

JESUS A PREACHER OF GOOD TIDINGS TO THE MEEK.

SERMON XLVIII.

ISIAH lxi. 1,

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

IN these and the following words, we have represented the great, the important work for which Jesus was appointed, and to which he was specially called by his heavenly Father,—work for which he was completely qualified, by the Spirit of the Lord God being upon him. We propose to consider the several parts of this work, in that order in which they are set before us; and accordingly begin with that part, his having “to preach good tidings to the meek.”—In which words we have,

1. The work itself in which the Son of God was employed, and to which he was called: “To preach good tidings.” He was a minister by office; Rom. xv. 8, “Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God made to the fathers;” the great minister of the gospel. He was the best among men; he brought good tidings, the best of tidings; by these tidings is meant the gospel, Luke iv. 18. This is the good news, the tidings of peace and salvation, which Jesus brought from heaven to earth.—We have,

2. The special object of this part of the work, “the meek.” The word signifies, such as are meek, humble, and submissive, being made so by poverty and affliction. In the parallel place, it reads poor, and the one explains the other. If it is inquired, what poor ones are meant? I think it is plain, it is not those who are mean in the world, but poor in spirit, for these poor ones are meek. These meek ones are classed with the broken-hearted, and both distinguished from the captives and prisoners, by the original accentuation. So that by the meek here is meant, the poor in spirit, those who, as being convinced by the law, have seen themselves to be poor, that they have nothing in which they could stand before God as righteous, but look on themselves as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17. And it is remarkable, that our Saviour’s sermon on the mount begins with good tidings to such persons: Matth. v. 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

But here there occurs a question: Was Christ to preach the good tidings of the gospel to none but these? To this I answer, The gospel was in itself good tidings unto all: Luke ii. 10, “And the angel

said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Our Lord preached to all who heard him promiscuously these good tidings, but in effect they were not good to any but to the poor in spirit among them. None but these could relish the goodness of them; to others they were tasteless, but to the poor in spirit, they sunk like a refreshing oil into their bones.—From these words I take the following

DOCTRINE, That as the tidings of the gospel will indeed be good and welcome tidings to those who are meek, and poor in spirit, so Jesus is, by his heavenly Father, employed on the great work of preaching the good tidings of the gospel to sinners, especially to such who are meek, and spiritually poor in their own eyes.—In handling this doctrine we propose,

I. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

III. Shew how this great work of preaching is, and hath been performed by Christ.

IV. Give the reasons of the doctrine.

V. Make some practical improvement of the whole.—We are then,

1. To consider this meekness and poverty, and shew who are these meek poor ones.—As to this, we observe, that this meekness comprehends in it,

1. A pressing scene of utter emptiness in one's self: Rom. viii. 18, "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." A poor man going abroad, sees this and the other thing, in the houses of the rich; but when he comes home, he sees none of them there. Thus, the meek poor soul looks through himself, and there, in himself, he sees nothing but emptiness of all goodness, no holiness, wisdom, nor strength. The heart, which should be the garden of the Lord, appears as a bare muir, a wild, a waste. He is ready to cry out, O barren, dry, sapless heart and nature of mine! Agur looks for knowledge, and he says, Prov. xxx. 2, 3, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy." The prodigal looks to his provisions, and says, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" Paul reckons up his whole self, and the sum total is nought: 2 Cor. xii. 11, "For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."—This meekness comprehends,

2. A pressing sense of sinfulness : Rom. vii. 14, " We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." He looks to the whole of himself, and he sees nothing on him but rags ; a sinful nature, a corrupt heart, unclean lusts, and an unholy life. He must rank his righteousness with his unrighteousness, his duties with his sins, for he is defiled with them all : Isa. lxiv. 6, " But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." These meek poor ones see themselves the very picture of rank poverty, having only filthy rags, death painted on their face by want, and overgrown by the vermin of filthy lusts. They see themselves not only nothing, but worse than nothing, while they look over these frightful accounts of the debt of sin, which stand against them, and for which they have nothing to pay.—This meekness comprehends,

3. A pressing sense of misery by sin. Like the prodigal, they see themselves ready to perish with hunger. Debt is a heavy burden to an honest heart, and filthiness to one that desires to be clean : Rom. vii. 24, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" They look about them, and see themselves in a cloud of miseries, arising from their sins. Their poverty presseth them down. They are obliged to do many things which otherwise they would not, and cannot attain to other things which they desire to arrive at : Rom. vii. 19, " For the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do." It separates them from that communion with God which they would otherwise enjoy, makes them sit within, mourning without the sun, when otherwise they might walk abroad in the light of the Lord's countenance. This presseth their souls to the dust.—It comprehends,

4. A sense of utter inability to help one's self : 2 Cor. iii. 5, " Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves." They see themselves in the mire, but unable to help themselves out ; therefore these poor men cry unto the Lord : Psalm xxxiv. 6. They see an emptiness and weakness in all their external privileges, their gifts, duties, yea, their graces, to save and help them. They count all things but loss for Christ, and wish to be found in Christ, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law. They find the sting in their conscience, but cannot draw it out ; guilt is a burden, but they cannot throw it off ; lusts are strong and uneasy, but they are not able to master them ; and this presses them sore.—This meekness comprehends,

5. A sense of the absolute need of a Saviour, and of help from heaven : 2 Cor. iii. 5, " But our sufficiency is of God." The pride of

the spirit is beat down, they lie down at the Lord's feet, saying, (Jer. xxxi. 18,) "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." They see they will be ruined if their help come not from above. Their case appears desperate to all remedies, but those which are under the management of an eternal omnipotent hand. They say to their souls, as the king of Israel said to the woman in the time of famine, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee?"—It comprehends,

6. A sense as to utter unworthiness of the Lord's help; they see nothing which they have to recommend them to the Lord's help. They dare not stand upon worth, like those proud beggars, who value themselves, on what they have been or done. Like the centurion, they say, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Hence there is a word put in for them, Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the water, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." They own the Lord would be just, if he should never vouchsafe his mercy and grace to them, but exclude them for ever from his presence; Jer. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." They see a loathsomeness in the best things about them, in their reformation, mourning, their desires of Christ, wrestling, and prayers for mercy; so that they conclude, if ever he notice them, it must be altogether for his own name's sake.—This meekness comprehends,

7. An earnest desire as to the supply of soul-wants: Matth. v. 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." A greedy man, we say, is always poor, because natural poverty consists rather in the desire of what we want, than in the want itself. There are many who want spiritual good things, yet are not poor in Spirit, because they are not pained with the want of them. But the poor in spirit are pained with the want of spiritual good things. They pant for them, Psalm xlii. 1; long for them, thirst for them, Psalm lxiii. 1. Hence we read of the expectation of the poor, which shall not perish for ever, Psalm ix. 18.—It comprehends,

Lastly, A hearty contentment in submitting to any method of help which the Lord will prescribe: Acts ix. 7, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Beggars must not be choosers; these meek poor ones are content with Christ on any terms, while others stand contending about them. Necessity has no law, and hunger will break through stone walls. Whoso are thus situated, will be for a

Saviour, a righteousness, and holiness, at any rate. They are content to be taught, content to be managed: Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." They are content to part with all, for the enriching pearl of great price.—We are now,

II. To explain the good tidings of the gospel, and, as we go along, shew that they are good and welcome tidings to such persons.

The poor in spirit are wounded by the law: the gospel brings a healing medicine to these wounds. It suits their case fully, and declares to them the good news of a salve for all their sores. Solomon tells us, Prov. xxv. 25, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Applicable this to nothing so much as the good tidings brought us from heaven in the gospel. I cannot enumerate all the articles of these good tidings, but shall take notice of the following:—

1. The gospel-tidings are tidings of a complete salvation. And are not these good tidings? Luke ii. 11, "For unto us is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." O! lost sinners, there is a salvation purchased for you, a great, a complete salvation, a salvation from sin, Matth. i. 21, and from the wrath of God, John iii. 16. It is offered to you, and offered freely, though it was dear bought; it is offered without money and without price, Isa. lv. 1. If ye ask what ye shall do to be saved?—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved. Though you are lost, though you have destroyed yourselves, yet here is help for you. Though ye are insensible sinners, the tidings are to you; it will in particular be good and welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, who see their lost and undone condition. A Saviour will be as welcome a sight to them, as a rope cast out from the shore will be to a drowning man. They will eagerly embrace the Saviour and his salvation: Song i. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth: therefore do the virgins love thee."—These tidings relate,

2. To a redemption, to a ransom paid: Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Sin and Satan made war upon the world, and overcame them all in Adam; so that by nature we are captives and slaves. No more God's free men, nor our own men, but slaves; and the rattling of the chains of divers lusts upon us are evidences of it. But good tidings, O captives! the King's Son, out of his princely bounty, has purchased for you redemption, he has paid a complete ransom, even his own blood: and whosoever will, may come to him. Your freedom is bought; come, take the benefit of it, by following him out of the

land of your captivity; Zech. ix. 11, 12, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water; turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." But what avails this to those who account it a kind captivity, who love their master, and his drudgery work? they will not come to Jesus. But never were the tidings of a ransom so welcome to a slave in Turkey, as these were to meek poor ones, who are groaning under their bondage, and breathing for the liberty of the sons of God.—These tidings relate,

3. To an indemnity, a pardon to criminals who will come to Jesus: Acts xiii. 38, 39, "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The world of mankind, God's natural subjects, have joined his grand enemy, and risen up in rebellion against their sovereign Lord. The law has proclaimed us all traitors, justice demands vengeance on the criminals, and we cannot escape by flight or by might. But good tidings, O criminals! the glorious Mediator has got an act of grace, of indemnity and pardon, passed in the court of heaven, in favour of a ruined world, bearing, that whosoever will come in, and lay down their arms, shall have a full and free pardon, written, for the better security, in the blood of the Mediator. It is proclaimed to you, Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." In this indemnity, there are no exceptions: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Now, whatever this be to others, it will be welcome tidings to the meek poor ones, whose consciences are galled with the sting of sin, bowing down under a sense of guilt. Never was a pardon more welcome to a malefactor on the scaffold, than this will be to them: Isa. xxxiii. 24, "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities."—These tidings relate,

4. To a glorious physician of souls, who never misses to cure his patients: Matth. ix. 12, 13, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." That forbidden fruit which was eaten by our first parents, has entailed dreadful diseases on all their posterity; so that this world is no better than an hospital, where there is not one sound person; and the sickness is unto death. But good tidings, O sin-sick soul! There is a glorious physician come from hea-

ven, who will cure all who will come to be cured by him. He cures in fallibly, his blood cleanseth from all sin. He cures freely: Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely." He rejects no patients: John vi. 37, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The medicine of his blood and Spirit removes all diseases. What is thy disease? It is a stony heart? He takes it away and gives an heart of flesh. Is it blindness, deafness, dumbness, lameness? He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. Is it the falling evil of backsliding? the consumption or decay of grace? the running issue of predominant lusts? the fever of raging lusts? the universal leprosy of the corruption of nature? All these he can cure, for he healeth all manner of diseases. They who see not their diseases, will indeed slight him; but it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are groaning under their diseases. O! then will such an one say, I will take my stony heart to him, my blindness to him, &c.—These tidings are the tidings,

5. Of a feast: Isa. xxv. 6, "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined." Since man has left God, he has had nothing to feed upon, but the dust with the serpent, or the husks of created things with the swine. He has never been satisfied, he never could get enough; still red hunger has been upon him, like those who eat but are not satisfied. But good tidings, O famished sinners! our Lord Jesus Christ has made a feast for hunger-bitten sinners, and they are all invited to it: Isa. lv. 2, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." It is the best of feasts, where the soul may feed to the full. Jesus himself is the maker, and also the matter of it; all the benefits of the covenant are the provision which are served up at this feast, he who eats thereof shall never die. It is true, that most men put no value upon it: Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." But, Psalm xxii. 26, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." It will be good tidings to hungry souls, who are sick of the dust and of husks, and are longing to eat bread in their Father's house, where there is plenty and to spare.—These tidings relate,

6. To a treasure: 2 Cor. iv. 7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Man was broken by his fall, he lost all his goods, and all his credit in heaven; so that absolute poverty reigns among Adam's sons, who have neither in them nor on them for the present necessity, and besides are drowned in debt to the justice of God.

But good tidings, poor sinners! There is a treasure hid in the field of the gospel, which will enrich you; and by the gospel you are pointed to it. O buy the field; Matth. xiii. 44. In this field are the most precious things, precious promises, and within them precious Christ, with all his merits; gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eye-salve, Rev. iii. 18. Here is variety of all good things, and abundance. They who are rich in their own eyes will not value this treasure; but to the meek poor ones it will be glad tidings. They will readily do as the man, Matth. xiii. 14, who sold all that he had, and bought the field in which the great treasure was hid.—These tidings relate,

7. To a marriage, a most happy match for poor sinners: Hos. ii. 19, 20, "And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." The Bridegroom is the Royal Mediator, who is content to match with poor captive souls. We are naturally of the house of hell: John viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This being our case, we could have no hopes of being comfortably disposed of. But good tidings, O children of the devil's family! you may be married to the Son of God, who for that end has taken on our nature; he says, Matth. xxii. 4, "All things are ready; come unto the marriage." This match is the most honourable, the richest, the happiest of which we are capable. There is nothing to hinder the match, he will make you lovely; and, what is more, he will make you willing. Most men despise this marriage, they prefer their farms and merchandise to it. But the poor meek ones will as gladly embrace it, as ever a captive woman, to save her life, would match with the most desirable conqueror.—These tidings relate,

8. To a victory, a glorious victory: Isa. xxv. 8, "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from all eyes." There is no getting to the heavenly Canaan, without fighting our enemies; which would, if possible, keep us out there. We are not able for them; sin, Satan, and death are too strong for us. But, good tidings! Christ has fought that battle, and obtained a glorious victory; he offers you a share of the victory and spoils; Rev. iii. 21, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Join the conqueror, come up at his back against your spiritual enemies, and ye shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us, Rom. viii. 37. They who have not yet broke their covenant with death, and agreement with hell, will slight this

victory. But it will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who would fain break through the host of their spiritual enemies, but know not how to make it out. These tidings relate,

Lastly, To a peace, a most desirable peace: Eph. ii. 14, "For he (Christ Jesus) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Sin made discord, and broke the peace between heaven and earth; so that God and the sinner became enemies. All access to God, all communication betwixt heaven and earth was blocked up. But good tidings! Christ has made peace by his own blood. It is offered to you, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me; let him take of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." It is a firm peace, on the most solid foundation, a lasting peace which will never terminate, a peace which will ere long be complete in all its parts; peace external, internal, eternal.—This will be good tidings to the meek poor ones, who are wounded with the apprehensions of God's anger, and affrighted with the thoughts of his wrath.—We are, then,

III. To shew how this work of preaching is and hath been performed by Jesus Christ. As to this, we observe, that he performed it under the Old Testament, and under the New Testament dispensation.

First, He performed this work under the Old Testament dispensation. Under this dispensation,

1. The first proclamation of these tidings was done personally by himself in paradise, to the compendized world, our first parents: Gen. iii. 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The Son of God, appearing in human shape, as a prelude of his incarnation, sat as their Judge, and as the first interpreter of his Father's mind, preached the first gospel to them in that promise, which contains the substance and abridgement of the whole gospel. He was absolutely the first, in all respects, who preached the good tidings of the gospel.

2. The second proclamation was by his ambassadors in his name, who were of two sorts:—Extraordinary; namely, the prophets whom he inspired infallibly to teach the people: 2 Pet. i. 21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."—And ordinary teachers, such as priests and Levites under the law, priests and others before the law. And in respect of this preaching by men in his name, he is said to have preached to those who lived before the flood: 1 Peter iii. 19, "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." There was also a proclamation,

3. By his written word, Deut. xxx. 11—14. This is his own word, where the meek poor ones may always find the glad tidings of salvation. Before it was written, they never wanted inspired men, and when it was written, though for a time they might want prophets, yet this they had always from him as an infallible rule.

2dly, He preached and preaches under the New Testament dispensation. This he did,

1. By his own personal preaching in the days of his flesh, when he went about among the Jews, preaching to them as the Minister of the circumcision: Rom. xv. 8, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." So that he himself, by himself, did begin this dispensation. The gospel at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3, "He spake as never man spake, and taught as one having authority." He did it,

2. By inspiring his apostles to preach and write the doctrines of salvation, contained in the New Testament, on whom he poured out his spirit, and by their writings, they being dead, yet speak to us from him and by him. He does it,

3. By raising up and continuing always a gospel-ministry in the church: Eph. iv. 11—13, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And with them he has promised to be present always, even unto the end of the world; Matth. xxviii. 20. These preach in his name, as deputed by him to declare these good tidings.

Thus you see this work is performed by the Son of God, not only by himself, but by his servants in his name. And though the mistakes, errors, and unfaithfulness of ordinary ministers, both under the Old and New Testament, are solely their own, their preaching of the true doctrine of the gospel is indeed his; they are but as it were the voice, he is the speaker. For, he gave and gives the gifts whereby they are fitted to preach the gospel. All their tapers are lighted at his shining lamp: John i. 9, "That was the true light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the world." Their wisdom and knowledge in divine mysteries is given them by him, for the good of his church, Eph. iv. 8. Their commission is from him, and from him they derive their power and authority, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. They are his ministers and servants, sent out upon his work, and to him they must give an account. *Lastly*, The effi-

cacy of their ministry is solely owing to him and his Spirit, 1 Cor. iii. 7, "So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." He makes it effectual to his elect ones.—We are,

IV. To give the reasons of the doctrine, or shew, that none but he was fit to be employed in this work. This will appear if we consider,

1. That none but he could reveal the secrets of love, which were hid from eternity in the breast of God: John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Neither man nor angel could open up these. But he was privy to his Father's counsels, as being in the bosom of the Father from all eternity.

2. None but he was fit to be an universal preacher to all persons for whom these tidings were designed, and to whom they were to be carried, and this in all ages. Who else could have the great charge of this weighty business? This required one of infinite wisdom, and one every where present.

Lastly, Whose testimony but his could be a sufficient ground of faith in this, of all matters the most important? Here lies the weight of God's honour, and the salvation of an elect world; and this required no less solid a bottom than the testimony of truth itself.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SERMON XLIX.

ISAIAH lxi. 1,

The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

HAVING gone through the doctrinal part of this subject, by offering what was intended on the several heads of method which we laid down, we shall now, as was proposed,

IV. Make some practical improvement; and this in uses of information, trial, and exhortation.

We are, in the *first* place, to improve this subject in a use of information.

I. Hence you may learn what is the great cause of slighting the gospel, of that coldrife entertainment which it gets amongst most of its hearers, that little relish which there is for the great truths of

the gospel; why so few do comply with the gracious calls which it affords. People may attribute this to what causes they will, but the true cause is the want of this meekness and poverty of spirit. Instead of this, there are pride and self-conceit, unsubdued and unmortified. I may branch these out into several particulars, as opposed to this meekness. There is,

(1.) No due sense of spiritual wants: Prov. xxvii. 7, "The full soul loatheth the honey-comb." Most men are sick of a Laodicean disease, saying in their practice as they said in their hearts, that "they are rich and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing," Rev. iii. 17. They are not mourning under their want of light, of life, and of holiness. They reign as kings with what they have, though, as with King Saul, God is departed from them. Hence they do not value that treasure which is hid in the field of the gospel.

(2.) Men have no true sight and sense of their own sinfulness. They see not the sinfulness of their nature, of their hearts, lips, and lives, but are like Samson, without his two eyes: Matth. ix. 12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They are pining away in their sins; their sickness has not yet taken them by the heart; their wounds are not lanced; the law has not had its effect upon them, and therefore the gospel is not relished.

(3.) Their eyes are veiled, so that they see not their misery by sin, and as being without Christ: Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this." Did they see the clouds of wrath which are hanging above their heads, the quick approaches which death with its sting is making towards them, their separation from God, and from all the privileges of the covenant, they could not be at ease. The gospel-tidings would be to them as life from the dead.

(4.) They are strangers to their utter inability to help themselves. They are like Samson, in another case, who knew not that his strength was departed from him. We may see how corrupt nature changes itself into various shapes on this point. If you urge men to ply the work of their salvation, Alas! say they, we can do nothing; they thus make it a covert for their sloth. Urge them with the necessity of reformation and repentance, they say, It is time enough, they will attend to this afterwards; as if it were in the power of their hand to do this business at any time: they thus make it a covert for their delays, and still have no relish for the gospel.

(5.) They do not feel their need of Christ: Rev. iii. 17, "They need his blood and Spirit, but they are not duly sensible of their

need." Their own works are big in their own eyes, and appear to them sufficient in order to obtain God's favour. Their natural and acquired abilities are also with them sufficient in order to their sanctification; they are by no means shaken out of themselves; therefore the offer of the gospel is but an offer of food to the full soul, and so is loathed.

(6.) They see not their own unworthiness of a Saviour's help; they come to the market of grace with their money in their hand. They look on themselves as worthy of what Christ should do for them, Luke vii. 4. Though they be perhaps so far humbled as to see they must have mercy and help from the Lord, yet they look on their reformation and duties as what cannot but recommend them to Christ beyond many others. They cannot see how the Lord can reject those who come so far a length as they do. Hence the doctrine of free grace is but tasteless to them.

(7.) They have no anxiety for the supply of their soul-wants. They want grace and holiness, but they can be easy without them. Like foolish virgins, they sleep on at ease, while they have no oil for their lamps: Prov. vi. 10, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Their desires are keen after the world, but weak, faint, and languishing after spiritual good things. They have no hunger and thirst after them. Hence they value not the gospel, nor the fountain of living waters.

(8.) They are not content with Christ but on terms of their own making. They are like those who seek to buy a commodity which yet they can be without. If they can get it at their own price, they will take it; if not, they can want it. There are right-eye sins, yet they will by no means part with them. They are not pleased with the covenant, some things are in it which they must have out; there are some things out which they must have in, else they will not come into it. Hence they care not for the gospel, or that covenant which it reveals.

2. Hence learn, that slight the gospel-call who will, the meek, the poor in spirit will gladly receive it. They who are shaken out of themselves by the law, will be glad to creep under that shelter which is held forth in the gospel. These souls will feast sweetly on what is tasteless to others, what others tread under feet and despise. The hungry are glad of that for which the full soul has no appetite; and just it is in this case.—This subject informs us,

3. Of the dignity and honour of the work of the ministry. With Paul, we would not be ashamed to magnify that office which is conversant about those things which are most necessary for the world, which bring the highest honour to God, and the greatest good to

mankind. It is true, it is often a despised office in the world ; but wisdom is justified of her children. God had but one Son, and he made him a minister, a preacher of the gospel. He is the chief shepherd and bishop of souls, and therefore the office of the ministry will be esteemed by all those who have a true esteem for Christ. It informs us,

4. Of that good-will which the Father and the Son jointly bear to sinners ; since the Father put his own Son into this work, and the Son readily engaged in it. Do they not by this say, " Why will ye die ?" It was good-will to men in its utmost height, that ever such tidings were to be carried, and that ever such a messenger was employed. It informs us,

5. How acceptable meekness and poverty of spirit are unto the Lord, who has put a peculiar article in Christ's commission for such. As to others, he is to humble and bring them down ; as to these, he is to refresh and revive them with good news. It informs us,

6. As to the goodness and weight of the good tidings of the gospel, which are brought to us by such a hand. Surely the weight of the matter must be great, when such a messenger was sent to publish it. We are informed,

7. As to the danger of slighting these tidings, though men be employed in carrying them ; for they speak in the name of the great Messenger, preach in the name, and by the authority of, the great preacher. So he that " despiseth them, despiseth him that sent them : " Heb. ii. 3, " How shall they escape, if they neglect so great salvation ? "

This subject may be improved,

Secondly, In an use of trial.

Hereby we may try whether we be meek and poor or not. What relish have we for gospel truths ? The meek, the poor in spirit, (and such all must be who are true Christians), have a singular relish for the word of the gospel. It tastes to them very differently from what it does to any in the world besides. Job says, " I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," chap. xxiii. 12. David says, " They are more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb ; " Psalm xix. 10.—For,

1. They are admitted to partake of the kernel of the word, while others break their teeth on the shell. It comes to them as it did to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. i. 5, " Not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." It has not been a dry channel to them, or a dead letter, but the ministration of the Spirit. Therefore the apostle says, 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3, " As new-

born babes, desire ye the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' And this first taste of it leaves a relish behind it: the drawing by of the veil has discovered the treasure in the earthen vessels.

2. It is their food, food proper, and suitable to their new nature: Deut xxxii. 47, "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." All living creatures have their proper food; thus one relishes and delights in that which another does not desire. The new creature is nourished by the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. This is natural to them, for the saints have had their life by it, they are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God, 1 Pet. i. 23. Thus the saints have a peculiar relish for the word of God, while others do not regard it; more than the dog does the hay, which, though the ox feeds sweetly on it, yet it is not agreeable to the dog.

Lastly, All their hopes are in it; it is all their salvation, and all their desire; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; take this from them, and what have they more? Hence they are content to part with all to buy this field; Matth. xiii. 44, and to part with life itself rather than the gospel, Mark viii. 35.—What wonder is it that a landed man should have delight in reading his charter, the pardoned criminal in reading the king's pardon, which another has not? As natural is it that the Christian should have a delight peculiar to himself in reading and hearing the gospel. Here occurs a

QUESTION, Since hypocrites may have a relish of the good tidings of the gospel, how shall I distinguish between their relish and the relish of a sincere Christian, who is meek and poor in spirit?—To this I

ANSWER, Hypocrites may have some desire, and wait upon public ordinances; Isa. lviii. 2. Like the stony-ground hearers, they may receive the word joyfully, Matth. xiii. 20; but yet there are great differences betwixt their desires and those of a sincere Christian.—Such as,

1, The sincere Christian relishes the good tidings of the gospel as good, yea, as the best for him, so as that he can lay the weight of his salvation, for time and eternity, upon this word, and choose it for his portion; Psalm cxix. 111; whereas the hypocrite may relish them as good, but not as the best for him; so that, for all the relish he has of this word, he has another thing which he looks on as still better for him. He has something else on which he is disposed to lay at least part of his weight before the Lord; for he is never poor in spirit, nor shaken out of his own righteousness. But the Christian has no confidence in the flesh; Phil. iii. 3.

2. The Christian gets his relish for the gospel, by seeing the extreme bitterness of sin; Acts ii. 37, "When they heard this they were pricked to the heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" But the hypocrite comes easier by his; "When he hears the word, he anon with joy receives it," Matth. xiii. 20. No man can relish health at the rate one does who is brought back from the gates of death. Many relish the sweetness of the word to whom sin was never made bitter; or if it was, it was never the bitterest of all things. Hence the relish for such is very superficial. But God puts in more and more bitterness in sin to his own people, till it becomes of all bitters the bitterest; and then they truly relish the good tidings of the gospel.

3. The Christian's relish for the gospel is the most powerful and overcoming relish which he has. The hypocrite's is not so; Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." So says the Christian, but of the hypocrite it is said, Ezek. xxxiii. 31, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." The sincere Christian chooses Christ peremptorily, if they should beg with him. They see such a suitableness in him to their case, that they must have him on any terms; whereas the hypocrite gets only half a look of Christ in the gospel. Hence he has only half affection for him, a kind of hankering after him. Christ is sweet to them, but still some one lust is sweeter; so that, like Orpah, they leave him, but not without some affection for him. But the Christian-like Ruth cleaves unto him, and thereby is brought to honour.

Lastly, The Christian relishes all the tidings of the gospel in every particular of them, whereas the hypocrite has always something in them which he does not approve of. The Christian without shame has respect to all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 6. He relishes the goodness of the promises, and also the holiness of the commandments. "He esteems all God's precepts concerning all things to be right," ver. 128. Herod heard John gladly till his beloved lust was touched. And so do many, they love the word, with the exception of that which strikes against their beloved lusts.

This subject may be improved,

Thirdly, In an use of exhortation.

As ever you would relish the good tidings of the gospel, labour to be meek and poor in spirit. Would you have your souls refreshed

at ordinances? Would you partake of the goodness of our Lord's house, and find that in ordinances, which is the hidden manna, which the carnal world knows not of? Well, take this course; it is the way to prepare yourselves for it.

1. Keep up always a deep sense of your own sinfulness, wretchedness, and absolute need of Christ. Our Lord was called the friend of publicans and sinners, because they who saw the least good in themselves got most of his converse; 1 Pet. v. 5, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The low valleys have the waters running in them, when they run off the high hills as fast as they come on; Isa. xl. 4, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." The man who feels his disease prizes the remedy, while he who is raving and insensible disregards it.

2. Be of a teachable disposition; this is true meekness; Psalm xxv. 9, "The meek will he teach his way." They who sit down to judge the word, rather than to be judged by it, may meet with what may disgust or please their fancy, but are out of the way of the true spiritual relish for the word; James, i. 21, "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." How many a weak Christian's soul is refreshed with that word, in which men who have knowledge, but not grace, find nothing. They will be sure to profit who lie down at the Lord's feet, to learn and receive the word as the word of God.

3. Be much in reviewing and mourning over your spiritual wants. Look not so much to what you have attained, as to what you are yet short of. Imitate Paul, in "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before," Phil. iii. 13. Mourn over your darkness, deadness, and unholiness. Let these be your continual burden, and you shall not want a word in season, Isa. l. 4. Jesus hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. This would make you lie at the catch for a word from the Lord, like Benhadad's servants in another case, and receive the Lord's message greedily, as what in one way or another will profit you.

4. Cry much to God for communion with him in gospel-ordinances. Come to ordinances in a believing expectation of enjoying it. Set yourselves to receive the gospel as the Lord's word to you, which worketh effectually in you that believe. The Lord appoints sinners to meet with him there, saying, "In all places where I record my name, I will come into thee, and I will bless thee," Exod. xx. 24. Propose a meeting with him there also, and you may be sure it will

hold. Like Jacob, you will prevail with God to bless you, Hos. xii. 4, compare Gen. xxxv. 1. Christ had promised the Spirit, and commanded the disciples to wait for him, Acts i. 4. They continued in prayer, ver. 14. See the fruit of it, chap. ii.

Lastly, Be thankful for the least of God's mercies, and be submissive to the Lord under every trying dispensation, as sensible of your utter unworthiness. When was it that Jacob got the blessing? Was it not when in this frame, "I am not worthy," said he, "of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." A sense of unworthiness as to the least mercies, cannot miss to produce in you a relish for the great mercies of the gospel.

There are many complaints as to the want of God's presence in ordinances. There is not that found in them which was in former times. Many lay the blame of this on ministers; and, I dare say, there is not either a godly minister in Scotland, or a godly Christian, acting as such, who dare refuse that he has a real share in it. The clean, to cast stones at the guilty, must come out from among those ministers and people who are strangers to their own hearts, and see better into others than they do into themselves. But however it be, I dare promise, in the name of the Lord, that the hungry shall not be sent empty away. The meek poor ones shall be feasted in ordinances; and their hungry souls shall be refreshed with the gospel, fare with others as it will; Psalm xxii. 24, "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied," Matth. v. 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." O! but the spiritual relish for the word is well worth all the trouble which is necessary for having it. For,

1. This is the hidden manna peculiar to God's hidden ones on earth: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna," Rev. ii. 17. We read, Exod. xvi. 13, 14, of the dew under which the manna lay. The ordinances are that dew; communion with Christ in ordinances, by relishing his word, is the manna under it. The ordinances are the cabinet; this is the opening of the cabinet, and the finding of the jewel, the drawing by the veil, and beholding the glory; the digging up the field, and falling on the treasure; the breaking the shell, and getting out the pearl.

2. This would make the Sabbath the most pleasant day in all the week, the hours of worship the most pleasant hours, which now to most are a weariness. See how the Gospel, felt in its power, doth affect: Isa. ix. 3, "They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." Com-

pare ver. 2. If you had ever any experience of this relish, dare you say but that these were your golden days, even the best time ever you had in your life, and that all the world could never make up your loss since you wanted them? You who never tasted of it believe others, since you are not capable of judging in the matter: Psal. lxxxiv. 10, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Believe those who have got that at ordinances, which has made them joyfully embrace persecution, banishment, a scaffold, and a fire.

3. This would readily hang about you all the week, in a holy, savoury, tender disposition, and make you rejoice at the return of the Sabbath: Psalm cxxii. 1, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is good being in Christ's company in his sanctuary; wherever they go afterwards, they smell of his good ointments: knowledge is taken of them that they have been with Jesus, Acts iv. 13. Remember what is said of the Gospel, 2 Cor. ii. 16, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life." Alas! how rank and unsavoury are the conversations of most, because they never get a relish for the word.

4. This would make you useful Christians. The woman of Samaria, as soon as she relished the Gospel, she got another spirit. As she had been formerly a prop of the devil's kingdom, and an agent for him in the place where she lived; she now, when converted by grace, turns useful for others. This would make you naturally commend the way of God to others, would make you useful in your families, in the congregation, and in the country-side.

Lastly, This would be a heaven on earth. What is the happiness of the saints in glory? They enjoy God, and this is in the utmost perfection. You should relish that enjoyment of him, which in your measure you have for the present, as a prelude, an earnest of what shall be your privilege hereafter.

I shall have done with a word to all in general, and in particular to meek poor ones.—To all in general, I would say, Entertain the good tidings of the Gospel, slight them not, give them a suitable entertainment. Believe them as undoubted truths. When God speaks, it is reasonable we believe; for he is Truth, he is the faithful and true Witness, Rev. iii. 14. The carnal mind is apt to fall into unbelief of the Gospel, which reflects great dishonour upon God: 1 John v. 10, "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." And this also makes the Gospel unprofitable to ourselves: "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with

faith in them that heard it," Heb. iv. 2. Embrace these tidings joyfully and thankfully; they are tidings of great joy, and should be received with the greatest joy and cheerfulness: as a malefactor on the scaffold should receive the tidings of a pardon, or as an indemnity would be received by those who have forfeited their lives by their treason. And the greater the danger is from which the Gospel proclaims deliverance, the more welcome should the tidings be. Finally, lay the weight of your souls on these tidings for time and eternity, fall in with the Gospel-contrivance, and embrace the covenant as well ordered in all things, and sure, Matth. xiii. 44. Embrace the salvation; come away with the Redeemer, accept the ransom, accept the indemnity, put your case in the hand of the great physician, and all shall be well. To prevail with you as to this, consider, for MOTIVES,

From whence the tidings come. It is from a far country, from heaven, the throne of God, yea, the depths of the counsel of God, John i. 18. Behold tidings of love and good-will from heaven, of a mercy-seat set up there for poor sinners, from whence they could have looked for nothing but wrath! Consider,

Who brings the tidings,—the Son of God. O! glorious messenger, who left the Father's bosom, and came down into this earth, to proclaim the glad tidings. And now that he is ascended into heaven, he has sent his ministers in his name to proclaim them, with his certification, That he who heareth you, heareth me; and he who despiseth you, despiseth me; and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me. Consider,

What are the tidings. Tidings of a salvation, a redemption, &c. They are good tidings, the best of tidings that ever came into the world. Good to refresh and revive the spirits of those whom nothing else can comfort, even sinners depressed under apprehensions of wrath; and the more to be esteemed that they are peculiar to sinful men, not fallen angels. "Unto you, O men! I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Consider,

The need there was of these tidings in the world. Never did tidings come so seasonably to any, as those of the Gospel to the world ruined by sin. We were as Isaac, with the knife at our throat, when the tidings came of Jesus Christ, as the ram caught in the thicket. Let us but suppose the world without the Gospel, we will then have a fiery law, flaming on our faces, and no way whatever to escape. Thus will we see the seasonableness of Gospel tidings.

To meek poor ones, in particular, I would say, O! sensible sinners, pressed with the sense of your spiritual wants, your sinfulness,

misery, inability to help yourselves, you who see your absolute need of Christ, and withal your unworthiness of his help, who are longing for supply, and content with Christ on any terms, to you is the word of this salvation sent particularly; come away, and joyfully embrace these good tidings. To influence you to this, consider,

That your names are particularly in Christ's commission. He was sent to preach good tidings to the meek. The Lord knows that the poor convinced sinner will have many doubts and fears, which will be hard for him to overcome, so as to get the tidings believed. Therefore, as in Mark xvi. 7, the angel said unto the woman, "Go your way, tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." So here particular notice is taken of the meek. God has a special eye on the outcasts of Israel to bring them in to himself, Isa. lv. 1. Again, consider,

That the grand end for which the Lord discovers to you your spiritual poverty is, that you may come to Christ for supply; Gal. iii. 24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." God brought a famine on Jacob's household in Canaan, when there was corn in Egypt, that Joseph's brethren might have an errand to him. Therefore reject not the counsel of God against yourselves. Consider farther,

That Christ is able to supply all your wants: "Open thy mouth wide," says he, "and I will fill it," Psalm lxxxi. 10. Were your wants as great as Paul's, as Mary Magdalene's, as Manasseh's were, he has enough to supply them all, a fulness of merit and of spirit. If all the world were so poor in spirit, there is enough for them all, and to spare; there is an infinite value in his blood, and an infinite efficacy in his spirit. Consider,

That you cannot get the supply of your wants anywhere else; Acts iv. 12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Alas! poor sinners are ready to go to wrong doors for supply, and to seek to have their wants supplied by themselves. But all your duties, prayers, watchings, mournings, will do no good, unless you believe; John vi. 29, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Consider, lastly,

That our Lord makes you welcome to him and his fulness, and that freely, Isa. lv. 1. I dare not come to Christ, says one. Why so? Christ is a gift, even the gift of God, John iv. 10; and what is freer than a gift? Nothing is required of you but to receive it. Incline, then, your ear, and come unto him; hear, and your souls shall live.—Amen.