

come not to bring grace with you to add to Christ's store. He loves to give, and glories in giving; but he scorns to receive grace from you; and in truth you have none but what he gives. Bring your wants to him to supply, but bring not your fulness to brag of. Spread your sins before this throne with shame and sorrow, and plead for a gracious pardon; but take heed you bring not your sorrow, tears, and repentance, nay, nor your faith itself, as a plea for that pardon. How abominable is it to Christians' ears, and how much more unto Christ's, to hear a man plead thus for pardon: "Here is my repentance; where is thy pardon? Here is my faith; where is thy justification?" I know men abhor to say so. But take good heed, lest any thought bordering on it enter into thy heart. Faith is the tongue that begs pardon? faith is the hand that receives it, it is the eye that seeth it; but it is no price to buy it. Faith useth the gospel-plea for pardon; but itself, neither in habit nor act, is the plea itself. That is only Christ's blood. Christ's blood goes for the remission of your sins, if ever they be forgiven; and is the only plea to be heard at the throne of grace. There are too many like the Pharisee (Luke 18:11). It would seem by Christ's words (v 14) that both came for justification. The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,—or as this publican. Poor wretch! The publican was a far better man than he, as Christ testifieth. He came to the throne of grace, like a man that would carry something away. It is a rule of this court, (Luke 1:53) He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away. According to this rule, the Lord dealt with the Pharisee and the publican; and so will he deal with you, as you are like the one or the other, in your approaches to, and pleadings at the throne of grace.

SERMON II Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I did take up this exhortation, as containing an answer to four considerable questions that usually are in the hearts of them that draw near to God seriously. 1. Where may we find him? On a throne of grace. Seek him no where else; for no where else is he to be graciously found. 2. How shall we come to this throne? Boldly, with confidence. 3. What is the ground of this boldness? It had need be a great and solid ground on which a sinner may build boldness in his approaching to God. This ground is hinted by the apostle in the word therefore. Wherefore? Because of our great High Priest, the Son of God, in heaven (vv 14,15). Though there be nothing more commonly said and owned, than that all men are sinners, and that all the acceptance of a sinner with God is through Jesus Christ; yet I can assure you, that when a person sees and knows what it is to be a sinner, and know what God is, it is a wonderful difficulty to believe, that it is possible that such a sinner and such a God should ever meet in peace. People's dry notions and opinions of Jesus Christ, if there be no more, will soon be blown away, with a deep sight of the sinfulness of sin, and of the majesty of God provoked thereby. 4. The last question is, What shall we get by coming? and what should we come for? The greatest blessings; mercy and grace. These blessings are comprehensive of all things needful to make a sinner happy.

To the first of these I began to speak last day, That God hath erected a throne of grace in the gospel, to which men are invited to come. What this throne of grace is, is spoke to; and that this throne of grace is to be distinguished from all other thrones of God spoken of in the word. The throne of his essential glory is unapproachable by all creatures. The throne of his justice is dreadful to all sinners. We should pray against our coming before this throne (Psa 143:2). He must be a proud ignorant fool that would offer to come and plead at its bar; for here all acts and sentences pass according to strict law and justice; and the law is an everlasting condemner of all sinners. There is also the throne of the Judge at the last day. But this throne is not yet set, though it will surely be; and we know not how soon, and should prepare for our appearing before it (2 Cor 5:9,10). But this throne of grace is the gracious manifestation of God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:18,19). This is the light of the glory of God's grace shining in the face of Jesus

Christ (2 Cor 4:6). And to coming to this throne of grace, and to God in Christ dispensing his grace from it, we are here exhorted and encouraged. In pursuing of this exhortation, I would,

- I. Prove that all should come.
- II. Show who will come.
- III. And who shall be specially welcome.

I. That all ought to come to the throne of grace.

All sinners that hear of it, should improve this great privilege, and seek the enjoyment of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

1. Because God is not otherwise approachable by men in accepted worship. No man cometh unto the Father but by me; saith Christ (John 14:6). The light of nature teacheth all men in some measure, that there is a God, and somewhat of his eternal power and god-head (Rom 1:20); and that this God should be worshipped. Therefore some sort of worship is performed by all sorts of heathens, who are yet without God, and that because without Christ, and therefore without hope in the world (Eph 2:12). Never was there, nor will there be, nor can there be, any gracious approach unto God, nor any address received favourably by God, but at this throne of grace. Therefore whatever may be said of the zealous devotion, and of the moral principles and practices of the heathens, yet never any of them did, nor could offer up an acceptable prayer unto God, nor obtain a gracious answer from him; not only because they worshipped an unknown God (Acts 17:23; Gal 4:8), but mainly because they worshipped not at this throne of grace; for there can be no communion with God, there can be nothing graciously given by God to men, nothing done by men that can be accepted of God, but at this throne of grace.

2. All should come to this throne, because all men have need of the blessings dispensed at this throne of grace. Where there is an universal urgent necessity, and only one place of supply discovered, men are called to betake themselves thither. The blessings dispensed at the throne of grace, are equally needed by all. Every man, every woman, young or old, rich or poor, are equally needy, because all are unspeakably needy of the mercy and grace of God. Some indeed have a greater sight and sense of their wants than others, (and that is mercy); but the real necessity is common to all. Every unpardoned man needs a pardon at this throne of grace; but few, if any, value a pardon till they get it, or value the grace of God till they feel it. Do you feel your need of what is given and got at this throne? Come then. The law thunders and roars against you, that you may see your need of coming hither for what the law cannot give, nor hinder you from receiving, nor rob you of when received. Do you think in your heart, that you are the most needy person in all the world; that you need all the grace and mercy, or more, than ever any sinner received? Then come the rather, come the sooner. The neediest soul, the hungriest sinner, the person most greedy of the grace of God, should come first to Christ's door, and beg loudest. Is there any not needy? Alas! many think so, but none is so. Will you come for hunger and want? A sensible hunger, a sense and sight of need, an appetite after grace and mercy, is an alms that Christ can give; and many professors want it sadly.

3. The command is universal, to all that hear it. As the apostle saith, (Rom 3:19) These things saith the law to them that are under the law; so I may say, This saith the gospel to all under the sound of it, come to the throne of grace. It is no indifferent thing. God commands all men to come. Believing (that is, coming) is commanded (1 John 3:23). Are you afraid to come? Have not I commanded you? (Josh 1:9) as God spake to the Captain of Israel. Will men own God's authority in the law, and deny it in the gospel? Is he not the same God in both? He that commands you to have no other gods besides him, doth command you to believe on his Son Jesus, who is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20). If coming to the throne of grace were not commanded, nor coming to it were no sin; and who dare say so? Not believing on Jesus Christ is the great gospel-sin, because believing on him is the great gospel-duty and work (John 6:29).

Object. But I am afraid he commands not me; others he may command, but not such a vile dead creature as I am.

Ans. Are you worse than some he hath commanded? (Jer 3:1,4,5) Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord. Such a practice in your land would greatly defile it, saith the Lord; but such acts of grace become the throne of grace. Are you worse than poor, and blind, and miserable,

and wretched, and naked? Yet the king of this throne commands them to come to him, though he sweetly calls it counsel (Rev 3:17,18). And in it we may join his two names, Wonderful, Counsellor (Isa 9:6). Object 2. But Christ calls and invites them that are weary and heavy laden (Matt 11:28) and the thirsty (Isa 55:1), and I am not such; and therefore he commands not me to come. Ans. 1. Do you expect any grace but at this throne of grace? Think you to work it out in yourselves, and come to him for more? or to get the beginning somewhere else, and then come to Christ for the rest? This bewrays your pride, and ignorance of the entire corruption of your nature, and of your impotency to any good. This frame discovers your ignorance of the nature of the grace of God, that consists in its freedom; as its glory is, in its being the original cause of all good done for us, and wrought in us, or by us.

Ans. 2. Christ never bid any man be or do any thing without him, and then come to him, and he would do more for him. Christ calls men as he finds them, and then makes them what he would have them: He begins the good work in them, and performs it (Phil 1:6).

Ans. 3. These and many such like calls and invitations do not limit and restrain the universality of the gospel-command, but do graciously apply it to such cases wherein they that are, are apt to think that they are specially excepted. What is more common than such arguings of unbelief: I have a vast load of sin lying on me; I have spent my time, and strength, and money, on sin and vanity; I have been wearied in the greatness of my way of departing from the Lord, and therefore the Lord will not receive me? Therefore such are named particularly by the Lord, and specially called.

Therefore let no man, whatsoever he hath been, or is, think, that he is not commanded to come to this throne of grace. Take the command, lay it on your conscience, give obedience to it; take the command for your warrant, and never fear but you shall be welcome. Can your souls say, Lord, no man out of hell is more needy of thy saving grace than I, no sinner more unworthy of it than I; yet, because thou commandest me to come, I come to beg, and to receive? He will sweetly receive you: Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). A text that hath been an anchor-hold to many a sinking sinner. 4. All should come to the throne of grace, because of the universality, vast extent, and indefiniteness of the promise of welcome to all that come. The command of God is a warrant and ground for our obedience, and the promise is a ground for confidence. The promise is God's great means for working faith; faith is the impression God makes on the soul of a man by the promise. When God takes the promise of the gospel, and applies it with the power of his grace upon the soul, it leaves an abiding mark and signature; and that is faith. The promise comes as the promise of a faithful God, who cannot lie, of a great salvation, to a great sinner. When the sinner sees and feels the truth and goodness of this promise, he believes. This promise of God is to be preached to all that hear the gospel; or rather, this promise is the gospel; the Lord will make it effectual as he seeth good. The apostle Peter encouraged such men to come to the throne of grace, who, if ever any in the world should have been kept back, it should have been they; a crew of the bloody murderers of the Son of God. But the word preached by Peter takes hold of their souls, and they cry out, What shall we do? No wonder they said so, when the cry of Christ's blood was in their consciences. The apostle saith to them, (Acts 2:38) Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, &c. Their sin was very great, peculiar to them only; none before or after them were guilty of this. The cry of innocent blood is a dreadful cry. But this was more than all the murders ever committed in the world. It was the murdering the Son of God, it was slaying the Prince of life; it was all that the devil and wicked world could do, to cut the throat of the gospel, and of all the elect of God: and this wicked act was done against Christ, because he taught that he was the Son of God, and that he came from the Father to be the Saviour of the world. Yet, saith the apostle to them, Repent, and be baptized in his name, for the remission of that sin; you that have been dipped in his blood, and so dreadfully guilty by the shedding of it, be baptized in his name, for the remission of that guilt, and of all others. This calling for repenting of their guilt of Christ's blood, was plainly a requiring of faith in him; not only that he was the Lord Christ they had slain in their unbelief, but that pardon, in the virtue of that blood, might be had by them, on their betaking themselves to him by faith. So did the same apostle preach to the council (Acts 5:28,31) when he and his brethren were charged by the high priest, for filling Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ, and intending to bring his blood upon them: Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. He directs them to look to Christ as the

giver of repentance for, and of forgiveness of all their sins; not excluding, but by (v 30) plainly including the greatest of all their sins, their slaying of Christ, and hanging him on a tree: and this they did with wicked hands (Acts 2:23), and with hearts as wicked as their hands. Yet thus did Peter preach Christ. So well did he remember his Lord's command, (Luke 24:47) That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. His argument is, (Acts 2:39) For the promise is to you, and to your children. Had they not slain the heir, and foundation of all the promises? Had they not done as much as men could do, to forfeit all interest in the promise? Yes; but Peter still invites them to the throne of grace, by an interest yet in the promise. The promise of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, is the rope and cord that God casts out to sinking sinners: it is equally in the offer of all in the gospel. It is true, that the Lord means and designs it to some particular persons; but that design is secret, and utterly unknown to all, till the promise itself be apprehended by faith, or finally rejected by unbelief. See Jeremiah 38:7-14. Ebed-melech let down a rope to draw Jeremiah out of the dungeon by. The cords could never have pulled him up, unless the prophet had put them under him, and unless his friend had drawn him up. He did so, and ventures on this mean of escape. He ventures on the strength of the cord, and on the trustiness of his friend. If either of them had failed him, he might have fallen down, and broke his neck; or stuck still in the mire, and starved in the pit. The case is so here. The promise of salvation is a great security; but it is so only to them that cast themselves on it, and trust to it. Whoever will trust God's promise in Christ, will find, that it is able to bear all their weight, if it were never so great. Therefore lay this warm promise to thy cold heart, and, by the Lord's blessing, life and warmth will come in. Try the strength of the promise, by casting all thy burden on it; and it will never sink under thee, nor thou perish by its failing. Christians think, that the promises of God are a blessed charter, (and so indeed they are); but few mind the promises as God's tendered and offered security to men; whereby, as means, he works faith in his chosen; and, by the offer of them to all in the gospel, leaves unbelievers inexcusable. Sinners perish under the gospel, not because there is no cord of salvation cast out to them, but because they either love the pit they are in, or cannot trust God's faithful promise of salvation by Christ for their delivery. So much of the first thing, the proving that all ought to come to the throne of grace, or to God in Christ sitting on it. God is not otherwise approachable; universal need of this throne, and of the blessings given at it; an universal call and command of God to come; an universal promise to all that do come; all prove that all men should come.

II. But though it be the duty of all to come, yet but few do come.

We would therefore see who they be that will come to the throne of grace. Of such we have two words. 1. Such as are given of the Father to the Son; all they, and they only, will come to this throne of grace: All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, saith Christ (John 6:37). Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep (John 10:26). The high spring of all the effectual calling and coming of men to Christ is this; They that are ordained to eternal life, believe, and none but they. It would be very unfit, that the book of life should be opened to, and read by any preacher of the gospel. I think not that ever any apostle had it opened to them with respect to others, so that they should be able, when looking on the multitude they preached to, to say, These are appointed for eternal life, and these passed by. But they being happily in the dark as to this secret purpose of God, did offer salvation through Jesus Christ to all that heard them. So Paul, (Acts 13:38,39) Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Having told them this good news, he (vv 40,41) warns them: Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. After his repeated pains on them, it is said, (v 48) As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed. It was a severe application of this word, that a very worthy divine made of it, that all the elect of God in this place were gathered in, by Paul's ministry in it, at this time. The grace of election is the spring of faith (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2), but this grace of election is not seen, but in the gift and light of faith. 2. All such, and only they, will come to the throne of grace, that are drawn by the Father: (John 6:44,45) No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath

learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Observe here the two universals: No man can come, unless drawn; Every man that is drawn, doth come.

The first decries the power of nature, the latter advanceth the power of God's grace. The utter impotence of nature, and omnipotence of grace, in the business of man's salvation, are stumbling-blocks to all the ungodly, but are foundations in Christian doctrine. The one lays man in the dust, the other raiseth him on a new bottom of the grace of God. When God hath a mind to draw a sinner to Christ, and to make him a believer on him to salvation, he teacheth him secretly and by a strong hand; he whispers into his heart the excellency of the Saviour, and greatness of his salvation; so that surely the perishing sinner comes to Christ, and as surely is welcomed and saved by him.

III. But who shall be welcome?

Surely all that come, shall be welcome; as the word every where witnesseth: and all that ever tried it, have found and testify it by their experience. For as the Son refused none that were given him of the Father in their eternal counsel, but took every one of them as his charge to redeem them; so all they, and only they, being drawn by the Father, and made willing to come to Christ, are made welcome by him (John 6:37). He knows his sheep, when wandering on the mountains (John 10:16,27,28), and accordingly receives them. When the Father drives home the lost sheep to their great Shepherd, Christ knows them before he opens the fold to them; and because he knows them, he lets them in, that they may find pasture, and feed on him and his grace to eternal life. But there are some that are specially welcome to Christ, and speed well at this throne of grace. As, 1. They that come when they can do nothing else; they that come to the throne of grace as their last shift: We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee, said Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 20:12). Sincerest believing, and strongest believing, is acted, when a man hath no prop at all to lean upon, but God alone. Believing is called fleeing: We have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us (Heb 6:18). Now, who flees? Only he that can stand no longer, that is not able to deal with his adversary and danger, that hath no hope of prevailing by his strength, and therefore betakes himself to his heels. It is men's great sin to endeavour to seek that elsewhere, that only is to be found here, mercy and grace. But it is the greatest sin of all, to count all lost, as long as this throne stands, and the Lord calls men to come to it. Be deeply humbled, and covered with shame; yet come notwithstanding. Such is the corruption of our hearts, and the Lord seeth it well, that if sinners could find grace and mercy any where else, they would never come to the throne of grace for it. Christ is the last shift of a distressed sinner; yet, blessed be his name, he welcomes the comer. The woman (Mark 5:25-35) tries many means ere she comes to Christ, yet sped well when she came at last.

2. They are welcome to the throne of grace that come ofttest, and ask the greatest things. It is otherwise in addresses to friends, or great men on earth. You may be welcome to them, if you come now and then, and if you ask little things; but if you come daily, and ask great things, and grow in your suits, they will quickly be weary of you. But what saith the King on this throne of grace? (John 16:24) Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Had not they asked formerly great things? that he would expound his word to them (Matt 13:36), that he would teach them to pray (Luke 11:1), that he would increase their faith (Luke 17:5). But all this was as nothing to Christ; nothing in regard of the great things he had to give, and they stood in need of. This is a great word of Christ's, Ask, and I will give, and ye shall receive; ask still more, and ye shall receive more, even till your joy be full. The reason why our souls are so empty of joy, is because our mouths are empty of prayer. Christ's love-quarrels with his people are three. 1. That they do not ask great things, and often. 2. That they do not receive what he is so ready to give. Our narrow vessels cannot take in large floods from the fountain of living water. 3. That they do not praise for what they receive. It is his due, our duty, and our great mercy. Both prayer and praise widens the heart for receiving more of Christ's fulness. 3. They are specially welcome to the throne of grace that come to stay, resolving never to leave it; that not only come to it at a pinch and strait, but come to abide there. our Lord teacheth several parables, to encourage and direct us in plying the throne of grace (Luke 11:5-13, 18:1-8). Jacob was a blessed man, and knew well the manner of this court, when he wrestled with the angel (Gen 32:24-30); and that angel was the King of the throne of grace (Hosea 12:3-5). After a long night's wrestling, with weeping and supplications, saith the Lord, (Gen 32:26) Let me go, for the day breaketh, Jacob answers,

I will not, looks like ill manners in speaking to God. He saith not, How can I hold thee? If thou hast a mind to go, it is impossible that I can detain thee. Can a man hold God when he hath a mind to be gone? But Jacob knew his party, and perceived that he tried him, if he would part without a blessing. "Nay, saith Jacob, if thou ask my leave and consent to part so, I will never give it. Let the day break, and the next night come, the great Blessor, and lame halting Jacob, shall never part, with Jacob's consent, without a blessing." And he prevailed. He had got his father's blessing, by the cunning of his mother (Gen 27); had it again ratified by his father (28:3,4); he had the Lord's blessing (28:12-16); he got it renewed again, on the Lord's calling him to return to Canaan (31:3): Yet he was in a new strait, and wanted a new blessing, and wrestled for it, and obtained it. Let all the seed of Jacob imitate his practice, and they shall share in his blessing, and be fed with the heritage of Jacob their father, as the word is (Isa 58:14). In pressing the exhortation in the text, I shall lay before you a few considerations.

1. Consider the greatness of this privilege, that there is a throne of grace erected for sinners, and revealed to them. This throne is only erected for sinners: it had never been but for sinners. A throne of grace supposeth, that there are guilty sinners to stand before it, and to get good by it. The greatness of this privilege is apparent, in comparing the state of fallen man with that of fallen angels; and in comparing their state that have the gospel, with theirs that are without it.

1st, Compare the state of fallen man with that of fallen angels. Whatsoever the proper meaning of that word is, (Psa 8:5) Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, these two may be well conceived; That man in his original make was lower in dignity than the angels; and that man was made a little after the angels were made: and long after it could not be; for the whole old creation was completely finished in six days. The angels that fell, are so sinful and miserable, that we cannot speak any good of them; yet, in their first make, they were a very glorious part of the creation. Notwithstanding, when they sinned, there was no throne of grace provided for them: God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (2 Peter 2:4); yet, for his elect, he spared not his own Son (Rom 8:32). The devils, (for such sin made them), immediately upon their sinning, were as much condemned as ever they shall be: I say not as much executed; for it seems that their full torment is reserved to the last day (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4). Art thou come to torment us before the time? (Matt 8:29), say they to Christ. No wonder the devil be such an enemy to the gospel of man's salvation, and a hater of the throne of grace. The wonder is, that men should be deceived by Satan, to despise and slight this great privilege. Let Christians take a view of this astonishing appearance of God's grace, that fallen angels are all passed by, and fallen man taken up; not indeed all of them, but a great many, as one day will declare: (Heb 2:16) For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 2dly, Consider the greatness of this privilege in the revelation of it. You have it, but the greatest part of the world have it not. They that cannot receive the truth of God revealed in the word about the sovereignty of grace in election, and the efficacy of distinguishing grace in calling, must see the same sovereignty acted in dispensing or withholding the means of grace as pleaseth him. And to be utterly ignorant that there is a throne of grace, renders people as miserable as if there was no throne of grace at all. They that never hear of Christ, must perish. It is an idle dream, that the efficacy of Christ's death may be applied, and profitable to the saving of adult persons that never heard of him. There is no salvation for men but by Jesus Christ; there is no knowing of it, or partaking of it, but by the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation (Eph 1:13). Christ and his name go together: (Acts 4:12) Neither is there salvation in any other; (no Saviour but he): for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. No other way of getting good by him, but by hearing of his name, and believing on his name: How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? (Rom 10:14). It is a wonderful mercy to hear of him; but woe to them that hear, and do not believe. None can believe without hearing (Rom 10:17); but alas! many hear, and believe not (Isa 53:1).

2. Consider the great advantages of this privilege, of having a throne of grace erected for us, and revealed to us. All blessings may be had here, by coming for them. If there was such a throne in this world, for silver, and gold, and health, and outward mercies, what strange crowding would there be to it? The blessings to be had here, are innumerable for multitude; all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:3); blessings invaluable for their worth, eternal in their duration, most free in their tenure, and all given in love. Every act of favour from the throne of grace, is more worth than all God's common

mercies. Lord, lift up upon us the light of thy countenance (Psa 4:6,7), that will put joy into the soul. Every thing given at the throne of grace, is a blessing of grace. Its very name should teach people how to come, and how to call what they get at it. If it be a throne of grace, we should come to it as empty, needy beggars; and when we receive any thing there, we should call and count it grace. Ask all saints on earth, and they will witness, that great and good things are to be had at the throne of grace. Try it yourselves, and you will find it is not in vain to beg here. Nay, the damned in hell do bear sad witness, that great are the blessings that are to be had at the throne of grace, which they feel and know by their woeful and eternal loss of them. The glorified in heaven know what a rich throne of grace this is. Only sinners on earth will not believe this, nor use this throne as they should.

3. Consider that this court and throne is of short continuance. It will not be kept up always. There is a limitation of the time of its lasting; as Hebrews 4:7, He limiteth a certain day. The day of the continuance of the throne of grace, is bounded and limited with four days; the day of a man's life, the gospel-day, the world's day, and the Spirit's day. 1st, The day of every man's life. This hath bounds set to it by God (Job 14:5). The throne of grace continues unto men no longer than they live. When men die, they go not to the throne of grace, but of glory and judgment. If we have sped well at the throne of grace, we shall be welcome to the throne of glory. The uncertainty and shortness of life, with the certainty of the expiring of all treaties betwixt God and us about salvation at the end of life, should make people careful to secure the main matter in God's time.

2dly, There is the gospel-day. This is also set and limited by the Lord. He hath determined how many offers you shall have of Christ; and when they come to an end, there will not be one more. And then the throne of grace is taken down as to you. (Luke 19:42) If you hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes! saith our Lord to Jerusalem. This was the ending determining day to Jerusalem as a city, and to its inhabitants as a body. Though many particular persons had another day of grace; yet the slipping of that day hangs on that poor people and their posterity to this very day.

3dly, There is the world's day. And then the day of grace will end as to all: When the bridegroom came, they that were ready, entered with him to the marriage, and the door was shut (Matt 25:10). There was no more grace to be dispensed to men; and we know not when that day will come. Miserable is their case, who shall see Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, before they have seen him by faith in the gospel; who hear the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, before they have heard the quickening voice of the Son of God from the throne of grace; who have neglected calling on him in time, and begin out of time, (Luke 13:25) When the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. Is it not just that they should be kept at the shut door, that would not enter at an open door in Christ's time, and when he called? When Christ comes, and hath shut the door, no man will be let in, knock as he will. Nor, while the throne of grace is patent, no man will be kept out, be what he will, that hath a mind to enter, and knocks for entrance.

4thly, There is the Spirit's day. Here is a great depth of God's sovereignty and wisdom, a great depth of his severity, an unaccountable and awful judgment; how the Spirit of God strives with men in the gospel, how near he comes to them sometimes, how close he besiegeth them, that they seem to be on the point of yielding, and are not far from the kingdom of God; and yet he draws back his hand, and leaves them. I believe, that many ungodly men, many reprobates, have been sometimes in their life nearer to heaven, (if such may be said to be near to heaven that never come there) than many an elect person was half an hour before his conversion: (Gen 6:3) My Spirit shall not always strive with man. What kind of striving this was, and what became of them striven with, we have (1 Peter 3:19,20). Nothing will more bitterly aggravate the eternal misery of the damned, than the remembrance of this, that they had a day, and in that day grace offered to them, and that they did reject the offer. Men's carnal hearts are now full of cavils against the unsearchable methods and ways of God towards the sons of men; but the last day's judgment will determine and declare, that in the perdition of the ungodly, there was, and is, most pure and unspotted justice and righteousness; and, in the salvation of all the elect, pure, perfect, and predominant grace, that reigned in them, and over them, and through them, till it brought them to heaven.

Wherefore, seeing the having of a throne of grace is a privilege of so great importance, and of so uncertain continuance, there should be the greater care to make diligent and present improvement of it. Why should any man let this throne of grace stand empty? Will men provoke the Lord to say, In vain have I set up a throne of grace for sinners that come not at it?

Again, Consider the wrath that will follow on the neglect, and not improving of this great privilege. The sin is many ways committed, and the judgments of many sorts that are inflicted. But I leave this to the next occasion. Except you, in your personal exercise and experience, do know what this throne of grace is, and what is got there; you may be Christians hereafter, but as yet you are none; unless you experience what this throne of grace is, by frequent repairing to it, and by frequent receiving good at it. That man or woman, whatever his or her name be in the world, or the church of Christ, that never found any need for, or use of, or benefit by this throne of grace, is surely a dead sinner. People may safely and surely judge of both the state and frame of their souls, by their business at the throne of grace. Never got any soul life, but by an act of grace and power from this throne. No soul can be kept in life, but by daily intercourse with it. It is as impossible that these bodies of ours should be maintained in life and strength without meat, and drink, and air; as it is for the soul of a believer to prosper without daily plying the throne of grace.

Let therefore the exhortation in the text be complied with, Come to this throne. Say therefore, Lord, I am invited to come to the throne of thy grace, and none have more need of that grace than I, and there is enough of grace there for me; and therefore I will come, and beg, and get, and abide, and bless the giver, and become happy by receiving.

SERMON III Hebrews 4:16.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

I have spoke of the first thing that this text contains, That God in Jesus Christ, in the gospel, is on a throne of grace, inviting men to come to him. What this throne of grace is; why all should come; who they be that will come; and who will be specially welcome, you have heard. I was pressing this exhortation of coming to this throne. You see the Apostle, in delivering this, takes in himself with them he exhorts, Let us come. He had oft come before, and had been bountifully dealt with at this court. (1 Tim 1:14) And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant towards him. This made him commend this throne so highly, and intreat others, and stir up himself, to frequent addresses to it. I did use three arguments to back this exhortation, and shall add a fourth.

1. The first was the greatness of the privilege, of having a throne of grace to come unto; a privilege denied to fallen angels, and the knowledge of it denied to the far greater part of mankind.

2. This throne of grace is a privilege full of rich advantages. All believers know somewhat of them. All their acceptance with God, all their access to God, all their communications from him, and fellowship with him, all their blessings in time, and their hopes for eternity, are all owing to this, that God is on a throne of grace.

3. This privilege is of uncertain duration, and short. The Lord the King is for ever; but the throne of grace is not for ever. It is but a time-dispensation, and limited unto certain seasons. The gospel-day is uncertain, our lifetime is uncertain, the world's day is uncertain, to us, though all determined by God. But above all, the Spirit's day is uncertain. How long he will strive, when he will forbear, who can tell? Some godly men have thought, that there are few (if any) that live under a powerful ministry, but, at some time of their life, the Spirit of God comes close to them; so that there is not only a witness given for the Lord in the offers of the gospel, but there is a further addition to that witness, by some special approaches of God's Spirit to their hearts. But whatever there be in that observation, this is undoubted, that where the Holy Ghost makes the strongest assaults on men, if he be resisted, and withdraws, the most prodigious hardness is left behind. Therefore, extraordinary, bold, hardened sinners, cruel persecutors, apostates, and mockers of