

EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

IN TWO SERMONS.

PREACHED AT CLAPHAM AND AT MARGARET'S NEW FISH
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EVANGELICAL REPENTANCE.

SERMON I.

“ Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—MATT. III. 2.

Or thus,

“ Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven hath approached.”

THESE words are the words of John the Baptist, when he first began to preach the gospel of Christ; and if you look into the next chapter, Matt. iv. 17, ye shall find that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ himself does preach the same doctrine in the same words, “ Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Our Saviour Christ, the better preacher, is not ashamed to tread in John’s steps and words: John honoured Christ, and Christ honoured John. Ministers should strengthen the hands one of another. And if ye look into Matt. x., ye shall find, that when our Saviour sent out his disciples for to preach the gospel, he commands them to preach the same doctrine too, in the same words, ver. 7, “ Go ye, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But, here is no Repent? Yes, that was in their commission too, as ye may read in Mark vi. 12; they would not preach a word beyond their commission: “ And they went out, and preached that men should repent.” So that their commission also was to preach thus, “ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven hath approached,” or hath drawn near unto you. Surely there is somewhat more than ordinary in these words, that John and our Saviour Christ and all the disciples, should begin thus, for to preach in these words, “ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” They were all ministers of the gospel, and the ministers of the gospel are not barely to preach repentance, but they are to preach repentance upon gospel motives: “ the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

In the words ye have an exhortation, “ Repent ye;” a motive unto the work of repentance, “ for the kingdom of heaven hath approached.”

“Repent ye;” that is, be not only sorrowful for sin committed, but mend your lives. Repentance is sometimes taken in a large sense for amendment of life. Sometimes repentance is taken only for godly sorrow, in a more strict and a narrow sense.

Sometimes it is taken largely, for the amendment of our life; not only for godly sorrow, but all obedience and reformation. And so it may be taken here, as ye may perceive by ver. 3, where this word Repent, is explained: “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: for this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Preparing the way of the Lord, and making straight paths, all one with repentance. There is a legal repentance, and there is an evangelical repentance. Some think it is a legal repentance that is here required: and thereupon they urge a necessity of legal preparation before a man does come to Christ: as there is John Baptist before Christ, so, say they, there must be a legal work of necessity before a poor soul can have any admittance to Jesus Christ.

But I pray consider the words, and you will find, that not a legal repentance, but evangelical, is here required. Did our Saviour Christ himself preach legal repentance? They are the words of our Saviour Christ, he uses them too.

The repentance is, as the consideration is, that this work is to be founded on, as the motive is. What is the motive? The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent; let your repentance be upon this ground, because the kingdom of heaven hath approached, because the kingdom of heaven hath drawn near. He does not say, Repent, because the kingdom of hell is near; but, because the kingdom of heaven is near: the motive being evangelical, the repentance is so; it is not a legal, but an evangelical repentance that is here required. Besides, these words, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” are not spoken only to the ungodly, but unto the godly also of those times, who were to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make straight their paths. And, therefore, not to be understood of a repentance only preparatory to that in the heart.

But what then are we to understand here by the kingdom of heaven; and the approaching of the kingdom of heaven?

For the kingdom of heaven hath approached or drawn near unto you.

The kingdom of heaven sometimes, in the language of the New Testament, notes, the glorious condition of the other world that we are going to. Sometimes it notes the state of the church; it is used for the church of Christ; and sometimes for the gospel of Christ. I take it here for the whole state of the Messiah: the kingdom of grace, Christ, and all his benefits, grace, mercy and free remission published in the gospel, in the several dispensations and administrations thereof. This is called the kingdom of heaven; for this motive, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, is set and used here in opposition unto the motives that were used among the Jews. When the Jews were excited and put upon any duty, they were stirred up thereunto upon such motives as these: for the kingdom of Canaan is at hand; if you do so and so, God will bring you into the land of Canaan, and give you that land. Now under the gospel here are other motives, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Not like those Jewish motives: the kingdom of Canaan is at hand, or the kingdom of the Jebusites is at hand. Christians are not only or especially to be stirred up by such motives as these, but by higher and greater motives, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and may carry an Hebraism with it; the kingdom of heaven, that is, a heavenly kingdom; as the law is called, the law of fire, in the Hebrew, a fiery law. The Jews expected the Messiah, and dreamed of an outward, glorious, and pompous kingdom: now, says John the Baptist, the Messiah is come, his kingdom is come; but it is not an outward, glorious, and pompous kingdom, but it is an heavenly kingdom, and therefore, repent, and prepare yourselves for the receiving of it, make your way plain, for the kingdom of heaven, an heavenly kingdom, is now at hand.

“Is at hand,” we read it; but according to the original rather thus, “The kingdom of heaven hath approached;” *appropinquavit*. As if he should say thus: Do you turn to God, because God hath turned to you; do you draw near to God, because the kingdom of grace and free remission hath drawn near to you.

There are two notes that lie here before us, that I shall commend unto your consideration.

The first is this, That the kingdom of heaven, of grace, mercy, and of free remission, does approach unto us before we do come unto it.

And secondly, that the appropinquation, or drawing near of the kingdom of heaven is the highest, and greatest argument and motive in the world unto true repentance.

The kingdom of heaven, I say, the kingdom of grace, mercy, and free remission of sin, does approach to us, before we draw near to it; repent, turn ye, for the kingdom of heaven hath approached, or it hath come near to you, and therefore do you come to it.

Thus it lies in the words: and thus you will find it all along.

Thus God hath promised; thus Christ hath parabled; thus God fulfilled.

Thus God hath promised. Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee: what voice is that, but the voice of mercy, and the voice of grace, and of free remission?

“Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee:” when thou art going away from God, and when thou hast thy back upon God, thou shalt hear a voice of mercy behind thee; it shall follow after thee before thou dost come to it.

And thus you have a clear parable for it, which you may read, fully speaking this truth in Luke xiv. 16—18, and so on, “A certain man made a great supper, and bad many; and sent his servant at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuses: so that the servant came (verse 21) and shewed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Mark, here are invitations of mercy sent out to those that never thought of it. “And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, (verse 23) Go out into the highways, and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” See I pray, how the kingdom of grace, and mercy, and free-remission is brought near unto a people, before ever they did make after it.

And this, I say, you shall find fulfilled. So God hath

dealt by the world. So by particular kingdoms and nations in the world. So by particular towns and countries in a kingdom. So by particular families in a town. And so by particular persons in a family.

Thus God hath dealt with the world, he hath brought near the kingdom of grace, and mercy, and free-remission to the world, before ever the world did make after it. When the whole world had sinned in the fall, and lay in wickedness, and never thought of returning unto God; "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son to them," John iii. 16. When Adam did not think of Christ, nor the world in him; the Lord gives out a promise, "The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head," Gen. iii. 15. Thus mercy, and grace made its approach towards the world, before ever the world did seek after it.

So in regard of a nation, in regard of a kingdom in the world: "Go (says our Lord and Saviour Christ unto his disciples) and teach all nations." The nations did not come to Christ and say, Lord, the Jews have refused the gospel, and therefore we beseech thee that the gospel may be preached unto us, and we will receive it: no, but before ever they sent any such message to have the gospel come down to them, the gospel is sent to them, "Go (says our Saviour) go preach to all nations." But Lord they might say, Suppose that in those nations we meet with such a man as Herod, such a man as Pilate; shall we preach the gospel and free remissions of sins then to such a one? Go, says Christ, I make no exceptions; go, and preach to all nations. But suppose that a Judas come in when we are preaching the gospel. Says Christ, I make no exceptions, if a Judas will come and submit, go preach to all, go preach the gospel, go preach to all nations.

And was it not thus with the nation of the Jews, as ye read in Ezek. xvi., when they were first taken into God's love? "None eye pitied thee (verse 5.) to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion on thee." Verse 6., "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." And so it will be with this people, the Jews, again, when they shall be converted in the latter days of the world: the Lord speaks

so concerning them by the prophet Isaiah: "I was found of those that sought me not," Isa. lxxv. 1. And in Isa. lxxvi. 7., it is said concerning the Jews that are yet to be called, and the preventing love of God towards them: "Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child."

Thus it is also with particular towns in a kingdom or in a nation: the kingdom of grace, of heaven is brought near to them before they do seek it. The apostles went and preached unto several towns; Iconium, and Derbe, and Lystra, before those towns did call for the gospel. And if you look into Matt. iv., you find that our Saviour Christ came and dwelt in Capernaum, verse 13., "which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people which sat in darkness, saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." While they were sitting still in their sins, and in the very shadow of death, Christ goes among them, and causes a glorious light to shine upon them: they did not go out to the light, but the light did come out to them first.

So it is also in regard of a particular family in a town. It is said concerning the jailor's family, that they were all baptized, they all believed; but how, did the jailor's family come and seek after the kingdom of heaven before the kingdom of heaven was brought unto them? No; the apostles were brought into prison, God works a miracle, the kingdom of heaven, grace, and free remission, is brought to the prison, and is brought to the jailor's family, before ever the jailor did stir after it.

And so ye know it was with the family of Zaccheus. "Zaccheus, (says our Saviour,) this day is salvation come to thine house." Pray consider it a little: did Zaccheus' house go to seek for salvation; or rather did not salvation come and seek for Zaccheus' house? Indeed Zaccheus out of a curiosity ran and got up into a tree that he might see the outside of Jesus Christ; but our Lord and Saviour Christ calls him down, "Zaccheus, (says he,) I must dine with thee:" invites himself, he carries salvation unto his family.

Thus God deals by families : he deals thus by the world, he deals thus by nations, he deals thus by towns, he deals thus by families.

And he deals thus by particular persons also. Was it not thus with Matthew the publican? He sat, ye know, in his custom-house, and Christ came and found him out there ; he did not first go and seek after Christ, but Christ came first unto him, and found him out in his trade, and said unto him, " Follow me." And was it not thus with Paul? Says Paul, " I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, but I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 13. I was breathing out threatenings against the saints, and against the disciples of Jesus Christ : but as I was breathing out threatenings against them, the Holy Ghost breathed upon my heart, and met me in the way, and unhorsed me, and shewed me mercy. The kingdom of heaven did approach unto Paul, before ever Paul sought after it.

And as it is with a particular person in regard of his first conversion and first repentance, so in regard of his after repentance. Peter sins, and before ever Peter repents, Christ looks back upon him ; that is the first, then Peter wept bitterly. Jonah sinned and sinned greatly in running away from God ; before ever Jonah could find in his heart for to seek unto God, God works a miracle, provides a chamber of preservation even in the belly of destruction, in the whale's belly, for him. God brought near his pardoning mercy and grace to him, before ever Jonah came near to it.

And as it is in regard of a man's first, second, and after repentance, so it is also in regard of a man's comfort and consolation. " O Lord," says David, " make me to receive joy and comfort, that the bones that thou hast broken may rejoice," Ps. li. 8. " My soul refuseth comfort," says he, Ps. lxxvii. 2. As if he should say thus: Lord, I have been a great surgeon at other men's hearts, and I have been able to set their bones that have been out of joint, but now mine own bones are broken ; I have fallen greatly, and now my own bones are broken ; I cannot set my own bones ; my soul refuseth comfort, and the promise is to my heart like a bank of ice, that my heart slips off : and Lord, if thou dost not uphold my heart with a promise, I shall never have comfort ; make me to see comfort, O Lord.

Thus you see, wherever you look in the Scripture, it is full

of the truth that is here before us, namely, that the kingdom of heaven, grace, mercy, and free remission, does approach unto us before we draw near to it.

Evidences of it :

One is taken from our own condition. Naturally we are lost sheep : so we are called by Christ. Man, in his natural state, is compared unto the lost son, the lost goat, and the lost sheep. Now you know when a sheep is lost, it does not lie where it is lost : if you lose your purse, or if you lose a ring, it will lie where it is lost, unless it be taken up : but now, if a sheep be lost, the sheep wanders up and down, and doth not lie where it was lost, but wanders up and down over one mountain to another, through one thicket to another, through one dirty place to another ; and of all creatures, the lost sheep does not seek the way home again. A dog lost will seek the way home again ; a cat and such like creatures lost, will seek the way home again : but a sheep lost, does not seek the way home again. Now we are all lost sheep, wandering up and down. One, he wanders over the mountain of pride ; another through the thicket of the world ; another through some unclean slough ; but all wandering, and no man able to find his home, until he be first found. Therefore says our Saviour Christ, “ I came to seek and to save those that are lost,” Luke xix. 10. He does not say barely, I came to seek those that are lost ; but, “ I came to seek and to save those that are lost.” And truly we must be sought all along. Says David in Ps. cxix. 176, “ Lord, I have gone astray like a lost sheep, oh, seek thy servant.” We have need of continual seeking, as long as there is continual wandering ; we have need of such a Shepherd as may seek us out. But first of all the kingdom of heaven does seek us out, before we do seek it : when we are found, then we seek, but we never seek until we are first found.

Another evidence I take from Christ's willingness for to save sinners. There is an infinite willingness in our dear Saviour for to save poor sinners. He came from heaven for that end and purpose. If a man come a thousand miles upon a business, will ye not think he is willing to do it ? Jesus Christ came from heaven for this business, for to save sinners ; is he not then willing to do it ? I may say that Jesus Christ is more willing to save sinners, than sinners are to be saved

by him ! The prodigal goes home to his father, but when the father sees him afar off, he runs ; the prodigal goes, and the father runs to meet him with mercy.

Yea, and our Saviour Christ seems to be most willing to save the greatest sinners ; the greatest saints have been made up out of the greatest sinners. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth, did he not carry his grace and mercy, and the doctrine of free remission, to the greatest sinners ? Beloved, consider of it, I pray you. The greater the sinner is, the more is Christ honoured in getting out his pardon, and in satisfying for such a sinner ; and so he will love Christ the more. Look I pray into Luke vii. " Simon, (says Christ) I will propound thee a parable. Master, say on," says he. Then says our Saviour, at ver. 14, " There was a certain creditor that had two debtors ; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty : and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love the most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." Those that he forgives most unto, will love most. Jesus Christ loves to be greatly honoured and loved, and therefore he is willing to save the greatest sinners. But now, the greatest sinners are most opposite unto what is good, they do not seek after what is good : surely therefore, if Jesus Christ would save sinners, and the greatest sinners, of necessity the kingdom of heaven and of grace must approach unto us, before we draw near to it.

But you will say, the Scripture seems to be contrary unto this doctrine ; for hath not the Scripture said, " Turn unto the Lord, and he will turn unto you," Zech. i. 3 ; " Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you," James iv. 8. How is this therefore true, that the kingdom of grace, mercy, and free remission, does first draw near unto us, before we draw near unto it ?

Yea, hath not our Saviour Christ said, " I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. ix. 13 : that is, such as are sensible of their sins ? surely, therefore, a man must be sensible of his sins, must be sensible first, before the kingdom of heaven, of grace, mercy, and free remission, be brought near unto him.

For answer, the Scripture is clearly with us; the apostle John speaks out expressly, "We loved him, because he loved us first," John iv. 19.

And says our Saviour, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," John xv. 16. I have chosen you, you have not chosen me.

And whereas it is said, that we should "turn to God, and he will turn to us;" and "draw near to God, and he will draw near to us:" that is, he will draw near unto you again, he will turn more unto you: not as if we should begin to turn to him, and first draw near to him, before he does first draw near to us at all; but, "draw near to him, and he will draw near to you;" and, "turn to him, and he will turn to you;" that is, he will draw more near to you, and he will turn unto you again.

And whereas it is said, that "Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" that is, such as are sensible of their sins; and men must be first sensible, before the offer of grace, mercy and free remission be made unto them.

I beseech you turn unto the place where the scripture lies, it is Matt. ix. 13, at the latter end of the verse: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This, say I, is not to be understood of sinners only sensible of their own sins, but sinners indeed; Christ came to call sinners indeed, yea, before they are sensible of their sins. For the word sinner, here, must be understood as the word, sinner, before is, in verses 10, 11: "As Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him, and with his disciples. When the pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" He did eat with those that were not sensible of their sins. Sinners, there, are not to be meant of those only that were sensible of their sins; Christ did not only eat with those that were sensible of their sins. Now he gives this account of it, "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance;" that is, sinners, such as he names before, such as he did eat withal; and they were not only such as were sensible of their sins.

Again, Our Saviour Christ gives this account, at verse 12: "The whole need not the physician, but those that are sick;"

to answer to this objection, that our Saviour did eat with sinners and converse with sinners, says he, I am a physician; and physicians are to go to those that are sick only. There is this difference between me, a physician, and other physicians, for I come unsent for, but other physicians come when sent for; I, as a physician, come to call my patients, but other physicians are called in by their patients. Now, says he, I am a physician, and I come not to call the righteous but sinners; I come to call my patients. Physicians do not only go to those that are sensible of their disease, but if a man be past sense, his friends send for the physician, and the physician goes. So does Christ here, comes unto his patients when they are not sensible of their disease many times.

Again, This suits with that which goes before. "Go," says he, at verse 13, "and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Sometimes this phrase, this sentence is to be understood concerning bodily mercy, but here it is to be understood of mercy to the soul: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Ye object to me, that I converse with publicans and sinners, not with those that are righteous in their generation; go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: I have more delight in conversing with poor sinners than with those Jews that do offer sacrifice.

And again, consider, what sense would there be if this should be the meaning: "I came not to call the righteous but sinners;" that is, I came to call those that are sensible of their sins. Then the meaning must be this, I came not to call the righteous, but men that are penitent, men that are sensible of their sins and are penitent. If by the calling the sinners, we are to understand those that are sensible only, then the sense must be this, I came not to call the righteous but men that are penitent. No, no, Christ came to call sinners, poor sinners; although they were never yet sensible of their sins, the Lord Jesus Christ came to call sinners, which are so indeed.

This doctrine then stands, notwithstanding that objection.

But, you will say, the prodigal seems to come home unto his father, before his father does come to him; and to repent, before his father shews mercy to him: and so our repentance

does prevent the Lord's mercy, and not the Lord's mercy prevent our repentance.

For answer, It is good for us always to attend unto the scope of the scripture, in parables especially. The scope of the parable cannot be according to the tenure of this objection, for then it should be contrary to the former parable, of the lost sheep.

Indeed, the prodigal says, he will repent, before he goes to his father: "I will return to my father, and I will say, I have sinned against heaven, and against thee, and I am not worthy to be called thy son," Luke xv. 18, 19; but he never says so till he came to his father; after his father had fallen upon his neck, and forgiven him, and shewed mercy to him, then he said so, and not before. "And (says the text) when his father saw him afar off:" notwithstanding he was resolved to go home, yet he was far off from mercy: his father saw him afar off, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, preventing of him by his grace; this makes it more prevalent.

But yet, you will say, How can this be? can God love sinners; can God set his love upon poor sinners, that are so?

What says the apostle, in Rom. iv. 5, "He justifies the ungodly," not in their sins, but from their sins, through Christ. It is not in God's love, as in our love: you love because the thing loved is lovely, but God's love does make lovely; your love finds lovely, and God's love makes lovely; you love a person because of some beauty, but God's love does make beautiful; you love a person because of some good you do find before you love, but God's love brings the goodness with it, God's love makes the person good that he does love. His love is the original and root of all our obedience and sanctification. Though the root lies under ground, all the branches are beholden to it, and the fruit have their sap and life from it; so though God's reconciling love lies under ground, and ye see it not, yet it is the root of all your obedience, of all your sanctification. Ye may observe, therefore, that in the Epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, to the Hebrews, when the apostle would stir up the Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, to holiness of life, that he lays his exhortation upon the doctrines of free grace, love, justification by faith alone, and the fulness of Christ's satisfaction for poor unworthy sin-

ners. In the book of the Romans he begins to state the doctrine of free justification of sinners and remission by Christ alone. In the book of the Galatians he begins with free remission of sins and justification by faith alone. So in the book of the Hebrews. But the end and conclusion of all these epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, is, obedience, repentance, and holiness of life; as if this were the great root that all our obedience did grow upon, even free remission of sins and justification by faith alone. And if justification do go before our sanctification, then of necessity there must be an approaching of the kingdom of heaven to us before we do come to it.

Give me leave to give you two or three reasons of it, and so I will come to the application.

God doth so order things in the dispensations of his grace and administrations thereof, as that he may be known to be God, Jehovah, that all flesh may see his glory. What is the glory of God? His free grace is his glory. And therefore ye shall observe, that when Moses begs to see God's glory, "Lord (says he), shew me thy glory," Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19; the Lord made him this answer: Moses, wouldest thou see my glory; what, otherwise than thou hast seen it in the mount? Moses, here is my glory, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The Lord read him a lecture of his free grace. Moses, here is my glory, my free grace is my glory. And how can God's free grace be more seen and manifest than in such a way; causing the kingdom of heaven, of grace and free remission to draw near to us, even before we do stir towards it?

God does so order things in the dispensations of his grace, as that men may be made the most gracious. The sight of God's grace will make a man gracious: the more ye see the grace of God in Christ, the more gracious ye will be. And pray mark that instance which ye have in Luke vii., the same that I named before, consider it well, at verse 37, "Behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner," it seems she was a very wicked woman, a sinner, "when she knew that Jesus Christ sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed

them with the ointment," What is the reason of this? Says our Saviour Christ, verse 47, "I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven her, for she loved much." She wept much because she loved much, and she loved much, because much was forgiven her.

The papists and those that do follow them say indeed, that her forgiveness was a fruit of her love; because it is said here, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." But, good people, mark it, and you will find, that first of all there is forgiveness, and thereupon the woman loved: and her loving much, was but a sign of her being much forgiven. For this is suitable with the latter end of verse 47, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." Much forgiveness is the ground of loving much: and loving much is a sign of much forgiveness: for it follows, "But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

And this suits also with the parable that ye have before, at verses 41, 42, 43, which is brought in upon occasion of this woman's loving thus much. "A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: and when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." Mark the scope of the parable, and you will find it is to show, that love flows from forgiveness. The papists, and others that cleave to them, therefore, go against the scope of this parable.

And now my beloved, if all our love be upon forgiveness, and forgiveness goes first; oh, what free grace is here? we repent, and we weep because we love; and we love because we are forgiven: but forgiveness goes first: oh, what grace, and love is here. Paul was so taken with this, that to me he seems to be more taken with it, than with the vision that he had in the third heaven, says he, "I knew a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, a man (says he,) wrapt up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful to be uttered," 2 Cor. xii. 2. And this Paul speaks of but once. But, says Paul, "I was a blasphemer, I was a persecutor; but I obtained mercy," 1 Tim. i. 13: this story he tells three times: he tells the other

story but one time ; but this story, this story of free grace ; how he was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and how he obtained mercy ; this was never out of his mind. As if he were more refreshed with the thought of this, than with the other. And I pray what then ? Do but observe Paul, how gracious he is : how humble he is : how thankful he is : how ready to serve Christ : how ready to serve the churches for Christ : how ready to suffer for Christ upon all occasions : oh, how gracious did this make him. Thus it is with a poor soul, that hath tasted of the free grace of God in Christ ; the heart is more taken herewithal, than with the thoughts of heaven : ah, says a poor soul, I was going on in such a sinful way ; or, I lay sleeping and snorting in my sins ; and I know not how, before ever I was aware, the kingdom of heaven did approach unto me, and the Lord in his free grace showed mercy to my family, and to my poor soul. Oh, therefore any thing for Jesus Christ ; oh, I will spend, and be spent, oh, any thing for Jesus Christ. The sight of God's grace, doth make one gracious ; and therefore Christ does take this way, causing the kingdom of heaven, grace, and free remission, to approach unto us, before we do draw near to it.

There is one reason more, I will but name it.

Christ does so order things in the dispensations of his grace, that no flesh might glory in itself, or in any thing that it hath, or doth : that no flesh might rest in any duty, in any service, in any suffering ; but only upon grace, upon Christ alone. Beloved, we are very unwilling to come unto any duty ; and when we have done, we are then as apt to rest upon it, as ever we were unwilling to come unto it. But what is the reason that men are so apt to rest upon their duties, but because there are these secret thoughts, that they come to Christ, before he does come to them. Let the heart be possessed with this truth, That Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of heaven, and of free grace, does approach unto us, and come near to us, before we draw near to it ; and then he will not rest so much upon what he is, or doth, or suffereth. A man in this case is like unto a silk-worm ; you know how it is with that worm : it makes a fine web, a fine work, and when it hath done, it dies in it ; afterward it eats a hole through the work, and it comes out with wings, a quite other creature

than it went into it. So it is with a poor christian: he makes a fine work of duty, and then he dies in it; but through the manifestations of God's free grace, he does, as it were, eat a hole through all, and he comes out with wings flying away from his duties, not so as to neglect the performance of them, but so as not to rest upon them: flies away from, in regard of resting upon any duty; and only upon this ground, because, says he, God did draw near to me, grace did draw near to me, mercy did draw near to me, before ever I drew near to it: and therefore why should I rest upon any duty? perform it I will, but through grace I will not rest upon it.

By way of application: let us I pray consider with ourselves, whether God hath dealt thus by our souls or no; hath the kingdom of heaven approached, and drawn near unto us, before we drew near to it? If not, truly, for aught that I know, we are yet under the law: and all our mournings, and walkings heaven-ward, they are but legal: if God love you indeed, he shews kindness and mercy to you, before you do come to him.

It is with God's darlings, as it is with the world's darlings. You have some men take a great deal of pains, rise early, and go to bed late, and yet the world does not smile upon them: these are the world's enemies. Some take pains, and grow rich thereby; these are the world's friends. Others there are again; that before ever they take any pains the Lord is upon them with the world's blessings; these are the world's darlings. So I say, God hath his darlings; and if thou art one of God's darlings, he does cause the kingdom of heaven, grace, and free remission to appear and draw near unto thy soul, even before thou dost draw near to it. Hath God dealt thus by any of you? Oh, contemplate, consider seriously the sweetness of this grace. Beloved, preventing grace is sweet grace. The Lord gave a crown, a kingdom to David; but the best pearl in all the crown, that his eye was most upon, was God's preventing mercy: "Lord," says he, "thou hast prevented me with the goodness of thy blessing." Ps. xxi. 3. As if he had said thus: Lord, thou hast not only given me a kingdom, made me a king over thy people; but when I was a poor shepherd, keeping my father's sheep; thou didst prevent me with thy love. So may a poor soul

say, Ah, Lord, thou hast not only given me a kingdom, but thou hast prevented me with thy love. It is a great matter that the great God of heaven and earth should answer our prayers, give us any mercy upon our request: aye, but that the Lord should give us the greatest mercy before we come to it! Pray, good people, mark it a little; ye shall observe, that the greatest mercies that ye have, ye have them, and they are given unto you, before you come for them. There are some great mercies that a christian hath: as conversion of his soul, justification, remission of sin; some lesser mercies: as comfort, and peace, and outward plenty. As for these lesser mercies, God gives them when we do come for them; but as for the great mercies: remission of sin, justification of our persons, conversion of our souls, God is upon us with these mercies before we come for them: oh, what grace is here; oh, what glorious, rich grace is here! What, shall we not stand and admire at the glory of this free grace of God in Jesus Christ!

You will say unto me: But suppose this, that the Lord hath brought the kingdom of heaven near to me, and my family, before I did come to it: for I must confess, that I have tasted, and drunk deeply of God's preventing love: oh, how graciously hath God dealt by our poor family! we were a poor, ignorant family; and the Lord shewed mercy to our family when we little thought of it: to such a child, to such a servant, to such a friend, to mine own soul. Indeed this is true, that the kingdom of heaven hath approached unto me, drawn near unto me, before I drew near to it; oh, what is my duty now that does flow from hence?

Let me tell you:

First of all; be sooner at heaven-gates with your duties hereafter, than ever you were before. When as a master comes into his servant's chamber in the morning, and takes him abed: if the servant have any ingenuousness, the servant says, This my master's coming thus early, is plainly a rebuke to my sloth; and therefore, God willing, I will be up sooner another day. So now, when as the Lord doth thus prevent us with his grace, and is at our bed-side with his grace, when we lie sleeping, and never think of mercy and grace; an ingenuous soul should say thus: What is all this but a plain rebuke to the slothfulness of my duty? Come, up

prayer, up duty, oh my soul be up sooner: yea, through the Lord's grace I will be up sooner at heaven-gate in duty, than ever I was before: his preventing grace teaches me thus much, that I am not soon enough at heaven-gate with my duty.

Again, hath the Lord prevented any of you with grace, and caused the kingdom of heaven to draw near to you before you draw near to it? Do you do the like: labour in your love to be like unto Christ, to be like to God. We stand upon our terms when we have to deal with men, upon our terms of state. Had Jesus Christ stood upon his terms of state when he came to save sinners, what had become of us? We say, we will forgive such a man for wrong done to us, upon his acknowledgment: oh, but did Christ do so? Did not Christ prevent us? Beloved, ye see how it is with the water, it moves downward; but if the fire get into it; if there be water in a pot upon the fire, and fire get into the water, the fire makes it move upward, it moves according to the nature of the fire then. So now, if the love of Jesus Christ get into our hearts, it will make us move like unto Christ: how does the love of Jesus Christ move? Oh, says Christ, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," Luke xxxiii. 34. Christ did not stay for acknowledgment: a poor, and a low thing for a christian; enough for a heathen to say so: I will forgive such a man for wrong done to me upon his acknowledgment. Let our love be like unto Christ's, and labour to prevent others with our love, as Jesus Christ hath prevented us.

Again, Then let all men wait upon others, with all long-suffering, and patience, for their conversion, and the revelation of truth unto them. Thou art a parent, and desirest thy child may be converted, and hast taken a great deal of pains with him for his conversion, and yet it will not be. Thou art a governor of a family, and wouldest fain have such a servant converted to Christ, and hast taken a great deal of pains, and yet it will not be. A friend you have, and you would fain that he knew such a truth, and much pains you have taken to beat such a truth into him, and he does not take it, and you are ready to be angry: but remember this, the kingdom of heaven draws near to us before we draw near to it: grace must come to thy child's soul first before it does

come to Christ, mercy must come to the soul, and the Lord must come and bring truths unto the soul. What is then to be done? Then be not angry with him; wait with all long-suffering, and all patience, and go to God; go to God for thy child; go to God for thy friend; go to God for thy servant, upon this ground, because the kingdom of heaven must come to us first, before we can come to it.

But especially, Trust in the Lord for ever. Oh, all you that are the servants of the Lord, upon this ground, trust in the Lord for ever. Does the kingdom of heaven approach, and draw near to us, before we draw near unto it? Then say within your souls, Doubting shall be no more.

Some there are, that doubt of their salvation, because of the ignorance that is in them: darkness causes fear: they do not know the merciful disposition of Jesus Christ, and so they doubt of his love. The devil, as he labours to change himself into an angel of light; so he labours to change Christ into an angel of darkness. But beloved, ye have heard of the merciful, sweet disposition of Jesus Christ: he is willing to save sinners, and the greatest sinners; brings near the kingdom of heaven to us, before we draw near to it: oh, wilt thou doubt again; poor christian, wilt thou doubt again?

Some there are, that doubt of their salvation, because they are afraid their duties shall not be accepted, prayers shall not be accepted: Oh, if I could but be persuaded, says one, that the Lord would hear my prayer, and accept of my duty, then I should know indeed I should be saved: but I am afraid the Lord doth not hear my prayers, and accept of my duties; and therefore I fear I shall not be saved. Man or woman, wherever thou standest, or art, hear the word of the Lord. Does the Lord cause the kingdom of heaven to approach and draw near to us, before we draw near to it; will the Lord be found of those that seek him not; and will he not be found of you that do seek him? Will the Lord come with his grace, and make an offer of grace and mercy to a sinner, and a great sinner; and will not the Lord receive you, when you do come unto him? Think of this: and surely then you will say, Doubting shall be no more.

Some there are that doubt of their salvation, because they

cannot pray ; their hearts are dead ; pray I cannot, and hear I cannot, and read I cannot ; perform duty I cannot ; and therefore I have cause to fear that I shall never come to heaven. Well, but though you cannot, man, or woman, christian, pray as thou art able, and hear as thou art able, and read as thou art able : the Lord Christ is of this sweet disposition, that he does cause the kingdom of heaven to draw near to us, before we draw near to it : oh, therefore, you that are the servants of the Lord, trust in the Lord for ever ; for ever trust in the Lord : and let doubting be no more.

I conclude all with one word of exhortation, and it is unto those that have not yet submitted unto this kingdom of heaven, this kingdom of grace : is there a truth in this doctrine : That the kingdom of heaven, grace, mercy, and free remission, does approach unto us, before we draw near unto it ; and that because, indeed, we are not able to draw near to it, before it draws near unto us ? Then all you, that have not yet submitted unto this kingdom of grace, and the offer of grace and mercy in the gospel ; whenever any offer shall be made unto you, take heed that ye neglect not so great salvation. You see how it is with the seaman : because the seaman is not able to raise a wind, or turn the wind when it is raised, he lies upon the sea coast ready, waiting upon the wind ; and when the wind turn, then he hoists up his sails, for, says he, now the wind is come about, and if I lose this gale, I am likely to lose my voyage : I cannot turn the wind, I cannot make the wind. So I say to you, man or woman, young man or old : hath the Lord brought a gale upon thine heart at any time ; a gale of mercy, made a tender of mercy, and free remission to thee ? Oh, for the love of God, and of thy own soul, take heed how you lose this opportunity ; is the wind come about ? The Spirit bloweth where it listeth. Is the wind come about ? Up with thy sails, up with thy sails, take heed how you lose this opportunity that now you have. Little do you think, that the kingdom of heaven may be in such a motion as you despise : the kingdom of heaven may be knocking at your door, the door of your heart, by such a hand as you little think of. "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but it grows to that bigness, that the fowls of the air come and make there their

nesses," Matt. xiii. 31, 32 : when you see a little mustard seed, you will say, it is impossible ; can ever this mustard seed grow to that bigness, that the fowls of the air should there make their nests ? The kingdom of heaven is like Christ himself ? Can this be the Messiah ? it is the carpenter's son ; can this carpenter's son be the Messiah ? So the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed : comes with a small motion : may be the child makes a motion to his father, Oh, father, let there be prayer in our family, oh, let there be reading the word of God in our family. May be the servant comes and makes a motion to the mistress ; Oh, mistress, let us go to such a sermon, let us go to such a meeting, let us go to prayer : the kingdom of heaven may come in such a motion ; by the hand of a child, by the hand of a servant : take heed therefore if you have not submitted to this offer ; oh, take heed, take heed how you neglect so great salvation. I say the kingdom of heaven may come in such a small motion as you despise. And therefore, if ever the Lord breathe upon any of your hearts ; if the wind come about ; man and woman, up with thy sails, now for thy life, now for thy eternity ; if this gale be lost, may be thou shalt never have such a gale again : the kingdom of heaven does approach and draw near unto us, before we draw near unto it : well therefore, when it comes, see that you accept of it.

SERMON II.

" Repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand : " (or hath approached.)—MATT. III. 2.

THESE words are part of that sermon which John the Baptist preached, when he first began for to preach the gospel. They contain, ye see at the first view, an exhortation to repentance, with a motive, or encouragement thereunto : " For the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

I take it for granted, that ye understand what is the notion of repentance. And my design is not to fall into the common place of repentance ; but only to speak to it so far as it hath relation to this motive.

Some there are, that think these words are to be understood of a legal repentance; as if John the Baptist's ministry were a legal ministry: and in that sense he himself a fore-runner of Jesus Christ. This, methinks, is to lower the ministry of John the Baptist. And if you look into Luke i., you will find, that John's ministry was not a legal ministry, but a gospel ministry: verses 76, 77, "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways: to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." And if ye look into the following verse to the text, ye shall find the interpretation of this repentance: "Repent ye: for this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." So that preparing the way of the Lord, and making his paths straight, is all one with that which is going before. Now is any one able to make his paths straight, before he do come to Christ; why then do we come to Christ if we be able to make our paths straight, before we do come unto him?

And besides, As the motive is, such is the repentance that is founded on it. The motive here is evangelical: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The motive is evangelical, surely therefore the repentance here required, is not a legal, but an evangelical repentance.

But what is it then? what is here meant by the kingdom of heaven; and the kingdom of heaven being at hand, or approaching?

In the language of the New Testament, the kingdom of heaven is sometimes put for the kingdom of glory; sometimes it is put for the church of Christ under the New Testament: sometimes it is put for the gospel, and the preaching of the gospel: sometimes for the whole kingdom of grace. I take it here for the whole state of the Messiah: the kingdom of grace, the preaching of the gospel, and the dispensations thereof. And he says here, That the kingdom of heaven hath approached: therefore do you turn, therefore do ye repent.

There are these two notes that lie before ye.

First, The kingdom of heaven does approach unto us, before we do come unto it. Repent ye: or turn ye: because

the kingdom of heaven hath approached unto you; so in the beginning.

Secondly, That the appropinquation, approaching, or drawing near of the kingdom of heaven, is the highest and the greatest motive in the world unto true repentance.

I have spoken to the former, in a congregation not far distant: and my desire is to speak unto the second.

The appropinquation, approaching, or drawing near of the kingdom of heaven, is the highest and the greatest motive in the world unto true repentance.

This is the motive that John uses here; thus John begins, when he began for to preach the gospel. And if you look into chap. iv., ye shall find, that our Saviour Christ begins to preach repentance upon the same motive: verse 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The same words. And if ye look into Matt. x., ye shall find, that when he sent out his apostles for to preach, he put the like words into their mouths also: verse 7, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

There the word, repent, is not, you will say: but if you look into Mark vi. 12, ye shall find that it is said there, "Then they went out and preached that men should repent." It was part of their commission: and thus they were to preach repentance upon this motive, "That the kingdom of heaven is at hand, or the kingdom of heaven is approaching." Surely therefore, this is the great motive, the motive of motives. In the invitation to the great supper spoken of in the gospel, what is the motive used, for to bring men unto the supper, but this? "Come, for all things are now ready;" mercy is ready, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is ready, come, for all things are now ready; this is the motive that is used there. And if ye look into Rom. xii. 1, ye shall find that when the apostle doth exhort them to present themselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, he persuades by this motive of mercy: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." I beseech ye therefore. That therefore, sends us unto the former chapter, to inquire what these mercies were. At verse 30, of the former chapter, he says unto them, "For as ye in times past have not believed

God, yet now have obtained mercy through their unbelief." The Jews were cast off: and the gentiles, these Romans, received to mercy, the kingdom of heaven did come to them, the gospel effectually preached to them, the doctrine of free remission of poor sinners: now, says he, I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. The Scripture is full of this.

But for our better opening, and clearing of this truth: let us, I pray, descend into the particulars of repentance, and consider how the grace, and mercy, and love of God in Christ, which is the substance of this kingdom of heaven, hath an influence upon them all; and how all of them are caused thereby.

A man that does repent, must see and know his sins: true sight of sin is requisite to true repentance. Indeed, a man may in some measure attain unto the knowledge, and discovery of his sin by some affliction: when Adonibezek had his fingers and toes cut off, you know what he said: "Thus have I done." Afflictions do unleave a man, take off his leaves: when the leaves are off the hedges, ye see those birds-nests that ye could not see before when the leaves were on; and so when affliction hath made one naked, and taken one's leaves off, a man is able to see those nests of corruption in his own heart that he never did see before.

The apostle says, "By the law is the knowledge of sin:" but now, though by the law, as by a rule, we come to the knowledge of our sin; and by affliction we are helped to see the nests of our own hearts: yet notwithstanding, a man cannot see his sins fully but by gospel light; it is a work of the Spirit to convince of sin: "I will send the Spirit, the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin." And where does the Spirit breathe, but in the gospel, the kingdom of heaven, the preaching of the gospel? "Received ye the Spirit, (says the apostle) by works of the law, or by the preaching of faith?" When once Isaiah the prophet had had a sight of Christ out, he cries out, *Væ mihi*, "I am undone; woe is me, I am undone, I am unclean."

Again, for I will but touch upon these; as a man must know his sin, so if he will repent truly, he must be grieved and humbled for it. If you look into Luke vii., ye may see what work it had. A woman, a great sinner, comes to Christ,

and she washes his feet with her tears; what made her do so? She loved much, for much was forgiven her. So that the more the love and mercy of God in Christ is opened in the gospel, or does make its approach unto a soul, the more the soul is set a weeping and mourning for sin committed.

Again, As a man repenting must be grieved for sin committed, so he must and he will loathe himself; self-loathing is requisite to repentance. If a man have taken a surfeit by eating or drinking, he does not only loathe the meat which caused the surfeit, but he loathes the very vessel that hath the smell of the meat or the liquor in it. So now when a man comes to repent, he does not only loathe his sin, but he loathes himself, the vessel where the sin was. Oh, these filthy eyes of mine; oh, these vile hands; oh, this vile heart of mine: he loathes himself. But what causes this self-loathing? The prophet Ezekiel will tell ye, in chap. xx. 41, 42, 43: "Then shall ye loathe yourselves when I am pacified;" or when God had shewn them mercy, caused his love to approach unto them. Then should they loathe themselves. It is not all your afflictions, nor all my threatenings, says God, that will make ye to loathe yourselves; but when ye see my love, my grace, my pardoning mercy, then shall ye loathe yourselves: not your sins only, but yourselves also.

Again, A repenting person does not only loathe himself for his sin, but he is ashamed of it; he is ashamed of his former evil ways. "What fruit have ye of those things whereof ye are *now* ashamed?" not before, but whereof ye are *now* ashamed. So long as a man walks in the dark, he does not blush, he is not ashamed, though his clothes be ragged and torn, and his naked flesh appears, because he is in the dark; but if he comes to the light, then he blushes that his nakedness appears. And so long as men are in their sins and are in darkness, they are not ashamed of their sins, because they are in darkness; but when once they come to the light, then they blush, and then they are ashamed. What light is that, that will ashame one of sin? There is light enough in hell-fire, for the damned there to read their sins by, but that does not make them ashamed; where the light of the gospel, the opening of the kingdom of heaven is, and pardoning love is, there is shame. Ye shall see, therefore, how Ezra blushes when he considered the love of God and their sins together;

in chap. ix. 6, "And he said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face unto thee, my God." Why? "For our iniquities are increased." Is that all? No; says he at ver. 8, "For a little space grace hath been shewed us from the Lord our God, to give us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place: we were bond men, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage: and now, O our God, what shall we say after this?" After this? The sight of their own sins, and the remembrance of God's love together, made him blush. Ye know the place in Ezekiel, "Then shall ye be confounded and ashamed, when I am pacified towards ye." The more a man knows that God is pacified towards him, the more he is ashamed.

Again, A repenting person is not only ashamed of his former evil ways, but as occasion serves, he will acknowledge his sins. But I pray, what worsts the heart over to this acknowledgment? When David had Saul at a great advantage, and spared him, Saul breaks forth into this expression, "O my son David, thou art more righteous than I." O David, thou art a righteous man, but I am an unrighteous man. So when the soul sees what infinite advantage the Lord hath it at, and how the Lord spareth, then the soul breaks forth and says, The Lord is righteous, I am unrighteous, I am unrighteous: this works an acknowledgment.

A repenting person, does not only acknowledge his sin as occasion serves, but he labours to un-sin his sin: and truly else it is no repentance. He does walk contrary unto himself and his former self; he does labour to undo what he had done before sinfully; he does labour to unsay what he had said before wickedly. Before the jailor was converted, he clapped up the apostle into close prison, and either whipped him there, or else being whipped, he did not relieve him and wash his wounds. But the jailor repenting, mark how he walks contrary to himself; repenting, he opens the prison-door, he washes the apostle's wounds, brings him into his own house, sets meat before him. Those sorcerers, Acts xix., repenting, burnt their books, which before they prized, and studied much. How did Manasses walk contrary to himself, when he once repented.

Well, but what is that, that will bring the soul to this disposition, to walk contrary to one's former self? If you look

into Psalm cxvi., ye shall find there how the psalmist eats up his former words: "I said in my haste, all men are liars." It was amiss in me, I eat my words, I am sorry for it. What made him do it? Says he, at ver. 3, "The sorrows of death compassed me about, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow: then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver me." At ver. 5, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." Now having had a taste of God's grace and God's mercy, now he eats his former words. And so the good man Hezekiah: "I said (says he) I am cut off from the land of the living." He did eat his words: "I repent, it was suddenly done," Isa. xxxviii. 11. How was he wrought off to this? He had tasted of the love, and grace, and goodness of God, and this made him do it. So that now, look into the bowels of repentance, and the several workings thereof, and ye shall find there is no such way or means or motive to bring a soul unto repentance, as the approaching of the kingdom of heaven, the word and work of God's grace, and love of God in Jesus Christ.

Would you know the reason? Briefly thus:

Repentance is a fruit of faith. Ye have a notable expression of godly sorrow to the height, in Zech. xii. 10, 11, 12, speaking of the call and conversion of the Jews: "They shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him:" ver. 10, "as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Bitterness upon bitterness, and mourning. "And in that day (ver. 11) there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon: and the land shall mourn, every family apart, the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart." Here is great mourning and sorrow. What caused this? Says he, at ver. 10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. This is the eye of faith, and all true mourning and sorrow does come from thence. All tears of repentance flow from the eye of faith. The more a man by faith is able to see a pierced Christ, the more his heart is pierced for sin committed. The more by faith a man is able to see a wounded Christ, the more will his heart be wounded for sin committed. Faith

works repentance, but what worketh faith? Surely the gospel, the preaching of the gospel. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the preaching of faith?" He does not say by the preaching of the gospel, but by the preaching of faith: the gospel is called faith, not only because it is the object of faith, but that by which faith is wrought.

Again, As repentance is a fruit of faith, so also it does flow from love. *Amor doloris causa.* Love is the cause of grief. The more a man loves another, or apprehends that he is loved of him, the more he grieves if he hath any way injured him. If you at unawares do strike another, and one tell you that he is your enemy, ye grieve not, ye are not troubled, unless it be in regard of some mischief that may come to yourself; but if one tell you that he is a friend, a special friend, that grieves you. So now, if by my sins I have stricken at God, if I look upon God as an enemy, I am not grieved much, I am not troubled much; but when I consider him as my Father, the best friend I have in the world, and consider how by my sins I have stricken at him, this makes me grieve. Oh, that ever I should wound the name of him whom my soul loves! She loved much, says our Saviour concerning the weeping woman, she loved much, for much was forgiven her. He does not say, she wept much, for much was forgiven her: there was no mention before of her love, but only of her weeping; and yet says our Saviour, she loved much: because he would shew what it was that drew up the sluice of these tears; it was her love. And what causeth love? Love causeth love. The more a man sees and apprehends the love of Christ towards him, the more his heart is drawn out in love towards Christ again. And what greater act of love than this: that the kingdom of heaven approaches, that the kingdom of heaven should come, and make its approach to such a poor sinner as I am? Surely, therefore, the approaching or drawing near of the kingdom of heaven, is the highest and greatest motive in the world unto true repentance.

You will say, Experience seems for to speak the contrary: for, arguments drawn from hell, and the wrath of God, seem to be more powerful and efficacious in the working of repentance. I have, will some say, sometimes considered the wrath of God, and let out my heart upon arguments drawn from thence; and then I have been much humbled, broken;

been much affected; yea, the truth is, I have been more humbled, and more broken, and more affected, and more troubled for sin, than when the gospel, the word of the kingdom hath been preached and opened unto me: how therefore is this true? Experience seems to speak the contrary.

I answer, *Quicquid recipiter &c.* Every thing is received according unto the receiver. A legal spirit doth relish and savour most of those arguments which are drawn from hell, and from the wrath of God: but an evangelical christian, those that are drawn from love and mercy. But for the more full answer to this, pray consider with me, these six or seven distinctions.

It is one thing for a man to be troubled in conscience, and another thing to be humbled for sin committed. Those that are damned in hell, and lie there despairing, must needs be troubled in conscience; how could they despair else? Take a soul that hath the work of the law upon him, and a mere work of the law, and in some respects, he may be more troubled in conscience, but a christian that hath a work of the gospel upon his heart, is, notwithstanding this, more humbled for sin committed.

Again, It is one thing for a man to be pricked in heart, and another for a man to repent. Ye shall find therefore, that in Acts ii., it is said concerning divers, that they were pricked in their heart, and said, "What shall we do?" Peter said unto them, "Repent." They were pricked in their heart, and said, What shall we do? and he said, Repent. Possibly then, a man or woman may be pricked in the heart, and yet not repent. Those that have the work of the law upon them, may have more legal prickings: but those that have the work of the gospel, they repent more.

Again, It is one thing for a man to repent of sin, considered *in genere entis*; and another thing, *in genere moris*. Sin may be considered in regard of the mischief, and inconvenience that does come thereby; or in regard of the moral evil of it. It is said concerning Judas, that when he saw what became of things, he repented. And a malefactor, a murderer, when he sees what shall become of him, that he must die for his sin; he may repent of his sin, *in genere entis*; wishing that he had never done it: and yet may be

not repent, *in genere moris*. Ye read concerning Esau in Heb. xii., "That he sought his birth-right with tears;" but found no room for his repentance. He repented, he repented with tears, but found no room for his repentance. What repentance was that? Says Austin, He grieved that he had lost his birth-right; not that he had sold his birth-right. So there was no room for such a repentance. And so now, take a man that hath the work of the law upon his soul, and he may be much troubled, he may repent; and he may have more repentings in regard of the evil that does come by sin: but the other more in regard of the evil that is in sin itself.

Again, It is one thing for a man to be broken with the weight of sin, and another thing to have his soul thawed, and melted for it. There is a great deal of difference you know, between the breaking of the ice with your hands, or with a staff; and the thawing of the ice, melting by the thaw. When you take a staff and break the ice with your hands, though you break it in one place, it freezes in another: but when there is a thaw, then it melts, then it breaks everywhere. So now it is in regard of legal breakings: here is a man hath a work of the law upon his soul, he breaks for his drunkenness, and breaks for his swearing, and he breaks for his wantonness: oh, but he freezes in unbelief, in another place; he freezes in unthankfulness: but when a gospel work comes, it makes a general thaw, a man is broken everywhere. And this is more.

Again, It is one thing for a man to have more sorrow, grief, repentance, in the ore; and another thing to have more sorrow, grief, repentance, that is well refined. As now, suppose a man take a handful of gold in the ore; it seems to be a great deal more than a twenty shilling piece; aye, but because much of that is to be taken away, a great deal of earth is to be taken away, it is less in the worth. Thus it is between legal repentance, and evangelical: the legal repentance may seem to be more in bulk: aye, but a great deal of that is to be taken away: much unbelief to be taken away; many sad, despairing conclusions to be taken away; a great deal of mercenariness to be taken away. And therefore ye shall observe, that when the father had kissed the prodigal, he left out the mercenary piece that he spoke of

before he came home. Says he at verse 11, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants," Luke xv. 18—20. He rose and came to his father; his father saw him, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him, had compassion on him: ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and the son said to him, "Father," now see whether he makes good his words, that he said he would say when he came to his father, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son:" but his father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe:" he leaves out that, Make me as one of thy hired servants. One kiss from his father had filed off all the mercenary disposition. Oh, much, much of the legal work is to be taken away: in evangelical repentance there is much in little; in legal repentance there is little in much.

Again, It is one thing for grief, sorrow, repentance to be more in view, sense, and noise; and another thing to be more in spirit, and in profit. As now for example, the rain does sometime fall in a storm, and when it does so, it makes a great noise; the earth hath not time for to take it at the first into its bosom; it runs down the streets in great abundance, and it stands in some places, in great plashes of water: at another time the rain falls by small drops, and makes no such noise: but yet notwithstanding, it falls to the root of the corn, and profits more; for when the rain falls so in a storm, it lays the corn; the corn, I say, is laid by it. So now, sorrow and grief sometimes fall in a storm, as in legal repentance; and it is great in view, stands in great plashes of water; oh, but then it doth lay our duties, it lays our assurance, it lays our faith: evangelical repentance, that makes no such noise, but it falls to the root of the graces, and does not lay your comforts, it does not lay your assurance, it does not lay your duties. And so it is more in profit.

Lastly, this sorrow, grief, and repentance may take one's own heart much, or the heart of God much; one's own heart may be much affected, or the heart of God may be much affected: beloved, we are apt to love our first born:

and though legal repentance does not always go before the work of the gospel : for what legal work was there in Mat-
thew before he did come to Christ, or what legal work was
there in Zaccheus before he came to Christ ? yet oftentimes
it does ; I say, yet oftentimes it does ; and this being the
first-born of our soul, we go to God with both our repen-
tances, legal and evangelical : and we say, Lord, lay the hand,
oh, lay the right hand of thy blessing upon my first-born,
oh, let that inherit : but the Lord deals here as old Jacob
did, when Joseph brought his two children before him to be
blessed ; Jacob crossed his hands, and for Joseph's sake he
laid the blessing upon the younger. So now does God do ;
you would have me to lay my blessing, says God, upon your
first-born, upon your elder, upon your legal repentance.
No, says God, I have said, the elder shall serve the younger,
and I will cross my hands ; and for Joseph's sake, because
there is more of Christ in this younger, therefore here will
I lay the hand of my blessing. Beloved, the heart of a
christian, a gracious man, is never more drawn out in grief
than upon the apprehension of love injured : the greater
love, and the greater injury is presented, the greater is the
grief. When the kingdom of heaven comes unto a poor soul,
there is the greatest love presented ; sin against that is the
greatest injury : when therefore a man is sensible of his sin
under that notion, then is his heart most affected and drawn
forth in godly sorrow. Surely therefore, the approaching
and the drawing near of the kingdom of heaven, is the
greatest motive, and argument unto heaven unto true re-
pentance.

By way of application : if these things be so, what a sad
condition are those in, whom the kingdom of heaven, the
word of the kingdom, the doctrine of free remission hath
come unto, and yet they are not stirred, nor moved for to
turn to God, or to repent ? It may be, here is some drunkard,
some swearer, some notorious sabbath-breaker, some wanton
that is gotten into the congregation : I will not say to thee,
Friend, how camest thou in hither ? Ah, poor soul, thou
mayest hear that voice, and those words too soon another
day : but this I say, Friend, the greatest motive under hea-
ven hath been used to move and turn thee ; and yet thou art
nothing moved and stirred therewith : oh, whereby shall thy

soul be brought unto repentance? “Go, (says our Saviour Christ unto his disciples) preach, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: if they receive ye, your peace be upon them: if not, it shall be more easy for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for that city, than for that people, at that great day.” Oh for the Lord’s sake, take heed when ye hear the word of the kingdom, take heed that ye do not lose it: repent, and then turn to God.

But if these things be so, then here we see the reason, why our hearts are no more broken, are no more humbled, no more repentance, no more melting, heart no more softened: because ye do not labour to bring the kingdom of heaven near unto your souls: I mean the gospel, and the word of the gospel; free remission of poor sinners: when the kingdom of heaven comes near unto a person, he runs away from it, from the promise: oh, it belongs not to me; I am not so and so qualified; I am not so and so broken; I am not so and so weary, and heavy laden: and therefore the promise belongs not to me. But the approaching of the kingdom of heaven, is the only means and motive to break thy heart, and wilt not thou therefore come to it, because thy heart is not broken?

Oh, but the promise does not belong to me; the promise is made unto those that are weary and heavy laden and I am not so.

Mistake not, good people. The invitation is made to the weary and heavy-laden, but the promise is made to coming. There are two things in that speech, “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden.” Here is an invitation, and here is a promise. The invitation is made indeed to those that are weary and heavy-laden. Oh, but the promise is made to coming, the promise is made to coming.

But that is all one you will say, for then it seems I am not invited, if the invitation be made to such.

God does not speak every thing in every scripture; but, man or woman, art thou not invited by some other scripture? Pray what think ye of that in Prov. ix., “Wisdom hath built her an house;” that is, Christ, compared with the former chapter; “she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath furnished her table: she cries upon the high places of the city.” What does she cry? read ver. 4, “Whoso

is simple, let him come in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding," ye read it; it is, "as for him that wanteth heart, come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." The invitation is made to simple ones: "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither."

Oh, but I have such an heart as never any had; I want a heart unto all that is good. Mark, "As for him that wanteth heart," she saith to him, "Come eat of my bread." How think ye, is the invitation here made only to those that are weary and heavy-laden? And if ye consider that place in the gospel, which ye know, the invitation to the great supper; the servants are sent forth to call in those that were bidden, and they excuse themselves: but they were bidden, they were invited: were they weary and heavy-laden, think ye? Well, he sent out again, and invites others. Look upon the text, were they weary and heavy-laden too? "Go, (says he) go, go to the highways, and go to the hedges, and compel them to come in;" were they weary and heavy-laden too? And if ye look into Rev. iii., ye find there that our Saviour says at ver. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Our Saviour Christ here stands knocking, and offers the greetest mercies that can be; fellowship and communion with a poor soul: "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." What greater blessing or mercy can you desire than fellowship with Jesus Christ. Says Jesus Christ, "If any man will open, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." Here is mutual fellowship; Christ stands and offers this; he stands knocking. But, I pray, what door does he knock at; whose door does he knock at? Oh, my beloved, it is a Laodicean door. Laodiceans, what are those? Lukewarm: "I would thou wert hot or cold; but seeing thou art lukewarm, I will vomit thee out of my mouth." Lukewarm person, worse than profane; and yet, behold, Jesus Christ stands at a lukewarm person's door: knocking and tendering mercy to a lukewarm Laodicean person.

Aye, but stay, may be they were weary and heavy-laden, first, before they were invited.

Read verse 17: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest

not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Were these weary and heavy-laden, think ye? and yet at this door, behold, at this door the Lord Christ stands knocking. Oh, grace, oh, glorious, rich grace. Oh, you that have stood at a distance from the promise, and dared not draw near to the promise; said it did not belong to you, you were not invited to mercy; consider, do you consider what great enemies you are unto your own breakings and humblings that ye do so much desire! The approaching of the kingdom of heaven, and the doctrine of grace and of free remission unto a poor sinner, is the greatest means and motive in the world to break one's heart. Oh, therefore, as ever you desire to have your hearts broken, and to be humbled, look much to the kingdom of heaven, and the doctrines thereof, and never say it does not belong unto you.

But if these things be so, if there be a truth in this doctrine, what infinite cause have we all for to repent, to mend our lives, and to turn to God? "The kingdom of heaven hath approached." Beloved, hath not the kingdom of heaven approached unto our nation? Take the kingdom of heaven for the kingdom of glory, and in these dying times, how hath the kingdom of heaven approached in that sense? Take the kingdom of heaven for the state of the church, and how many church truths hath broken out in these days that were not known before? Take the kingdom of heaven for the gospel and the preaching of the gospel, how hath God gone up and down in these latter times, even in these times of trouble, preaching free grace to poor England? Witness all these victories ye have had notwithstanding all your sins. O England, England, now repent and turn unto the Lord. Surely, if ever, the kingdom of heaven is come to you. Yea, hath not the kingdom of heaven approached unto many of your souls in particular? Are there not some here, great sinners, that have been invited to mercy; are there not some here, great sinners, that have received mercy? Hath the kingdom of heaven approached unto you, and will not you repent, and will not you turn to God, and will not you amend your lives?

You will say, This work is not now to do, we have repented already.

But pray give me leave, have ye, have ye repented upon gospel motives? have ye repented upon this ground, because

the kingdom of heaven hath approached? Oh, how many legal professors are there among professors! As there are two sorts of men in the world, some that live in dark places and prisons, and others that walk up and down in the light; so some there are among professors, some legal, that walk up and down in the dark, and see no light; others, again, that walk up and down in the light of the gospel: many, many legal professors.

Beloved, the more evangelical your repentance is, the more it will cure your souls, and not hurt your body. Legal repentance soaks into the body, and frets out the very strength of one's body. Pray look a little into Job xxxiii.; see what the Holy Ghost says there: "God speaks once, yea, twice, yet man perceives it not;" here is man in his natural, pure natural state: "In a dream (at verse 15), in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;" that is, before a man is aware: "then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." What then? "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; so that his life abhorreth bread and his soul dainty meat: (verse 21) his flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out; his soul draweth near to the grave and his life to the destroyers." Here is legal work. Then comes the gospel. "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one of a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom." Then, at verse 25, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth." His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. Thus evangelical repentance is a friend both to soul and body. Mere legal repentance eats out the strength of one's spirit, even of one's very body.

Again, the more evangelical your repentance is, the more you will be humbled and grieved for sins against the gospel. "I will send (says Christ) the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin." What sin? Of sin and of unbelief. Oh, says the soul that repents evangelically, who more guilty of unbelief than I? Oh, never any one more ignorant of Christ than I! Oh, the unkindness of my soul towards

Christ! Legal repentance, it pitches upon some breach of the law, and there it rests.

Again, Evangelical repentance complies with spiritual joy, and is a friend unto it. You grieve for sin, and you rejoice in God; and when you rejoice in God you grieve for sin, I will send the Comforter, says our Saviour. He does not say, I will send the Spirit; no, but, I will send the Comforter, and he shall convince the world of sin and of unbelief. The Comforter, because it shall be a work of comfort unto the soul that is convinced of sin gospel-wise. And the more a man rejoices in Christ, the more he grieves for sin; and the more he grieves for sin, the more he rejoiceth in Christ again.

Again, When your repentance is evangelical, the more you apprehend or hope that your sin is pardoned, the more you will grieve for it. Ye read in the Psalms of one special penitential Psalm of David, the list. But when was that made? A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him; that is, after the prophet Nathan had been with him. And what did Nathan the prophet say to him? Says Nathan, Thy sin is forgiven thee. Upon that message David falls into a penitential Psalm, a Psalm of humiliation and of repentance. The more a man hath assurance that his sin is pardoned, the more he doth grieve for it.

And the more evangelical your repentance is, the more your heart will be enlarged to and for Christ. The sight of God's free love in Christ will make your heart free in love unto Christ and for Christ. When the poor sinner, the woman spoken of in Luke vii., had much forgiven her freely, she came and brought her precious boxes, and poured them out upon Jesus Christ. So when a soul hath tasted of the free love of God in Christ, then no boxes of ointment are too precious to pour out upon the feet of Jesus Christ.

Further, The more of the gospel and the more of the kingdom of heaven is in your repentance, the more of the gospel will be in your obedience, the more of the gospel will be in your assurance, the more of the gospel will be in your performance, in your prayers and other duties. Beloved, repentance is foundation work; it hath an influence upon all your service. If your repentance be legal, your obedience legal, and your performance legal, and your assurance legal; ever tying God unto such conditions as he never tied you to,

through the improvement of your own unbelief. But now, when as your repentance hath the gospel in it, drawn up and raised upon such motives as these; then your obedience, your comforts, your duties, your assurance will have the impression of the gospel also upon them.

And the more of the gospel, the kingdom of heaven, is in your repentance, the more your hearts and spirits will be meekened and sweetened towards the saints, towards your fellow servants, the people of God. What is the gospel but a dead Christ? As Jesus Christ was a living gospel, so the gospel is a dead Christ.

When the gospel approaches, when the kingdom of heaven draws near to a soul, and Christ therein, the heart is meekened and made like to Christ. The law is called a fiery law, the law of fire, compared unto Hagar; and says the apostle, The children of the bond-woman will persecute the children of the free-woman, of Sarah. And what is the reason that there is so much bitterness among professors, but because there is no more of the gospel and of the kingdom of heaven in our profession? Beloved in the Lord, ye see into what sad times of discord and bitterness we are now brought; as ever you do desire to be free from this spirit of bitterness, as ye do desire that ye may not have a hand in opposing your fellow servants, and acting a spirit of bitterness towards the children of God, oh, labour for more of the gospel, get more of it into your repentance and into your obedience; oh, let us labour to be more evangelical than ever we have been.

I had need call upon my own heart for this; and give leave to measure your own hearts by mine. Beloved, I do not now come to call for repentance, barely, but I come this night unto you, calling for refined repentance, gospel repentance: these are refining times; your public worship refined, the government refined; christians had need refine all their duties, and all their graces, and all their comforts, and all their assurance: we had need even take our whole garment, and look into every seam, brush every seam, there is so much dust gotten into it. Oh, labour, labour to be more evangelical, to get more of the gospel of Christ into all your duties. The gospel is the ministration of life; and the ministration of the law is called the ministration of death. The ministration of the gospel is called the ministration of righteousness; the

ministration of the law is called the ministration of condemnation. The gospel is called a glorious gospel, a glorious gospel: as ye do desire that glory may be upon you, get more of this glorious gospel into you; more of the gospel into all your duties, into your repentance; which that you may do, now even repent that ever you have been so legal in your repentance. A man will never be evangelical in his repentance that does not in some measure grieve that he hath been so legal in his repentance.

And, to end all, if at any time, man or woman, thou dost find thy heart dead and dull, and sayest, thou canst not pray, thou art unapt, and thy heart is hardened; then go, go to the word of the kingdom, go to the gospel, go, lay out thy soul before the word of the gospel; consider the kingdom of heaven, the word of the kingdom, free remission unto poor sinners; and this is the only way for to break your heart: for certainly this is a truth that I have spread before you; think of it: the appropinquation, approaching, or drawing near of the kingdom of heaven is the highest and greatest motive in the world unto true repentance.

END OF VOL. IV.