

William Kiffin

Omnipotent Reign of Grace

It is the work of the day to cry down Babylon, that it may fall more and more, and it is the work of the day to give God no rest, till he sets up Jerusalem as the praise of the whole earth. {Is.62:7} Blessed is he that dasheth the brats of Babylon against the stones; {Ps.137:9;} blessed is he that hath any hand in pulling down Babylon; and beautiful likewise are the feet of them that bring glad tidings unto Jerusalem, unto Zion, saying, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." {Rev.19:6} Though Christ's Kingdom be for a while darkened, yet certainly Christ will reign in his Church gloriously, at the which the saints will sing Hallelujah. Why, did not Christ reign before? Yes, but not in that manner that now he is to reign, for the Kingdom of Christ hath been exceedingly darkened in the World; though it now begins to appear a little more brightly, it hath been exceedingly darkened. When Christ came in his own Person, how did he appear to reign, and be the Lord God Omnipotent? I mean outwardly, for he was a man of sorrows; one that was rather a worm than a man; as it is said of him, He was one, in whom appeared no Form and Beauty; for which he should be desired. {Is.53:2} He was bruised by his Father; he was in the form of a servant; yea, made in the likeness of men; being made sin for us, and beaten like a condemned malefactor; yea, made a curse for us; and so how did he reign? They made him a king in way of derision, put a reed into his hand instead of a scepter, and bowed the knee in scorn, and called him the King of the Jews; and thus he reigned outwardly, and not otherwise, in his own Person. And afterwards in the primitive times how did he appear to be Lord God, and to reign there, when the Heathen Emperors reigned over his Subjects, and had their wills imposed upon them? His Subjects were but a company of poor distressed and forlorn people, wandering up and down, persecuted, and destitute of all comforts. Afterwards when God brought Constantine the Emperor and others to reign, the Church enjoyed a little Peace, though this was but for a little time. In the 8th of the Revelation, it is said there was silence in Heaven for half an hour, which may perhaps be applied to that little time of respite that the Church had in Constantine's time; for when Licinius who was joined with Constantine in the Empire, presently fell off, and grew a Persecutor, then spread Arianism over all the World, that all the World seemed to be an Arian, so that Christ was not acknowledged Lord God; and therefore not {recognized as} reigning. Then Antichrist spread himself, and he set himself up as Lord God, and prescribed laws to the consciences of men, and Christ was cast out {in the hearts of degenerate men} of his Throne; yea, to this day how little hath Christ reigned as to any outward display of his power? The Devil himself appears a greater king, I mean in regard of the multiplicity of his subjects. Divide the World into thirty parts, and there are not above five of those that even acknowledge Christ; and out of those five take them where Antichrist reigns, and how little doth Christ appear to reign? And among them where Christ is acknowledged, and Antichrist rejected, how is his Kingdom persecuted; and of the better sort, how is his Kingdom slighted, and many forward professors and zealous Ministers have trifling thoughts thereof. Yea, even among those that set up his Kingdom, in regard of their miscarriages his Kingdom is darkened; so that Christ doth appear to have but a little reign in the World; and it is a glorious thing spoken of to

John, that Christ, "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." What shall we say to these things? That Christ should be King of Heaven and Earth, and should appear so diminutive in his reign as he hath done, and yet doth to this day. Let us stay a little here, and admire at the infinite Depth and Wisdom of God's Counsels that are past finding out. What God should aim at and indicate {if we may speak with holy reverence} to order these things, that his own Son so infinitely dear unto him, should have his glory so darkened in the World as he hath. We may think of some reasons why God doth ordain this; but what his aim and intentions are in the depth of his Counsels, is infinitely beyond us. It may be it is to be a stumbling-block to wicked and ungodly men in his just Judgment that they should see and not understand. {Mt.13:14} And it was upon this ground that God suffered his Kingdom to be darkened hitherto, that Antichrist might prevail, because of much Glory {that is, vindicate Glory as made known in the "day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"} that he intended to bring out of the prevailing of Antichrist in the World; therefore in his Providence he hath so ordained it, as that the Kingdom of his Son for many years should indeed be darkened. And {my Brethren} if the Kingdom of Christ had been kept in Congregations, in that way that we and some other Churches are in, it had been impossible that Antichrist should have got head. But God in his Providence, because he would so order Antichrist to rise and to Rule for a long time, as he had many things to bring out of the Kingdom of Antichrist, to work for his Glory; therefore God hath left this particular truth {that of his absolute sovereignty & complete reign} to be so dark; that is, the setting up of Christ in his Kingly Office. Thirdly, because God would exercise the Faith and other graces of his Spirit in his own Children, that they might believe in and love Jesus Christ for his spiritual Beauty, though {at particular seasons} there appears nothing but spiritual Beauty, and no outward Beauty, as no outward Kingdom doth appear, but he reign as a Spiritual King only. It was a great and a glorious thing, in those three wise men that came to Christ that offered Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh to Christ when he was in a Manger; and so for God's people now to believe in him, now to love, now to rejoice in him, now to offer all to him; for now his Kingdom is darkened, now he doth appear so despised as he is; for this is a glorious work of Faith, and we should desire much to be found in this way of faith, in looking upon this Spiritual Beauty that is in Christ, and satisfying our souls in that; that so we may not be offended at the darkening of Christ's Kingdom outwardly in the world; and the less Christ doth appear to reign outwardly in the world, the less glorious his Kingdom doth appear outwardly, the more let us labor to bring our hearts under his spiritual Reign of Grace. The more others say, "we will not have this man reign over us," the more let our souls subject themselves to him, and say, "Christ is our KING," and may he reign forever over us; yea, let us labor to sympathize with Jesus Christ in the darkening of his glory and of his Kingdom. Jesus Christ, though he be the glory of his Father, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person," yet is he contented to have his glory darkened for a season. Therefore who are we that we must have glory in this world and outward excellencies, when Christ is willing to be without them? Let us be willing to go like the Witnesses, clothed in Sackcloth, till Christ comes to reign. There are white shining garments prepared, but that time is not yet, though it will not be long. The Bridegroom yet seems to be absent, and therefore it is fit for the Spouse to go low and mean in the mourning weeds as a widow; the trimming of the Bride in her outward glory, may come hereafter, when Christ shall come in glory into the World. Lastly, the Kingdom of Christ is darkened for a while outwardly, and therefore it should teach us to bless God so much the more for that

opportunity that we have of setting up Christ as King amongst us; for thus far, the Voice is not heard much, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth abroad in the world, though lately some noise we have heard; but, blessed be God, in our Congregations amongst us, may we hear the Voice, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. It is through our own wretched wickedness, if his Kingly Power be not fully set up amongst us in all his Ordinances; and that we should have an opportunity to set up his Kingly Power amongst us here, while it is so much opposed, and so little known in the world, it is a great mercy indeed. Therefore let us take heed of abusing that opportunity we have, for darkening the Kingly Power of Christ, which we profess to set up; especially in these {apostate} times, when there comes to be a Voice, though confusedly, from the Multitude, and some kind of Voice of thunder from the great ones. But though it be dark for a while, certainly he shall reign, and the Voice will be glorious and distinctive, saying, "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." William Kiffin {Glimpse of Zion's Glory, or the Churches Beauty Specified, 1641}

Contending for the Faith

One sign of declension is this; a disregarding of the truth of Christ; {II Chron.24:20;} as when the minds of men grow weary of the truths of Christ, and their estimation of truth {which formally hath been} slackens. – To prevent this, let us labor for soundness of judgment in the truths of God, that so we may receive nothing upon other men's judgments, and reports, but trying all things we may hold fast to that which is good, for ignorance is the mother of error, and a corrupted life doth soon follow an erroneous judgment; wherefore let us be often in searching the Scripture and seeking of God by prayer, that he would be pleased to unfold those glorious mysteries of his will in his Word unto us by his Spirit, that so we may be enabled to judge of things that differ. Let us also labor to receive the truth in the love of it, for when truth is received by men under this consideration of love; when men see an excellency in truth and love the truth from that excellency that they see in it, they will labor after it. It is the property of love to do much, and suffer much; and yet it looks upon all that it doth; and suffers as little, because where true love is, it will produce effects suitable to itself. See this in that love of God; "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, &c." {Jn.3:16} Mark, if once God cast an eye of love upon a creature, this very love will produce an effect suitable to its nature, even the giving of Jesus Christ to die for that creature; so indeed if once the love of our souls be given unto the excellency of the truth, then our lives, our liberties, our estates, or friends will follow roundly; but if there be a defect in our love to the truth, there will soon be a defect in our standing to, or suffering for truth. Let us consider that the truth of God is the portion of the Saints, and if we lose truth we lose Jesus Christ. Where will you have comfort and where will you have salvation, if you lose truth? And therefore saith Solomon, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life." {Pv.4:13} Therefore David also hath recourse upon all occasions to the Word. Psalm 119. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me;" {Ps.119:49,50;} as if he should say, I have no other companion in my troubles but it; and so in the 92nd verse of the same Psalm saith he; "unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." And therefore as worldly men surround themselves with all they have, by what they have and are in the world, so let the servants of God surround themselves with what they have and are; that is, by nothing but what they have in Jesus Christ, who dwells in the truth, and

conveys himself through the truth into the hearts and consciences of his people, and therefore let us labor to possess it as our portion, and if Naboth would rather incur the displeasure of the King, then part with the inheritance given him by his fathers; {I Kings 21:3,4;} how much more should we be willing to incur the displeasure of all men, rather than to lose any part of the truth of Jesus Christ given unto us, and purchased for us, as so dear a rate as his own precious blood. William Kiffin {Observations upon Hosea Chapter Two, 1642}

Christ our Divine Lawgiver

Christ is the only Head, Husband, Lord and Lawgiver of his Church. Reason: Because the Church of Christ is sprung up from the loins of Christ, as they have been taken out of the very sides of Christ - so may Jesus Christ claim a propriety and interest in the Church to be Lord and Husband of it because it proceeds from his very loins; and because Jesus Christ hath bought his Church {through redemption} they are the travail of his soul, the glory of his Mediatorial work; and seeing that Jesus Christ hath travailed for his Church, and by his travails hath brought forth a glorious deliverance to his Church; that now his Church should be subject to him, and yield obedience to his laws; seeing Christ hath satisfied God his Father by his own blood, is it not reason that we should live to his praise and honor. Is it reason that when a mother hath undergone a sore travail and pain with a child, and at last when the child is through many difficulties and hazards of the woman's life brought forth, that another woman that stands by, when the child is delivered, should snatch it up and say, "this child shall be subject unto me and own me for its mother; and what I command it, so shall it do; and what I command it to wear, it shall wear;" would not this be counted injurious dealing with this poor woman that hath suffered so much in bringing forth the child; that now she should be deprived of the comfort of bringing it up; and is it not as injurious dealing with Jesus Christ, that seeing he hath travailed for his Church, and brought forth his Church, that now other men should snatch it from his hands and prescribe laws unto them, which they would force their consciences to be subject unto? Therefore by way of use, in the first place this serves to reprove all these persons that so do; for certainly Jesus Christ will one day take vengeance upon all such persons; and sure it is, that the Church being the glory of his mediatorial work, he will not give his glory to any other, nor his praise to graven images; but though men do now labor to dis-throne Christ, yet there is a time coming wherein Jesus Christ will dis-throne all his enemies and will reign gloriously in the midst of them all; as he will make his enemies his footstool, and "the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills." Therefore let all men for the time to come take heed how they prescribe any laws for the government of the Church, that they step not up in Christ's stead, but this let all men know, that Christ hath prescribed laws already which are perfect and pure, by which he both hath, doth, and will govern his Church, and therefore let this be the duty of us all, to labor to know what these laws and rules are, that so we may be more and more subject unto them, that we dishonor not Jesus Christ, by giving anything to any other, which is only of right due unto Him. William Kiffin {Observations upon Hosea Chapter Two, 1642}

Spirit's Work in Setting Forth the Excellency of Christ

When God intends to do any soul good, either to reclaim them from a fallen condition, or to bring persons to the knowledge of Himself, the usual way that he takes herein is to discover to them the emptiness and insufficiency of all things that are here below; as not being able to give any contentment or satisfaction to the soul. There is something of this truth appearing in the 14th verse of this chapter, where the Lord saith, "I will bring her into the wilderness." {Hos.2:14} Now we know a wilderness condition is a condition destitute of all help, as nothing is to be found therein but wild beasts ready to devour, and no help is to be expected in the wilderness from it; so indeed when men are brought into a wilderness condition having neither penny nor pennies worth as the prophet saith {Is.55:1;} then is God pleased to speak comfort to his people and then doth he cause them to look upwards. – The reason why God takes such a course with men is because while the soul sees any fullness in anything in heaven or earth whereby to lean to besides Christ, it will fasten at the horns of that altar; be it what it will, and never make any further search or inquiry after Christ. The carriage of the soul in this case is like the carriage of Jacob in another, for while there was corn in Canaan, Jacob never thinks, nor mentions going into Egypt, but when there was none there, then saith old Jacob, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." {Gen.42:2} So indeed, while there is any food to be gotten for the soul here below it looks no higher, and therefore it is that the Lord is pleased to cut off all springs of comfort and peace to be had from anything here below, that so the soul may see Jesus Christ to be he who has all the Wellsprings of comfort, peace, joy, and refreshment to the soul. Let us a little from the consideration of this doctrine examine our own spirits, and see how our hearts stand affected, or what our spirits are fraught with, whether with high conceits of the world, of the excellency and fullness and glory thereof; or whether with the excellent fullness and goodness that is in Jesus Christ? Certainly this is an undoubted truth, that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in them, let them profess what they will; therefore it behooves every man to look about him, and see whether God hath ever yet made this discovery to the soul; namely, that all the things of the world are empty, poor and weak, not able to give out the least dram of true comfort to the soul. I beseech you, let us again ask our hearts this question, as Christ did in the like case: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" {Mt.20:22} - This we all profess to know, that we cannot serve two masters. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." These being so opposite one to each other, that if we obey the one, we must reject the other. Wherefore let us commune with our own hearts, and see a little how our spirits stand affected to Christ. Do we find upon serious examination that Christ and his laws do bear sway in our hearts and the excellency that is in them doth in the eyes of our souls weigh down all those riches, honors, pleasures and desires of the world? Nay; more than this, do you see so much excellency in God's ways as that it will bear your charges with great allowance through those miseries, sorrows, reproaches and losses that you shall sustain in this life; yea, even life itself. Paul when he cast up his account of matters of this nature, triumphs in that glorious allowance that he saw provided for him by God; "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." {II Cor.4:17} Wherefore let us not rest satisfied with a face of profession, but let us labor to make inquiry into our own heart and see what discoveries God hath made to us of the creature emptiness, and of his own fullness in Christ. William Kiffin {Observations upon Hosea Chapter Two, 1642}