

SERMON II.

THE FIRST AND LAST IN SUFFERING WORK.

“ But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.”

MATTHEW XIX. 30.

AT verse 27., Peter doth propound a question unto Christ, saying, “ Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee : what shall we have therefore ?”

Jesus answered him in the following verse ; and his answer is partly comfortable, and partly cautional.

In the comfortable part he doth declare what great reward his disciples or any other should have, that did suffer, or leave any worldly interest for his name’s sake.

The first part concerns his disciples only, in verse 28. “ I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” This shall be your reward.

And as for others, though you make the question, I will give my answer so, saith he, as shall concern more than you : my promise shall be extended unto others also ; at verse 29., “ And *every one* that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred fold :” here is their reward, “ an hundred fold.” It is a very great improvement. We account ten in the hundred a great matter ; and if merchants can venture to sea, and gain twelve or ten in the hundred, and be insured of so great a gain, they account it a great matter : but here is “ an hundred fold :” not ten or twelve, but an hundred for one ; and this insured too : “ Verily, I say unto you, (saith Christ) every one that hath forsaken, &c., shall receive an hundred-fold.”

And as for the cautional part, that follows at verse 30., “ But many that are first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

Wherein he doth give a caveat, not only unto his disciples, but unto all those that should suffer, and forsake any worldly interest upon his account. As if he should say thus : It is true, you have indeed left all to follow me ; thereupon you ask me what you shall have ; and I lay before you very great

rewards: but I would have you for to walk warily, and to take heed how you walk in the matter of your sufferings: for though you suffer for my name's sake, and though those that do so in truth shall have very great rewards, an hundred-fold in this life; yet many that are very forward, shall appear to be backward; and many that are backward, shall appear to be forward; and many that stand behind, they shall stand before; and many that stand before, they shall be set behind: "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Which being spoken in reference unto suffering and forsaking of our worldly interest for the name of Christ; the doctrine then is this:

"That many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first," in suffering work.

For the clearing whereof, there were four things propounded.

First, What it is for a man to be first that is last, and to be last that is first.

Secondly, How it may appear that many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first in suffering-work.

Thirdly, How and in what respect that is true.

Fourthly, What are the reasons on it.

And then the application.

First, What is it for one that is first to be last, and one that is last to be first? What is this?

Some think this is to be understood in regard of the sameness of reward; as if Christ had said thus: The first shall be as the last, and the last shall be as the first, in matter of reward. And for this, they have the next parable to shew, where this same speech is brought in. "A certain householder went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard, and agreed with the labourers for a penny a day: and he hired some at the first hour, and some at the last; and those that came in at the last, received a penny as the first did." Whereupon the first they grumbled. The Master answered, verse 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last." Why? because the last had the same penny. As if the meaning of this therefore should be thus much, that there should be the same reward given to the one as to the other. But this can-

not be the meaning on it : for it is not true ; for there shall not be the same reward given to all ; some shall have more than others, some shall have greater degrees of glory than others.

If there be degrees of torments in hell, then there are degrees of glory in heaven. There are degrees of torment in hell ; for Christ hath said, “ He that knoweth his Master’s will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with *many* stripes,” with more stripes than those that are ignorant and know it not. Now if there be degrees of torment in hell, there are degrees of glory in heaven : and therefore the thing is not true, that there shall be the same reward.

And here in chap. xix. we see, that the apostles are set higher in their reward. “ When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, *ye* also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

And our Saviour Christ here, he doth not speak universally, nor indefinitely : he doth not say that *all* that are first shall be last, and *all* that are last shall be first ; neither doth he speak definitely, the first shall be last, and the last first : but he speaks thus, “ That *many* that are first ;” he doth not say “ *all* that are first shall be last ;” neither doth he say indefinitely, “ The first shall be last,” but, “ *many* that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.” That is the meaning then.

Others think therefore the meaning is this, and the words are to be understood in reference to men’s conceit and opinion ; as if he should say, Be not conceited ; for though ye suffer much, and forsake a great deal for me, and for my name’s sake, yet many that are first in their own conceit, shall be last : and many that are last in their own opinion and conceit, shall be first. This is true : but this is not all the meaning.

Therefore we must know that a person or thing is said to be first or last, in regard of time, or in regard of dignity or chiefdom.

In regard of time : so we say the last day is the first day of the week ; first in regard of time.

In regard of chiefdom ; and so Paul saith, “ Whereof I am chief.” In the original it is : This is a true saying, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereof I am the *first* ; but we read it *chief*, because the *chief* is the *first*.

First is put for *chief* in scripture language; and so it is true, many, many that are first in religion, ancient professors, shall be last at suffering for the name of Christ, when it comes to it; and many that are last in religion, novices in religion, lately brought in, shall be the first in suffering for the cause, and for the name of Jesus Christ. And so many that are chief, and of great esteem in the world, that are first in esteem, shall be last at suffering work; and many that are last in esteem and of no account, shall be first to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ.

A thing is said to be in Scripture, when it is declared to be, when it appears to be. So in Acts xiii., speaking concerning the resurrection of Christ: "According as it is written, This day have I begotten thee." Why *this day* have I begotten thee; why was Christ begotten that day, the day of his resurrection? Christ was the eternal Son of God; how is this, "This day have I begotten thee," to prove the resurrection? The apostle explains it in Rom. i. 4, by the resurrection he was mightily *declared* to be the Son of God. So that in scripture phrase, a thing is said to be, when it is declared to be and appears to be. And accordingly now, many that are first, that appear to be first, shall in due time appear to be last in suffering work; and many that appear to be last, shall in due time appear to be first in suffering work for the cause of Christ, and for the name of Christ.

Thus now in the general we hear what this means; more particularly afterwards.

Secondly, But how may it appear that many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first in suffering work, suffering for the name of Christ? (For I am not now speaking of the thing at large, that many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first, in the general, but in reference only to suffering.) How may that appear? Thus:

It is in the suffering part of religion, as in the doing part. In the doing part of religion, many that are first shall be last. Many that are great men in duty, and of great abilities and gifts, shall be last; and many that are last, and weak and low in grace, that you would think had no grace at all, shall be first. It is said so in the next chapter, in the parable: there it is spoken in regard of doing, here in this

Scripture it is spoken in regard of suffering. Now in regard of doing, so it is, I say.

Is it not a great matter for a man to frequent the ordinances with delight ; to believe, and to repent, and to preach, and to prophesy, and do many wonderful works, casting out devils in the name of Christ? All these things in some sense a man may do, and yet may fall short of heaven.

Possibly a man may attend upon the ordinances with delight. In Isaiah lviii., “Ye delight in approaching to me,” ye unsound hypocrites.

Possibly a man may in some measure believe, and yet be unsound. It is said of Simon Magus, that “he himself also believed,” in the Acts.

Possibly a man may repent in some sense, and yet be unsound. It is said of Judas, in Matt. xxvii., when he saw what became of Christ, “he repented himself, and carried the money again.”

And in Matt. vii., they say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many wonderful works in thy name?” And yet Christ shall say at last, “Depart, I never knew you.” So that many men go very far in the doing part of religion, and yet fall short of heaven. If then, the first may be last in the doing part of religion, why should it be a thing incredible to us, that the first may be last in the suffering part?

The second demonstration of it, to clear it, is this :

If a man may spoil and lose all his former sufferings by his after sins ; and if a man may recover, repair, recompense his former backwardness to suffer, by his after faith and grace ; then presently the last may be first, and the first may be last in point of suffering. So it is.

Possibly a man may lose all his former sufferings by his after sins. “Foolish Galatians (saith the apostle,) have ye suffered so many things in vain, if yet in vain?” They fell from the doctrine of grace, to justification by works ; and they lost all their sufferings by their after sins.

On the other side, Nicodemus was very backward to come to Christ ; he “came by night ;” he was afraid to suffer ; yet afterwards, when Christ died, he owned Christ openly : and the Holy Ghost sets a mark upon it, John xviii., “This is that Nicodemus which came to Jesus by night.” He did

recompence his former backwardness to suffer, by his after-faith. So that a man may lose his former sufferings by his after sins; and a man may recover and recompence his former backwardness to sufferings, by his after faith and grace.

If a man may be a famous preacher of the gospel, and lose much upon that account, and yet prove an apostate, a persecutor of the gospel; and if a man be a notorious persecutor of the gospel, and yet afterwards prove a famous preacher of the gospel, and suffer much upon that account: then possibly the first may be last, and the last may be first in point of suffering. So it is, that a man may be a famous preacher of the gospel, and lose much upon that account; and yet afterwards prove an apostate, a persecutor. So it was with Judas. When Christ sent forth his disciples, saying, "Take no purse, nor scrip," &c., Judas was among them, and left his purse &c., and was no doubt a famous minister; yet after, he became a most notorious persecutor, and headed the party that came to take Jesus.

And always, as you may observe, the persecutors are headed with some apostate; they have some apostate in the head of them.

And on the other side, who doth not know what a notorious persecutor Paul was, insomuch as he saith upon that score, that he was "the least of all the apostles, because he persecuted the church of God:" and yet who doth not know what a famous preacher of the gospel he was, and suffered much upon that score. So then, the thing lies clear and plain, that possibly the last may be first, and the first may be last in point of suffering.

Thirdly, How and in what respect is this true?

It is true in regard of privileges and enjoyments: many that are first in regard of privileges and enjoyments, shall be last at the work of suffering for Christ; and many that are last in privileges and enjoyments, shall be first in the work of suffering for Christ.

Many that are first in privileges and enjoyments, shall be last in suffering. Here is a young man comes to Christ, and Christ loved him; and he saith unto Christ, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Keep the commandments, saith Christ. I have done it, saith he. Aye, but saith Christ, One thing thou lackest; go sell what

thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And saith the text, "He went away sorrowful, for he had a great estate;" he was rich, he was a privileged man, and had great enjoyments, for he was a rich man; and yet notwithstanding he was the most backward for to leave all for Christ.

On the other side, the poor receive the gospel: and as the poor do receive the gospel, so they hold it, and keep it and suffer for it. So that it is true then in regard of privileges and enjoyments.

This is true in regard of abilities: many that are first in regard of ability, shall be last in suffering for Christ; and many that are last in abilities, shall be first in suffering for the name of Jesus Christ.

Many that are first in abilities. So the disciples, when Christ said to them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I am to drink of; and are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with? Yea, Lord, (say they,) we are able." But when Christ came to suffer, it is said, "They all forsook him and fled." First in point of abilities, and last in point of suffering. But Mary, and a company of weak women, cleaved unto Christ, and followed him to the very last: the first were last, and the last were first. And look into the Book of Martyrs: where do you find the martyrs growing? Do you find them growing upon universities? Few were scholars and doctors that were martyrs, but growing in country towns and villages. So it is said of Origen, that when he was a young man, about sixteen or seventeen years old, his mother was forced to hide his very shirt from him, so that he was ashamed to go into the streets, for otherwise he would have gone to have suffered martyrdom. But afterwards, when he came to be a great doctor, then he offered to the idols; insomuch as they cried out, Origen hath sacrificed! While he was weak and young, very forward to suffer; when he was grown strong, and had abilities, then backward. The last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

This is true, also, in regard of action, professional action. Many that are first in profession, and of great performance, shall be last in suffering for the name of Christ. And many that have not been of so great profession and such high performance shall suffer when it comes to it; they shall suffer

for the name of Christ. You have an instance in the parable of the stony ground; it "receives the word with joy:" yet, notwithstanding, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, by and by they are offended. So they were high and first in profession, yea action too, and yet the last in suffering.

So on the other side, you know the stories there that go together: a certain man comes to Christ, and saith, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Saith Christ, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay his head." Then Christ comes to another, and saith to him, "Follow me. Lord (saith he), I must go bury my father. Why? let the dead bury the dead." What is the meaning of this but to shew thus much, that the first shall be last and the last shall be first in forsaking their worldly interests for Christ, and for the name of Christ!

This is true also in point of resolution. Many that are first in resolving to suffer shall be last to suffer when it comes to it; and many that are last in resolving shall be first in suffering. "Lord (saith Peter), though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Bravely resolved! But though he was first in the resolve yet he was first in forsaking Christ. "The cock shall not crow before thou deny me." And you know how it was with those two* in the Book of Martyrs: the one was a very fat man, and he would burn, his grease should fry in the fire for the name of Christ; the other was a lean man, and he cries out, Oh, I am afraid I shall never hold out! But when it came to it, the lean man was the martyr, and the fat man would not burn. So that that is true in the point of resolution.

And true it is, also, in the point of endurance and pain in the work of suffering. And in that, many that are first in the work of suffering shall be last in the reward, and many that are last in the work of suffering shall be first in the reward. "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Possibly a man may give his goods to the poor, part with his worldly interest to the poor, and give his body to be burned, and yet want love.

* Pendleton and Sanders.

So, then, the first in the very work of suffering may be last in the reward. It is true in that respect. And so I have done with that.

Fourthly. But then what is the reason of this, and how comes this pass, that many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first in suffering work? There are two reasons for it.

The first is drawn from God and his grace.

The second is drawn from ourselves and sufferings.

The first is drawn from God and his grace, thus: It is God's ordinary way in his dealings with his creatures, to set those things and persons before that do stand behind, and those behind that do stand before. As in printing, you do not take the letters and place that first that is first in the alphabet, but that which is first in the word; as in *zeal*, *z* is the first, but it is the last in the alphabet. And so God in writing down the names of men in the book of life, he writes down them that stand behind; the last letter first and the first letter last. See it for instance.

When the Lord had to deal with men and angels, which was the first in the creation? The angels; they were the elder brother to man, they stood first: but when men and angels had fallen, God he redeems man, and sets him before that stood behind, and takes the fallen angels and sets them behind that were first in the creation; sets them behind, and man that was behind, he is brought before. So when God would take a people to himself, what people did God take to be his people? A poor, forlorn, despised people, the people of the Jews; and past over all the glorious nations of the world.

And when God would take a family out of that people, what family did he take? The family of Jesse. And when he would take a particular person, what person was it? David the younger brother, that stood behind, and was among the sheep: he that stood behind was brought before, and he that stood before was set behind. That for the time of the old testament.

So in the time of the new testament. The Jew stands first, he had the hanel of the market, he had the hanel of the gospel; Christ was born of them after the flesh; they had the oracles of God; they stood first, the gentiles stood behind; they called them dogs: "It is not meet to take the

children's bread and cast it to dogs." Well, these gentiles that stood behind, they are brought before; and the Jews that stood before, they are set behind.

And what nation did God take out of the gentiles? Did he take any great continent in America, where the gold and the silver is? No, but "the isles shall wait for thy law;" and the "inhabitants of Kedar shall rejoice, and the inhabitants of the rocks shall sing."

And when God would convert these, whom did he make use of to do it? He makes use of Paul, Paul the last of all the apostles: the twelve apostles they stood first, but he that stood behind, that was brought in last, that was born out of time, he is taken to do the work.

And who are they that are converted to him? They are babes and sucklings. "Not many wise, not many noble," but babes and sucklings. "Even so, Father, because thou art so pleased." This is the ordinary way of God: he takes those things that stand behind and brings them before, and takes those things that stand before and sets them behind. And why doth he do so? Why,

Because "he will shew mercy to whom he will shew mercy." Whom he will he shews mercy unto, and whom he will he hardens; and he orders things in such a way that no flesh may glory. 1 Cor. i. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Why? "That no flesh should glory in his presence," verse 29. God will carry things in such a way as no flesh may glory either in their doings or in their sufferings. And how will he order it then? Therefore the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, both in doing and in suffering, that no flesh may glory, but that grace may be all in all. Whom he will he shews mercy to, and whom he will he hardens. This is the first reason, drawn from God himself and from his grace.

The second reason is drawn from ourselves and from our sufferings, and it lies thus:

If there be a great deal of suffering that will come to little, and if there be a little suffering that will amount to much,

and come to much; then many that are last shall be first, and the first shall be last in point of suffering.

Now so it is that there is a great deal of suffering which will come to little, come to little account. Judas left all; and it came to little. Alexander drawn out of the crowd in suffering for Christ, and it came to little: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works." His sufferings came to little. The poor Christians that are taken slaves by the Turks, they lie in slavery ten years together rather than they will renounce the christian religion, yet when they come out, oh, what drunkards, and swearers, and enemies to God, and such as have nothing of Christ in them. Oh, they suffer much, but it comes to little; they shall not be saved. So that I say there is a great deal of suffering that will come to little.

On the other side, there is a little suffering that will amount to much. A cup of cold water shall have its reward; the mite that the poor woman gave, more than all the rest, saith our Saviour. It was no great matter that Onesiphorus suffered for Paul: saith Paul, "Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chains; he sought me out diligently, and oft refreshed my bowels: the Lord shew mercy to the household of Onesiphorus." It was no great matter that he suffered, but it did amount to much.

But you will say, How can this be, that there should be a great deal of suffering that will amount to little, and a little suffering that will amount to much?

Both ways I answer.

If you ask now it can be that a great deal of sufferings should come to little?

I answer, It is possible that a man may lose that he may gain. I am a minister, and have a living; and I may lose my living possibly, that I may get a livelihood another way. I may suffer and go to prison, that I may be maintained. I do not reflect upon any particular, but only to shew the deceitfulness of our hearts in such a case.

And who doth not know, that a man may suffer from a natural boldness and courage; and that he may suffer by crowding in among good people that are in a suffering way?

And who doth not know, that a man may suffer upon the strength of education? As a Turk, a Jew, a papist, a pro-

testant, may suffer in the religion that they are educated and brought up in.

And who knows not that a man may suffer very much in a way of merit? It is recorded of one, that he invited a friend of his to dinner, that so he might show unto him his hounds. And when he came, he shewed unto him a company of poor people, and said unto him, These are my hounds with which I do hunt for heaven. In a way of merit he speaks. And we see how it is with a horse or a cow in pasture that is eaten down; if there be herbs or pleasant flowers growing in the ditch that is full of water, the horse or cow will reach and reach many times so far, that it falls into the ditch. Truly there are many fine flowers grow in the suffering ditch, and many an unsound heart may reach so far, until it falls into the ditch. As it is possible that a man may tread a great deal of ground, and never come to his journey's end; so it is possible a man may tread a great deal of suffering ground, and never come to heaven, for there is a great deal of dross cleaving to our best sufferings.

In a suffering time, then we are apt to be very froward, and to be impatient, and to dwell more upon our own pleasures than upon God's dishonour.

In suffering times, then we are very apt to forget our former experiences, and to be unthankful for our present mercies.

In suffering times we are very apt to boggle at the dispensation, to fall foul upon instruments; to complain of God's dealings with us, and not of our own unworthy dealings with God.

In suffering times we are very apt to look to the smart of our sufferings, and not to the cause, or else to pitch upon the wrong cause.

In suffering times we are very apt to wish that we had never begun in the work of God; As Joshua and the elders, when they smarted before the men of Ai: "Would to God we had stayed on the other side Jordan," say they. So when men meet with the smart of afflictions in the way and work of God, oh then, Would to God we had never meddled with the work of reformation; would to God we had been content with our leeks and onions which we had before.

In suffering times we are very apt to comply and corres-

pond with our enemies, and with God's enemies; and to use unworthy shifts to get out of trouble, as Abraham did, "Say thou art my sister." It is true she was his sister, but she was his wife, and it was an unworthy shift for such a man as Abraham was.

In suffering times we are very apt to tempt the Lord, and to "limit the Holy One of Israel," and to say, "Can God provide a table now?" Can God provide a table for me in this wilderness? Thus there is a great deal of dross cleaves to all our sufferings, and therefore no wonder that a great deal of suffering comes to little.

And on the other side, that a little suffering may amount to much. I can give no other reason of it but this, God hath a very gracious allowance for his people. As we use to say, we bear with children when it is their weaning time. Truly our suffering time is our weaning time: and God saith, Bear with such an one, it is his weaning time. "You have heard of the patience of Job." Why I have heard of Job's impatience! True, but God did not measure Job in his wallops, but when he was cold. As we do not measure milk when it wallops and seethes, but when it is cold; so God doth not measure Job in his passion, but when he was off the fire, when he was cool. You say, the best gold must have its allowance; if it want a grain or two, it must have its allowance. So all the suffering people of God must have their allowance; and God hath a very great allowance for his suffering people; and therefore this is all the reason that I can give, why a little suffering shall go a great way. So then put all together, and you have the doctrine cleared in all the particulars of it.

If many that are first shall be last in point of suffering, why then should we not all take heed how we suffer, look to the manner of our sufferings, look to our hearts in suffering?

He is a virtuous man, that doth what he should, as he should. So he is not a true sufferer, that suffers what he should, but that suffers what he should, as he should. When we hear how far a man may go in religion, and yet be unsound, and go to hell, then we should say, Good Lord, I will then look to my heart in prayer, and look to my heart in duty. So in point of suffering if many that are first shall

be last, and the last first, then I will look to my heart in suffering, if ever I be called to suffer.

If that many that are first shall be last in suffering work, why then should we not walk humbly under all our sufferings? "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." A man who hath prayed a prayer, or performed a duty, he should do as one that hath written a letter; why he will read over the letter, and then he mends it, and then he looks over the letter, and throws dust, dust, dust upon the letter. And so a man when he hath performed any duty, he should look over his duty, and throw dust, I mean humility and self-denial, upon his duties. So should we do in regard of our sufferings; if ever we be called to suffer, read over our sufferings, and throw dust upon our sufferings, walk humbly under them; "for many that are first shall be last," in point of suffering.

Why should we rest in what we suffer, and not press on to that which lies before? The life of a christian is like the life of a man in a cook's shop, from one work to another. Like the life of a husbandman, he ploughs and he harrows, and he sows and reaps and threshes, and he never stands still. So the life of a christian, always at work. You know what our Saviour saith, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." What then; take a stool and sit down? No; "Let him take up his cross and follow me." Follow me after sufferings, not sit down and rest there. When we have done all, still press on to that which is before.

If many that are first shall be last in point of suffering, why should we not take heed that we do not give in if ever we be called to suffering? as it is said of the French, they are fire at the first onset, but smoke in the issue.

So there are many that are rare men at a charge, and they overcome in a skirmish, but they give in at the battle. But is this true, that many that are first in suffering shall be last? Oh, then why should we not take heed that we do not give in if we be called to suffering?

If this be true also, that many that are last shall be first in the work of suffering; why should we censure or despise some that are weak, that do drag, that do come behind, that are backward, as we think, unto the work of suffering? We

will not blame an apple-tree or a pear-tree that is winter-fruit, because it doth not come so soon as other trees that are summer fruit? So there are some men that are sooner ripe for sufferings, and they are summer fruit; others that are backward, and they are winter fruit, they do not come so soon. The Lord hath many gusts of sufferings, and such an one may be reserved for the second or for the third part. Now as we do not blame the tree for bringing forth so late, because it is a winter fruit; so why should we despise some that are backward in our eyes, that hang and flag as to the business of suffering? Why "the first shall be last, and the last shall be first."

Why should any be afraid or be discouraged, because they are weak and unfit to suffer? As, many that are first shall be last, so many that are last shall be first. As there is a great deal of suffering that will come to a little, so there is a little suffering that will amount to much. Therefore though you be unfit, as you think, for this suffering work, yet be not discouraged.

But you will say, I am not afraid of suffering upon this account, but I am afraid of my suffering because of my sin: for now suffering times are come, and we suffer for our sins; and can any suffering that comes by sin, turn to a good account? If I did know that my suffering should turn to a good account, I would never be afraid to suffer: but I fear my suffering will not turn to a good account, because my sufferings come by sin. Can any sufferings that come by sin turn to a good account?

I answer, Yea, through the grace of God. When the ark was taken, were not the people in a sad condition? Yes, "they lamented after the ark twenty years." And did not that condition come by their sin? Yes. Did that turn to any good account? Yes, for Dagon falls down before the ark, the Philistines' own hands brought it home again, and they give glory to God. So that it turned to a good account.

But especially that instance of David. There was a pestilence, and many thousands died; and did it come by sin? Yes; David numbers the people. Aye, but did it turn to any good account? Yes, for then the Lord told David where his temple should be built. 2 Chron. iii. 1. David had a great desire to know where God's house should be built; but never was it told until now. So that thus this suffering

turned to a good account, although it came by sin. Possibly a suffering may come by sin, and yet, through grace, it may turn to a good account.

But then the great question of all is, suppose thus : Suppose there be such a great reward laid out for those that suffer for the name of Christ ; suppose there is a great deal of suffering will turn to a little account ; suppose there is a little suffering will turn to a great account : how shall I so order and manage my sufferings, as that my sufferings may turn to a good account ? Indeed this is a great question, and worthy of all our consideration.

For answer unto this :

If you would order and manage all your sufferings so as they may turn to a good account, be sure of this, that all your sufferings be underlaid with godliness, personal godliness and actual godliness.

With personal godliness. For if your person be not accepted, your suffering will not : if you be not in Christ, your suffering will come to little. As the tree is, so is the fruit that grows upon the tree ; if the tree be a crab, all the fruit is but crabs. And if you be a crab, and not implanted into Jesus Christ, your suffering will not be accepted.

And not only personal godliness, but actual godliness ; so as not to lie in any sin, either of omission or commission. For any sin is a hole in the bag of our sufferings. If there be a hole in the bag, all your money will run out. Surely if a man lies in any sin, that sin is a hole in the bottom of the bag, and all the profits of his sufferings will run out, though he suffers never so much for Christ and for religion. Therefore be sure that all your sufferings be underlaid with godliness, personal and actual godliness.

If you would so order and manage your sufferings, as that they may turn to a good account ; then labour to get your understanding clear, and your will free, in the matter and business of sufferings. For though the thing that you suffer for be never so right, yet if you have not a clear understanding in what you suffer, your suffering will turn to little. And though you have never so clear an understanding, yet if your will be not free, it will turn to little. You know how it was with Moses ; it is said, “ He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with

the people of God." Why when was this? When he came of years. Why when he came of years? Because then he had discretion and understanding; and the Holy Ghost would shew, that he did what he did *understandingly* in the point of his suffering; and he did it *freely* in the point of his will; for he "chose rather:" choosing is an act of the will. So that if you would have your sufferings turn to a good account, labour to get a clear understanding in the matter of your sufferings, and be very free in your will.

You will say to me, How can I be freely willing to part with my house, or land, or liberty?

Yes, you may be very free, and freely willing to part with all in reference to the will of God your Father. Christ himself said, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." He was unwilling in regard of the thing itself he suffered, but he was very willing in regard of the Father's will; and therefore he saith, "Not my will but thy will be done." This is another thing: let your understanding be clear and your will be free in the matter of your sufferings.

Take heed you run not into any suffering without a call, nor rush out of that suffering without the same call from God. Noah was in the ark; and when the waters were abated from off the earth Noah would not stir out of the ark. Why would not Noah go out when the waters were abated? Why as Noah had a call to go in, so he would have the same call to go out. A man must not run into a suffering without a call, and he must not rush out of it without a call. And therefore you shall find Christ and the apostles, and all the martyrs, that thus they acted; they would hide, and go aside, and avoid their sufferings; but when they were in hold they would not go out though the doors were open. So that that is the next thing: be sure of this, that you do not run into sufferings without a call, nor rush out of sufferings without the same call from God.

If you would order and manage all your sufferings so as they may turn to a good account, then set all your losses upon Christ's head and upon Christ's score, which you may do if you do suffer for Christ's cause; which you may do if you do suffer according to Christ's example; which you may do if you suffer with the same spirit and disposition that Christ did

and suffer in the strength of Christ: set all upon the head and score of Christ.

If you would so order and manage all your sufferings as that they may turn to a good account, then take heed that there be no contradiction found in the way of your suffering. A man may be very stiff, and stand out here, and yet he may yield there. Saith the apostle, "If I build again what I have destroyed I make myself a transgressor." And, "Blessed is the man that condemns not himself in the thing that he allows." It is possible I may build that with one hand that I may pull down with another. Possibly a man may be very stiff, and stand out at such a thing, and yet he may yield there. There may be contradictions found in the way of our suffering. And let me tell you this, If it be thus, your sufferings will come to little. Take heed that there be not contradictions therefore found in the way of your sufferings.

If you would manage your sufferings so as they may turn to a good account, then let your eye be more upon the public good than upon your own private loss; more upon God's design than your own detriment; more upon God's dishonour than your own grievance or your own pressure. It is good for a man to be spiritual and savoury in his suffering. Our Saviour saith, "Such worshippers the Father seeks," &c. And truly, I say, such sufferers doth the Father seek that suffer in spirit and truth, whose spirits are savoury in their sufferings. And when is that? When that your eye is more upon the public good than your own private loss; more upon God's design than your own detriment; more upon God's dishonour than your own grievance and your own pressure.

If you would so order and manage all your sufferings, as that they may turn to a good account, then let your eye be upon that, and observe what that is that you have most delighted in, and that your heart is most upon in this world; and give that up to God the first thing you do, for truly nothing is done till that be done. It is said of Abraham that "God tempted Abraham." Divines observe that Abraham met with ten temptations; but it is never said before that God tempted him, until he spake to him to offer up his son Isaac. Why there was his heart and his love and his delight. And where doth a man's temptation grow, but where his Isaac is? he shall be sure to be tried there. Here was Abra-

ham's heart, here lay his temptation. And so, it may be, my heart is upon my house, or upon my land, or upon my trade; and I cannot part with this: I can part with any thing else, but when it comes to this I am ready to say, The good Lord pardon me in this. Many say, I will not adventure to suffer any further for the name of Christ, than I can secure my trade, or my land, or relations; but when it comes to this, I cannot part with these; I must have my trade, &c. Here is a *but* comes in. Ananias and Sapphira they parted with a great deal, but it came to little, because they had a reserve. And so if we have our reserves with the Lord, our sufferings will come to little. So that observe that you give that up first to God that your hearts are most upon; for nothing is done in suffering till that be done.

If you would so order and manage your sufferings as they may turn to a good account, then let the load, and let the weight and the burden of all your sufferings be drawn upon the wheels of faith and love; those two wheels, of faith towards God and love towards man. Saith the apostle, "By faith Moses chose rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God." How so? Why, "by faith he saw him that is invisible;" and so trampled upon visible things. And by faith he had an eye to the recompence of reward; and so overlooked these things. And by faith he saw "greater wealth in the reproach of Christ than in all the treasures of Egypt." And so the three children, they suffered by faith, and it turned to a good account.

And as for love, you know what the apostle saith, "If I give my body to be burned, and want love, it profiteth me nothing." So, then, as ever you desire your sufferings may turn to a good account, let your faith towards God and your love towards man be exercised. And let these be the two great wheels that all your sufferings shall be drawn upon.

If you would order your sufferings so as they may turn to a good account, then labour to be serviceable in and by your sufferings. If ever God call you to a prison, labour to be as serviceable in and by your suffering as ever you can. Peter was in prison; What came of it? was there any converted? No. Why so? Peter slept. Aye but Paul and Silas they sang in the stocks, and they preached in the prison, and there is the jailor converted. They were serviceable in and by

their sufferings and it turned to a good account. And therefore if you would desire that your sufferings may turn to a good account, labour to be serviceable in and by your sufferings as God calls you into.

When you have done all and suffered all, then say and think in truth, that you are unprofitable servants, and let your eye be wholly to the sufferings of Christ. Offer your own sufferings upon the sufferings of Christ in reference to your acceptance. For though you may have an eye to the recompence of reward to encourage you to suffer, yet you are wholly to look to the sufferings of Christ in reference to your acceptance. And therefore when you have done all, think and say you are unprofitable. Two men went up to pray, and the one he was a pharisee, and the other a publican. The pharisee he comes and praises God he was not as the publican: I thank God I am not as this publican; I fast and pray, and I am not as this publican. Well, there comes the publican, and he smites himself upon the breast, and says, I am a poor sinner; oh, the Lord be merciful unto me a poor sinner. So, say I, two men go up to suffer, and there is one stands and vaunts, and saith, I thank the Lord I am not so cowardly and dastardly as these poor-spirited men that dare do nothing; my flesh shall fry in the fire. But the other stands at a distance, and saith, Oh, I am a poor creature; I am afraid to suffer, and I am afraid I shall betray the cause of Christ. Now, I tell you, this poor trembling soul that is last shall be first, and he goes away rather justified.

If you would so order and manage your sufferings as they may turn to a good account, praise God over your suffering, and pray to God under your suffering. I put these two together—praise and pray. This is a certain thing, those sufferings shall turn to a good account that Christ blesses. How shall I know whether Christ will bless my sufferings? Why if I can bless God over my sufferings, God will bless my sufferings to me. And then, are you called at any time to suffer? go away rejoicing that you are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

Yet, notwithstanding, not only bless and praise God over your sufferings, but pray unto God under your sufferings. And what should you pray for? Pray unto the Lord that he would turn your sufferings unto a good account. There is an

old promise wrapt up in the apostle's prayer: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," 1 Peter v. 10. So, then, have you suffered a while? you may go, then, to God, as to the God of all grace, and say, Lord, through thy providence I have now suffered a while; thou art the God of all grace, make me perfect, confirm me, stablish, strengthen and comfort me, and let all these sufferings turn to a good account. Thus praise God under your sufferings, and pray over your sufferings, and so shall you manage and order all your sufferings as that they shall turn to a good account.

SERMON III.

THE WAY TO OBTAIN A SURE AND GREAT REWARD.

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."—Matt. xix. 28.

IN this scripture we have our Saviour's answer unto Peter's question propounded at verse 27, "Behold, Lord, (saith Peter,) we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?" Our Saviour answers in the following verses, and his answer is partly comfortable and partly cautional. The cautional part I have spoken to among some of you, from verse 30, "But many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The comfortable part I spake unto the last Lord's day in another meeting. And being now desired to speak the same things unto you, considering that they are of present and universal concernment. I shall do it as briefly and plainly as I can.

The comfortable part of Christ's answer, you have in ver. 28, 29, wherein our Saviour Christ doth shew what great