

the light, be walking in it: for to look no farther than the entertainment the gospel is getting at this day, it is a sad sign there is a black night abiding us: so that I think ministers and people should set themselves about it as a way-going commodity.

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THE DANGER OF NOT COMPLYING WITH THE GOSPEL-CALL.

Prov. ix. 12.—*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

THIS verse is the epilogue or conclusion of the gospel-treaty with sinners, carried on with them by the messengers of Christ in his name. It is a solemn declaration or protestation that it is shut up with. The entertainment the gospel meets with, is twofold, and there are two sorts (and but two) of gospel-hearers. (1.) Compliers with the gospel-call; these are called the *wise*. (2.) Refusers; these are styled *scorners*. The declaration looks to both, and is carried as it were, after the offer is made, to every individual man and woman's door that hears the gospel. It is not, *They that are wise, shall be wise for themselves*; but hereby the Lord speaks to every one in particular, *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, &c.* Which class soever one puts himself into, here is his case declared. (1.) *If thou be wise*, and comply, the gain shall be thine own; it is not the Lord's, but the fruit shall drop into thine own lap. (2.) *If thou scornest*, and refusest, the loss shall be thine, it will lie chiefly at least on thine own head. So the exclusive particle is taken, Psal. li. 4. 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.'

I design not to insist on these words, but only with them to shut up the call to the improvement of the gospel and religion which I have been giving you. Thus the great duty is laid before you: and now I would apply the words of the text unto you on this occasion, and to every one of you. Ye have heard the nature of faith and repentance, the utility of public ordinances for salvation, and the necessity of not receiving the gospel in vain. Now, sinner, what wilt thou do? wilt thou comply with the gospel-offer or not? Well, I protest and declare in the terms of the text, *If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* I shall branch out this protestation in three particulars.

*First*, If thou be no complier with the gospel-call, thou art a scorner of it: there is no mids. This is evident from the text, which divides all gospel-hearers into these two sorts. Now, thou art not a complier with the gospel-call, as long as,

1. Thou entertainest any prejudice against religion, and wilt not come to Christ, John v. 40. Thou art a refuser in that case, thou wilt not be obedient but turnest away thine ear and shoulder. Men may receive and comply with a form of religion and a profession, who are yet under reigning prejudice against the power of godliness, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Now, since religion lies inwardly, and consists not in word, but in power, these are not compliers, for they say they will not come into the inner court.

2. Thou art in a doubt whether to come or not, or delayest and puttest off. Halters between two opinions are not compliers with the gospel-call. Nor will the call admit of a delay, like that of the sluggard, 'Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,' Prov. vi. 10. For see the effect of such a sluggish delay, ver. 11. 'So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.' It is, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.' If thou delay then till to-morrow, thou rejectest the call, thou art a scorner of the offer.

3. If in any case thou dost come, dost not turn from thy sins unto God in Christ, sincerely, thoroughly, and universally, thou dost not comply, Jer. iii. 10. The hypocrite, that satisfies himself with his partial turning, is a non-complier, a rebel against King Christ, as well as the profane, and shall bear the weight of it, Psal. cxxv. 5. As for such as turn aside into their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' Now, in this case of thy not complying with the gospel-call, our God looks on thee as the scorner of it, Psal. i. 1. Prov. i. 22, 26. What king proclaiming an indemnity to rebels, would not look on those that refused to take the benefit of it, as scornors of his clemency? Is it possible for him to look on them as neutrals with respect to his interest? nay, he must look on them as engrained enemies to his person and government. So is the case here. And that thou art guilty of scorning in this, will be evident, if you consider, that, by your not complying with the gospel-call,

(1.) Thou abusest the mercy, goodness, and patience of God. God offers thee mercy and grace in his own way, upon thy coming to him in Christ, leaving thy sins. But thou graspest at his mercy in thy sins, as if thou wouldst offer violence to the mercy of God, saying, as Deut. xxix. 19. 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst.' Thou snatchest peace out of his hand, and by thy grasping of gospel-privileges, making no conscience of gospel-duties, scornest the call.

(2.) Thou slightest, making no account of the gospel-call, but indeed lookest on it as a trifling, inconsiderable thing, Job xli. 29.

Is not this the treatment the gospel meets with from the most part? 'They make light of it,' Matth. xxii. 5. The great offer of the gospel is despised, the good things it offers are undervalued, and any the least worldly pleasure or profit is preferred; and for the threatenings wherewith it is backed, they are in effect looked upon but as bugbears and scarecrows, the sounding again of the mountains: and thus they are scorned.

(3.) Thou exposetest it to shame and dishonour; and is not that scorning, Prov. xx. 1. A generous spirit knows how far a man is out, when his offered kindness and good-will is neglected. And thus thou treatest the God that made thee. He offers thee his friendship before the world, angels, and men, and thou regardest it not; the Son of God courts thee by his ambassadors to a marriage with himself, but thou slightest the proposal. And is not that to scorn and affront him, before all that are witnesses to the neglect thou puttest upon him?

(4.) Thou failest of thy fair promises, and so defeatest and frustratest good expectations concerning thee. And is not that scorning? Matth. ii. 16. Heathens do not scorn the royal Bridegroom; for as he was never in their offer, so they never said they would not take him: but as thou wast baptized in his name, thou didst engage to be his, and yet thou ruest again, and sayest, 'Thou wilt have none of him. How many times hast thou broken thy word to him, after thou hadst given consent, yea, sealed the contract before many witnesses as at a sacrament? How often hast thou scorned thy God, as the son did his father, saying, 'I go, but went not?' Matth. xxi. 30.

(5.) *Lastly*, Thou makest thyself merry with thy disobedience to this call, Prov. xiv. 9. Is not that scorning? How many are they that expressly mock at religion and seriousness, and look on many of the duties of religion as below them? But besides, whatever joy thou hast in any thing, especially in sinful practices, while thou slightest the call of the gospel, it is in effect a scorning of that call. Even as the condemned malefactor, who being offered a reprieve or pardon, refuses it, and yet is jovial, does scorn the pardon, the king's mercy.

Hence ye may conclude, that God will deal with you as scorners. A king finding himself mocked and scorned, falls into rage, as Herod did, Matth. ii. 16. And God's anger will burn hot against he scorners of his grace, Prov. i. 22, 26. Those that will have none of his grace, will drink deep of his cup of vengeance, Luke xix. 27.

*Secondly*, If thou comply with the gospel-call, thou shalt therein

act wisely for thyself: the gain shall be thine own, the fruit shall fall into thine own bosom. Two things are imported in this.

1. Men, by their complying with the gospel call to faith, and holiness, and repentance, do not bring any profit or gain to God. There is a great profit by it, but it descends to themselves, ascends not to God, Job xxii. 2. and xxxv. 7. Psal. xvi. 2.

To confirm this, consider,

(1.) God is infinite in perfections, self-sufficient, and therefore the creatures can add nothing to him; for nothing can be added to what is infinite; and nothing given unto him who possesseth all things.

(2.) All the goodness and profitableness of men or angels, or any creatures, comes from God. He that gives all things to all, needs nothing from any, Acts xvii. 25. We received all from God: where is that, then, we have to give him, whereby he may be profited?

*Inf.* 1. Then let no man be scared from coming to God in Christ, because of his unworthiness, that he is an useless and a fruitless creature, that can do nothing for God. For the best and holiest of men cannot profit him. He will never turn his back, because we bring nothing with us, Isa. lv. 2.

2. Mistake not the reason of our Lord's earnestness with you to bring you to repentance. It is not that he expects any advantage by your return; it is for your own good, not for his. He is not dealing with you, as one that hires a servant, because he needs one, and cannot want one; but like a compassionate person that is dealing with a frantic one, that will needs destroy himself in the water. God may say to the greatest men, the richest, aye, and the most penitent sinners, and the holiest alive, I have no need of you.

3. Ye can do God no real hurt by your continuing impenitent in your sins, Job xxxv. 6, 8. Your sins can reach him as little to his loss, as your obedience to his profit. All sin is against the mind of God, but there is no sin against the happiness of God. If it were possible, and all the angels in heaven, and all the men upon earth, should conspire with the devils against him, it could not diminish one jot of his happiness, nor create him the least real uneasiness thereby. All is but like a dog's barking at the moon, or one's rushing his head against a rock, which stands unmoved, but he is wounded.

4. *Lastly*, By thy compliance with the call of God, and the duties of religion, while others slight them, do not thou think thou obligest God, or that he is more indebted to thee than to others, Luke xvii. 10. Thou actest indeed more for thy own interest than they; but as he suffers no damage by their folly, so he reaps no advantage by thy duties.

2. If thou compliest with the call of the gospel, the profit shall be thine own; though God do not and cannot gain by it, thou shalt. *Thou shalt be wise for thyself.* The phrase imports two things.

1st, Thou shalt gain by it, thou shalt advance thy own interest thereby. Men praise them that do good to themselves; they that hearken to the gospel-call do so. When the rest of the world are misspending their time and talents like a parcel of fools, thou art acting a wise part, consulting thy own true interest. Briefly, this gain lies in two things.

(1.) In saving, or preventing loss. Thou shalt prevent the loss of God's favour, thy own soul, happiness, &c. A penny saved is a penny gained. And is not a soul saved from the pit a noble gain? Well, if thou be wise for thyself, thou shalt save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

(2.) In getting what we want. If thou be wise for thyself thou shalt not only save, but get, make a purchase. Thou shalt gain for time, and gain for eternity, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Whatever drops out of the promise, or is wrung out of the everlasting covenant, they drop all into the lap of the penitent sinner. And there is all in them for time and eternity. The earth is in them, and the heavens are in them. So shalt thou be wise for thyself in gaining these.

2dly, Nobody shall go between thee and thy gain, in the enjoyment of it. How often is that verified quickly, 'One soweth, and another reapeth;' one has the pains, and another gets the fruit? Matth. vi. 20. 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.' Many a wise man of the world is a fool for himself, and wise for others. He gathers, and others enjoy the treasure. And death makes it so at length; and therefore the world's good things are called another man's, only those of another world are our own, which no man shall leave to his heirs, Luke xvi. 12. Now, if *thou be wise for thyself*, thou shalt carry thy gain into another world with thee, and it shall be thine own, and not another's.

Thirdly, If by not complying with the gospel-call, thou scornest it, thou shalt get the weight of that to bear thyself: *Thou alone shalt bear it.* And it is heavier than mountains of brass, and of everlasting continuance, even everlasting judgment without mercy, Prov. i. 26. And,

1. Thou shalt bear the blame of it. It is a heavy blame, a weighty guilt; but thou shalt not get another's back in all the creation to lay it on; and shift it off thy own. They that comply may bless God; they that do not may thank themselves. The cause is from themselves.

2. Thou shalt bear the loss of it, the loss of what thou scornest, the loss of grace, the favour of God, the loss of heaven. Thy blood shall be on thine own head. The scorning of the call brings a heavy load of wrath; but thou alone shalt bear it: that is,

(1.) God that called thee shall not bear it, either blame or loss. A man's heart perverts his way now, and his heart fretteth against the Lord; and I cannot think that the hearts of the reprobates in hell will be more reconciled to this dispensation, Matth. xxv. 24, 25. But the Lord will throw the weight of it back on thee, and thou alone shalt bear it! for though he was not obliged to give thee grace, yet he offered it to thee, and thou refused it.

(2.) His faithful servants that warned thee, and called thee to comply with the call of God, shall not bear it, Ezek. xxxiii. 9. Nay, every call of theirs, every sermon, exhortation, reproof, and warning, in public or private, shall turn it back on thyself. Every sigh, groan, waste of their strength, for warning thee, shall turn it upon thee with a witness: And *thou alone shalt bear it.* Nay,

(3.) They that had a hand in thy not complying shall not bear it, They that tempted thee to sin, thy graceless neighbours and companions, whose face thou shalt curse the day that ever thou sawest it, they shall not bear it. Even unfaithful ministers, who either shall not warn thee, or by their unholy life harden thee, they shall not bear it, and thou wilt not find shelter under their wings. Nay, the devil himself, who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, and does what he can to hinder thee, even he shall not bear it. For they do not force thee, but entice and tempt thee to sin; they lay the bait, but it is thy own fault that thou embracest it: they lay the stumbling-block, the occasion of sinning, in thy way; but thou art obliged to go by it, and hold off from it.

It is true they shall bear the weight of the hand they had in thy ruin; but alas! what is that to thee? what good will it do to thy poor soul? It is in this case as when one draws another into the water, and both are drowned together! alas! what is it to the man whom the other drew, that his companion is drowned himself too? that does not save his life, Ezek. xxxiii. 8. So they shall not bear it, but thou alone shalt bear it.

[1.] None shall bear it for thee, nor take the burden off thy back. The soul that sinneth, it dies. The sinner shall be the sufferer. They that refuse the surety of the Father's choosing, to bear the burden in their stead, shall not get another surety nor burden-bearer for them among angels or men. Nay, thou alone, and not another for thee, shalt bear it.

[2.] None shall bear it with thee, to ease thee of a part of the

weight, Gal. vi. 5. There will be no relieving out of the flames, so there will be none that will be so kind as to bring a drop of water to cool the tongue in it, Ezek. xvi. 24. The whole weight shall lie upon thyself. Thou alone, and not another with thee, shalt bear it.

Wherefore consider what ye do. Be wise, sinners, and repent: For except ye repent, ye shall perish. The sound of the Lord's word goes away, and dies out as other sounds: but it liveth and abideth for ever in its efficacy, for the salvation or condemnation of those that hear it. So death and life are set before you, the blessing and the curse. *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

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HOW THE SACRAMENTS BECOME EFFECTUAL MEANS OF  
SALVATION.

1 COR. xii. 13.—*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

I COME now to handle the questions in the Catechism concerning the sacraments. And the first of these is that touching the efficacy of these holy ordinances, which is one of the doctrines of this text, in which the apostle explains and confirms the doctrine of the mystical union betwixt Christ and his people from the two sacraments.

I explained this text at large, when speaking of the mystical union from it\*. I shall only consider it now, in so far as it relates to the sacraments. And so there is,

1. The number of the sacraments of the new Testament. These are two, viz. baptism, 'we are all baptized,' &c. and the Lord's Supper, called here *drinking*; the denomination being taken from the cup, as it is called *breaking of bread*, the name being taken from the bread therein used, Acts ii. 42. The former is the sacrament of our initiation into Christ, and union with him; the other, of our nourishment in, and communion with him.

2. The efficacy of these sacraments. They are effectual to salvation in those in whom they have their effect, they being united to Christ into one body, and partaking more and more of his Spirit, in those ordinances respectively which so secures their salvation from sin, and wrath too.

\* See vol. i. page 544.