

is not discerned or credited.* The language of many persons is this—"I do not deny or question the perfection of Christ's work, and the freeness of his redemption—I have heard these things and am persuaded of them; and yet still I feel myself lost, and miserable, and helpless, and do not find that all this conveys any pleasure or satisfaction to my mind, for I have still many objections against myself, and many doubts and difficulties in my mind respecting my salvation." What these are or may be we shall soon attend to. But do you indeed believe the proper freedom of Divine grace?† How comes it to pass then, that you are not encouraged by and delighted with it, when it is certain it must be so in any similar case. If a person in great want be told of a free supply, or a person in debt, ready to be arrested, be told of a free, able, and willing surety, could this fail of giving him pleasure, hope, and satisfaction on his hearing and believing it? And if it did not, would not every bystander judge that there must be some mistake or doubt in his mind about it? There must, therefore, be some defect or mistake in our apprehension, if we have not some satisfying hope produced in our minds from the free gospel, of full salvation in Jesus Christ for a helpless undone sinner.‡

5. Let me then represent, as clearly as I can, what must be, or may be, the mistake or doubt in the minds of many.

* "For the most part when we come to deal with God for forgiveness, we hang in every briar of disputing, quarrelsome unbelief. This or that circumstance, this or that unparalleled particular, bereaves us of our confidence. Want of due consideration of Him with whom we have to do, measuring him by that line of our own imaginations, bringing him down to our thoughts and ways, is the cause of all our disquietments."—Owen on 130th Psalm.

† "If the Lord tenders you the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, do not say you cannot receive it; do not say you are not meet for it. The question is, are you in need of it? Are you not guilty? Receive it as a grace. The true reason why so many neglect right dealing with God for justification, and slight God's dealing with them about receiving it, is because their hearts stand at a distance from, and they have a sort of quarrel with mere grace. As it is certain that nothing but grace can save the sinner, so it is as certain there is nothing more unpleasing to the sinner than grace."—Trail, P. 29.

‡ "The truth is, that we but little enter into the real meaning of the words which we so often utter, *free love, or free grace*. Did we see anything of the depth of that last expression, doubting would cease. What is *grace* but favour to the *unworthy*? and what is *free grace* but that favour conferred entirely from the bounty of the giver, without respect to any prerequisite in the receiver? And who can be more *unworthy* than one who, day after day, remains

"The gospel affords not relief to my mind," says one, "because my sin and guilt have been greater than many, than most, or than *any* others. Mine iniquities have increased over my head, and my transgressions mount up to the very heavens. Look where I will, I can find no relief. Whether I look backward, inward, forward, or upward, all is dark and dreadful. My case is so peculiar, my sins are so aggravated, that I cannot apprehend that Divine grace should reach directly to such an one as me." I answer, are *any* guilty sinners excluded out of the proclamation of grace?‡ If they were, the gospel would cease to be glad tidings, not only to *you*, but to *every one* else; for we have *all* sinned and come short of the glory of God; and if God should mark iniquities, none could stand. You think that the gospel may be joyful tidings to others, but not to you. But why so? You say, "Because they are not so bad as I am, and have been." This is the same as to say, that because others are in some respects better than you, therefore they have more reason, and better ground to hope in Christ than you have. But whoever thinks thus, it is evident, does not apprehend the grace of God in Christ to be properly and directly free, and he imagines that he must be somewhat better than he is, before he may hope in Christ. But we are directly told, that Christ came into the world to save the *chief* of sinners; and that this faithful saying is worthy of all accep-

unmoved by love? Who should be of that class if he be not, whose very prayers and duties are sin? Who but those who know themselves unworthy, as you know yourself to be, can need favour shown to the *unworthy*? You answer, "If I felt myself unworthy, and sorrowed on this account, I should then be privileged to rest on this grace; but it is my utter want of feeling which convinces me that I must not take comfort from this consideration." Is not, then, your want of feeling one of the very worst signs of your state? Would not that of itself prove you wholly unworthy? And if you cannot even bring a wish, you must, indeed, come to *free* grace, since you are so entirely devoid of anything which can recommend you.

Again, you answer, that you would desire to do so, but that you do not truly believe in this free grace, or you know that you should rejoice to accept it, and that you find you cannot believe in it, your faith is so weak. Let, then, your want of faith be added to the countless list, still, still the free grace remains the same; you cannot pray, or read, or hear, or feel, or believe, but whilst grace means favour to the *unworthy*, and *free* is stamped on that favour, you must not, ought not to despair."—*Strong Consolation; or Letters to a Friend*.

* "The genuine gospel is a complete warrant for the most ungodly person to believe in Jesus.—Booth.