

We have in view an ordinance that calls to self-examination : 1 Cor. xi. 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Therefore bestir yourselves, and consider your state. Study the spirituality of religion, that you may thus approve yourselves to the heart-searching God. Amen.

THE STATUTE-LAW OF DISCIPLESHIP.*

SERMON XXXIII.

LUKE xiv. 26,

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

He is a fool who joins himself to any society, before he has weighed with himself how he can comply with the laws and rules of that society. In vain do we propose to be a disciple to any person, if we are not disposed, to submit to his discipline. Man is born like a wild ass's colt, naturally untractable and unteachable; the Son of God has set up his school amongst us; many who externally belong to it stand at a distance from him, as rude and unpolished by grace as when they first came to it. There is a solemn and awful entry into the school of Christ before us, and it cannot be unsuitable, especially on such a season as this, to stand and hear, out of the mouth of the great Master, the necessary qualifications of all such as will be reckoned his disciples indeed. This we have in the text.—In which there is observable,

1. A case supposed; and there are two things in it. For this case, though the case of many, is like the legs of the lame, which are not equal.—In it, first, there is a fair profession. The man cometh to Christ, not in the way of believing on him, as this word is often used, the expression here can by no means be thus explained; but in the way of an outward profession, joining himself with his followers, taking on him the name of his party. The occasion of the words clears this. Multitudes went with him, and they were ready to value themselves because they kept good com-

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pany. The Lord turns to them, and tells them, that it was another thing to be a disciple of his than most of them took it to be. He lays the matter so plainly before them, as would make it easy to conclude, that most who followed him now would leave him afterwards; and that when it came to the trying pinch, he would have but a thin backing; therefore they should in time consider what they are doing.—In the case there is, next, a foul and false heart. The man comes to Christ, and brings not his heart with him, but leaves it at home with his father or mother, &c. or keeps it still hugging and embracing his dear self, his life, so that he cannot embrace Christ, more than a man can take both heaven and earth in his arms at once. Christ must be dearer to his disciples than what is dearest to them in the world. The dearest persons are father, mother, &c. The dearest thing is life. That which makes this case so bad is, that they are dearer to the man than Christ. He hates not his father, mother, &c. He who taught us in the law, to love our neighbour as ourselves, does not contradict this here, but speaks out what was implied there, that we must neither love our neighbour nor ourselves, as God. It is not an absolute, but a comparative hatred which is here meant; that is, a less love: Gen. xxix. 31, “And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated:” that is, less loved than Rachel. Similar instances occur, as in Deut. xxi. 15; John xii. 25. And thus it is explained, Matth. x. 37, “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.” A man must leave father and mother to cleave to his wife; but he must leave his wife, yea, and his life also, to cleave to Christ. Levi gave a practical commentary on this text, Deut. xxxiii. 9, “Who said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.” And so did that disciple-like resolution of Jerome: “If my father should stand before me,” says he, “my mother hang upon me, my brethren press about me, I would break through my brethren, throw down my father, tread under feet my mother, to cleave to Jesus Christ.” So said a certain Dutch schoolmaster, being asked, if he loved not his wife and children? “Yes,” says he, “if all the world were gold, and mine to dispose of, I would give it all to live with them, though but in a prison; yet is my soul and my Lord Christ dearer than all.” But perhaps this is only the attainment of few. Mistake it not, but hear,

2. Christ's verdict upon the case, and venture not to distinguish where the law makes no distinction: “If any man come to me, and hate not, &c., he cannot be my disciple.” Be he or she who

they will, they cannot be Christ's disciples, if Christ be not dearer than what is dearest to them in a world. Nominal disciples they may be indeed, but real they cannot be, they cannot bear afflictions for Christ, because they want such affections to him as are necessary to make them go in the strait and narrow way which leads unto life.—From this subject I would take this

DOCTRINE, That no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.

For illustrating this subject, I shall,

I. Speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.

II. Confirm the doctrine of the text.

III. Offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples, than what is dearest to them in the world. And,

IV. Conclude with some improvement.

We are then,

I. To speak to the nature of this necessary qualification of a true disciple of Christ.—There are in it,

1. An esteem of Christ above all : Psalm xlv. 2, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." Christ is the highest and most glorious object in the practical judgment of all his true disciples : Psalm lxxiii. 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." They do not only think him the best portion, considering things in the general, in which sense he has even the commendation of those who slight him; but they look upon him as best for them, in whatever circumstances they may be; this is the character of a true disciple : Matth. xi. 6, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." As the sparkling stars hide their heads when the sun ariseth, so all things in the world lose their lustre when the glory of God appeareth to them, shining in the face of Jesus; though to others there is in him no beauty.

2. The heart renounceth its property in all things of the world, in the day of its closing with Jesus Christ. As a rebellious son, turned out of his father's house into an uninhabited land, takes that as his property which he falls upon by the right of first finding; but when he has access to return, he quits it, that he may enjoy his father's estate : so Adam and his children being driven out of paradise, and banished from the presence and enjoyment of the Lord himself, they take up with what created comforts they stumble upon in their blind rambling through the wilderness of this world, as

their own portion ; but returning and taking Christ, they part with these, their souls returning into their quiet rest. The natural man, being alienated from the life of God, takes a dead hold of created things, as suited to his corrupt state, and therefore his own by choice ; hence so many carnal "mys," but not a word of "my God" amongst them : Hos. ii. 5, "She said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." This is very unlike to Psalm xviii. 1, 2, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer ; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust ; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." Now, when the soul begins to live, it quits that greedy grip of carnal things, and begins to fall off from the world ; that bond of iniquity which bound the heart and the world together being broken ; so that the disciple of Christ looks on all he has as no more his own.

3. The soul resigns all to the Lord, lays all down at the Lord's feet, to be disposed of as he will : 1 Sam. iii. 18, "Eli said, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." 2 Sam. xv. 26, "David said, Behold, here am I, let the Lord do with me as seemeth good unto him." If the Lord have use for his comforts in the world, he, and all that are his, are for his part at his service. Though they were his before, he now makes a free-will offering of them all to the Lord ; so that, in very deed, all that a true disciple of Christ has, are dedicated things, consecrated to God. He may not, he dare not, revoke the grant ; they must be used, as God who is the proprietor doth direct, whose will must not be disputed in the disposal of his own ; they can be no more for profane, but holy uses. And if, through the prevalence of corruption, he has put his hand to that which is not holy, Christ's discipline will make him bring it back with the tear in his eye. Never a soul closes with Christ aright, that layeth not all its enjoyments, even life itself, at his feet.

4. The soul accepts of Christ for, and instead of the things resigned. God does not require us, nor will the heart ever part with these, but for a better : Matth. xiii. 45, 46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The man takes Christ instead of father, mother, and all things ; for it is impossible that man can be self-sufficient. The heart of man is an empty, hungry thing, that must needs have something to feed upon ; and let men ply their hearts with the utmost diligence, they will still find it impossible to draw the husks of the world out of their hearts, unless something better is set before them. They must see heaven, before they will be drawn from earth ;

therefore, the great transaction between Christ and the soul is held out under the notion of buying, in which a man does indeed in one sense, namely, as to his portion, give away his money: but he obtains something instead of it, which is better to him than his money. He gets Christ, the pearl of great price, the one thing needful.

5. The soul is disposed to part with them, when the Lord calls for them; has an habitual readiness to part with them for Christ. It is true, indwelling corruption is ready to hold the grip too fast, even when the Lord calls for a delivery; yet every soul closing with Christ has an honest resolution to part with all for him actually, when he shall please to put them to the trial. The grace of God looseth them at the root, when it first comes into the soul, rooting and grounding them in love to Christ; which root of the righteous shall never be moved.

6. There is in the soul a new power of living, without them, on Jesus Christ; a life which is an absolute mystery to every Christless soul: John vi. 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." If in this spiritual bargain they have quit with their money, on the purchase made, they can live without it, else would they never have quit with it. Though all temporal things fail them, yet can they rejoice in the Lord as their portion, and joy in the God of their salvation, Hab. iii. 18. If father and mother should leave them, they can satisfy themselves in the Lord's taking them up. If they should lose all relations for him, his relation to them is, in their eyes, more than sufficient to make up the loss. If they should not know where to hide their heads, or how to get food in a hiding-place, he is to them, not only a refuge for protection, but a portion for maintenance, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. If all their substance should be taken from them, the Almighty shall be the gold and silver of their strength, Job xxii. 25. Yea, though natural life should go in his cause, himself is their life, a life which cannot be taken from them; for, Col. iii. 4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory."—We now proceed,

II. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or shew, that no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to him in the world.—For this purpose, consider,

1. That the soul cannot truly lay hold on Christ, but it must of necessity part with the world. The embracing of Christ infers naturally the loosing our hold of the world: Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We may as soon grasp heaven and earth at once in our arms, as fix on Christ, and not loose our hold from all things besides him. If you

would look up to the heavens, you must look away from the earth. The world is the term from which Christ calls us: Song iv. 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." Men may keep his company, with the world under their feet, but not with the world in their heart.—Consider,

2. It is impossible that the love of God, and the love of the world, (the persons and things of the world), can at the same time be predominant in the heart. One of them must of necessity be uppermost. If the love of God be predominant, then it will command the love of all worldly things to yield; and these things will be disposed of, so as may best please him that has the chief room in our hearts. All the streams of our love to things below, will be swallowed up in the depth of our love to Christ: but this will be swallowed up by none; for this love is strong as death. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned; see Heb. xi. 25, 26. If the love of the world predominate, then it leaves no love to the Lord, because no predominant love of the world is consistent with the true love of God: 1 John ii. 15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This proves the man no disciple of Christ, Matth. vi. 24; James iv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 4, 5.—Consider,

3. That if Christ be not dearer to us than the world, there is no universal resignation, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart: Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2 Cor. viii. 5.—"But first gave their own selves to the Lord."—If this be wanting, there is nothing done; we give not to the Lord what he seeks, namely, that we be *all his*. If we deal thus in this solemn transaction, we do but lie to the Holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira, keeping back part of the price. This is a sure evidence that grace is not effectually at work with us, else we would have been a willing people; we would have made no reserves in closing with Christ.—Consider,

4. That if Christ is not loved supremely, there is a root wanting, the fruit of which is necessary to evidence sincerity. (1.) There is no root of universal obedience, the want of which will leave us ashamed, Psalm cxix. 6. There will always be, in this case, one thing lacking, that will mar all other good things about us. There will always be some idol of jealousy that gets Christ's room; some offending right hand spared, that will bring the whole body to hell at length. (2.) There is no root for Christian suffering, bearing the cross of Christ, which is a cross of Christ's choosing, not of our own.

Our part is, to take up the cross that Christ lays down to us; and without this we cannot be his disciples. And when Christ lays on his cross, it is found, that readily he will have the man tried in that which of all things lies nearest his heart, and bids fairest for Christ's room: so that, if any thing be dearer than Christ, the cross readily discovers it, and the man's hypocrisy with it.

You, then, that are to sit down at the Lord's table, may see how you are to manage this solemn transaction, so as that it may be ratified in heaven. If you take Christ, let these go their way. Lay down your all at Christ's feet, with all solemn seriousness; if there be aught kept back, you do but ruin your own souls. The laws of Christ's school are read before you. Examine yourselves this night, whether ye be content with Christ on these terms or not. If you be not, it will be unnecessary, and even criminal, for you to come to his table; you cannot be his disciples. If you be content, then give up your all to him, and lay down your all at his feet. Because of the deceitfulness of your heart, it will be good to be very distinct and particular in this point, on which eternity depends.—In consequence, I would advise you,

1. To give up with all your lusts. You have held the grip long, let it now go: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Hos. xiv. 8. Let none escape, let there be no reserved morsel, as you would not quit your lot and portion in Christ. Let every man give up with "the iniquity he knoweth," as the phrase is, 1 Sam. iii. 13. If there be any bosom-lust, which has been a signal competitor for the heart with the Lord, let it be given up with in a particular manner. Sure, if lawful things must be laid at the Lord's feet, unlawful must much more be laid down.—I would advise you,

2. To lay down at the Lord's feet your nearest and dearest relations, so as that you may never break with Christ for them: his favour, truths, and ways, must be dearer to you than they. And sure I am, if thou meetest with Christ at his table, thou wilt say, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." "I will love my father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters; but my Lord Jesus more than all."

3. Lay down at the Lord's feet your substance in the world, be it great or small, houses and lands, goods, &c. that he may dispose of them as he may see meet. Times have been, and they are like to return, wherein the Lord has sent for these things from professors, even by wicked messengers, as he sent for the ass and colt, Matth. xxi. 3, "Saying, The Lord hath need of them." And they that had before fairly given them, with themselves, to the Lord, did not stand to deliver him his own: "Go thou, and do likewise."

4. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your credit and esteem in the world. This is often a great idol, and goes betwixt many a man and Christ. There are few that ever have it, but suffer an eclipse in some time or other. God even sends for his people's credit, to be a stepping-stone for his glory. But if thou makest sure work in this transaction, thou wilt even be content at his call to creep down, and lie among the pots, till he himself bring thee out again. Thou wilt be content to commence a fool to the world, that thou mayest be wise to God.

5. Lay down at the Lord's feet, your ease and liberty: Acts xxi. 13, "I am ready," said Paul, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." The flesh will cry, "Man, spare thyself;" but the spirit must offer all to the Lord. Thou wilt not break with Christ, though thou shouldst never get an easy hour, but be hunted as partridges, till in heaven. He to whom his ease and liberty is dearer than Christ, is a slave to the devil, and cannot be Christ's disciple.

6. Lay down at Christ's feet, your desires. Your desires shall be to your spiritual Husband, who shall choose for you your inheritance, Psalm xlvii. 4. If he shall grant your lawful desires, it is well; if he see meet to refuse them, it must even be well also in your eye; you are to take himself, and give up with your own will, and say, Thy will be done.

Lastly, Lay down at the Lord's feet, your life. Let your bodies be given now to the Lord, not only for service, but also for a sacrifice, if he requires it. The text makes it plain, none go to heaven but martyrs, either in action or in affection. It may be the Lord may have use for your strength; for your health, it may be for your blood. Resign all to him now. If you hate not your life, you cannot be his disciple. Be not deterred from the sacrament by this, for, by the word of God, the way to heaven is no easier. But when the time comes, that the saints are to be carried to the table above, they will not be supposed to stand and look on, as when they present themselves before the lower table; the fearful and unbelieving shall be excluded from that table, Rev. xxi. 8. It is necessary at all times that people should manage matters thus when they sit down at the Lord's table, but especially at this time, when the cloud of the church's trouble is gathering so fast, and our peace is flying from us. That party has now got the ascendant, whose temper always has been to breathe out threatenings, cruelty, and blood, and furiously to drive their plough over the back of the church, and to make their furrows deep, till the righteous Lord do cut the cords of the ungodly crew.

They have brought in their superstitions already, by the favour of a toleration which reflects shame on themselves before the world, as if they were men of no faith, but as to one article. By their means we are threatened with idolatry, and with a French government. But God sits in heaven, and can bring order out of confusion. Let us prepare for whatsoever may come, honestly committing all to the Lord, and he will raise the sincere soul above itself, and give the back to bear its own burden, if we be but willing to stoop, and take it on for his sake. He left all for us, and shall we account any thing too much for him? However, this is the settled law of heaven, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Amen.

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THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.\*

SERMON XXXIV.

LUKE xvi. 26,

*If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

HAVING, in the preceding, discourse, attended to what was proposed as the first and second heads of method, I now proceed,

III. To offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to his true disciples than what is dearest to them in the world.—Among other reasons, the following are mentioned.

1. Because to every true disciple, sin, of all bitter things, is the bitterest. A man will get a clearer view of the stars from the bottom of a deep pit, than from the top of a high mountain; and the lower that a man is laid in humiliation for sin, Christ will be the dearer to him. Many things, nay, almost any thing, is dearer to most persons than Christ. Why so? Because any bitter thing is more bitter to their depraved taste than sin. As when God intended to endear the promised land to the Israelites, and make them content to leave the flesh-pots of Egypt, Exod. i. 14, their lives then were made bitter to them; so God gives his people deep wounds for sin, till their consciences be made to dread it, and their

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hearts to loathe it; he makes them sick at the heart with it, and puts more and more bitterness in the cup to them, till it be of all things the bitterest, to this very end, that Christ may be the dearest to them, and that whatever they may afterwards meet with in his way, they may embrace it rather than sin. Sin has been bitter to many, but not extremely bitter; therefore they say, as the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35, "When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." But the experience of sin duly embittered quickly determines the Christian which side to choose, when they are brought to this alternative, to suffer or sin.—Another reason is,

2. That God is man's chief end; and when he made him, he made him pointing towards himself as his chief end: Eccl. vii. 29, "God made man upright." But man sinning, turned off from God, turned his intention, his love, and desire, beside the mark set before him, turned these in to himself, made himself his chief end. So that the whole of every natural man's religion, however refined, resolves itself into that cursed principle, "Master, spare thyself." Hence they choose new gods, father, mother, &c. setting their heart on them more than on God. Hence is their war in the gates against heaven, those things which were to be subordinate to God are set in opposition to him; those which were to be below him in their love and esteem, are set above him. If the grace of God rectify not this disorder, it does nothing: for it is impossible, while the soul is perverted as to its chief end, that any thing can be right with that person; as a watch that is once wrong set, though it go never so regularly, it is still wrong, for it never points right. But grace truly, though not perfectly while here, brings back the Christian to God as his chief end. It makes him say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25; and again, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. It makes him holy in all manner of conversation; so that whatever way the Christian turns, he points habitually towards God.—Another reason is,

3. That as there unquestionably is, so they have seen, a vanity and emptiness in all things of the world, even the things that are dearest to them: Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad." God has hung the sign of vanity at the door of all the creatures, yet do men throng into the house, every one calling and looking for a fill, and promising it to themselves after a thousand disappointments: Isa. lvii. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved." They see not the sign by the

light of grace, although they may have a rational conviction of it, which will be as far from producing a true weaning of the heart from the world, as painted fire is from burning off a man's bands. But Christians are made to see it with the light of grace, which is the light of life, which makes them go by the creatures' door to him in whom "it hath pleased the father that all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. The Lord squeezes the sap out of all things, besides himself, to his own, so as that when the heart is seeking its rest, they are tasteless to them as the white of an egg: Phil. iii. 7, 8, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."—Another reason is,

4. Because they find Christ of all objects the most suitable to them, and therefore he cannot but be dearer to them than the dearest thing in the world. The soul which has long gone through the dry places of the world, seeking rest, and finding none, when it comes to Christ, finds rest to the conscience under the covert of his blood, and rest to his heart in that all-fulness dwelling in Christ which is commensurate to the unbounded desires of the heart, desires which can never be satisfied but by an infinite good; and therefore of necessity, and from choice, settles here, saying, "This is my rest;" and that soul is not to be drawn away from Christ by any means whatever: Rom. viii. 35, 38, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He is fully suited to their case: and, what is more, he is suited to their mind, they have no fault whatever to him: Song v. 16, "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely; this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." There is nothing in him they would have out of him, and nothing out of him they would have in him; whereas every created enjoyment is lame, and defective to a great degree; the fairest rose has some sharp prickles about it. Now, that soul which has traversed all created enjoyments dissatisfied, and could never find contentment, is completely satisfied in him. How, then, can it otherwise be, than that he is dearer to it than all other persons and things whatever?—Another reason is,

5. Because he is their greatest benefactor; his unparalleled benefits command their hearts to be all his: he has done for them what

none other could do. When Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor the cattle on a thousand hills for a sacrifice, when rivers of oil were too shallow, and the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls would have been rejected, he redeemed them with his own blood; he left the bosom of his Father, and came and poured out his soul unto death for them, when they deserved to have died for ever. He is doing for them what none can do, he is their resident at the court of heaven, taking up emergent differences betwixt God and them, preparing a place for them in his Father's house of many mansions. And he will do for them what none but he himself can do; he will at last bring them to his glory, and make them perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of their God and Saviour through all eternity.—Another reason is,

6. Because they are sensible, that whatever they have in the world, they have it through and by him. And so they behold him as the fountain of all their mercies.—Thus,

(1.) They have the enjoyment of their blessings through him. It is by him they enjoy father and mother, wife and children, &c.; not only by his common providence, as the wicked enjoy their mercies, but by his blood, whereby the malefactor is not only pardoned, but also is set down with these, and far better things, as the purchase of Christ's blood; whereas, had not the Mediator intervened betwixt them and the stroke of justice, they had been stripped of all their enjoyments in the world, even life itself, and shut up for ever in the prison of hell.\*

(2.) They have the comfort of them through him. Every creature is to us what the Lord makes it to be, and it is no more; no more it can be. The creature in itself is a mere nothing: what drops of sweetness are to be found in it, are distilled into it from himself, the fountain of goodness: none good but one, that is, God. And surely the Lord never puts any sweetness in the creature to arrest our hearts upon it, but rather that, finding the sweetness of the streams, we might thereby be drawn up to the Fountain, where sweet water is always sweetest. Let God call in his own from our enjoyments, our dearest relations shall be utterly uncomfortable; yea, our very life a burden. If it be by him only, then, that our enjoyments are desirable, surely himself is much more so. And seeing the Christian loves these things for what of God is in them,

\* The worthy author is doubtless here to be understood as referring to that comfort and benefit which is enjoyed in such relations; for it is only in the nature and extent of this kind of enjoyment, that a difference arises between the Christian and the sinner, or that the former, with propriety, can contemplate the enjoyment of these relations as the fruit of Christ's blood.—EDIT.

and with them, and can never be satisfied with them without Christ, surely Christ himself must be dearest of all.—Another reason is,

7. Because, if it were not so, Christ would have no church in the world. His standard would fall, and there would be none to take it up. There is an old inveterate enmity in the wicked against godliness; the devil's partizans are always the most numerous. If imprisoning, banishing, spoiling of goods, fields and scaffolds reeking with the blood of the saints, would have deterred all persons from following Christ, there had been no church in the world this day. But God will have a church in spite of devils and wicked men. The spark shall be kept alive, though in the midst of an ocean, and "his name shall endure for ever," Psalm lxxii. 17. A new seed shall ever be rising to enlist themselves under Christ's banner. God will not remove the rocks for them, but the way to heaven, to the world's end, shall lie through many tribulations; for he will animate his people to quit with all that is dearest to them in a world, rather than quit his way, and make them overcome through the word of his testimony, and not love their lives even unto death.—I come now,

IV. To make some practical improvement.

1. In an use of information.—You may hence see,

(1.) That Christ will admit no rival in the heart. One throne cannot receive two kings, and one heart cannot admit both Christ and any worldly thing set up beside him; it must needs lie at his feet, or all is wrong in that heart; Matth. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters.—Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Christ and the world have long struggled together, it is hard to tell which of them many of us have been chiefly following: but when Christ and the world parts, it will be known which of them is our master.—Hence see,

(2.) How far those persons are from being Christ's disciples, to whom a loathsome lust is dearer by far than the Lord Christ. Though it tends to ruin their bodies, their souls, and consciences, they notwithstanding will not part with it for Christ. When Christ commands thee to do some great thing for him, how wilt thou do it? Is it a right hand, a right eye? Thou must cut it off, pluck it out; for wast thou parting with all but one thing, this one will eternally separate betwixt Christ and thee, if thou canst not also part with it for him.—Hence see,

(3.) That men are not out of danger, even when walking within the bounds of lawful things. It is a certain observation, that lawful things are a ditch, in which many souls are drowned, Matth. xxiv. 38, 39. A man in the use of lawful things, is like one walking

on the brink of a steep precipice; the ground is firm, but his head is ready to become giddy, and he may fall over. It is hard to rejoice in them, and not to overjoy; to have them, and yet to sit loose to them. Be often feeling the pulse of thy affection to them, how it beats, lest it be so violent as to separate Christ and thee.

(4.) This shews what is the root of apostacy and defection from the truths and ways of Christ, in a time of the church's trials and troubles. It is the things of the world being dearer than Christ, his truth and ways, this is the first spring of it: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world." If Christ be dearer to us than all things else, we will follow him wherever he goes, and never break with him, for the world's frowns.—I shall only add,

## 2. An use of exhortation.

Let me now exhort all of you, especially those who have been communicants, to evidence yourselves the true disciples of Christ by your comparative hating of father and mother, &c., for Christ and his cause in the world. Let your hearts be loosed from, and do you sit loose to, all that is dear to you in the world, resolving in the Lord's strength, and showing yourselves ready to part with all for Christ, if he shall call you to it. In order to influence your complying with the exhortation, I would lay before you the following motives:—

MOT. 1. This is necessary to fit you for trials; that you may be able to stand in the evil day, arm your souls with this disposition.—For this purpose consider,

(1.) That the pathway to heaven lies by the cross, and all who have a real desire for heaven must lay their account with suffering; John xvi. 33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Acts xiv. 22, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom." 2 Tim. iii. 12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore he who does not lay his account thus is a foolish builder, Luke xiv. 25, and downwards. There is always a hot noon-tide in the church's day, Song i. 7, and it may as certainly be expected as the noon.—Consider,

(2.) That the things which concern us appear to be making haste. You have enjoyed the dispensation of the sacrament after Christ's institution in peace, we have no great ground to promise another such season in a haste. There has been much sad work wrought upon this church in a little time, and it is the temper of our enemies to drive more violently than deliberately. We have had long peace, and the air is usually quiet and clear before an earthquake, and the winds are laid before great rains fall. The gospel has been doing little good for many years; and where people

are not bettered, they are made worse by it. I believe there was never a generation more disposed to root out serious godliness from the earth, than that which this time affords. Among the fashionable people of the age, religion is become almost quite out of fashion. Ministers and professors, through long ease, have gathered much mud, they need to be emptied from vessel to vessel. And it seems that judgment, as ordinary, must begin at the house of God, to purge it, and prepare the nations for a more dreadful vengeance; so that it is probable it will be brought to this ere long,—suffer or sin.—Consider,

(3.) That it is not easy to stand in a time of trial. Many will venture to sea in a fair day, that will never abide a storm. Many tall cedars have been blown up from the root by the wind of persecution, and they who have stood firmest, their towering branches have been made to sweep the ground. Be not over confident; though you have endured a storm already, there may be a harder yet before you, Heb. x. 34, compared with chap. xii. 4. There is need, then, to be preparing.—Consider,

(4.) That this will fit you for it. When the things of the world hang loose about us, like Joseph's mantle, and Satan, by the hands of wicked men, seizes them, to draw us to him by them, they will slip off, and we will leave them in their hand, and so escape, as he did. They who are standing ready to encounter, will resist the enemy, while they who are surprised will fall into confusion. It is a sad thing to feel trouble before we see it, to be past hope before we have any fear. Troubles that find men secure, ordinarily leave them desperate.

MOR. 2. Apostacy and defection from God in a trying time, is dreadful and dangerous: Heb. x. 38, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." God punishes men of this description oftentimes remarkably. How has a spirit of defection been followed in the fearful judgment of God with a spirit of persecution; for when God departs, the spirit is imbittered. As the sharpest vinegar is made of the most generous wine, so apostate professors oftentimes become the bitterest persecutors. Besides, their gifts often wither, and dry up. It has also often been seen, that they have quickly lost their all dishonourably, who have gone out of God's way to save it, while they who have walked honestly, have walked surely. Dreadful above expression will their doom be, if they get not grace to repent: Matth. x. 33, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." But, Heb. x. 32, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions."

3. The truths and ways of God are more worth than the whole of what we have to lose for them. It is a general rule: Prov. xxiii. 23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." The profane spirits of some influence their slighting some less truths of religion; and they imagine, after doing so, that they are secure from suffering, while the foundation points remain untouched. If these men valued their bodies as little as they do the truths of God, they would, in like manner, allow you to cut and mangle them as you please, provided ye did not stab them in the heart: but they who value fundamental truths, because of Christ's stamp upon them, will not dare to give up with circumstantial truths which they know, seeing they also bear the same impression of divine authority; so that it is a bold venture for a man, on any pretence, to quit the word of Christ's patience in a time of trial, and to step out of God's way: for he leaves his soul in pawn for it, which is of more worth than all he has in a world; and it is one to a thousand, if ever he has power to come back, and redeem it by repentance.

MOR. 4. Death is approaching, and then you must part with all you have in the world. Cleave as fast as you will to these things, you must let go your hold at length. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of it, would discover to us, that the whole we can make by turning aside from God's way in a time of trial, is not worth our trouble, not worth the going off our road for it; for it may be, what is refused for Christ may quickly be taken from you at death. I am sure we will never part so easily with what we have, as when we sit loose to it. Ripe fruit falls off the tree with a shake, when the unripe must be rent off. When the heart is loosed from what we have in the world, it is easy parting with it, by what it is when the heart holds by it till it be forced from it.—Nothing is ever parted with so honourably, as when it is parted with for Christ. No thanks to you that you part with what you have, when God takes it from you whether you will or not. It is honourable to forsake the world at Christ's call, for Christ's sake, before we be forsaken of the world.

MOR. 5. You will be no losers at Christ's hands. If you quit with them now to Christ, he probably will let you keep them, and accept of your will for the deed. This was the case with Abraham, when called to offer up Isaac; and with David when it was in his heart to build a house to the Lord. Thus you will have them with his blessing and favour. If he take them from you, without them you will get a throughbearing: Psalm xxxvii. 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." A little served up to you from the promise, and brought to



your hand by a particular providence, will have a double sweetness in it. That bread will not be lost which is thrown upon these waters; after many days you shall find it: Matth. xix. 29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit eternal life." Himself will be to you instead of all, and better than all here; and heaven will fully make up all hereafter.

If any shall say, "But, O! I fear I shall never be able to carry through," I would say to such, You know that the foundation of your throughbearing is laid, if your heart be loosed from all things besides Christ, and if he be dearer to you than what is dearest to you in a world: Psalm xlv. 10, 11, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him." When the king thus greatly desires thy beauty; he will see to preserve it; John x. 28, 29, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." You have taken him for all, and it lies upon his honour to see you carried through. Live by faith, and draw your daily supplies from him: Hab. ii. 4, "The just shall live by his faith." Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Amen.

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A RICH REWARD TO DILIGENCE IN RELIGION.*

SERMON XXXV.

Hos. vi. 3,

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.

IT is an observation of Soloman's, Prov. xii. 27, "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." Men are at some pains to get something, but when they have got it, they let it slip through their fingers. Hence our religion, good frames, attainments, resolutions, &c. turn to small account. We are at some pains to acquire something when attending divine ordinances, but then we put it in

* Delivered at Tweedsmuir, April, 1712.