

Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever

A Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

Hebrews xiii. 8. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

The exhortation, which the apostle gives the Christian Hebrews in the verse preceding this, is to remember and follow the good instructions and examples of their ministers, “Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” The last part of this exhortation is to follow their faith. By following their faith, the apostle seems to intend adhering to the Christian faith, and those wholesome doctrine which their pastors taught them, and not depart from them, as many in that day had done, to heretical tenets. And the enforcement of the doctrine is in these words, “Considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” Christ is the end of their conversation, he is the end of their conversation in their office, the end of the doctrine which they taught, and the end of all their administrations, and all their labours in all their work. And as he was so, they ought to follow their faith, or cleave steadfastly to the doctrine they had taught them, and not depart to other doctrine; for Jesus Christ was the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

If they still professed to be Christians or the followers of Jesus Christ, then they should still cleave to the same doctrine that they were taught in their first conversion; they should still follow the faith of them, who had first indoctrinated them in Christianity; for Jesus Christ was the same now that he was then, and therefore, Christianity was obviously the same thing. It was not one thing now and another when they were first converted, or even like to any other thing than it always had been. Surely therefore, when Christ and Christianity were thus unchangeable, he would therefore have them not fickle and changeable in their faith, not depart from their former faith, nor be carried about with divers and strange doctrine, as it follows in the next verse.

When it is said that Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, by *yesterday* is meant *all time past*; by *today*, *the time present*; and by *for ever*, *all that is future*, from the present time to eternity.

Doctrine

Jesus Christ is the same now that he ever has been and ever will be.

Christ is thus unchangeable in two respects.

I. In his divine nature. As Christ is one of the persons of the Trinity, he is God, and so hath the divine nature, or the Godhead dwelling in him, and all the divine attributes belong to him, of which immutability or unchangeableness is one. Christ in his human nature was not absolutely unchangeable, though his human nature, by reason of its union with the divine, was not liable to those changes to which it was liable, as a mere creature; as for instance, it was indestructible and imperishable. Having the divine nature to uphold it, it was not liable to fall and commit sin, as Adam and the fallen angels did, but yet the human nature of Christ, when he was upon earth, was subject to many changes. It had a beginning; it was conceived in the womb of the Virgin; it was in a state of infancy, and afterwards changed from that state to a state of manhood, and this was attended not only with a change on his body, by his increasing in stature, but also on his mind; for we read that he not only increased in stature but also in wisdom. Luke ii. 52. And the human nature of Christ was subject to sorrowful changes, though not to sinful ones. He suffered hunger, and thirst, and cold; and at last he suffered dreadful changes by having his body tortured and destroyed, and his soul poured out unto death; and afterwards became subject to a glorious change at his resurrection and ascension. And that his human nature was not liable to sinful changes, as Adam's or the angels', was not owing to anything in his human nature, but to its relation to the divine nature which upheld it. But the divine nature of Christ is absolutely unchangeable, and not liable to the least alteration or variation in any respect. It is the same now as it was before the world was created. It was the same after Christ's incarnation as before, when Christ was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, and underwent many changes on earth, and at last suffered that dreadful agony in the garden, and suffered on the cross; it made no real alteration in the divine nature; and afterwards when Christ was glorified, and sat on the right hand of the Majesty on high, it made no alteration in his divine nature.

II. Christ is unchangeable in his office. He is unchangeable as the Mediator and Saviour of his church and people. That unchangeableness of Christ in his office of Mediator, appears in several things.

1. This office never ceases to give place to any other to come in his room: Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, that ever has been or ever shall be. He is an everlasting Saviour. There have been typical mediators many, that have continued but a little while, and then have passed away, and others have come in their room; but the great antitype continues for ever. There have been prophets, that have been raised up, and these have died, and others have succeeded them.

Moses was not suffered to continue by reason of death; and the dispensation which he introduced was abolished, to give place to another which Christ should introduce. Moses gives place to Christ, but Christ never gives place to any other. John the Baptist was a great prophet. He was Christ's forerunner; like the morning star, the forerunner of the sun, he shone bright a little while, but his ministry by degrees ceased, and gave way to the ministry of Christ, as the morning star by little and little goes out as the sun rises. John iii. 30. John the Baptist says, " He must increase, but I must decrease." But Christ's ministry never ceases. So the ancient legal priests, they had but a changeable and short lived priesthood. Aaron died, and his son Eleazar succeeded in his room; and so there were many priests, one after another; but Christ continues a priest for ever. Heb. vii. 23, 24. "And they truly were many priests; and they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but Christ, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." These legal priests succeeded one another by inheritance; the father died and the son succeeded him, and then he died and his son succeeded him; but it is observed that Christ, in his priesthood, " is without father and without mother, without descent." He had no ancestor that went before him in his priesthood, or any posterity that should succeed him in it. In that respect, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, of whom the Scriptures give us an account, that he was a priest, but seems not to have been a priest by inheritance, as the sons of Aaron were: as Heb. vii. 3. "without father, and without mother, and without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually:" and therefore it is said of Christ, Psal. cx. 4. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Those things that

appertain to Christ's priesthood are everlasting. The tabernacle at which the priests of old officiated, was a tabernacle that men pitched, and therefore a tabernacle that was taken down. It was the holy of holies of old; but Christ is a minister of the true tabernacle and the true sanctuary, which the Lord hath built, and not man. Heb. v. 2. The holy of holies he entered into was *heaven*; he is priest in a tabernacle which shall never be taken down, and in a temple that shall never be demolished. So the altar on which he offers incense, the priestly garments or robes in which he officiates, are not of a corruptible nature. And so Christ is everlasting with reference to his kingly office. David and Solomon were great kings, and eminent types of Christ: but death put an end to their kingdom and greatness. Earthly monarchies that ever have been, those that have ruled over the bigger part of the known world, as particularly the Grecian and Roman monarchies, they have come to an end, but Christ's is an everlasting kingdom, his throne is for ever and ever; Heb. i. 8. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Though all other kingdoms shall be demolished, Christ's kingdom shall stand for ever. Dan. vii. 13, 14.

2. Christ is at all times equally sufficient for the office he hath undertaken. He undertook the office from eternity, and he was sufficient for it from eternity. He has been in the exercise of his office from the fall of man, and remains equally sufficient throughout all ages. His power and his wisdom, his love, his excellency, and worthiness, is at all times equally sufficient for the salvation of sinners, and for the upholding and glorifying of believers. He is for ever able to save, because he lives for ever. His life is an endless and unchangeable life. He is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb. vii. 16. He is at all times equally accepted as a Mediator in the sight of the Father, who is ever well pleased in him. He is always equally worthy and lovely in his eyes. He is daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. The sacrifice that he has offered, and the righteousness that he has performed, is at all times equally sufficient. His blood is as sufficient to cleanse away sin now, as when it was warm from his wounds.

3. He is now, and ever will be, the same that he ever has been, in the disposition and will which he exercises in his office. He is not changeable in his disposition, as men are that are called to any office or business, which causes them to appear and act very differently in their offices at some times, from what they, do at others. But Jesus Christ is, in this respect,

the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is ever disposed to execute his office in a holy manner. He ever has been, still is, and ever will be, disposed to execute it so as to glorify his Father, to discountenance sin, and to encourage holiness. He ever exercised the same grace and mercy in his office. He undertook the office of a Mediator from eternity with delight. He then delighted in the thoughts of saving sinners, and he still delights in it; he never has altered from the disposition to accomplish it. When man actually fell and became a rebel and an enemy, an enemy to his Father and himself; still it was his delight to do the part of a Mediator for him. And when he came into the world, and came to his last agony; when the bitter cup that he was to drink was set before him. and he had an extraordinary view of it, so that the sight of it made " his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and caused him to " sweat as it were great drops of blood:" still he retained his disposition to do the part of a Mediator for sinners, and delighted in the thoughts of it; so, even when he was enduring the cross, the salvation of sinners was a joy set before him. Heb. xii. 2. And he never alters from his readiness to receive and embrace all that do in faith come to him; he is always equally willing to receive such. His love is unchangeable; he loved from eternity: Jer. xxxi. 3. he loved with an everlasting love; and it will be to eternity. John xiii. 1. "Having loved his own he loved them unto the end."

4. Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, as to the end which he aims at in his office. His supreme end in it is the glory of God; as particularly in vindicating the honour of his majesty, justice, and holiness, and the honour of his holy law. For this end did he undertake to stand as a Mediator between God and man, and to suffer for men, viz. that the honour of God's justice, majesty, and law may be vindicated in his sufferings. And he also undertook the office to glorify the free grace of God; and his special end in his undertaking was the salvation and happiness of the elect.

These two ends he has in his eye in all parts of the work of his office; and these two ends he unchangeably aims at. These he sought on entering into covenant with the Father from eternity. These he has sought from the beginning of the world to this time, and these he ever will seek. He does not sometimes pursue one end, and then alter his mind and pursue another; but he ever pursues the same ends.

5. Christ ever acts by the same rules in the execution of his mediatorial office.

The rules that Christ acts by, in the execution of his office, are contained in a twofold covenant.

(1.) The covenant of redemption, or the eternal covenant that was between the Father and the Son, wherein Christ undertook to stand as Mediator with fallen man, and was appointed thereto of the Father. In that covenant, all things concerning Christ's execution of his mediatorial office, were agreed between Christ and his Father, and established by them. And this covenant or eternal agreement, is the highest rule that Christ acts by in his office; and it is a rule that he never in the least departs from. He never does anything, more or less, than is contained in that eternal covenant. Christ does the work that God gave him to do in that covenant, and no other: he saves those, and those only, that the Father gave him in that covenant to save; and he brings them to such a degree of happiness as was therein agreed. To this rule Christ is unchangeable in his regard; it stands good with Christ in every article of it, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

(2.) Another covenant that Christ has regard to in the execution of his mediatorial office, is that covenant of grace which God established with man. Though indeed this be less properly the rule by which Christ acts as Mediator, than the covenant of redemption, yet it may be called a rule. God does, as it were, make his promises which he makes to his creatures, his rule to act by: *i.e.* all his actions are in an exact conformity to his promises, and he never departs in the least degree from them, as is the case with men with regard to what they make the rule of their actions. Yet it is not a rule to God in the same sense as a rule is to a created agent, which must be considered as something antecedent to the purposes of the agent, and that by which his purposes are regulated. But God's promises are consequent on his purposes, and are no other than the expressions of them. And the covenant of grace is not essentially different from the covenant of redemption: it is but an expression of it: it is only that covenant of redemption partly revealed to mankind for their encouragement, faith, and comfort. And therefore the fact that Christ never departs from the covenant of redemption, infers that he will never depart from the covenant of grace; for all that was promised to men in the covenant of grace, was agreed on between the Father and the Son in the covenant of redemption.

However, there is one thing wherein Christ's unchangeableness in his office appears: that he never departs from the promises that he hath made to man. There is the same covenant of

grace in all ages of the world. The covenant is not essentially different now from what it was under the Old Testament", and even before the flood; and it always will remain the same. It is therefore called an everlasting covenant, Isa. lv. 3.

And as Christ does not alter his covenant, so he unchangeably fulfils it: he never departs in the least jot or tittle. Though he has given exceedingly great and precious promises to those that believe in him, he ever fulfils them all. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of his promises shall fail, till all be fulfilled. It is especially on account of his unchangeable-ness with respect to his promises, that he styles himself, "*I am that I am*," and is called "*Jehovah*," Exod. iii. 14. and vi.3. Christ revealed himself to the children of Israel, in their Egyptian bondage, by this name, to encourage the people that he would fulfil his promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

5. He is in many respects unchangeable in the acts which he exercises in his office. He is unchangeable in his acceptance of those that believe in him, and never will reject them; and he is unchangeable in his complacency and delight in them. He is unchangeable in his intercession for his church and people. He ever lives to make intercession. Heb. vii. 25. His intercession before God in heaven is a continual intercession. It is a constant presentation of his will before the Father for the salvation and happiness of those that are his in the virtue of his blood. And as Christ is unchangeable in his intercession, so he is unchangeable in upholding and preserving those that are his, and ordering all things for their good, until they are brought to his heavenly glory. He is constant and unchangeable in taking care of them in all respects, and will hereafter receive them to a constant and unchangeable enjoyment of himself.

Application

I. We learn from the truth taught in the text, how fit Christ was to be appointed as the surety of fallen man. Adam, the first surety of mankind, failed in his work, because he was a mere creature, and so a mutable being. Though he had so great a trust committed to him, as the care of the eternal welfare of all his posterity, yet, not being unchangeable, he failed, and transgressed God's holy covenant. He was led aside, and drawn away by the subtle temptation of the devil. He being a changeable being, his subtle adversary found means to

turn him aside, and so he fell, and all his posterity fell with him. It appeared, therefore, that we stood in need of a surety that was unchangeable, and could not fail in his work. Christ, whom God appointed to this work, to be to us a second Adam, is such an one that is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and therefore was not liable to fail in his undertaking. He was sufficient to be depended on as one that would certainly stand all trials, and go through all difficulties, until he had finished the work that he had undertaken, and actually wrought out eternal redemption for us.

II. This truth may be well applied to the awakening of those who profess to be Christians, and this on several accounts. You may be hence assured that Christ will fulfil his threatenings that he has denounced against unbelievers. There are many awful threatenings which Christ has denounced against wicked men. Christ has threatened woe to this wicked world; Matt. xviii. 17.; and has declared concerning all, that do not believe, that they shall be damned. This is that which Christ gave in charge to his disciples before his ascension, when he sent them forth to preach, and teach all nations. Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." So Christ declares that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire. Matt. vii. 18. And he has especially threatened an awful punishment to gospel sinners. He has declared that every branch in him that beareth not fruit shall be cut off, and cast forth, and gathered up and burnt; and that, however wicked men and false Christians may dwell among the godly, as tares grow among wheat, yet when the harvest comes, and the wheat is gathered into the barn, the tares shall be gathered into bundles, and burnt. Matt. xiii. 30. And in the explication of the parable, he says, that, at the day of judgment, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," ver. 41, 42. So he declares in Matt. viii. 21. concerning those visible Christians that say to him, "Lord, Lord," and that do not do the will of his Father which is in heaven, that he will hereafter profess unto them, that he never knew them, and that he will say unto them, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity;" and that those that build their house on the sand shall fall, and that great shall be their fall; and that such as these shall see many coming from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south,

and sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out; and he teaches in his parables that unprofitable servants, and those that as professing Christians come to the gospel feast without the wedding garment, shall be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. He often denounces woe on hypocrites; and threatens concerning such as begin a life of religion and do not finish, and are not thorough and persevering in it, that they shall come to shame; that those who are foolish virgins, that take their lamps and take no oil with them, shall at last be shut from the marriage when others enter in with the bridegroom, and that when they come to the door they shall find it shut, and shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," in vain; and that, at the day of judgment, Christ shall separate the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, setting the righteous on the right hand, and the wicked on the left; and that he shall say to the wicked, "Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. And particularly he has threatened concerning them that have not a spirit of self-denial, that do not cut off a right hand or a right foot, nor pluck out a right eye, that they shall go with two hands, or two feet, or two eyes, into hell-fire, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And that those that have not a spirit to sell all for his sake, and that do not in comparison of him hate father, and mother, and wife, and every earthly relative and earthly possession, shall not be acknowledged of him as his disciples.

And concerning those that are ashamed of religion before men, that of them will he be ashamed before his Father and before the angels: and concerning those that are of a revengeful spirit, and not of a spirit of forgiveness, that they shall not be forgiven: and concerning all that are of a malicious spirit, and not of a spirit of Christian love and meekness, that are of an angry, wrathful, and scornful disposition, that say to their brother, "Raca," or "Thou fool;" that they shall be in danger of everlasting punishment proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes. And concerning worldly-minded men he has declared, that 'tis impossible for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. Concerning such he has said, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation; and woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger;" and concerning such as are addicted to carnal mirth and jollity, he says, "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall

mourn and weep.” And he has abundantly declared concerning gospel sinners, that their punishment shall be far more dreadful than that of the worst of the heathen; that it shall be more tolerable even for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them; and he has declared that those, that are once cast into hell, shall in no wise come out thence, until they have paid the uttermost farthing. Such things as these did Christ threaten against the ungodly when he was here upon earth. And by the doctrine of the text you learn, that he now is and ever will be the same that he was then. He has not at all altered, no, nor ever will; but these dreadful things, that he has threatened, he will surely fulfil. Christ was no more disposed to threaten, than to fulfil his threatenings. Christ is as holy, and his nature and will is as averse to sin now as ever it was; and he is as strictly just now as he was then. Therefore, let no Christless person flatter himself, that, continuing such, he shall by any means escape punishment. Christ’s threatenings are the threatenings of one, that is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and what he has threatened with his mouth he will fulfil with his hands. When Christ appears at the day of judgment, and you shall stand at his bar to be judged, you will find him in judging, just what he was, and just what you find him in your Bibles, in threatening.

III. The truth in the text may be applied by way of reproof.

1. To those that have been heretofore under awakenings, but have now become senseless and careless. This doctrine shows your folly. You act as if Christ were altered, as though he were not now so dreadful a Judge, and his displeasure not so much to be feared, as heretofore. Time was, when you were afraid of the displeasure and wrath of Christ. You were afraid of the dreadful sentence from his mouth, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” And why is it so much otherwise with you now? Is not the wrath of this Judge as much to be dreaded now, as ever it was? Time was, when those threatenings, that Christ has denounced against sinners, were terrible things to you; and why do you make so light of them now? Is this your great Judge grown weaker than he was, and less able to fulfil his threatening? Are you less in his hands than you were; or do you imagine that Christ is become more reconciled to sin, and has not such a disposition to execute vengeance for it as he had? Time was, that you seemed to feel yourself to be in lamentable circumstances that you had not an interest in Christ, and to have a great mind to get an interest in him. You sought it, and prayed to God daily for it, and took considerable pains, and went and

asked others, what you should do to obtain an interest in Christ. Why is it that you are so much more careless about it now? Is Christ altered; is an interest in him less valuable, or less necessary, now, than it was then? Was acceptance with him worth earnestly seeking, and praying, and striving for then, and is it good for nothing now? Did you stand in great need of it then, and can you do well enough without it now?

Time was when you seemed to be much concerned about your having been guilty of so much sin against God and Christ, and, it may be, wept about it in your prayers. But now, you are not concerned about it. The thought of your having so often and so greatly offended him, does not so much trouble you, but that you can be easy and quiet, and have your heart taken up about one vanity or another, without being very much disturbed with the thoughts of your sins. Then you used to be careful to avoid sin; you were watchful to avoid those things that were forbidden in God's holy word; you were careful that you did not sin by profaning the Sabbath, or by unsuitably spending the time in God's house, or by neglecting the duties of reading and prayer. You were careful of your behaviour among men, lest you should transgress. If you suspected anything to be sinful then, you dared not do it. But now there is no such care upon your spirit, there is no such watch maintained, you have no such guard upon you. But when you are tempted to do or omit anything, it is not a thought coming with weight upon your heart, "Is this sinful or not?" "Is this contrary to the mind and will of God, or not?" You do not dwell long on such kind of thoughts as these; you are grown very bold, and live in neglects and practices that are sinful, and that you have light enough to know to be so: just as if you thought that Christ's disposition, with respect to sin, was altered; and that he was less an enemy to sin now than he was then. Instead of being less an enemy to sin than you then thought he was, and instead of being a less dreadful Judge of ungodly men than you then imagined, or had a sense of in your heart, he is a thousand times more so: for then, when you was most awakened and convinced, you conceived out very little of what is in reality; you apprehended very imperfectly the enmity of Christ's nature against sin, and the dreadfulness of his wrath against the ungodly. It was but a little sense you had of it. His wrath is infinitely more dreadful than ever you have yet had any conception of. And though Christ be unchangeable, yet you are not. You are changed for the worse, since the time when you were awakened. Christ is equally an enemy of sin, and you are become more sinful than you then were. Christ's wrath is in itself equally dreadful as it

then was; but you have far more reason to dread it than you had then, for you are in much greater danger of it; and, if you do not repent, are much nearer to the execution of it. And not only so, but you are now exposed to much more of that wrath. Christ's wrath hung over your head then, and so it does now, but with this difference, that now much more of that wrath hangs over you than did then. You hung over the pit of hell then, and so you do now; but with this difference, that you have ever since been kindling and enraging the flames of that fiery gulf over which you hang, so that they are vastly fiercer than they were then; and the moth of time has been nibbling at that slender thread ever since, and has much nearer gnawed it off than it had then. And your heart is far more hardened than it was; and the devil has faster hold of you, and the way to escape is more blocked up; and your case upon many accounts is inexpressibly more doleful, however much more careless and unconcerned you are about your own circumstances.

2. This doctrine reprove all that have entered into the bonds of the Christian covenant, and have proved false to it. If Christ be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and is always the same towards us in fulfilling as he is in promising, then surely we ought to be so towards him. If he never breaks covenant with his people, then they are greatly to be reprov'd who are false and treacherous in their dealings with him. Therefore this reprove a covenant people that depart from Christ, and break covenant with him; as we in this land have done, having greatly revolted and degenerated both from the pure profession and religious practice of the first times of the country. Though Christ and his doctrine, and the religion that he taught, are always the same, yet this country has great multitudes in it that are driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and has now for a long time been exceedingly corrupted by the prevalence of many evil customs and practices.

And by this doctrine is every particular person reprov'd, that does not take care to keep covenant with Christ. We are in general under the solemn bonds of our baptismal covenant; and that covenant, that was sealed in our baptism, most of us have explicitly own'd, and expressly and solemnly promised to walk in, in a way of obedience to all the commands of God, as long as we live; and have, time after time, in the most solemn manner, sealed this covenant anew, by taking the body and blood of Christ upon it at the Lord's supper. They bring dreadful guilt on themselves who are not careful to fulfil such vows; they that have solemnly vow'd to obey Christ in all his commandments as long as they live, and have sealed

these vows by eating and drinking at the Lord's supper with far greater solemnity than if they sealed it with as many solemn oaths, yet live in ways of sin, live in the neglect of several commanded duties, and in the commission of forbidden sin; or at least do not make it the care of their lives strictly to keep Christ's commands; surely such persons render themselves very guilty.

3. This doctrine reproves those that have been seemingly pious, and have fallen away to ways of sin. Who these persons are, their own consciences are better able to judge than those that are about them. There are many here present, that in times past have been seemingly pious; and let everyone inquire at the mouth of his own conscience, whether his seeming piety holds on; whether it be not come to an end. If you find reason, by a serious and strict examination, to conclude that you are one of them, consider how vile is your treatment of him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and who never is false to any to whom he once manifests his favour. How greatly doth God complain of such short-lived religion in the Scriptures! Hos. vi. 4. "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Psal. lxxviii. 57. "They tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies, but turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow."

4. Hereby the truly godly are greatly to be reproved for their declension. There are many such here, as I charitably hope, and many of them I fear have been guilty of great declension in religion. Formerly they were lively and animated in religion, now they are dull and indifferent; formerly their hearts went up on high after God, but now after the world; they carried themselves for a while very exemplarily, but have since behaved in such a manner as to wound religion. Why will you be guilty of such a departure from your Redeemer, who changes not with regard to you? His love he formerly manifested towards you, but it does not change; it has ever held up to the same height; his faithfulness never has failed to you; why then does your love so languish towards him, and why are you so unfaithful to him? He keeps up the same care and watchfulness towards you, to preserve you, to provide for you, to defend you from your enemies, and why will you suffer your care and strictness to serve and please Christ, and honour him, to fail in any measure? When you were first converted, your heart seemed to be wrapped up in love to Christ, and delight in him and his praises.

You were then continually meditating on Christ and the things of Christ, and your meditations on him were sweet; and you were then much in speaking of those things, and you delighted to speak of them. And why is it so much otherwise with you now? Is Christ less excellent than he was then? is he less worthy of your love?

5. This doctrine affords matter of reproof to us of this town, for our declining is much from what we have lately been. That we have exceedingly declined in religion, is most manifest, and what all confess. A little while ago Christ was the great object of regard among us. The hearts of the people in general were greatly engaged about Christ; as though Christ had been all, and the world nothing. There was then a great deal of conversation among all sorts of persons, and in all companies, of Christ. They who thought they had no interest in Christ, were full of concern how to obtain an interest in him; and they were almost ready to neglect their worldly concerns, as though Christ was all they needed. And with regard to those that thought they had obtained an interest in Christ, their thoughts and their conversation seemed also to be very much taken up about Christ.

They were much engaged in talking of the excellency of Christ, and seemed to be full of the grace and dying love of Christ. And one and another of you expressed the strong sense you had of one perfection and excellency and another of Christ, and of the glory of the works that he has done, and of the sweetness of the words that he speaks. The town seemed to be full of the praises of Christ. You expressed to one another how you earnestly longed to praise him and bless his name for ever and ever, and how you desired that others should help you to praise him. The benefits procured by Christ were then greatly valued in the town, and both Christ and his benefits were then precious among us. And multitudes seemed to be concerned, what they should do for the honour of Christ, how they should live to his glory, and do something for the advancement of his kingdom in the world. But now, how much otherwise is it; how little is Christ set by, in comparison of what he has been; how much is he neglected, how much is he dropped out of people's common discourse and conversation! How have many of you left off earnestly following after Christ, to pursue after the world; one to pursue after riches, another to be engrossed by amusement and diversion, another by fine clothes and gay apparel; and all sorts, young and old, have gone their way wandering in a great measure from Christ: as though Christ was not as excellent now as he was then: as though his grace and dying love were not as wonderful now as they

were then; as though Christ were not now as much preferable to the world, as worthy to be loved, and to be praised, to be thought of, and talked of; and as though he was not as worthy that we should be concerned to honour him, and live to his praise, as ever he was. If Christ be as much altered as the town is altered, he is altered very much indeed. Are we so foolish as to think that he, that is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is so much altered from what he was three years ago?

IV. The truth taught in the text may be applied by way of encouragement.

1. To sinners, whose minds are burdened and exercised with concern about the state of their souls, to come to Christ, and put their trust in him for salvation. If Christ is now and ever will be the same that he ever was, then here is great encouragement for you to come to him; as will appear by considering two things.

First. How Christ has invited you to come to him, with promises that he will accept of you, if you do so. Christ in his word often invites those that are in your circumstances; whether we consider your circumstances as a lost sinner, or as a sinner under anxiety and concern about your condition. If we consider your circumstances merely as a lost sinner, Christ invites you; for he is often inviting and calling on sinners to come to him. Prov. viii. 4. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." And chap. ix. 4, 5. "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; and ye that want understanding, come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled." Rev. iii. 20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Rev. xxii. 17. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Or if we consider your circumstances as a sinner burdened in your soul with concern about your condition; such are especially invited by Christ. Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And Isa. iv. 1. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;" and John vii. 37. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." That Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, shows what a joint encouragement these invitations are for you to come to Christ in two ways:

(1.) It shows that as Christ invited such sinners, when these invitations were spoken and penned, so he does now, for he is the same now that he was then; so that you are to look on the invitations that you find in your Bible, not only as invitations that were made then when they were first spoken or written, but that are made now. Christ makes them now as much as he made them then. Those invitations which proceeded out of Christ's mouth when

he was on earth, are made to you now as much as if they now this moment proceeded from Christ's mouth; for there is no alteration in Christ; he is the same as ever he has been; so that when you read or hear any of the invitations of Christ, you may look upon them as if they now came from his blessed lips.

(2.) It shows that if you come to Christ, he will surely prove to be the same in accepting that he is in inviting. Christ will be consistent with himself. He will not appear one way in calling and inviting you, and then another way in his treatment of you when you come to accept of his invitation. Christ will not appear with two faces, with a pleasant winning face in inviting, and with a frowning countenance in his treatment of persons that come at his call; for he is ever the same. You see that Christ is exceedingly gracious and sweet in his invitations; and he surely will be as gracious and sweet in his acceptance of you; if you close with his call. And then Christ does not merely *invite*, he also *promises*, that if you accept of his invitation, he will not reject you. John vi. 37. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He that is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, will be found the same in fulfilling that he is in promising.

Secondly. How Christ has treated those that have come to him heretofore. Christ in times past has graciously received those that have come to him; he has made them welcome; he has embraced them in the arms of his love; he has admitted them to a blessed and eternal union with himself, and has given them a right to all the privileges of the sons of God; and he is the same still that he has been heretofore. We have an account in Scripture of many that came to him; we have an account in the history of Christ's life of many that accepted his calls, and we have an account in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, of multitudes that believed in him; but we read of none that ever were rejected by him. And we ourselves have seen many that we have reason to think Christ has accepted on their coming to him, many that have been great sinners, many that have been old hardened sinners, many that had been backsliders, and many that had been guilty of quenching the Spirit of God. And he is the same still; he is as ready to receive such sinners now as he was then. Christ never yet rejected any that came to him: he has always been the same in this respect; he is so now; and so he surely will be still.

2. There is in this doctrine great encouragement to all persons to look to Christ under all manner of difficulties and afflictions; and that especially from what appeared in Christ when

he was here. We have an account, in the history of Christ, of great numbers under a great variety of afflictions and difficulties, resorting to him for help; and we have no account of his rejecting one person who came to him in a friendly manner for help, under any difficulty whatever. But on the contrary, the history of his life is principally filled up with miracles that he wrought for the relief of such. When they came to him, he presently relieved them, and always did it freely without money or price. We never read of his doing anything for any person as hired to it, by any reward that was offered him.

And he helped persons fully, he completely delivered them from those difficulties under which they laboured. And by the doctrine of the text we learn that though he is not now upon earth, but in heaven, yet he is the same that he was then. He is as able to help, and he is as ready to help under every kind of difficulty. Here is great encouragement for persons who are sick to look to Christ for healing, and for their near friends to carry their case to Christ; for how ready was Christ, when on earth, to help those that looked to him under such difficulties! and how sufficient did he appear to be for it; commonly healing by laying on his hand, or by speaking a word! And we read of his healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. Persons under the most terrible and inveterate diseases were often healed. And Christ is the same still. And here is great encouragement for mourners to look to Christ for comfort; we read of Christ's pitying such; as in the case of the widow of Nain, Luke vii. 12, 13, &c. "And so he wept with those that wept, and groaned in spirit, and wept with compassion for Martha and Mary, when he saw their sorrow for the loss of their brother Lazarus, John xi. 32, &c. And he is the same still; he is as ready to pity those that are in affliction now as he was then.

And here is great encouragement for those that are exercised with the temptations of Satan; for how often do we read of Christ casting out Satan from those of whom he had the strongest possession! and Christ is the same still. And whoever are under spiritual darkness, from the consideration of their own sinfulness, have encouragement hence to look to Christ for comfort; for if they do so, he will be ready to say to them, as he did to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee;" for he is still the same that he was then.

V. The truth taught in the text may be applied by way of consolation to the godly. You may consider that you have in him an unchangeable Saviour, who, as he has loved you and undertaken for you from eternity, and in time has died for you before you were born, and

has since converted you by his grace, and brought you out of a blind, guilty, and undone condition, savingly home to himself; so he will carry on his work in your heart; he will perfect what is yet lacking in you, in order to your complete deliverance from sin, and death, and all evil, and to your establishment in complete and unalterable blessedness. From the unchangeableness of your Saviour, you may see how he thinks of that chain in Rom. viii. 29, 30. "For whom he did foreknow them he also did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." The Saviour has promised you very great and precious blessings in this world; and things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, in the world to come; and from his unchangeableness you may be assured that the things which he has promised he will also perform.

You may from this doctrine see the unchangeableness of his love; and therefore, when you consider how great love he seemed to manifest, when he yielded himself up to God a sacrifice for you, in his agony and bloody sweat in the garden, and when he went out to the place of his crucifixion bearing his own cross, you may rejoice that his love now is the same that it was then.

And so when you think of past discoveries which Christ has made of himself in his glory, and in his love to your soul, you may comfort yourself that he is as glorious, and his love to you is as great, as it was in the time of these discoveries.

You may greatly comfort yourself that you have an unchangeable friend in Christ Jesus. Constancy is justly looked upon as a most necessary and most desirable qualification in a friend; that he be not fickle, and so that his friendship cannot be depended on as that of a steady sure friend.

How excellent his friendship is, you may learn from his manner of treating his disciples on earth, whom he graciously treated as a tender father his children; meekly instructing them, most friendlily conversing with them, and being ready to pity them, and help them, and forgive their infirmities.

And then you may consider this doctrine, and how it thence appears that he is the same still that he was then, and ever will be the same. From the unchangeableness of your Saviour, you may be assured of your continuance in a state of grace. As to yourself, you are so

changeable, that, if left to yourself, you would soon fall utterly away; there is no dependence on your unchangeableness; but Christ is the same, and therefore, when he has begun a good work in you he will finish it; as he has been the author, he will be the finisher of your faith. Your love to Christ is in itself changeable; but his to you is unchangeable, and therefore he will never suffer your love to him utterly to fail. The apostle gives this reason why the saints' love to Christ cannot fail, viz. that his love to them never can fail.

From the unchangeableness of Christ you may learn the unchangeableness of his intercession, how he will never cease to intercede for you. And from this you may learn the unalterableness of your heavenly happiness. When once you have entered on the happiness of heaven, it never shall be taken from you, because Christ, your Saviour and friend, who bestows it on you, and in whom you have it, is unchangeable. He will be the same for ever and ever, and therefore so will be your happiness in heaven. As Christ is an unchangeable Saviour, so he is your unchangeable portion.

That may be your rejoicing, that however your earthly enjoyments may be removed, Christ can never fail. Your dear friends may be taken away and you suffer many losses; and at last you must part with all those things. Yet you have a portion, a precious treasure, more worth, ten thousand times, than all these things. That portion cannot fail you, for you have it in him, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.