

close with them, and rest on them alone, not seeking for or closing with Christ in those promises, which is a common error among people, and is like as if Noah's dove should have rested upon the outside of the Ark, and not have come to Noah within the Ark, where, though she might rest for a while, yet could she not ride out all storms, but must needs have perished there in the end. But we may observe that the first promise which was given was not a bare word simply promising forgiveness, or other benefits which God would bestow; but it was a promise of Christ's person as overcoming Satan, and purchasing those benefits: "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head." So, when the promise was renewed to Abraham, it was not a bare promise of blessedness and forgiveness, but of that seed—that is, Christ, Gal. 3: 16—in whom that blessedness was conveyed: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." So that Abraham's faith first closed with Christ in the promise, and therefore he is said to see Christ's day, and to rejoice in embracing Him. And so all the succeeding fathers, that were believers, did, more or less, in their types and sacraments, as appears by 1 Cor. 10: 1, 2. And if they, then much more are we thus to look at Christ, unto whom now He is clearly made known, not in promises only, but is really incarnate, though now in heaven. Hence our sacraments, which are the seals added to the word of faith, do primarily exhibit Christ unto a believer; and so, in Him, all other promises, as of forgiveness, &c., are ratified and confirmed by them. Now, there is the same reason of them that there is of the promises of the gospel; for they preach the gospel to the eye, as the promise doth to the ear; and therefore, as in them the soul is first to look at Christ, and embrace Him as tendered in them, and then at the promises tendered with Him in them, and not to take the sacraments as bare seals of pardon and forgiveness; so, in like manner, in receiving of or having recourse to a promise which is the word of faith, we are first to seek out for Christ in it as being the foundation of it, and so to take hold of the promise in Him. Hence faith is still expressed by this its object, Christ—it being called faith in Christ. Thus Philip directs the eunuch, "Believe on the Lord Jesus," Acts 8: 31. The promise is but the casket, and Christ the jewel in it: the promise but the field, and Christ the pearl hid in it, and to be chiefly looked at. The promises are the means by which you believe, not the things on which you are to rest. And so, although you are to look at forgiveness as held forth in the promise, yet you are to believe on Christ in that promise to obtain that forgiveness. So it is said of believers by Christ Himself, "That they may obtain forgiveness of sins by faith that is in me," Acts 26: 18.

And, to clear it farther, we must conceive

that the promises of forgiveness are not as the pardons of a prince, which merely contain an expression of his royal word for pardoning, so as we, in seeking of it, do rest upon, and have to do only with, his word and seal which we have to show for it; but God's promises of pardon are made in His Son, and are as if a prince should offer to pardon a traitor upon marriage with his child, whom, in and with that pardon, he offers in such a relation,—so as all that would have pardon, must first seek out for his child: and thus it is in the matter of believing,—the reason of which is, because Christ is the grand promise, in whom "all the promises are yea and amen," 2 Cor. 11: 29, and therefore he is called the covenant, Isaiah 49: 1. So that, as it were folly for any man to think that he hath an interest in an heiress' land because he hath got the writings of her estate into her hands (whereas the interest in the lands goes with her person, and with the relation of marriage to her,—otherwise, without a title to herself, all the writings will be fetched out of her hands again); so is it with all the promises: they hang all upon Christ, and without Him there is no interest to be had in them: "He that hath the Son hath life," 1 John 5: 12, because life is, by God's appointment, only in Him, as verse 11. All the promises are as copyhold land, which, when you would interest yourself in, you inquire upon what lord it holds, and you take it up of him, as well as get the evidences and deeds for it into your hands. The lord of it will be acknowledged for such, in passing his right into your hands. Now, this is the tenure of all the promises: they all hold on Christ, in whom they are yea and amen, and you must take them up of Him. Thus the apostle preached forgiveness to men: "Be it known that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." And as they preached, so we are to believe, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 15: 11. And without this, to rest on the bare promise, or to look to the benefit promised without eyeing Christ, is not an evangelical but a Jewish faith, even such as the formalists among the Jews had, who, without the Messiah, closed with promises, and rested in types to cleanse them, without looking unto Christ the end of them, and as propounded to their faith in them. This is to go to God without a Mediator, and to make the promises of the gospel to bear the promises of the law. Nehushtan, as Hezekiah said of the brazen serpent, a piece of brass vain and ineffectual; like the waters of Bethesda, they heal not; they cleanse not, till this Angel of the Covenant come down to your faith in them. Therefore, at a sacrament, or when you meet with any promise, get Christ first down by faith, and then let your faith propound what it would have, and you may have what you will of Him.—*Goodwin's "Christ set forth."*