, but when the substance was come they would not be required. He allowed their priesthood to be one of imperfect men, because he intended by-and-by to supersede it by a perfect and enduring priesthood: hence no oath of God attended the ordination of the sons of Aaron. But our Lord Jesus Christ's priesthood, and all the economy which he has ushered in, was intended by God to be perpetual, therefore doth he confirm it with an oath. No end of days will ever happen to our High Priest, nor shall the economy of grace be supplanted by another and clearer revelation. It shall be developed from strength to strength, and we shall see greater things than these in the days of the personal reign and the millennial glory, but no new economy of grace shall overthrow the present. Think not, O ye ungodly, if ye reject Christ that there will yet come a Savior better than he; for you there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. I have heard men talk of "a larger hope": I believe it to be a larger lie than ordinary if it supposes more mercy than is revealed in Christ Jesus. There is no larger hope than that which Christ has revealed: if it had been so he would have told us. Stars can be excelled by other stars, but what shall outshine the sun? One human gospel can be eclipsed by another, but how can there be a more loving, tender, gracious gospel than that which is embodied in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," — is that message of grace to be exceeded, and is greater love yet to be revealed? No; the gospel is God's ultimatum: he will go no further: we have the last proclamation of mercy to men, the last Savior, the last foundation for

hopes to be built upon, the last fountain in which sin can be washed away, the last door of hope by which men shall escape from the guilt and punishment of sin. I beseech you, avail yourselves of it, for God has confirmed it with an oath that it may stand for ever: it is your one and only hope for eternity, lay hold upon it while you may. The oath of God sets forth the dignity of our Lord's person and the eternity of his office: see that ye despise not one who is thus great and abiding.

By an oath also was our Lord set apart, because of the reality of his priesthood, and the substance that dwelt in his sacrifice. As we have already said, the Levitical priesthood dealt only with the shadows of good things to come, and not with the very substance of the things. So to speak, the sacrificial bullock was not actually a sacrifice, but the representation of the sacrifice that was to come. The morning and evening lambs did not take away sin, but only mirrored the great blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. In very deed and truth, the men of the house of Aaron who attended at the visible altar were not actual priests before the real altar of the Lord, but only shadows of the true. The real altar is the person of Christ, the real sacrifice is the death of Christ, and the real priest is Christ himself. The images of heavenly things were glorious, but the glory of the things themselves dwells in Christ, and we behold that glory full of grace and truth. Fly, ye shadows, since it is clear that ye were meant to be so, for God did not establish you as abiding things. You did but predict and foreshadow, but you were not the blessings which ye pictured. In Christ is the actual putting away of sin, the effectual atonement, the real and efficacious substitution for guilty men, the redemption which actually redeems, the sacrifice which reconciles. In him dwells the truth of the matter: he is not prediction but fact, not promise but fulfillment. Oh, never listen for a moment to those who would spiritualize Christ himself, sad make out even his person and work to be a shadow. Certain teachers have risen who seem to look upon our Redeemer's life as a sort of allegory, an instructive parable, or a myth, out of which eclectic minds like theirs may spell out mystic truth. It cannot be so: Christ Jesus is a fact: God was on oath in human flesh: that mysterious person the Son of God, the Son of Mary, lived and loved and died and rose again: his sacrifice once offered has for ever put away sin, and it has bestowed upon him the power by his intercession to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. If I had been sent this day to be the preacher of the shadows of the law I would have done my best to obey my Master, but as I

am commissioned to preach absolute certainties I am full of delight, and resolved to speak boldly. We preach not fictions, dreams, or parables, but literal facts. What a joy I feel; a joy as true and unfeigned as the glad tidings I deliver! For real guilt here is actual atonement, and sure forgiveness; for access to God here is an open way, and a tender hand to guide you in it. Trifle not with that which is no trifle, lest haply when you come into real straits, and the waters of death are actually around you, you shall find the lack of the only friend who can effectually help you in your hour of need. Death and judgment are no fiction; seek therefore in very deed for the substantial grace which can bear you through. God confirms the priesthood of Christ by an oath because it is a real priesthood: I pray you cast your soul upon it by true and real faith.

But perhaps to usward the main reason of Christ's being installed in the priesthood by an oath of God is this, for the strengthening our faith. Brethren, an oath for confirmation among men is the end of all strife: when an honest man has sworn to it the testimony stands in evidence, and may not be questioned. When God not only gives his promise and his word, but swears to his declaration, who shall dare to doubt? Shall blasphemy go the length of accusing him of perjury, or shall profanity give him the lie in the teeth of his oath? There was no need for God to swear if there had not been in us a fearful lack of faith, but "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie" he hath given us strong consolation by swearing by himself that it shall be so. I do beseech you, since God's design is the confirmation of your faith, pray that your faith may be confirmed by it. No measure of faith in Christ can ever be too great. If we trust him blindly, implicitly, immeasurably, with every interest for time and for eternity, we cannot have ventured too far. He that is ordained with an oath may be rested on without fear: he cannot fail, it is not possible while God's own truth is staked upon his mission, and guarantees its success.

Beloved, ought not this great truth to bring many tremblers to believe in Jesus Christ? The Christ we preach is not an enthusiastic amateur who has come among men with high purpose but without commission, with good intentions but without authority; but God himself hath appointed him to his office and settled him in it, in the most solemn manner, swearing, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Will you not trust him with your soul since God entrusts him with his honor? Will you not accept the priest whom God himself has ordained? Will you not accept the sacrifice which he has presented, whose efficacy abides for ever before

God? I beseech you, men and brethren, as many of you as have not believed in Jesus Christ, look ye well to it that ye do not reject a gospel more certain than certainty itself. I know not how else to express the sureness of that to which God hath set no less a seal than his own oath. Right joyfully do we see the whole nature of the infinite God guaranteeing the office of our glorious high priest, for by swearing by himself the great Jehovah hath made his very being a hostage for the performance of the covenant of which Jesus is the surety, and put forward his own character for truth as the pledge of Christ's eternal priesthood. May no soul among us dare to refuse a priest so surely ordained to his office, and settled in it by Jehovah himself.

II. Secondly, we ought to believe on the Lord Jesus because OF THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HIS PRIESTHOOD. This is seen in the tenour of the divine oath, which runs thus: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Very briefly let me mention some of the respects in which our Lord Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. These ought all to be reasons for our faith, and I pray the Holy Spirit to use them for that purpose.

First, our Lord is of the order of Melchisedec as surpassing and superseding all other priests. As surpassing, — for Melchisedec comes before human view as priest of the Most High God, blessing Abraham, "and without doubt the less is blessed of the greater." Abraham, and Levi in his loins, pay Melchisedec homage. Now, whatever may be said about the priesthood of other men, there can be no doubt about the superior priesthood of Melchisedec. Abraham acknowledged it at once, so that before there were any Aaronic priests there was a greater priest. Before the foundation of the world, when there was no word concerning a priest of the house of Levi, our Lord Jesus Christ was looked upon by God as priest and sacrifice for men. It is not said, "Thou shalt be a priest," but "Thou, a priest for ever." The verb is left out, but the word "art," in the present tense, is correctly enough supplied by the translators. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." He was a priest before Aaron and his sons were born or thought of. Moreover, consider that the decree registered by the Psalmist in the hundred and tenth Psalm was published by revelation hundreds of years after the law had been given, so that it was not an old decree invalidated by the law of Moses, but a newly published decree abrogating in due time that which had gone before. Even while the law was in its palmy days, and the priest wore the Urim and the Thummim,

there was a note struck in the Psalms of David which intimated the ending of it all, because there was another priest, not of the house of Aaron, who surpassed all of them, being made a priest by oath, even while they were priests without an oath. Whatever priesthood there may have been of God's ordaining under the Old Testament, it was evidently all subordinate to the superior Melchisedec-priesthood of Jesus Christ our Savior, and was predestinated to give place to it.

It was a priesthood which united with itself the dignity of kingship. This Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, was king even as Jesus Christ is King of kings, as well as high priest over the house of God. He is, first, Melek Zadok, king of righteousness, setting up a kingdom of righteousness, and fulfilling all righteousness himself; and then is he King of Salem, or of peace, bringing peace to those that believe in him and follow after righteousness. Now, it is a main ground of trust in Jesus that he is King as well as Priest, with power in his arm as well as merit in his blood; with power to rule and govern and protect us, as well as with an efficacious sacrifice to purge our sins. We ought to trust implicitly in one whose royal omnipotence supports his sacred merit. Double faith should be bestowed on him who exercises the double office of the kingdom and the priesthood.

Our faith should also rest on the fact that our Lord was, like Melchisedec, "without father, without mother." We find no father or mother mentioned in the case of Melchisedec, because he did not come to the priesthood by natural descent as did the sons of Aaron; and in this he is the great type of Jesus, who is not one of a line, but the sole and only priest of his order. As a priest he is "without beginning of days or end of years," neither taking the priesthood from a predecessor, nor passing it on to a successor, nor laying it down because of old age.

There was no beginning to our Lord's priesthood, for the witness is "Thou art a priest for ever," and there will be no end to it, for even in the glory he

***"Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."***

Our Lord has not left off being a priest to-day, poor sinner. Come to him with your sins and seek reconciliation. He is able to hear your confession and grant you absolution: he will present your praise and offer your prayer,

for he ever liveth, and because of this he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Melchisedec had no predecessor, no assessor, and no successor; and so is it with our Lord. Of his order there was none before him, — he is the only priest of his line: none stood side by side with him, for he needed none; and none can be compared with him; by his one sacrifice he hath perfected all who accept his priesthood, and what more is needed? None can follow our Lord in his office. How can there be any successor to him, since he hath an endless life, and in the power of that endless life ever liveth to make intercession for us? Listen, ye that need a priest to reconcile you to God. Here is one ordained to that office from of old, who performs his office even now, and ceases not from it for a moment; who at this moment asks no help from you, nor from priest of Rome or Canterbury, or any other place, but is able himself alone, with his own precious blood and prevalent intercession, to save you to the uttermost.

This great priest of ours is Master of all, for as Melchisedec received homage from Abraham in the form of tithes, so doth our blessed Lord receive the reverence of all who believe. The day cometh when every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Therefore come and trust him: trust the Lord of all. O ye guilty ones, who desire salvation, I beseech you repose upon him, for he must reign, and you must either kiss him with the homage of your heart, or else he will break you as with a rod of iron in, the day of his power.

Perhaps one of the main points about Melchisedec is that he is represented as bestowing blessing. When he came to meet Abraham the chief thing he did was to bless the patriarch. The apostle does not refer to the bringing forth of bread and wine by Melchisedec, because he regarded it as a temporal blessing included in the greater spiritual one. Our Lord Jesus blesses all that trust him: blesses them with the riches of heaven and earth, with the eternal word which sustains their souls, and with supplies for this mortal life so that they live and praise him. It is inevitable that blessing should flow forth wherever he comes; he never touches without healing; he never speaks without consoling; he never comes to dwell with a man without enriching; he never belongs to a man without sanctifying and perfecting him. Oh, what a blessed priest he is! Who would refuse him, since he is all blessing? “Virtue has gone out of me,” said he, and virtue is

going out of him every day to the sons of men. "In him shall the families of the earth be blessed."

Once again, Christ is never to be changed or superseded. He is a priest for ever. As we read nothing of Melchisedec's having given up the priesthood, so depend upon it Christ never will lay down his office while there remains a single man to be saved. Once a priest always a priest" is true of the Lord Jesus Christ though true of nobody else. Once was be ordained, and none can put him from his priesthood as once the Father set him upon the hill of Zion as King, and the kings of the earth cannot dash him from his throne. O ye who pine for certainty and seek everlasting life, come and rest your everlasting hopes on his everlasting priesthood. That is my point all the way through. You have not to trust a mere man; you have not to rely upon one who will die, or leave his office to another who may not know you or care for you; but you are to trust one who cannot change or die. If I were called upon to be the advocate of human priests this morning, if I were ordained to tell you to trust to the shavelings of Rome, my tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth for lack of arguments: for what can there be in them that we should trust them? O sirs, the most brutish delusion in the world is to rely upon any priest of our own sinful race. I would as soon trust my salvation with the Norwood gipsy as with a Cardinal Archbishop. Her imposture is not so daring as his. What can priests do for us? "They can give absolution." The Lord absolve them from the blasphemy of such a pretense. There is one pardoning Priest, and there is none other under heaven. He hath made all his people in another sense to be priests unto himself; but as atoning priests, or as men that offer a propitiatory sacrifice, he hath ordained none, and all who pretend to such power must answer for it before the bar of God. Think ye of Roman and Anglican priests as of priests of Baal, and have no fellowship with such deceivers. Pray God to open their eyes that they may themselves be delivered from the delusion. As, for you and for me, let us keep to the one Melchisedec priest, and yield subjection to none other. In Jesus we are complete; to look elsewhere would be to dishonor his perfection.

III. I beg you next to notice that our text speaks OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE COVENANT UNDER WHICH OUR LORD OFFICIATES, in which, also, we shall find abundant argument for believing in Jesus. It says, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Learned men have fought each other very earnestly over the word translated "Testament." Some say that it means "testament;" others answer that in the Septuagint Greek it is

used as the interpretation of the Hebrew word which signifies “covenant.” I feel quite sure that the combatants are both right. I am always glad when I can conscientiously take both sides in a battle, and I do so in this instance, because it matters nothing which of the two conquers, though it would be a loss for either side to be defeated. The word means both testament and covenant. God’s covenant of grace has had the conditional side of it so completely fulfilled that it has virtually become a “testament,” or a deed of free gift, in which the one party is a donor and the other has become simply a receiver. Though the economy of grace is a covenant under one aspect, under another it is no covenant, now requiring something from each of two parties, but it has become a testament or will as to its practical result. The old covenant was on this wise: if the Israelitish people kept to God as their God, and if the priests obeyed his law and offered sacrifice according to divine rule, God would accept and bless them. Thus there was an “if” in the covenant. It was conditional, and therefore liable to failure. The people said, “All that thou hast spoken we will do.” Eagerly, with all hands up, they cried, “We will do it. We will do it all.” Within forty days they had broken the law, and to pieces went the covenant. A man’s covenant is sure to be broken if it promises holiness on the part of the sinful, and perseverance on the part of the fickle-minded. Man cannot bear the burden of the needful requirements of a covenant with God. Our great High Priest represents another and surer covenant. There is no “if” in the covenant of grace. It runs thus: “I will,” and “You shall.” That is the tenor of it. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Its essence lies in the supreme word, “I will.” Therefore, because the conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled it is in no danger of abrogation, and Christ Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant.

The first covenant was typical and shadowy: it was but a school lesson for children. Just as we give to our boys models of churches or models of ships, so was the ceremonial law a model of good things to come, but it did not contain the things themselves. Christ is no surety of a mere model or pattern of things in the heavens, but of a covenant which deals with the

heavenly things themselves, with real blessings, with true boons from God. The first covenant was temporary: it was meant to be so. It was meant in part to teach the coming covenant, and in part to show the weakness of man and the necessity of divine grace, but it was never meant to stand. This covenant of which Christ is the surety standeth for ever and ever. The everlasting hills may bow, and the heavens themselves be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, but God's covenant shall stand for ever and for ever while Christ its surety liveth.

The old covenant was a covenant in which there were imperfections, as Paul saith, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." In the economy of grace of which our Lord is the surety no fault can be found, and in it there is no fuel for decay to feed upon. There is nothing about it that is weak and unprofitable, for it is "ordered in all things and sure": "he taketh away the first," not that he may set up another which shall be removed in its turn, but "that he may establish the second." In this second we have covenant purposes from eternity unalterable, love infinite and changeless, promises sure and inviolable, and pledges given that can never be withdrawn, for the Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

How earnestly do I pray that you may have a part in this covenant! It includes all believers within its lines. O that you would believe and so lay hold upon the covenant once for all. If you have already believed, I pray you to rejoice in this covenant, and bless the Lord Jesus who has made it sure for you by his blood.

IV. Now of such a covenant or testament has Jesus Christ become the priest and surety, and with that we shall close, dwelling Upon THE RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH HE STANDS TO THAT COVENANT. This is our fourth point. I am sure we did not expect as we were reading this passage that we should come upon the word "surety." The apostle was speaking of our Lord as a priest, and he puts it thus, "By so much" — that is, by reason of his being inducted into his office by an oath — "was Christ made a surety of a better testament." However there is the word "surety," and

doubtless there is excellent reason for the unexpected turn in the sense. Testaments do not need sureties, therefore the passage should be read "covenant." But why did he turn from the idea of priesthood to that of suretyship? How is our Lord Jesus a surety?

He is so, first, because we are absolutely certain that the covenant of grace will stand because the Redeemer has come into the world and has died for us. Brethren, the gift of Christ is a pledge that the covenant, of which he is the substance, cannot be dissolved. Christ has been born into the world, God himself has become incarnate: that is done and can never be undone, how can the Lord draw back after going so far? More, Christ has died: he beareth in his flesh to-day the scars of his crucifixion: that also is done, and can never be undone. If God had ever meant that this covenant should be temporary he would never have given his Son to bleed and die as the substance of that covenant. It cannot be that so vast an expense should be laid out upon a transient business. Moreover, Jesus lives, and as long as he lives the covenant must be regarded as a reality. It cannot possibly be that a work should be regarded as a fiction when it has been wrought out by such an one as he is. The ever-living Son of God did not die to perform a mere representation: the abiding essence of the matter is in his work, and he lives to prove that it is so. The priests of the house of Aaron were poor sureties of the former covenant, for they could not keep it themselves, but Christ has kept the covenant of grace; he has fulfilled all that was conditional in it, and carried out all that was demanded on man's part. It was conditional that Christ should present a perfect righteousness and a perfect atonement: he has effected this to the fall, and now there is no "if" in it. The covenant now reads as a legacy, or a will, the will of God. the New Testament of the Most High. Christ has made it so, and the very fact that there is such a person as Jesus Christ the Son of man living, bleeding, dying, risen, reigning, is the proof that this covenant stands secure though earth's old columns bow.

But next, Christ is a surety on God's part. I know that divines say that God does not need any surety, that he is to be trusted without it. This is true, and he is to be relied upon without an oath, but even as he takes an oath for our sake, so he provides a surety for our sake that we may believe with stronger confidence. Christ is the bondsman of God on the Father's behalf, that the covenant shall be fulfilled. "Look," says the Father, "have you ever doubted me? Believe my Son. Have I not given him to you? Is he not one with you in your nature? Has he not died for you? Surely, if I seem too

great, and therefore too terrible for the grip of your faith, you may lay hold on the Well-beloved, your friend and kinsman; and you may see that I give him to be for me the pledge that I intend to keep the covenant of grace.” Now, as long, as there is a Christ, God’s covenant evidently stands fast, for all the promises are “Yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us”; and until it can be proven that Christ has ceased to be, no man that believes in him is in any mortal danger. Hath he not said it, “Because I live ye shall live also”? The life of every believing man and woman is bound up with the very existence of Christ, as the gift of God, and that existence is divine as well as human; and unless he can cease to be he cannot cease to love, and bless, and keep his people, and be for them all that a high priest and surety can be. He is God’s pledge to us that every word of promise shall stand.

But then mainly he is a surety of the new covenant on our behalf. Adam entered into a covenant with God for us, but that covenant went to pieces in a very short time. Then the second Adam became our covenant head and surety, and represented us before God. “Lo, I come,” saith he — this is the brief of it — “to stand in their stead, to roll away the reproach of thy law, and so to save that which is lost.” Now, the sinner is not saved in a way which casts a slight on justice, for Jesus has honored the law, and borne its penalty on the behalf of the men whom the Father gave him. It was a wonderful act of grace on Christ’s part thus to become our surety before the throne of justice, but he did, it and smarted for it, and fulfilled all that it involved. Beloved, I would not like to have gone to heaven over a broken law: no right-minded man could be eternally happy and yet know that the law of God had to be dishonored before he could be rescued from hell. What would the universe say but that God was unrighteous, for he had saved the ungodly, and tarnished the honor of his justice by allowing sin to go unpunished: thus proving that the law was needless, and the punishment superfluous. But now they cannot thus speak concerning any one of us who are saved in Christ Jesus. The saved one’s sins have been punished: every believer has borne the punishment of his guilt in the person of his great Substitute. The law is satisfied; we owe it nothing, for we have obeyed it actively and passively in the person of our surety. Even the infinite holiness of God can demand nothing of any believer but what the Lord beholds and accepts on the believer’s behalf in Christ Jesus our representative. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? God that justifieth? “No, the very act of justifying proves that he cannot lay

anything to our charge, for that would be to nullify his own act. “Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died?” What, condemn those for whom he has shed his atoning blood? Yea rather, Christ has risen again. Shall he condemn those whom he has justified by his resurrection? If so, he rose in vain. “Who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Shall he condemn those for whom he has taken possession of heaven, and for whom he offers perpetual intercession? Impossible! impossible! Our Surety then has rendered to the law the full of all its demands. Sing, O Zion; rejoice, O ye people of God, for God hath rendered unto you double for all your sins. In the person of your Substitute all that the law could demand has been exacted, and you are free. O blessed Melchisedec, high priest for ever living, we rejoice in thee as the surety of the covenant itself, and also the surety for both parties of that covenant, the guarantee on both sides, surety for God as thou art God, surety for man as thou art man, surety of the covenant as God-man in one divinely blessed person!

It comes to this, that we must believe in Jesus Christ and take him to be our priest, or be out of the covenant of grace. God will not deal with us without a Mediator, and “there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Will you have him? Will you have him, or for ever be excluded from the covenant of grace, and consequently condemned under the covenant of works, and cast away for ever and ever? Will you, O unbelievers, will you despise the oath of God? I spoke of it with trembling just now, feeling a solemn awe at the very mention of the oath of God. Will you give the lie to that oath? Will you say, “Thou hast sworn to Christ that he shall be priest, but he shall never be mine”? This would be the honest expression of what your heart feels if you refuse Jesus: will you venture so to speak? Will you reject heaven’s own appointed Savior, and deny the witness of the Lord? See that ye do not this, for the Lord your God is a jealous God; and if you touch his dignity, so far as to strike at his oath, what more atrocious crime can you commit? “He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” Will you refuse the ever-living Savior? Is there one here so foolish as to be trusting to another priest? Oh, can it be that you are so far gone as to look to a man instead of looking to the Son of God?

Dear friends, if Christ deigns to be priest for us we ought gladly to accept him: there ought to be a rash at him. We are bound to cry, “Great priest, intercede for me; let thy sacrifice avail for me; wash me in the cleansing

blood.” It ought to be a joy to all mankind to accept this heaven-sent Priest and Surety. Will you refuse him? Will you neglect his salvation? If you do so, remember you shut yourselves out from the better hope, and the better covenant, and the better promises: you are barring the door of heaven against yourselves. He who rejects the Savior commits eternal suicide: his blood shall be upon his own head. This shall be the hell of his hell, the very center of its fire, the worm that never dieth, that he himself put from him everlasting life, and counted himself unworthy of the kingdom, and would not have Christ whom with an oath God had set up, that whosoever believeth in him might live. God bless these all-important truths to every heart for Christ’s sake. Amen.