

## SERMON I.

### THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.\*

1 COR. ii. 2.—“ For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

In the preceding words, the Apostle begins a vindication of the manner of his preaching, which he says “ was not with excellency of speech or of wisdom.” And ver. 4th, he adds, “ My speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” It appears there were in his days, as there are in ours, many who greatly admired a fine style; not so much regarding the subject-matter of a sermon, as the preacher’s language and manner of address. Of this sort were they who had been instructed in the Platonic philosophy before their conversion to Christianity, and were for introducing among the preachers of that religion, what they called *Plato’s gracious manner*. The Apostle frequently in his epistles declares against this piece of vanity, as very much below the dignity of the Gospel. He did not study pompous words curiously arranged, and rhetorical harangues, or nicely adjusted periods, to tickle the ear and please the fancy of those who pretended to a refined and polite taste in these matters. And the reason for this

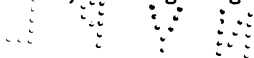
\* Preached October 22d, 1761, at Colinsburgh, Fifeshire, upon the admission of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Collier to the exercise of the holy ministry there. This discourse has a historical value, independent of its intrinsic worth. It was upon this day, and in this place, that the Relief Presbytery was formed.

part of his conduct is assigned in the text; *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

In which words, two things are observable:

1. The subject-matter of Paul's preaching, namely, Jesus Christ. *I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ.* This surely is not to be understood as if the Apostle simply condemned all other knowledge but that of Jesus Christ. We find the Holy Ghost has recorded it to the honour of Moses, "that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Besides, Paul himself had a very liberal education before his conversion, being bred up at the feet of Gamaliel an eminent doctor of the law. Yea, he was not only acquainted with the Jewish laws, rites, and traditions, but likewise with the heathen poets and philosophers, as appears by passages quoted from them in his writings. However, he condemns all sorts of knowledge, in so far as they come in competition with, or stand in opposition to, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Neither was this a warm flight of devotion, or a thought that suddenly struck the man; but the effect of the most attentive consideration, the result of the most deliberate and serious inquiry. So much is imported in what is here rendered *determined*. It is as if he had said, "I have well weighed the case, I have turned it round, and balanced advantages and disadvantages, gains and losses;—I have endeavoured to take in every thing that merits consideration here, and, after the most serious, deliberate, and impartial scrutiny, this is my settled opinion, my fixed sentiment, that no knowledge whatsoever is worthy to be once named with the knowledge of 'Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,' (or dog's meat, as the Greek word imports) 'that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'" Phil. iii. 8, 9.

Now, this being the great Apostle's judgment, we need



not wonder that he determined to know nothing, *i. e.* to make nothing known among the people, but Jesus Christ. This excellent, this matchless One, should be the subject of all his sermons, discourses, and epistles. He would study first to know Christ for himself, and then to make him known unto the people, hereby setting an example to ministers of the gospel in all succeeding ages, that they should first be Christians, and then ministers; and further, that, however well they may be accomplished in the several parts of human learning, yet in their pulpit-ministrations, they should display nothing but the glory, the love, and the laws of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the mean appointed of God for the salvation of sinners; and though it be esteemed foolishness by the *witlings* of the world, we may rest satisfied in this, that the only wise God knows very well how to adapt the means to the end.

2. The special consideration of Christ which he singles out from among all the rest, to be the subject of his preaching, namely, *Christ crucified*. It is not Christ risen, Christ ascended, and sitting at the right-hand of God, clothed with all power, that he pitches on, though these views of him were more likely to have recommended him to the world: but, behold! he singles out that very circumstance concerning Christ, which, of all others, neither Jews nor Gentiles were able to endure; and that was, his being nailed to a cross till he died! "Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." And, indeed, he was so to Paul himself, as much as to any man, before his conversion; for he was, by his own acknowledgment, "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." Nay, we find the disciples could not bear the intimation of Christ's death when it was made to them by himself: Peter remonstrates against it vigorously. The truth is, these good men laboured under the prejudices of a Jewish education; and they never awaked fully out of the dream of a temporal kingdom, until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down upon them, and cleared up the mystery of the cross unto them: and then,

indeed, they went forth with boldness, boasting and glorying in that very thing which the world thought a badge of shame and infamy.

And now, methinks, this determination of the most famous preacher and apostle of the Gentiles furnishes us with a lesson very suitable to the occasion of our meeting here this day, namely, "That the doctrine of Christ crucified, is that which ministers of the gospel should chiefly study to know and to make known among the people."

In discoursing further on this subject, we propose, through divine assistance, first, to consider what is that knowledge of Christ crucified which ministers of the gospel ought to have. Secondly, to show how ministers of the gospel should make Christ known among the people. Thirdly, to point out, in some particulars, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified above all other knowledge whatsoever.

I. As to the first thing proposed, *viz.* what is that knowledge of Christ crucified, which ministers of the gospel ought to have? we say,

1. All Christians, but especially ministers of the gospel, ought to have the speculative knowledge of Christ crucified, as by their office they are bound to make him known unto others. They should be "scribes well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, and able to bring forth out of their treasure things new and old." They should know and understand the evidences of the Christian religion, and likewise the particular doctrines and duties thereof; that so they may be able not only to instruct the weak and ignorant, but also to defend Christianity against the attacks of deists and infidels, and all other enemies of the truth, as it is in Jesus.

Now, as he who would be master of any art or science, will choose to read the best book written thereon; so those who desire to make proficiency in the knowledge of Christ, would by all means study the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments;—these, my brethren, are the grand charter of our salvation, and they are sealed by the blood

of our Saviour.—This same Jesus is, as it were, the *running-tide* of the whole Bible. All the prophets spoke of him; all the priests in their sacred services were types of him, and pointed towards him.—Judaism was Christianity under a veil, as Christianity is Judaism unveiled. Therefore the Old Testament ought to be carefully studied by ministers of the gospel, as well as the New; forasmuch as Christ is the scope and substance thereof. And for the better understanding of both Testaments, it is quite necessary they should be acquainted with the original languages in which they were written. The strength and beauty of many passages in the Old Testament, and even the true sense of some of them, cannot be discerned by such as are utterly unacquainted with the Hebrew language. And I cannot but take notice of it, as what deserves to be regretted, that the study of that language has gone so much into desuetude in this nation, and even among the clergy, whose office it is to explain the Scriptures unto the people, and who ought therefore to be furnished with every thing necessary for their own understanding of them. But we have some ground to hope, that this error may, in process of time, be rectified, as there appears a greater inclination for that study, both in this and in the neighbouring nation, than heretofore.

Ministers of the gospel ought, like Apollos, to be mighty in the Scriptures. *Bonus theologus, bonus textuarius*, was the saying of old. They should read them regularly, frequently, and with great attention, and thereby they will be furnished with a better fund for preaching Christianity, than by reading any other book, or all other books whatsoever that have been written on the subject, though these also are very useful in their proper place.

2. They ought also to have the experimental and practical knowledge of Christ crucified; lest, while they preach him to others, they may themselves be *cast-aways*, as the apostle's phrase is. The most precious truths fluctuating in the head, but not descending into the heart, or sanctifying it, prove no better than the manna of old, which when

kept over night, stank and bred worms: however distinctly we apprehend evangelical truths, yet if they are unmixed with faith, and undigested by practice, they will breed the noxious humours and crudities of pride, self-conceit, hypocrisy, and profaneness.

Real religion, my brethren, does by no means consist in the merely speculative knowledge of its truths; otherwise, the devils themselves would have more religion than the best of us: for albeit they have lost their purity and holiness, we have no ground to think they have lost their knowledge and sagacity. The Scripture saith, "They believe and tremble," James ii. 19., which implies their knowledge. As for carnal unregenerated men, whatever be their abilities, natural or acquired, they know Christianity only in a book; whereas real Christians have felt the exceeding greatness of its power: they have such ideas and such impressions of spiritual things made upon their minds by the Holy Ghost, as the natural man knows not at all.

Suppose the picture of a man drawn as lively, and as near to the original as possible, yet they who have seen the man himself, and conversed with him, will have another sort of idea of him than those possibly can have, who never saw him but in the picture. A man who has read geography, may describe the complexion, religion, laws, customs, commodities, and curiosities of different countries which he never dwelt in, nor travelled through: but the man who has lived in those countries, and seen all these things with his eyes, and often conversed with the inhabitants, must have an idea and impression of them, which the man, who has only read or heard of them, knows nothing about.

How necessary then is the experimental knowledge of Christ to ministers of the gospel! Let them have the richest cargo of gifts and learning you can suppose, yet, without this, they are but very poorly furnished for their office, and the discharge of it is more likely to be the drudgery of their lives, than the delight of their souls.

A preacher of Christ, yet not a believer in Christ! a minister of Christ, yet a servant of sin! what monstrous connections are these? "Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" Rom. ii. 21. In short, those who preach Christianity, without real and saving impressions of it upon their own hearts, are no better than actors upon a stage where a villain often personates the most virtuous character, and where all is mere fiction. But,

II. I proceed to the second thing in our method, *viz.* to show how ministers of the gospel should make Christ crucified known among the people.

1. They should make him known by preaching. To this purpose the revered apostle of the Gentiles tells us, "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 21—23. And in another place, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," &c.; 2 Cor. iv. 5. True it is, we are not *apostles*; this high title belongs not to those who are now ministers of the gospel: for they have neither the call, nor the qualifications, nor the charge of apostles. Neither had the apostles any successors in their office properly so called. At the same time, Jesus Christ certainly designed there should be a set of men successively, whose office it would be to teach and preach his religion to the end of time. And as such an institution seems founded on common sense and reason, and upon the universal practice of mankind in reference to religion, so it seems to be very plainly intimated by our Saviour himself before his ascension, when he says to his disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,—teaching them to observe all things what-

soever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. We all know these good men lived but a short while in the world: however, the promise originally made to them, extends to faithful ministers of the gospel in their several generations, to the end of time. Therefore, whatever be pretended, it appears to me a very unfriendly office to Jesus Christ and his religion, to depreciate a public ministry.—It is an attempt to blast what the Lord has most certainly blessed in all ages to the conversion of souls.

But then, ministers of Christ must be preachers of Christ; they should make him known among the people, by preaching his *doctrines*, his *institutions*, and his *laws* and *commandments*. Under these three, I conceive, what is called *preaching of Christ* may be comprehended.

Ministers should lay before their people the evidences of the truth of Christianity in a way suited unto their capacities, that so they may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them, and be fortified against the attacks of deists and infidels, who abound every where in this degenerate age. However, they ought not to insist always upon these, but to open up the particular doctrines of Christianity, such as concern the person, natures, offices, and grace of the Lord Jesus. They should endeavour to convince sinners of their lost state by nature, their absolute inability to recover themselves, and the indispensable necessity of coming to Jesus Christ as the one and only Mediator betwixt God and man. And, in order to obtain this good end, the law must be preached, its threatenings and curses must be sounded loud in the ears of sinners;—they must be alarmed with the thunder and fire from Mount Sinai: "for the law is our schoolmaster to bring us in to Christ." They should open up that grand transaction betwixt God the Father and God the Son, in behalf of mankind sinners, called *the covenant of grace*, with all the blessings and benefits contained therein, as effectual calling, justification, adoption, regeneration, sanctification, the in-



habitation of the Spirit, perseverance in grace, and the heavenly kingdom.

Farther, ministers of the gospel should declare the ordinances and institutions of Christ. Our Lord's last words, when he was leaving the world, were, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," &c. The positive institutions of Christianity, for all the clamour and noise that have been made about them by infidels, are but few in number, and of easy observance, especially when compared with the ritual of the Jewish church, once of divine institution, and which the apostle Peter calls "a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear."

But then, ministers of the gospel must preach the laws and commandments of Christ. Hence we find the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in his epistles, always subjoins unto the doctrines of free grace, (which he had a particular talent of displaying,) the warmest exhortations to piety, holiness, and righteousness in their several branches. For he well knew how prone corrupt nature is to divorce comfort from duty, and to turn the grace of God into wantonness.

The gospel is "a doctrine according to godliness," it is a most holy gospel; and where it appears, it "teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," the gospel of Christ commands us to "think on these things," Titus ii. 11, 12; Phil. iv. 8.

Therefore, when ministers declaim against vice, either in general, or more particularly;—when they inculcate the duties of sobriety, righteousness, and charity, the people must not call it legal preaching, or not preaching Christ; for he who preaches *the laws of Christ*, preaches Christ, as well as he who preaches *the love of Christ*. But then faithful preachers of the gospel, in urging duty and obedience upon

the people, will be sure to remind them of their utter insufficiency of themselves for so much as a good thought, and the necessity of an entire dependence upon the Spirit and grace of the Lord Jesus, for assistance and acceptance in every good work. When these things are duly observed, duty cannot be too much urged; but the pressing of duty without them is a most criminal neglect of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a piece of cruelty to poor sinners; while they are craved hard, as by an Egyptian task-master, for duty and service, and nothing afforded them wherewith to pay.

2. Ministers should make Christ known among their people by the ordinance of catechising. In the primitive church, catechising was very much the work of their pastors, and many were set apart for that very purpose. Before persons were admitted into full communion with the church, they were, by catechising, instructed in the principles of the Christian religion; and, till such time as they were judged fit to partake of the holy sacrament, they were called *Catechumens*.

The apostle Paul recommends it to the Galatians to give all due encouragement unto those who laboured in the work of catechising among them. "Let him that is taught in the word,"—according to the original, it is, "Let him that is catechised in the word, communicate unto him that catechiseth, in all good things," Gal. vi. 6. Several great and worthy men, both in the earlier and later periods of the church, have employed much of their time in this sort of exercise among the people, and have found it exceedingly profitable unto them. And I apprehend, the knowledge of the principles of religion, which generally obtains amongst the people of Scotland is, in a good measure, owing to the laudable custom of catechising practised by their ministers, whereas, in the countries where it is neglected, the poorer classes are, for the most part, grossly ignorant.

Sermons are addressed to a whole assembly, and by far the greatest number of the audience, they are very little

attended unto. Besides, the subject of a sermon is probably but one single point or doctrine of Christianity, whereas, at a diet of catechising, one may hear the principal doctrines of the whole system opened up; and the attention of the people is better kept up, when they are particularly called upon to give the reasons of their faith and hope.

Let us, then, who are ministers, carefully discharge our duty in this particular, especially among the younger sort; and, through the divine blessing, it will have very good effects.

3. Ministers should make Christ known among their people by occasional instruction, exhortation, consolation, and reproof. Let us hear Paul's awful charge to his son Timothy:—"I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom."—Strange! what must that be which the apostle charges with such an awful solemnity?—"Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. Ministers should have a deep sense and impression of the weight of their work always abiding upon their spirits, as also a tender concern for the state of their flock; and then they will readily embrace every opportunity of promoting their edification in faith and holiness. Besides the stated and constant parts of the ministerial work, which should be diligently attended unto, a faithful minister will find several occasions of dealing with particular persons, for their conviction in case of offence, for their direction in difficulties, for their clearance in doubts, or for their comfort in distress. And the word, thus particularly applied by one having "the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season," has often been blessed with remarkable success.

4. Ministers should make Christ known among their people by exemplifying his life in their own lives. Paul tells the Thessalonians,—“Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe,” 1 Thess. ii. 10. Mankind have,

in all ages, been more easily influenced by example than by precept. And this is thought to be one reason why the heathen philosophers had so little success in reforming the world, *viz.* that many of them practised those very vices in their lives, which they declaimed against in their public lectures. Therefore ministers of the gospel, above all men, should be careful to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" by their holy works; they should not give the least countenance to the vices, vanities, and follies of the age. In any company where they happen to mix, they should speak and act in a suitableness to their sacred and venerable character;—they should be as so many living Bibles scattered up and down the Christian world, "that they who know not the word, may also, without the word, be won" by their holy and exemplary conversation, 1 Peter iii. 1.

It was said of one of the ministers of the primitive church, that he thundered in his doctrine, and lightened in his life. And a greater than he was called "a burning and a shining light," *viz.* John Baptist. He called himself, in his great humility, *a voice*;—"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." A voice! the lowest of entities, which owes its very being to the breath of the speaker. And, indeed, he was all a voice;—a voice in his habit, a voice in his diet, and a voice in his conversation. If, then, we who are ministers, would commend Christ and his religion to the people, let us walk before them as he also walked; and thus we will preach to them by our lives, as well as by our lips.

III. I proceed now to the third thing proposed, *viz.* To point out the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified above all other knowledge whatsoever. On this head, I offer the following particulars:—

1. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of certainty. That such a person as Jesus of Nazareth appeared in Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, is agreed to by all. The birth of this person, his

manner of life, his doctrine, and his death, exactly correspond with the prophetic accounts of the Messiah to be found in the ancient Jewish records. He proved himself to be the same Messiah, the Son of God, and a divine person, by his doctrine, and by a series of incontestable miracles, not done in a corner, or some small inconsiderable village, but done in Jerusalem, the capital of the nation; and not before friends only, or a select number of witnesses, but publicly, in the presence of thousands, the most of whom were his bitterest adversaries, and had all the inclination imaginable to disprove them, had it been in their power. After they had murdered him, and laid him in his grave, under a triple security, the stone, the seal, and the watch, yet, according to his own prediction, he rose the third day after his death. He did not indeed appear publicly before the Jewish nation after his resurrection, as he had done before his death: but the whole college of the apostles, men of sufficient abilities for discerning, men of untainted candour and integrity, go to death, one after another, maintaining the same thing, *viz.* that they saw with their eyes Jesus of Nazareth alive; that they ate, and drank, and conversed familiarly with him, for no less than forty days after he had been both dead and buried. Thus the resurrection of Christ, upon which the whole of Christianity depends, stands upon the most undoubted evidence. Now, my brethren, besides the external evidence for the truth of Christianity, arising from miracles and prophecies, which the acutest adversaries have not yet been able to disprove; real believers have the inward witness of the Spirit of God, convincing them of the truth of Christianity, with a certainty beyond all the moral suasions or mathematical demonstrations in the world.

2. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of easiness and plainness. How difficult is it to get any tolerable insight into most of the sciences! how much time is necessarily spent in the very rudiments and elements of them! and all this is but an introduction

into them. How many years may a man live, and study hard too, and yet make but small progress in the knowledge of natural philosophy? He may know much in respect of others who are ignorant in these matters, and yet know but very little in comparison of what yet remains to be discovered in the vast continent of nature.

The honourable Mr. Boyle, a great searcher into nature, a profound philosopher, and, at the same time, *altogether a Christian*, affirms, that the shortness of man's life makes it impossible for him to understand thoroughly any one thing in nature. Besides, it is not the bulk of mankind, nay, it is only a few of them, that have capacity or opportunity for philosophical inquiries. But Christianity being designed for the benefit of mankind at large, it is plain and easy, and calculated for the weakest capacity, so that people of humble life, and of little penetration, may make great proficiency therein. It is true, indeed, there are in the Scriptures things hard to be understood, difficulties that exercise the judgment of the greatest scholars; but, then, these are remote from the essentials of Christianity, and people may remain ignorant of them without endangering their eternal salvation; whereas, the things absolutely necessary to be known are expressed in such plain terms, that he who runs may read them. There are, in the Scriptures, shallow places where lambs may wade, as well as depths where elephants may swim: and while learned men *and disputers of this world* contend about chronological difficulties, or critical niceties, the meanest and weakest of the household of faith may rest satisfied, yea, be full of joy, while they know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of sublimity. Hence, the Christian joins issue with the devout Psalmist, crying, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," Psalm cxix. 18. What is the knowledge of languages, of arts and sciences? what is the knowledge of nature or of mankind, when compared with the knowledge

of "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them?" The whole system of nature, which contains so many admirable curiosities, was designed chiefly as a theatre to display the revealed system upon, for a while, and therefore, must be as far inferior unto it, as the scaffolding is to the building.

The gospel is the history of God acting in triune economy for the recovery of mankind;—it contains the grandest plot, plan, and contrivance that ever bred in the breast of God, and which lay hid there from all eternity;—it is "the mystery of God, and of Christ; even the mystery that hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints," Col. i. 26. This glorious gospel opens up unto us the love, grace, and manifold wisdom of the Father;—the person, natures, offices, and grace of the Son;—the person, nature, operations, and influences of the Holy Ghost, as the prime minister in the mediatory kingdom: it solves the grand problem of the heathen world, *viz.* the origin of moral evil, and, at the same time, discovers the only remedy for it,—it points out the universal corruption of human nature, and the only mean of its renovation,—it brings life and immortality to light, and opens unto us a joyful prospect beyond the gloomy shades of death and of the grave. These grand and important things, which the very angels desire to look into, are the subject of the gospel, and, therefore, in point of sublimity, it excels all other knowledge.

4. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of extent and compass. In view of this, David says, "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad," Psalm cxix. 96. And the apostle Paul prays for the Ephesians, "That they may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 18, 19. Other sciences are but shadows, the gospel is a boundless bottomless ocean—it is the manifold wisdom of God; a wisdom of many plies, and folds, as the word

imports. It is an allusion to a curious piece of needle-work, wherein there are various expressions of art; and so it is, as it were, *the embroidered wisdom of God*. Angels, who excel in knowledge as well as strength, delight themselves at present, and will do so through eternity, in contemplating this wisdom. It is in the studying of Christ as in the planting of some new discovered country; at first men sit down upon the skirts and borders, and there they dwell, till they search farther into the heart of the country. And, indeed, my brethren, those who have made the greatest progress in the study and knowledge of Christ crucified, are but yet on the borders of this vast continent. "For now we see as through a glass darkly; now we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12.

5. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of profit and usefulness; "for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. Arts and sciences, it must be acknowledged, have their usefulness; philosophy is a valuable thing; but, alas! of how little account are they, when compared with the knowledge of Christ crucified? What though a man perfectly understand the heavenly bodies, in their nature, motions, and influences? yea, what though a man understand all the secrets of nature, and could unravel her, from the sycamore to the cedar? If he is ignorant of Jesus Christ, "the Sun of righteousness, the bright and morning star," he, with all his cargo of knowledge, must be lost and ruined for ever.

Carnal reason and philosophy cannot give a satisfying answer to the weighty case of conscience proposed by the gaoler;—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" All the wisdom of Egypt and Athens fall short here, and leaves the inquisitive mind fluctuating in painful uncertainty. But the apostle, in very few words, fully answers the case; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"



Acts vi. 30, 31. This answer, as one observes, is so old, that with many it seems out of date; but it is still, and will ever be, new, and fresh, and savoury, and the only resolution of this grand case of conscience, as long as conscience and the world last. Let this, then, commend the knowledge of Christ unto us, that it directs us in matters of the last consequence and moment, *viz.* how we shall obtain the favour and friendship of God, and how we shall steer our course for a blessed and happy eternity. In fine, this knowledge is profitable unto all things: it is profitable for prosperity and for adversity; for sickness and for health; for life and for death; for time and for eternity.

6. The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of pleasure and satisfaction: "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. The discovery of truth, absolutely considered, is accompanied with an intellectual, and, therefore, with a manly pleasure, vastly superior to all the delights of sense: and the more important and interesting the truth is which we discover, the joy arising from it is so much the greater. O then, how ravishing, how transporting beyond all expression, must the discoveries of Christ be to the gracious soul! "Their money perish with them," said the famous Italian convert, "who think all the gold of the Indies worthy to be compared with one hour's communion with the Lord Jesus." Archimedes, when he had solved the problem of the density of bodies, ran from the bath-room into the public street, exclaiming, in an ecstasy of joy, *I have found it! I have found it!* Surely the believer, who has learned that God is his God in Christ, has infinitely better reason than the ancient geometer, for crying out, in holy transport, *I have found it! I have found it!*

Moreover, the joy arising from the knowledge of Christ abides with the saints in the day of distress, making them to glorify God in the fire, and to cry out in the dark and cloudy night, "Hallelujah! he does all things well!"

However much people living at ease may be pleased

with the fine discourses of the heathen philosophers about bearing misfortunes; yet, when one is deeply plunged in distress, all the fine speeches of Seneca, the smart sayings of Epictetus, and the solemn counsels of Antoninus, prove but Job's comforters: and a single sentence of the Bible, sent home upon the heart by the Holy Ghost, affords infinitely greater consolation than all the philosophers put together. The sweet sense and experience of this, made a great and good man express himself after this manner, in a letter to a friend:—"I desire to bless His holy name who has delivered me from the painful pursuit of what they call learning, and from the foolish pleasure of venting the little of it that I know. I write it on all my books, and desire to have it engraven upon my heart;—'I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.'"

7. Lastly, The knowledge of Christ crucified excels all other knowledge in point of duration and continuance. That head which carries the richest cargo of human learning, will very soon be emptied of all, and laid down, cold, and senseless, and silent in a grave. The knowledge of policy, the art of war, languages, laws, customs, and histories, will be just as useless the moment after death, as the knowledge of the meanest mechanic: but the knowledge of Christ will go along with us into the eternal world; and the more it is improved here, it will be so much the more dilated hereafter. Now these things being duly considered, we need not wonder that Paul "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified;" and that "he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of this knowledge."

I conclude with a few practical inferences.

1. Here we may see the great worth and excellency of the Christian religion. It clearly and fully ascertains the terms, on which God will treat with guilty sinners in order to pardon and reconciliation;—it gives a satisfactory answer to that most important and interesting inquiry, "What shall I do to be saved?" while it directs the anxious inquirers to believing on the slain Son of God, as

the great ordinance of heaven for their restoration to the divine favour. Christianity tells us what Jesus Christ has done for us and suffered for us;—and what account God the Father makes of all this;—and what God and Christ require and expect of us, as an expression of gratitude for all this love and kindness.

2. If the knowledge of Christ be so valuable, then should not we lament the state of those nations that sit in the darkness of ignorance? My brethren, this gospel is not the privilege of mankind all the world over; nay, the proportion which the Christian world bears to the world at large, is computed but as five to thirty, which is a very small one. Should not we then lift up a prayer for our fellow men, that the light of the glorious gospel may yet shine upon them? Surely, if we love the Lord Jesus, we will desire an accession to his kingdom; and therefore will, with a deep concern upon our spirits, put up the second petition in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Of six petitions that are in that prayer, the first three relate to the Redeemer's interest in the world; "Hallowed be thy name:—thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is common with us to bring in these great affairs towards the end of our prayers, as it were to spin out the time, when the warmth and vigour of our spirits are well nigh spent. But the friends of Jesus should not leave that last of all, which he has put first of all: at least, whatever place they assign it in their prayers, it should have great room in their hearts, and never be mentioned but with fervency of soul.

3. What a shameful thing is it, that so many of the daily hearers of the gospel should be grossly ignorant of Christ! Ah, my brethren, great numbers among us "are destroyed for lack of knowledge!" and the case is, not that they cannot get it, but that they are not for it. Their ignorance is not simple and involuntary, but wilful and affected. The light is come unto them, but, like bats and owls, they hate it, and choose "darkness rather, because their deeds are evil." They say unto God, "Depart from

us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. Well, remember, the day is fast approaching, "when he will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel."

4. The best among us, whether ministers or private Christians, have reason to lament and be ashamed, that we have made so little progress in the knowledge of Christ crucified. Alas! "we are yet but as babes in Christ, and such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat, being unskilful in the word of righteousness," Heb. v. 13, 14. Let us then shake off sloth and indolence;—let us sequester ourselves from the bustle and noise of a vain and vexatious world, and betake ourselves more closely to the study and contemplation of the most glorious object; in other words, Christ, and him crucified. Angels are our co-disciples and fellow-students in this mystery, though their concern therein be not equal with ours. It was our nature that he assumed, and not the nature of angels;—it was for us he laid down his precious life, and not for them;—we have the honour to be members of his mystical body, not they;—unto us is the gospel preached, not unto them. But they love to hear Christ preached, and therefore they attend our worshipping assemblies, and learn the manifold wisdom of God from the church. So much the apostle intimates, when he says, "To this intent, that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God," Eph. iii. 10. Let these considerations excite us unto a more earnest and diligent study of Jesus Christ, "whom to know is life eternal."

Lastly, We that are ministers of the gospel should learn hence both the matter and manner of preaching. Let us preach Christ crucified. This was Paul's subject: and that man is certainly an ignorant, proud, and useless preacher, that refuses to follow Paul's example, and manages his ministry as if he had determined to know *any thing* but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let us endeavour to understand, and to make our people understand,

how all the truths of the gospel meet in Christ, as so many lines in their centre. And, at the same time, let us be careful to urge obedience to all the laws of Jesus, from such motives and principles as the gospel suggests.

And then, as to the manner of preaching, let us declare the truths of the gospel in the style and language of the gospel, which is certainly the true sublime. The modern embellishments of style are as much below the dignity of the gospel, as they are above the capacity of popular auditories, and serve only to display the pride, pedantry, and silly affectation of the speaker. They may indeed please such as go to the church from the same motive they go the play-house, *viz.* for their amusement; but those who attend sermons, that they may be built up in faith and in holiness unto salvation, will not find their account in them.

I have often been much pleased with the character which Dr. Bates gives Mr. Richard Baxter as a preacher, in his *funeral sermon* upon him. He says;—"There was a noble negligence in his style; for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words; he despised flashy oratory: but his expressions were clear and powerful, so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders, who were not *charmed by so wise a charmer*. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs."

To conclude: In our preaching, let us accommodate ourselves to the capacities of those with whom we have to do: let us choose such means as are adapted to the great end of preaching, which is to bring the hearer to the knowledge, to the faith, love, and obedience of Jesus Christ and him crucified.