

prevents him from the enjoyment of the privileges of God's family. Take an example: There are found, in the word of God, "exceeding great and precious promises;" promises of a clean heart, and a right spirit; promises of complete recovery to the image of God; promises of being sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit; promises of being preserved blameless to the coming of the day of the Lord. And what hinders the man, who sees the beauty and excellency of holiness, and beholds it so clearly and abundantly promised—what hinders him from entering on the full possession of it? In some cases it may be want of perception of its beauty, and the possibility of attaining it; but, in general, it is want of faith.

Take another case. In some dark and cloudy day a man has yielded to temptation; he has committed sin, and he is filled with misery. But this, his guilt, he acknowledges; he does not attempt to palliate it; and it is the privilege of such a man to come to God as at first he came, and to obtain a renewal of that favor which he has forfeited. And what is it that induces him to postpone the application for this mercy to a future period? What prevents him approaching the fountain opened? What prompts him to seek to wear his stain away, instead of coming to have it washed away at once? Satan persuades him that the principle which thus keeps him from God his Father, who is waiting to be gracious to him, and receive him back to his favor, is *shame*, holy shame, ingenuous shame;—but it is really unbelief. We ought to be ashamed of having been negligent, of having been unfaithful, of having been sinners; but we ought not to be ashamed of coming to God for forgiveness; we ought to remember that these words belong to us—"These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins."

And I might observe, that unbelief operates, in a degree, in *believers* in Christ. It is so in cases of affliction, of trial, of difficulty. Believers are sometimes in circumstances in which they are ready to say, "My way is hid from the Lord: my God hath forgotten me!" in opposition to his word, who hath said, "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee!" But I cannot dwell longer on this part; and you can easily apply these remarks to other cases. I proceed,

II. TO JUSTIFY THE EXPRESSION OF ASTONISHMENT ON THE PART OF CHRIST.

It is said that "he *marvelled* because of their unbelief."—Unbelief is altogether unreasonable and unbecoming.

1. How unreasonable, for instance, was the *unbelief* which our LORD *witnessed* in the *days of his flesh*. The unbelief of these men at Nazareth was marked with great stupidity,

and chargeable with great folly. For, consider *what opportunities they had been favored with* of seeing our Lord's early character, and of listening to his propitious doctrines. The superior sanctity, which marked his childhood, ought to have made strong impressions on their minds; and ought to have led them to investigate carefully, and to receive honestly the convictions of their minds. And unbelief so blind as theirs was surely unreasonable. Consider, also, *their confession of his wisdom and power*. "From whence," exclaimed they, "hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that such mighty works are wrought by his hands?" The fact they admitted; the evidences were too strong to be resisted. Why, then, did they not at once proceed to draw the only rational inference, namely, that he was a divine person? Their unbelief was unreasonable. Advert, also, to the *nature of the excuses they presented* for it. They talked of the meanness of his education—of the poverty of his circumstances—of the narrowness of his means. Why, these were the very circumstances that ought to have induced faith. For if natural causes could not produce such surprising effects, how very rational to conclude that they were produced by supernatural causes. Then, *their possession of the ancient Scriptures* left them without excuse. They had the prophecies of Isaiah; and they might have read them if they had not wilfully neglected so to do. His fifty-third chapter would have told them that Christ was to be "as a root out of a dry ground," that he would be destitute of any outward "form, or comeliness, or beauty" which should lead them to "desire him." All this justifies the strong sensation of surprise, on the part of our Savior, at so much insensibility. "He marvelled;" he who well knew what was in man, and how depraved and how very unreasonable man naturally was—even He was surprised; even the Searcher of hearts "*marvelled*, because of the unbelief!" they manifested!

2. *The same unreasonableness attaches to modern as to ancient unbelief.* Let us consider this in reference to the various descriptions of unbelief we noticed in the first part of the discourse.

First. On what do our modern infidels rest their unbelief? Do they plead WANT OF EVIDENCE? How base and ungrounded is their assertion! Let them study our Christianity; let them institute a strict comparison between its various parts; let them look at the long chain of prophecies by which it was introduced; let them consider the miracles by which its verity was attested—its pure salutary truths and doctrines; let them mark the astonishing rapidity of its early progress—its progress in opposition to all obstructions, and to the most determined hostility; and that it came not with any appeal to the passions, or proclaiming any truce to the