

ATTENDANCE IN PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP WHERE THE DIVINE NAME IS RECORDED, ENCOURAGED. Sermon II

Preached October 9, 1757, at the Opening of a New Place for Worship, in Carter-lane St. Olave's-street, Southwark.

([Ex 20:24](#)) In all places, where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

Two things have been observed in these words, and proposed to be treated of:

I. The place, or places, God has a regard unto; and where his people should meet and worship him; and that is, where he records his name.

II. The regard he has to such place, or places; and the encouragement he gives his people to meet and worship him there; expressed by his presence with them and blessing on them, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

The first of these heads has been discoursed on this morning; under which has been shewn, what is meant; by the name of the Lord; which takes in his Being, his Nature, his Perfections, and Attributes, and every title and appellation, by which he is made known unto men. And also his Son, in whom his name is; and all his characters; and likewise his gospel; which is a most glorious revelation of himself, and of his mind and will; so that it includes every thing relating to his essence and glory; to his Son in whom and to his gospel, and the doctrines of it, by which, he is declared and manifested; especially in his grace and mercy to the children of men. Moreover, it has been inquired into, what is intended by recording his name, or causing it to be mentioned, or remembered. And it has been observed, that this was done by the Lord, under the Old-Testament-dispensation, by appointing memorials of it; such as the Ark, and Mercy-seat, the Altar, and the Sacrifices offered on it: and under the New-Testament-dispensation, by the ministry of the word, and the ministers of it; whose business it is, to make mention of the name of the Lord, and put men in mind of him; to publish and proclaim his free grace, good will, and favour, in the election, redemption, justification, and salvation of men; and to preach Christ and him crucified; to make mention of his person, as God-man; of his offices, as Mediator and Saviour; and of his blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession; and purely, faithfully, constantly, and consistently, to dispense the doctrines and mysteries of grace, they are stewards of: likewise they record the name of the Lord, and he by them, through a faithful administration of his ordinances, especially the ordinance of the Lord's

supper; which is designed to commemorate the grace of God, and the love of Christ until his second coming. And now, where the riches of the grace of God are displayed; Christ, in his person and offices, is exalted; his word is faithfully preached; and his ordinances truly and rightly administered; these are the places where the Lord may be said to record his name, and where his people should meet together to worship him.

And, as we have now opened a new place of worship, we enter upon it in this way, by recording the name of the Lord, in the manner before described; namely, by preaching the doctrines of the grace of God, and of free and full salvation alone, by Jesus Christ; and by the administration of gospel-ordinances, as they have been delivered to us. To do these from time to time, is our present view, and what, by divine assistance, we shall endeavour to pursue, in the course of our worship and ministrations here. What doctrines may be taught in this place, after I am gone, is not for me to know; but, as for my own part, I am at a point; I am determined, and have been long ago, what to make the subject of my ministry. It is now upwards of forty years since I entered into the work of the ministry; and the first sermon I ever preached, was from those words of the apostle, For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; {[1Co 2:2](#)} and, through the grace of God, I have been enabled, in some good measure, to abide by the same resolution hitherto, as many of you here are my witnesses; and I hope, through divine assistance, I ever shall, as long as I am in this tabernacle, and engaged in such work. I am not afraid of the reproaches of men; I have been inured these, from my youth upwards; none of these things move me. But I hope you will pardon this digression; I return to my subject, and proceed to consider,

II. The regard which God has to such place, or places, where his name is recorded; and the encouragement he gives his people, to meet and worship him there; namely, the promise of his presence and blessing: I will come unto thee, and bless thee.

First, The Lord here promises his presence with his people, assembled together in his name, and where his name is recorded, and they meet to worship him, to celebrate his name, to make mention of it, and put one another in remembrance of it; I will come unto thee; that is, in such place, or places, where this is done. Under this head I shall endeavor to show, in what sense the Lord may be said to come unto his people, when gathered together for religious worship; under what considerations he comes unto them; and

when it may be known that he is come unto them, and is in the midst of them; as well as the wonderfulness of this grace and favour; which will appear, by observing the contrast between the I, the person who says he will come; and the thee, or persons to whom he comes.

1. What is meant by his coming to his people. And this is to be understood not locally, of any change of place; or of his removing from place to place, which he is incapable of, being omnipresent. The Jews call God Makom, [\[i\]](#) "place;" because he is every where, and fills up all places; the heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool; and neither of them can contain him; he fills both with his presence, and is not circumscribed by either: so that he cannot with propriety, be said to come or go from one place to another: when he is said to descend or come down from heaven to earth, it is not by local motion, but by some display and effects of his power, or of his grace and goodness. Thus; when he said Let us go down; and it is said, he came down, to see the city and tower the children of men were building, [{Ge 11:5,7}](#) this was done in a way of wrath and judgment; by shewing his power, and by confounding their language, and scattering them abroad upon the face of the whole earth; and when the Lord is said [\(Ex 29:42; 33:9\)](#) to descend, and stand at the door of the tabernacle, to meet his people there, it is to be understood of displays of his grace, discoveries of his love, and intimations of his favor; and of his mind and will; and which is greatly the sense of the expression here for, it is not to be taken either in a corporal sense, as if any bodily shape was assumed by the Lord, and he appeared in it. Indeed, this is the sense of all those passages, which speak of, and foretell the coming of Christ, and contain the promise of it: such as, your God will come, even God with a recompence; he will come, and save you; and again, Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand; [{Isa 35:4; 40:10}](#) but these only belong to the second person in the Trinity, the Son of God, and his incarnation; to his coming into the world, by the assumption of human nature; to the Word being made flesh, and so dwelling among men; but cannot be said of Jehovah, the Father, who is the person speaking in our text, and who never appeared in any corporal form; for Christ expressly says, Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. [{Joh 5:37}](#) Nor is this coming of the Lord to his people, to be understood now of any visible token of his presence, as in former times; as in a cloud, or by fire, or any other way. Thus he came to Moses in a thick cloud; and descended on mount Sinai in fire. [{Ex 19:9,18}](#) These were indications of his being come, and of his being present. So he went before the children of Israel, as they travelled through the wilderness, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. [{Ex 13:21}](#) When these were seen, it was known

the Lord was there; when the tabernacle was set up, a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. {[Ex 40:34](#)} The cloud was a visible symbol of the presence of the Lord in it: and the same may be observed of the temple of Solomon at the dedication of it by him: the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord: {[1Ki 8:10-11](#)} and it was the cloud, as is plain, that was the visible token of that glory, or of the glorious presence of the Lord there. Sometimes God gave intimations of his presence with his people, and of his approbation of them, and their sacrifices, by sending down fire upon them! and which is thought by some, [\[ii\]](#) to be the way and manner, in which he expressed his acceptance of Abel's sacrifice. However, in this way he did signify his acceptance of others: it is said, And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people; and there came fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burn-offerings, and the fat; which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces, {[Le 9:23-24](#)} in reverence of the divine Being, who was present by this symbol; and they shouted for joy, and in thankfulness, for his declaring his approbation and acceptance of their sacrifices. And in like manner, the Lord shewed himself to be present, and to be the only Lord God, by causing fire to fall down and consume the sacrifice, the wood, stones, and dust, and lick up the water in the trench, when Baal could do nothing to make it manifest that he heard his prophets, or was present with them. {[1Ki 18:38-39](#)} But nothing of this kind is now to be expected, under the gospel-dispensation; the Lord's coming to his people, is only in a spiritual manner; by his Spirit and grace, and the communications of it; by his Spirit teaching, and instructing, enlightening, comforting, quickening them, and applying his word with power; and blessing that and his ordinances to them; in like manner as Christ promised his presence to his disciples; I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you; {[Joh 14:18](#)} meaning, that though they should be deprived of his bodily presence, yet they should have his spiritual presence with them, especially when administering his ordinances; and in this sense it is to be understood in a following verse; where he promises his presence to all that love him, and keep his commandments, and his father's also; saying, We will come unto him, and make our abode with him; {[Joh 14:23](#)} which cannot design the return of his bodily presence to his disciples, at his resurrection; but the gracious and spiritual presence of him, and his divine Father, with his people, in all ages; particularly, while they are employed in his worship, and are observing his commands and ordinances: and it is in this sense we may understand the expression in this passage; especially as it may be applied to gospel-times.

2. It may be inquired, under what considerations God may be said to come unto his people, in this gracious and spiritual manner, whilst worshipping him. He comes unto them, as into his own house and habitation; and that as the master, owner, and proprietor of it; his church and people are built up, an habitation for him, through the spirit; believers are the lively stones, of which the spiritual house consists; and these being laid on the foundation, Christ, grow up unto an holy temple in the Lord; [{Eph 2:21-22}](#) and for his use; and whither he comes; and of which he says, This is my rest; here will I dwell, for I have desired it; [{Ps 132:14}](#) and from this time forward, that God takes up his abode and residence here, the name of such a place, city, and church, is, Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there: [{Eze 48:35}](#) he comes unto them, as unto his family; as the father of it, who cares and provides for it. He is their father by adopting grace; and has taken them into this relation in the everlasting covenant, to which he predestinated them, according to the good pleasure of his will; in which he says of them, and to them, I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty; [{2Co 6:18}](#) and which grace he makes known unto them by the spirit of adoption, sent unto them: in consequence of this, he will not leave them comfortless, or orphans, as is Christ's word concerning them; [{Joh 14:18}](#) but will come unto them, in a spiritual way, as he promises; and shew his paternal love to them, and care of them, bringing food in his hands for them; asking one and another of them, Children, have ye any meat? [{Joh 21:5}](#) and puts it into their hands and mouths, and blesses Zion's provisions, the word and ordinances, to them, and satisfies his poor with bread; with the bread of the gospel; with the bread of life, Christ Jesus. He comes unto them as to his flock, and as the shepherd of it: it being under his peculiar watch and care, and he the proprietor of it: his own the sheep are, the sheep of his hand, and the sheep of his pasture: to these he comes; and he looks well to this his flock; and inspects narrowly and carefully into their state, case, and condition: he comes to search and seek out those that are straying, and scattered in the dark and cloudy day; to look up that which is lost and driven away, and restore them, and lead them into green pastures, and beside the still waters; to bind up broken hearts, and broken bones, and strengthen the sick, and heal all their spiritual maladies, and do all the offices of a good shepherd to them; by feeding them in a good pasture, and making them to lie down in a good fold; [{Eze 34:12-16}](#) He comes unto them, as to his friends, and pays kind visits; he makes a feast of fat things for them, in his holy mountain; he brings them into his banqueting house; he sits down at table with them; he sups with them, and they with him; whom he welcomes to the entertainment he makes for them; saying, Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. [{Song 1:12;](#)

2:4; 5:1 } To observe no more; he comes unto his people met together for worship, as his special favorites; for whom he has a peculiar respect, and admits to peculiar nearness to himself, and to peculiar enjoyments; whom he remembers with the favour he bears to his chosen ones; having loved them with an everlasting love, and distinguished them by the blessings of his grace, bestowed upon them; to those he loves, he shews his covenant; the blessings and promises of it, and their interest in them; discloses the secrets of his heart's love unto them, and sheds it abroad in them; makes known more fully to them the great salvation, and restores unto them the joys of it: indulges them with near and intimate communion with himself; and manifests himself to them, as he does not unto the world: by all which it appears, they are the delight of his soul, and the darling of his heart; the favorites of heaven, and friends of God.

3. It may be asked, how it may be known when God is come unto his people, in a spiritual manner, in public service and worship? In answer to which, it may be said, that it may be in some measure known, when the ministers of the word are assisted by him, both in praying and preaching; when they manifestly pray with the spirit, and with the understanding, and have their hearts enlarged in prayer; and are directed to suitable petitions for those they represent; and have much freedom in their own souls, and much nearness to God, and familiarity with him; and when they have in their ministrations to the people, presence of mind, liberty of expression, a door of utterance, and fulness of matter; when they are brought forth in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ; and they are not straitened in themselves; but find a pleasure in their work, and have their own hearts affected and warmed; which may not only be felt by themselves, but be discerned by others. Also the presence of God may be observed, when the word preached by them is owned for conviction and conversion; when under it men are pricked to the heart, and set a seeking after the right way of salvation; as the three thousand under Peter's sermon, on the day of Pentecost; and as those in Cornelius's house, on whom the Spirit of the Lord fell, while the same apostle was preaching; when the Spirit of God effectually convinces men, by means of the word, of sin and the evil nature of it; lays open all the sinfulness of their hearts, and brings to their remembrance the iniquities of their lives; and they are told, as the woman of Samaria was by Christ, all that ever they did; and then being convinced and judged of all, and the secrets of their hearts made manifest, as if the minister had privately been acquainted with their lives and characters, they fall down on their faces, and worship God, report that God is in ministers, and with his people, of a truth. {**1Co 14:24-25**} Likewise this

appears to be the case, when the gospel is not only the means of faith, by which it comes, as it does by hearing the word; for when the hand of the Lord, or his power, goes along with his ministers, and accompanies his word, then men believe; but, when it is increased thereby; when the word is food for faith; when there are in souls a desire after the sincere milk of the word; an appetite for it; a gust and relish of it; when it is found under the ministry of it, and is eaten by faith, and is the joy and rejoicing of the heart; when it is not only received by faith, in the love of it, but is mixed with it, and digested by it; and so becomes very nourishing, strengthening and edifying. Moreover, this may be discerned, that God is come unto, and is present with his people, at such times, when their affections are moved and raised, and their minds enlightened, and judgments informed and established in the truth of the gospel; when these two go together, raised affections, and instructed minds; for it is dangerous to have them separated: when the word is like fire, and at once both warms the heart and illuminates the mind; and when, at the same time, the hearts of God's people burn within them; as did the hearts of the two disciples, that travelled with Christ to Emmaus, while he talked with them by the way, and opened to them the scriptures; [{Lu 24:34}](#) the eyes of their understandings are enlightened, and the veil is removed from them, and they behold wondrous things out of the law, [{Ps 119:18}](#) or doctrine of the gospel; when the Lord opens their understandings, that they may understand the scriptures, as Christ did his disciples'; and the Spirit of the Lord leads them into all truth as it is in Jesus; and applies it powerfully and comfortably to them, and they are established and confirmed therein; and then, ere they are aware, their affections are caught, and these rise up, like pillars of smoke perfumed with frankincense, and their souls are like the chariots of Amminadib; [{Song 3:6; 6:12}](#) are on the full speed upwards; and God-ward. Again; then may the presence of God be perceived by his people, in public worship, whilst attending the word and ordinances; when the promises of the gospel are opened and applied; when a word that is sent unto Jacob, lights on Israel; when a word is spoken in season to weary souls, and it suiteth to their case and circumstances, and is so understood and observed; and which gives peculiar pleasure and delight, and yields a joy unspeakable, and full of glory; for a word fitly spoken, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. [{Pr 25:11}](#) And so it appears very sensibly, when the love of God is again manifested; when the experiences of the saints are renewed and confirmed; when fresh light is thrown upon the work of grace on their hearts, and the evidence of it is clear; and in Jehovah's light they see light, and are satisfied of the truth of grace in them; when the desires of their souls are drawn out after God, and their hearts pant after him, as the hart pants after the water-brook; and after

the name of Christ and the remembrance of it: and they are indulged with intimate communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and have some fresh pledges and tokens of their love to them. And now, it is this which makes the house of God delightful, the tabernacles of the Lord amiable and lovely; a day in his courts better than a thousand elsewhere; yea, to be more eligible to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of sin and wickedness: it is the presence of God and Christ; the discoveries of the love of Father, Son, and Spirit; the rich displays of divine grace, and those interviews which believers have with God; and the sweet fellowship they have with him and one another, that makes Wisdom's ways ways of pleasantness, and all her paths paths of peace; ([Ps 84:10](#); [Pr 3:17](#)) yea, amidst such spiritual and ravishing enjoyments as these, of a place of religious worship, it may be truly said, this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. {[Ge 28:17](#)}

4. The wonderfulness of enjoying such a favour, as to have God come to his people, and be with them in a spiritual manner in places where they meet to worship him, will appear by considering the contrast between the great Jehovah, who promises to come unto them, and does; and the persons he comes unto, and who enjoy his gracious presence. The one is, the Creator of the ends of the earth; the maker and former of all things visible and invisible; the earth, the sea, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, and all that in them are; the angels of heaven, men on earth, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, and the cattle on a thousand hills; with whom, and before whom, and in comparison of him, all the nations of the world are as a drop of a bucket, as the small dust of the balance; nay, are as nothing; yea, less than nothing, and vanity. And, on the other hand, those he comes unto and pays them a visit, and graciously converses with, are creatures of his; dust, earth, and worms: it is marvellous he should cast an eye upon them; with whom it is a condescension, a humbling of himself, to look upon things in heaven; it is amazing he should care for them in a providential way, support them in their beings, follow them with his goodness and mercy, and bestow upon them daily the bounties of his providence with respect to which, it is with wonder said, What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment? {[Job 7:17-18](#)} But how must the wonder rise and increase, when it is observed, that this great and glorious Being, that has given being to all worlds, and creatures in them, vouchsafes to come unto such poor nothings, in a way of special grace and kindness; and communes with them in a spiritual manner, and tells them how he loves them, and has loved them,

with an everlasting love; unbosoms himself to them, and communicates the riches of his grace, and assures them of their right and title to everlasting glory and happiness! Moreover, he who promises to come, and does come, to his people worshipping at his footstool, is the possessor of heaven and earth; [{Ge 14:22}](#) as he has made them both, he has a right to each; the one he has reserved to be an habitation for himself: the other he has given to the children of men; the one he has made his throne to sit on; the other his footstool to tread on; and both are his property, and at his dispose, with all things in them: the riches of both worlds are his; and yet these riches are nothing to the perfections of his nature he is possessed of. And now, this high and holy one, that inhabits eternity, and dwells in the high and holy place, [{Isa 57:15}](#) and not in temples made with hands, is graciously pleased to come unto poor frail mortals, that dwell in earthly tabernacles, in cottages of clay, which have their foundations in the dust, and visit beggars upon the dunghill; from whence he takes them, and sets them with princes, that they may inherit the throne of glory; [{1Sa 2:8}](#) as well as takes up his abode with such that are of an humble and contrite spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and the heart of the contrite ones. He who condescends to come unto his people, and he seen in the midst of them, is the King of kings, and Lord of lords; the Lord of the whole universe, whose the kingdom of nature and providence is, and who is the governor among the nations; that presides over all kings and princes, and over all kingdoms and states; who sits enthroned in the highest heavens, and does what he pleases in heaven and earth; and orders all things after his sovereign pleasure; and whose will cannot be resisted, or his power controlled, or his hand stayed; or he be called to an account for any thing done by him; nor does he, nor will he, give any account of his matters to the sons of men; but all are, and must be, accountable to him; kings and governors; those in the highest, as well as in the lowest class of life. Now, it is this great and universal Monarch, that vouchsafes to descend from heaven, in the displays of his love and grace, and shew himself among the poor of this world, though rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom; [{Jas 2:5}](#) to come and make known himself, his Son and gospel, and open the treasures of his grace, to persons who, in the esteem of men, are things that are not, and are reckoned by them the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things. [{1Co 1:28; 4:13}](#) It would seem strange, and be very surprising, and be thought an instance of wonderful condescension, should an earthly king go in a public manner, in his royal robes, and with his attendants, to the cottage of a poor peasant; there enter, sit down, eat and drink, and freely converse with him for an hour or two; and yet, this is not to be mentioned with this wondrous favour of the King eternal, immortal, the blessed and only potentate, shewing himself in the

assemblies of his saints, sitting down at table with them, and communing with them from above the mercy-seat; where they behold the King in his beauty, being held forth in the galleries of the ordinances; and sometimes in so glorious a manner, that they with wonder and rapture say, how glorious was the king of Israel to-day? {[2Sa 6:20](#)}

Once more; he who promises to come, and does come, and is among his people, while worshipping him, is a holy, just, and righteous Being; a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with any approbation or pleasure, or so as not to correct or punish for it; who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; glorious, as in all the perfections of his nature, so more especially in his holiness; being perfectly pure, unspotted, and untarnished, just and true, and without any iniquity at all: and yet, the persons he deigns to come unto, and take up his residence among, are sinful men; such as have sinned in Adam, and are made sinners by his disobedience; who are conceived, shapen, and born in sin; and are by nature, corrupt, depraved, polluted, and guilty creatures, and so children of wrath, as others; who have in time past lived according to the course of this world, in sin and wickedness, serving divers lusts and pleasures: and though now called by grace, yet have sin dwelling in them, and are frequently guilty of transgressing the law of God, in thought, word, or deed; and are often revolting and backsliding from God, and doing those things which might justly provoke the eyes of his glory; and yet he is pleased to come unto them, and take up his dwelling with them. Now, there is nothing that can account for all this, but his being the God of all grace; a God gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth; a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, as he has proclaimed himself; it can be ascribed to nothing else but to his free, rich, sovereign grace; not to any deserts of men, or on account of any service done by them; which when done in the best manner, is unprofitable, with respect to him. It is all marvellous loving-kindness; it may well be wondered at, for it cannot be accounted for in any other way, but on the foot of free and unmerited grace.

Solomon, at the dedication of his temple, said, but will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; how much less the house that I have built? {[1Ki 8:27](#)} It is wonderful that such an infinite and incomprehensible Being should dwell on earth; it is more wonderful, that he should dwell with men on earth; it is more wonderful still, that he should dwell with sinful men here. But yet, since he has said he will come unto his people, where his name is recorded, it may be expected and believed he will; for he is a faithful God, a covenant-keeping God, true to

every word of promise made by him; he will not suffer his faithfulness to fail; he cannot deny himself, nor will he alter any thing that is gone out of his lips: Christ has promised, that where his people, though ever so few, are gathered together in his name, and where his ministers preach in his name, and ordinances are administered in his name, and in the name of his Father, and of the blessed Spirit, he will be with them, even unto the end of the world: {[Mt 18:20](#); [28:19-20](#)} And he has not only promised for himself, but for his divine father also, that such as keep his commandments, from a principle of love to him, they will come unto them, and make their abode with them; ([Joh 14:23](#)) and this being promised, may be most surely depended upon. If the Lord says, he will come, nothing shall hinder his coming: not Satan; he may hinder, as he sometimes has hindered the ministers of the gospel from coming to the churches, and ministering to them, for their comfort and edification; as he hindered the apostle Paul, and others, from going to Thessalonica; as he affirms, Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again, but Satan hindered us; {[1Th 2:18](#)} but, when God says he will come, and is resolved to come, and pay a gracious visit to his people, Satan, and all his principalities and powers, cannot hinder: if any thing, the sins of God's people are most likely to hinder his coming to them; as they sometimes are the cause of his departure from them, and of their not having sensible communion with him; your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. {[Isa 59:2](#)} But when it is his pleasure to come among his people, and indulge them with his gracious presence, even these shall not hinder; he will come leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills, {[Song 2:8](#)} of all their sins and transgressions, revoltings and backslidings, indolence, negligence, and unbelief. So much for the first instance of God's regard to places where his name is recorded, and the first argument used, to encourage his people to meet and worship him there. I proceed,

Secondly, To consider the other instance and argument made use of, the promise of blessing them; and I will bless thee. God, when he comes unto his people, and pays them a visit, he does not come empty-handed; he brings a blessing, or blessings, along with him. And,

1. His very coming to them, his presence itself, is a blessing; a wish for this, is the sum and substance of the blessing of the high-priest, pronounced over the children of Israel, and on their account; The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. {[Nu 6:24-26](#)} It is the presence of God, the displays of his grace and power, the shine of his face,

and the light of his countenance, that fill every petition; and, indeed, a greater blessing than these cannot be enjoyed. Nothing is more desirable to a gracious soul, than the presence of God; be he where he will, or come and go where he will; this is what he is importunate for, that it might be with him; as Moses said, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. {[Ex 33:14](#)} It signifies nothing where such a man is, or what he has, if he has not the presence of God; this is better to him than life, and all the enjoyments of it; whilst others are saying, who will shew us any good? Any good, any temporal good; any of the good things of this life will satisfy a worldly mind, but not a gracious heart; such will say, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; and, when this favour is granted, and enjoyed, they will add, with praise and thankfulness, thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased. {[Ps 4:6-7](#)} No temporal mercy can so delight the heart of a good man, as the presence of God, and communion with him; his absence is darkness, and death, his presence is light, and life; it is night when he withdraws himself, and that causes weeping; it is morning when he appears again, and that brings joy; this was the experience of the Psalmist; for his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. {[Ps 30:5](#)} This might be exemplified in the case of Mary Magdalene, weeping at the sepulcher of Christ, when her Lord was taken away from her, and she knew not where he was laid; and of the disciples sorrowing, during the time of Christ's lying there; but, when he was risen again, and appeared to them, the one, exulting, said, Rabboni, which is to say, master; "O my dear Master, is it thou?" and of the other, it is said, Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord; {[Joh 20:13,16,20](#)} nothing more desirable, nothing more delightful, than the presence of God and Christ; nothing so much like heaven as this; this perfectly and everlastingly enjoyed, is heaven; In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. {[Ps 16:11](#)} Wherefore, it is no wonder that this should be the one thing, that should be uppermost on the hearts of God's people, when they are worshipping in his sanctuary; that they may see his face, behold his beauty, and have a view of his power and his glory; {[Ps 27:4; 63:2](#)} as they have sometimes seen them there with inexpressible pleasure and satisfaction: and when they are thus favoured, they are blessed indeed! This is an antidote against all fears; they have nothing to be afraid of from all their enemies, men or devils, the rage of the one, or the reproaches of the other; or the severest persecutions; nor indeed, any affliction, trial, or exercise; nay, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, since God is with them; as he is, when they pass even through fire and water; wherefore since he says to them, Fear not, I am with

thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God; [{Isa 41:10}](#) they may say in return, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? [{Ps 27:1}](#) And particularly, there is no need to fear any enemy, within or without, whilst worshipping him, since he is present: for, if God be with us, and for us, who shall, or can be against us? [{Ro 8:31}](#)

2. The Lord blesses his people with fresh supplies of grace: what they have received, though it is much, and very abundant, yet not sufficient; as they are called to fresh duty and service, they want more grace; particularly to assist them in the duties of religion; in acts of public worship; in waiting upon God, and serving him in his sanctuary: to do this aright they have need to have grace in their hearts, and that in exercise, and a fresh supply of it; that they may worship him in spirit and in truth; in righteousness and holiness; acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; and they may expect a supply of it from him. My God, says the apostle, shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Jesus Christ. [{Php 4:19}](#) The people of God are full of wants: they have many indigencies; they always stand in need of more grace; and never do they need more than when they are engaged in the public exercises of religion; to keep their hearts from wandering from God, and intent upon his word; to enable them to receive it in love, and mix it with faith: and in all, to seek the glory of God: and they may hope to have it, since God, their covenant-God and Father, is the God of all grace; and is able to make all grace to abound towards them; that they having all sufficiency of it, may abound in every good work; [{2Co 9:8}](#) whether performed in a more public, or in a more private way: and he has promised to give more grace to the humble dependents on him, and worshippers of him. Christ the mediator is full of Grace; all fulness of it is laid up in him, to be distributed to his people, whenever they want it; and as they have already received from thence, and grace for grace, [{Joh 1:14,16}](#) or an abundance of it, they may have more by application to him for it: for he is a sun and shield; he will give grace; [{Ps 84:11}](#) more grace to them that seek unto him: and there are the means of grace, the word and ordinances, which are the golden pipes; through which the golden oil [{Zec 4:12}](#) of grace is communicated from Christ unto his saints; and there is the throne of grace, which they may come boldly to at all times, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help them in time of need; [{Heb 4:16}](#) and to have a full supply of grace at such a time; as every time we worship God is, is a blessing indeed!

3. The Lord blesses his people when he comes unto them, while they are waiting upon him, and worshipping him, with peace: it is said the Lord will bless his people with peace; [{Ps 29:11}](#) as if this was the one and only blessing he blesses them with; or, at least, the chief and principal one: and, indeed, it is a very comprehensive blessing; it includes all prosperity, temporal and spiritual; and all kind of peace, outward and inward; especially peace of conscience, tranquility and serenity of mind; that peace of God which he is the author and giver of, that passeth all understanding [{Php 4:7}](#) of natural and unconverted men, who know not the way of peace; are strangers to, and intermeddle not with the joy those have that believe in Christ. This peace is from God; whence he is called the God of peace; [{Heb 13:20}](#) who is not only at peace with his people through the blood of Christ, but gives peace unto them; and indeed, he only can give it; wherefore it is asked of him: and if ever it is had, it must come from him. This is a frequent prayer of the apostles for the churches, Grace to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. [{Ro 1:7}](#) It is to no purpose to apply for it, or expect it elsewhere; and if he gives it, none can take it away; nor even disturb it, unless he suffers it: when he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? [{Job 34:29}](#) In vain, do Satan, or the world, or any other enemy, seek to hinder the one, or make the other. This peace is through Christ; who is not only the prince of peace, the man, the peace, who is our peace, and has made peace by the blood of his cross; but gives it to his followers; even such peace as the world cannot give, nor take away; and which he continues with them amidst all their tribulations in this world: it flows from him, and from God through him: through his precious blood, which speaks better things than that of Abel; which speaks pardon, and so peace, to guilty souls; and by removing guilt, settles and secures peace; and through his righteousness, by which being justified, souls come to have peace with God through Christ; and are in no fearful apprehensions of present or future wrath; and through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ; in the view of which they joy in God, through him, by whom they have received the atonement of all their sins and transgressions; the consequence of which must be peace and joy.

And this great blessing, in which the comfort and happiness of the spiritual life consists, is enjoyed in a way of believing: the more faith, the more conscience-peace, and spiritual joy: it is assured as being what God has promised, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee; [{Isa 26:3}](#) and it is a prayer of faith; and when so made, it may be expected it will be answered, the God of hope fill you with all joy, and peace in believing; [{Ro 15:13}](#) and it is the experience of the saints,

that the more faith is in exercise, in religious duties, in prayer, in hearing of the word, or in attendance on any ordinance; the more spiritual peace is enjoyed: And which blessing the believer is often favoured with, in public worship; in performing the duties of the house of God; and in observing his commands and ordinances: for though there is no reward for keeping them, yet in keeping of them there is a great reward; {[Ps 19:11](#)} and this reward is peace of mind; and a sufficient one it is; and which all the Lord's people are blessed with, more or less, that keep close to him in his own ways, and pay a proper and constant regard to his institutions and appointments. Great peace have they which love thy law, or doctrine; the doctrine of faith; the doctrine of the gospel; and shew their love by a close and constant attention to it, and to the ordinances of it; nothing shall offend them; {[Ps 119:165](#)} disturb their peace, and interrupt their joy; they shall walk comfortably in the light of God's countenance; go on their way rejoicing in Christ; feeling in their breasts a joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and so by good experience, they find the truth of this, that wisdom's paths are paths of peace. {[Pr 3:17](#)}

4. Another blessing God blesses his people with, who meet and worship him in places where his name is recorded, is the free and full forgiveness of their sins: This is only of God: none can forgive sin but him, against whom it is committed; whose law is transgressed, and whose justice is affronted: Were there any that could, they would be such as were like him, at least in this respect; whereas there are none. Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage! {[Mic 7:18](#)} There is none like him for it; and this he does of his rich grace and mercy; and for the sake of Christ, his blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction: Hence the apostle exhorts the saints to forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, saith he, hath forgiven you: {[Eph 4:32](#)} and though this is done at once, and for all sins together; yet as every fresh commission of sin occasions fresh guilt to rise in the conscience, there is need of a renewed application of pardoning grace and mercy; which believers are sometimes favoured with, through the public ministration of the word; where the name of the Lord is recorded, and the blessings of his grace are published; and this among the rest. Thus when the prophet Isaiah was cast down under a sense of the pollution and guilt of sin; when in a visionary way he was in the temple of the Lord; one of the seraphim, an emblem of gospel ministers, took a live coal from the altar, expressive of the expiating blood, and atoning sacrifice of Christ, and touched his lips with it, saying, thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged; {[Isa 6:5-7](#)} signifying in a declarative way, according to the tenor of the everlasting gospel, and the doctrine of pardon in it, that his

iniquity, of which he was truly sensible, was forgiven for the sake of the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God; and in this way, and at such seasons, namely, under the ministry of the word, is the pardon of sin sometimes applied and sealed to the consciences of God's people; and a special blessing this is: blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: {[Ps 32:1](#)} This is a chief and principal blessing in the covenant of grace; it stands first in the article of redemption; yea, redemption by the blood of Christ, is made chiefly to consist of it; that is explained by it; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: {[Eph 1:7](#)} the doctrine of it, is a main and principal one, in the ministration of the gospel; one of the first ordered to be preached and published in it; and is of the utmost importance; and it is among the first-rate blessings we are to call upon our souls to be thankful and bless God for. On this much of the peace, the comfort of the people of God depend; when he would have them comforted, it is by telling them that their iniquity is pardoned; and when he would have them be of good cheer, it is by assuring them their sins are forgiven; without which they cannot: but this will make the bones that are broken to rejoice; and will cure every soul-sickness and malady: for when this grace is applied, the inhabitant shall not say I am sick; the reason is, the people that dwell therein, shall be forgiven their iniquity; {[Isa 33:24](#)} though storms and tempests may arise in the conscience of a sinner, through guilt fastened on it, yet let but a word of pardon by Christ be spoken, all is hush and quiet; there is immediately a calm: and without this blessing, and a sense of it, a man cannot stand before God, and serve him in his sanctuary with pleasure; but let his conscience be sprinkled and purged by the blood of Christ, and that be applied to him for pardon; and then he will serve the living God freely and cheerfully: and, indeed no one can look into eternity with comfort, and think of a future state with any satisfaction, unless he has a good hope through grace, of an interest in this blessing; but when he sees that God has in love to his soul, cast all his sins behind his back; and in his mercy to him, has thrown them into the depths of the sea; so that when they are sought for they shall not be found, being all freely and fully pardoned; then, though upon the brink of eternity, and just launching into another world, he can sing and say, O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and that is taken away by Christ; The strength of sin is the law, and that is fulfilled by him: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory over sin, law, hell and death, through our Lord Jesus Christ, {[1Co 15:55-57](#)} his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice.

5. The Lord also blesses his people with a justifying righteousness, and with fresh views of their interest in it, whilst they are serving him in places where he records his name, by the ministration of the gospel; for therein is this righteousness revealed from faith to faith; {[Ro 1:17](#)} from one degree of it to another, until they arrive to a full assurance of its being theirs: and they are happy indeed, who receive this blessing from the Lord; even righteousness from the God of their salvation; they are truly blessed, thrice happy persons that are favoured with this grace, and indulged with a lively sense of it: David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; {[Ro 4:6](#)} but it is not easy to give after him the whole description of that happiness: such have acceptance with God; God is well pleased with Christ, and with all his people in him, being clothed with his pure and perfect righteousness; with which righteousness he is well pleased; because by it the law is magnified and made honourable; his justice is satisfied; and all his perfections reconciled and honoured in the justification of his people by it; and not only are their persons accepted with God in the beloved, through the righteousness of Christ, and for the sake of it; but their services and duties; their sacrifices of prayer and praise also. Moreover, such have great peace in themselves, much quietness and ease of mind; for, the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever; {[Isa 32:17](#)} not of the righteousness of man, which is impure and imperfect, and cannot justify before God; and therefore, can never lay any solid foundation for peace; but of the righteousness of Christ, by which those that are justified, have peace with God, and in themselves; for, the kingdom of God, in them, is righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost; {[Ro 14:17](#)} that is, these are the fruits and effects of the righteousness of Christ, being received by faith, and so making a part of that kingdom of grace, in the heart of a believer, which can never be moved: to which may be added, that such who have an interest in this righteousness, are secured from condemnation and wrath; there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, and are justified by his righteousness; for his blood-shed, sufferings, and death, which are a principal part of this righteousness, are their security from condemnation; so that they shall never enter into it, but shall pass from death to life; and they may assure themselves, that as they are justified by the blood of Christ, they shall be saved from wrath, through him: to say no more; they must needs be blessed and happy, since they are hereby entitled to eternal life. Hence justification by Christ's righteousness, is called, the justification of life; {[Ro 5:18](#)} for, being justified through it, they are made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life, {[Tit 3:7](#)} and shall most assuredly enter into it; for, this righteousness will answer for them in a time to come,

and give them admission into the kingdom of heaven; which a man's own righteousness, be it what it will, will leave him short of.

6. Such as serve the Lord, and worship him in a spiritual manner, where his name is recorded, are blessed by him with eternal life itself; for, there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore; {[Ps 133:3](#)} they are here blessed with an enlarged view of it; life and immortality, or an immortal life, being more clearly brought to light by the gospel, {[2Ti 1:10](#)} and the ministration of it: that presenting to faith the best account that is given of the unseen glories, and invisible realities of another world; and here, under the gospel-ministry, saints are sometimes indulged as with a sight of the King in his beauty; so with a prospect of the good land that is very far off; {[Isa 33:17](#)} their hope of possessing it is more and more encouraged, and their faith of it increased: and are, indeed, made to rejoice in the believing views, and hope of the glory of God, they have some glimpse of; yea, he that believes hath eternal life, in some sense, already; he has it in promise, and in faith and hope; and he has the earnest and pledge of it, yea, the beginning of it, which is grace in him, and the knowledge of God in Christ; for, this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent; {[Joh 17:3](#)} which spiritual and experimental knowledge, unto which life eternal is annexed, is increased yet more and more, by means of the word and ordinances, the memorials of the name of God in his house; these are appointed for that purpose, and continued for that end; till we all come in, or into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; {[Eph 4:13](#)} and this is no small encouragement to attend upon them: and when all this is considered, in how many instances, and by how many ways, God blesses his people, that meet and worship him, where he records his name: it will clearly appear what a regard he has to such places, and what inducements there are to his people to attend them.

This will be more evident, if it be observed, that these blessings are blessings indeed; true and real ones; such as Jabez prayed for when he said, O, that thou wouldst bless me indeed; {[1Ch 4:10](#)} or, "in blessing, bless me;" some blessings have only an appearance of blessings; are rather imaginary than real; at least they are not to be mentioned with these; as the outward blessings of life, temporal good things; for they sometimes are turned into curses, and are curses to wicked men; but these are covenant-blessings, the sure mercies of David, which come from a covenant-God, through Christ the mediator of the covenant; and in a way of covenant-grace, which makes them sure to all

the spiritual seed of Christ: these are spiritual blessings, are of a spiritual nature, in distinction from corporal ones, from blessings of the basket, and of the store; are suited to spiritual men, and make for the welfare of the spirit and soul of man; and are brought down, and brought near, revealed, and applied by the holy Spirit of God, who takes them, and shews believers their interest in them: these are solid and substantial blessings; in comparison of which, temporal ones are things which are not, that have no solidity and substance in them, mere nonentities; but the blessings of grace, which saints are made to inherit now, are substance; and that glory they shall possess hereafter, is a better and more enduring substance; than any thing enjoyed here. In a word; the blessings God blesses his people with, who are found true and spiritual worshippers of him, where he records his name, are unchangeable, irreversible, and for ever; he never repents of them, nor revokes them; when God gives commandment to bless his people, and does bless them, they are blessed; and it is not in the power of men or devils to reverse such a commandment, or such blessings; they come from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; and they are like him, invariable and unalterable; what Isaac said to Esau concerning Jacob, is applicable to these blessings; I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed. {[Ge 27:33](#)} And, it may be strongly argued from hence, that if a poor, frail, weak, and dying man, would not make any alteration in a blessing he had conferred on his son, though earnestly solicited to it; much less will that God, who is the immutable Jehovah, the everlasting I Am, make any change in, or reverse the blessings he has bestowed on his people: no, whatever he does in this way, is for ever; there is an inseparable connection between the blessings of grace, and eternal glory; to whom he gives the one he gives the other; whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. {[Ro 8:30](#)}

To conclude: We see how strong are the reasons, how forcible the arguments, how great the encouragement, to engage us to attend the house and ordinances of God; for, if his presence and blessing are not sufficient, what will be? The Lord, to encourage the people of Israel to wait at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, promised to meet them there, and commune with them: and Christ, to encourage his ministers and churches to attend to his word and ordinances, promised his presence with them, to the end of the world; than which nothing greater could be suggested to them: and, since God is to be met with in public places of worship; his grace is there displayed and communicated; Christ is to be found, and with him life, and righteousness, and salvation, and the love and favour of God to be obtained and enjoyed; this

may induce us to a constant attendance in them; Blessed is the man, says wisdom, or Christ, that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. {[Pr 3:34-35](#)} But then it should be observed, that the places where attendance is to be given, in a religious way, are where the name of the Lord is recorded; there only his presence and blessing are to be expected; not where there is no mention of him; where the free grace of God, in the salvation of men, is not set forth; where the name of Christ is not spoken of, but studiously concealed, and but only occasionally, or now and then taken notice of under some low epithet or another; but, instead thereof, man's free-will is exalted; the power and purity of human nature cried up; justification and salvation are attributed to the works of men, and only a moral scheme is advanced and enforced; in such places, the presence and blessing of God are not to be met with; and, indeed, they are here rarely thought of, or sought for: but, if the name of God is recorded in a place, in the sense in which it has been explained, it matters not what the place is, or is called, as has been observed; since Jehovah dwelleth not in temples made with hands, {[Ac 17:24](#)} at least is not limited and restrained unto them: nor does he regard the form and manner in which they are built; he dwells in a more stately temple than any that can be erected on earth; the heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool; and, therefore, he may well say, where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? {[Isa 66:1](#)} Since there is none built, or can be built equal to the glory of his Majesty; therefore our great concern should be, to worship him in a spiritual manner, with our whole spirits, in the exercise of spiritual graces, and under the influence, and by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name, even to each divine person; to the Father, who has chosen us to holiness and happiness; to the Son, who has redeemed us by his precious blood; and to the Spirit, who has regenerated and sanctified us, and is the earnest of our future glory.

[i] Apud Rabbinos $\mu\omega\text{qm}$, inter nomina Dei est, & quidem cum articulo $\mu\omega\text{qmj}$, per antiphrasin, quasi illocalis, infinuus, qui nullo loco capitur, sed omnibus rebus locum dat. Buxtorf. in rad. $\mu\omega\text{q}$, p. 673. Vid. Pirke Abot. c. 5. s. 4. & 6. 1. The reasons of this name given by the Jewish writers, are these; says Aben Ezra, (Praefat. in comment. in Esther.) our antients, of blessed

memory, call him (God) the place; because every place is full of his glory; and R. Hona, in the name of R. Ame, says (Bereshit Rabba. S. 68. fol. 60. 4.) why do they surname the holy blessed God, and call him $\mu\omega\eta\mu$, place? because he is the place of the world; and there is no world his place but what is written, behold, there is a place by me, [Ex 33:21](#). And elsewhere (Pirke Eliezer, c. 35. fol. 38. 2.) it is likewise, why is his name called place? because in every place where the righteous are, there is he found with them, as it is said, in every PLACE where I record my name, &c. [Ex 20:24](#).

[\[ii\]](#) See Ainsworth on [Ge 4:4](#).

[\[iii\]](#) orfanouv, [Joh 14:18](#).