

Take heed of the next temptation, if so be that you would exercise this grace of meekness—though you forget other rules, yet lay up this—take heed, I say, of the next temptation, go away but with this resolution: The Lord hath made me to hear of the excellency of the grace of meekness, how it is commended by Christ, and that it hath such excellent promises; and he hath shewn me somewhat of the evil of a froward spirit that is so contrary to it, and hath given me many rules for the helping of me that so I may live more quietly in my family. Well, now I shall go away, and after I have heard all this, it may be a temptation will come this night, for that is the way of the devil, that just at any time when you have heard against some particular sin, there will come some temptation to that sin. And when you have been put upon some duty, there will come some temptation to take you off of that duty; for if the devil can but prevail with you after a sermon, then he makes account that all that sermon is gone, and will do you no good. So now, after you have heard of all this about meekness, it may be this night, or to-morrow morning, there is like to come some temptation to frowardness and passion in your spirits—for a hundred to one but you will meet with something. Well, had you but a heart to think now—Well, this is

the devil's work to take away all the profit of those sermons that I have heard of meekness, and therefore, through God's grace, I hope I shall take heed of that temptation. And you cannot imagine what a deal of good the next temptation being resisted may do. But now, if either to-night or to-morrow, or two or three days hence in this next week, there comes some temptation, and the very first temptation of all overwhelms you and prevails against you, farewell these sermons then; I have lost my labour as concerning you. And whether you may live to hear any more sermons about this again it is more than you know, and therefore look to yourselves that you may not lose the word; and go away with such resolutions, Well, through God's grace, I will take an account of these truths for the ordering of my heart and of my life in my family; and all that lives with me shall see by my life that I have heard some sermons of meekness. You that are women, and it may be have lived unquiet with your husbands; and you that are husbands, that have been bitter to your wives, oh that it might appear that you have heard this blessedness, 'Blessed are the meek,' that so both husbands and wives may put this even into their prayers, Blessed be God that we have had this scripture opened to us.

SERMON XIV.

OR,

RULES AND HELPS TO CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'—MAT. v. 6.

THE last day you may remember we spoke to the close of the third beatitude here mentioned by Christ, 'Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.'

And the close of it was an exhortation to this blessed and precious grace of meekness. Divers rules were given for the furtherance of this grace of meekness. I intend not to look back at all to what we then spake, only add this one thing further as a great help to the meekening of our hearts, and that is, especially to those that are godly,

Sixteenthly, The want of this grace is a great dishonour to them and to their profession. Let such remember their own prayers, their own expressions before God in prayer; it would mightily help to meeken

us. Remember how thou hast acknowledged thy vileness before God; thou canst freely in many expressions tell God what a vile, unworthy, sinful, wretched creature thou art, and how through thy sin thou dost deserve the eternal wrath of God; that it is a wonder thou art out of hell. Thus thou canst go on perhaps in prayer, or it may be in company, a long time speaking thus against thyself; and yet as soon as thou hast done, if anybody cross thee, thou canst be as froward and as angry as any else. What art thou the man or woman that but a while since, a few hours or a day ago, wert before God acknowledging how vile, sinful, and wicked thou wert; and that thou didst wonder thou wert out of hell all this while? Art thou

the man or woman that didst acknowledge this, and when thou comest to any cross in the world thou art not able to bear it! Thou sayest thou deservest hell; but if a child, or servant, or wife, or husband, or friend do cross thee, thou canst not bear it. If thou couldst but look back to thine expressions before God in prayer, it would cause thee to be vile in thine own eyes, and so to have thy heart to fall down when thy passion begins to rise. Thou that hast a passionate, froward heart, either in the morning thou dost pray to God, or thou dost not. If thou dost not pray, thou shewest thyself to be atheistical; if thou dost pray, I suppose one special part of thy prayer is the acknowledging of thy wretchedness, sinfulness, and vileness. Why hast thou done that in the morning, if when any temptation comes to passion in the daytime thou yieldest to it? Now if thou couldst but have the power over thyself as to think of thy prayer, and to think how unsuitable this carriage of thine is to all those acknowledgments of thine, of thy sinfulness and wretchedness, it would tame thee in the midst of thy unruly passion.

There should now have been mentioned several sorts of people that should especially labour for this grace of meekness. It concerns us all; but some more than others. I will only speak a word to those that are in an afflicted condition. Therefore the Hebrews have the same word that signifies *afflicted*, for *meek*; meekness and affliction in the Hebrew tongue are expressed by the same word. To note that such as are under affliction, they should be of meek and quiet spirits, for the hand of God is then upon them. And yet it falls out quite contrary ordinarily, that such as are most afflicted, are most froward; as many times those that are sick, when they are sick, they are more pettish and more froward than at other times; whereas they should be more meek, and quiet, and gentle under God's hand. And so many that are poor people—where do you hear such reviling communication as from such as are miserably poor? how do they lavish out words! Do but cross them in any one thing, what railing and reviling comes from them! shewing a proud, froward, passionate spirit. If God hath afflicted thee with poverty, it is, if he hath a love to thee, that he might keep thee low; and if thy heart were low, thy heart would likewise be meek.

But we let pass this of meekness, 'Blessed are the meek,' and come to that; read in ver. 6, 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness.' 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst.' This seems to be as contrary to the opinion of the world as anything can be. The world rather saith, Blessed are they that are full, than they that hunger and thirst; but the Holy Ghost pronounces a blessedness upon those that hunger and thirst, and a woe to those that are full: in Luke vi. 25, 'Woe unto you that are full.'

You think it the greatest happiness that men have their full tables, and full dishes, and full cups, and full purses; but the Holy Ghost doth not look upon men's happiness to be there. 'But woe be to those that are full; and blessed are they that hunger and thirst.'

Some understand this hunger and thirst literally; and the rather because, comparing it with what St Luke saith—as I told you in the beginning of this sermon, that, notwithstanding divers objections against it, it appears to be the same sermon—chap. vi. 21, 'Blessed are ye that hunger now.' Luke doth not mention the word righteousness, but only ye that hunger now; and opposes hunger to those that are full, and therefore they think it is literally meant. 'Blessed are they that do hunger'—that is, such men as are godly, so it must be understood; that want bread, and want drink; such as being godly are put to such great extremities as they have not bread to put in their bodies, nor drink to quench their thirst; as if Christ should say, 'Be not troubled; though you should be put to such extremity as to want bread, and want drink, this will not hinder your blessedness; you may be blessed for all that.' And whereas, when you are in great wants, you may be ready to look upon those that are full and have abundance, and to think them to be blessed; but be not deceived. 'Woe to such as are full;' but you are blessed in these your great wants and extremities. And so they take this blessedness out of the Old Testament, as the former of meekness, in Ps. xxxvii. 11, from whence Christ takes that of meekness; and this of hungering and thirsting out of Isa. lxx. 13. But to rest in this interpretation is not my purpose; and therefore we must proceed further, for the object here of their hunger and thirst leads us further than so, 'for they hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Yet I confess I find very learned interpreters and godly men, such as Calvin and Musculus, they carry these words no further than thus: Blessed are they that in their great extremity do but hunger and thirst to have that that is fit for them, that that is right. Those that are godly and brought to a low condition, and oppressed, they hunger and thirst that they might have righteous dealings in the world, that they may be dealt withal righteously, and they go no further than this; and you know Mr Calvin is one that doth usually hit the sense as right as any, and is as spiritual as any interpreter ordinarily, yet I say in these words he goes no further than this. By hunger and thirst, that clearly is meant earnest desires—desires that rise out of pain from the sense of the want of the thing that is desired, from whence the desires grow very strong and earnest; for no desires are so strong and earnest as the desires of the hungry man, or the thirsty man; and so do hunger and thirst after righteousness, either after righteous dealings,

that they may be dealt withal righteously, or that there might be righteousness in the world; that is a little higher than they go, they only speak of hungering and thirsting after this, that they themselves may be dealt withal righteously, and have righteousness; but I think we may go further even in the interpretation of this righteousness, to speak of righteousness as from your dealing, such as hunger and thirst that righteousness might prevail in the world, and this indeed I verily think to be one special thing intended by the Holy Ghost. Christ he looks upon his disciples, and as if he should say to them, You are like to meet with much unrighteous dealings in the world; you will see how the world is carried on in injustice, and unrighteousness that prevails in the world; but in the meantime this will go near to your hearts, it will be a pain and grief to your souls to see the unrighteous carriages of things in the world, and you will long for the time wherein righteousness may prevail in the world and rule among men. Well, blessed are you; do not you meddle with their unrighteous dealings, but when you see it among others, let your longing desires be for the time wherein righteousness shall prevail in the world; and blessed are you that do thus hunger and thirst. This I verily do believe is a special thing that Christ intends in the pronouncing of this blessedness, and therefore I must not pass over this so lightly as many do in handling of this blessedness. I confess the other righteousness, the most of your latter men that especially speak of this in a preaching way, they look to that that they think to be most spiritual—as thus, that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Blessed are they that have earnest, strong, and unsatisfying^s desires after the righteousness of Christ, that they may be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and stand righteous before God through the righteousness of his Son: Blessed are they.

And then, Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after the power of righteousness in their own hearts, to be delivered from the power of sin, and to have further degrees of sanctification in their hearts. This is ordinarily, and I suppose in most of your thoughts that have minded this scripture—you have rather looked upon this righteousness to be meant the righteousness of justification by Jesus Christ, and the righteousness of sanctification by the work of the Spirit in the heart; and these two are very godly interpretations, very spiritual, and we must not exclude them, but shall speak likewise to either of these two. But for this exercise I shall speak only of the first.

'That hunger and thirst after righteousness,' after righteous dealing. And though the other are more excellent in themselves, yet I doubt much whether

* Query, 'unsatisfied' ? or 'unsatisfiable' ?—Ed.

Christ had not this in his thoughts, even first, speaking to his disciples that were like to be in a poor and mean condition; therefore he begins with those that are poor in spirit. We interpreted the meaning of that; and so now you are like to meet with much unrighteous dealings, but blessed are you that are content to submit to such a condition that you are like to meet withal, and yet send up your desires to heaven from God to clear your righteousness. As if Christ should say, The world will accuse you and revile you for being troublesome, factious, and turbulent among them; but blessed are you: can you appeal to God for your righteousness, and desire, Lord, while the world doth thus revile us, and account us to be hypocrites, to make a show of religion, and yet to have no truth in us, Lord, do thou judge our righteous cause; Lord we appeal to thee. Why, saith Christ, blessed are you while you do thus; I will look upon you, and have an eye to you. When others shall say that you are false, and that you falsify your trust that is committed to you, you can appeal to God, and desire him to come and judge your righteous cause. Lord, let righteousness appear; let it appear that under these accusations that I have behaved myself righteously. Blessed are you; be not now troubled. And so when the world accuses you of making a trouble in the world, you can appeal to God and say, Lord, thou knowest that there is nothing that I desire more than peace; and so far as I can see it to be thy mind, I can yield in anything, and therefore, Lord, appear and manifest my righteousness before the world. Blessed are you, saith Christ; be not overmuch troubled that you are thus accused; you hunger and thirst for the time when the Lord shall make your righteousness appear. And so if the world shall accuse you of self-seeking—that in all things that you do you do but aim at yourselves in all—why, you can appeal to God of the righteousness of your hearts in these things, and you thirst after the time when God will come to discover the secrets of all men's hearts. Lord, thou hast a time for to manifest the secrets of hearts, and then it shall appear whether I sought myself or thy glory. Blessed are you if you can do so, and hunger after the manifestation of God's righteousness in this. If they shall accuse you for partiality, or wronging others, it may be such accusations are upon you, why, still you hunger after the time for God to clear up righteousness. There is nothing more ordinary in the world than for the wicked of the world to cast aspersions upon the saints of God for some evil or other to darken them in their holy profession; but if they bear what is cast upon them patiently, and long for the time that the righteous God will appear to manifest their righteousness, blessed are you when you thus hunger and thirst even after this righteousness.

Blessed are you, for,

First, You have the testimony of your own consciences when men do accuse you.

Secondly, You have the testimony of God; God witnesses for you.

Thirdly, Blessed are you, for God is working for you all this while, while you lie under these accusations.

And you shall be satisfied one day, you shall be cleared; God will clear your righteousness, and he will make it break forth as the noonday. Now you are bespattered, as if Christ should say, You are all to be smeared with accusations from evil men, but you shall be clothed with white linen: in Rev. xix. 8, 'And to her,' that is, to the church, 'was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'

White linen, it is true, it is the righteousness of Christ; but it may have reference to this righteousness that I am speaking of. As if so be that a matronly woman, being in the street, should have had people cast dirt upon her, when she comes home she hath clean linen to put upon her; so though the saints here are bespattered with dirt, to make their names to be odious in the world, yet Jesus Christ hath fine linen to put upon them, and they shall appear righteous before the saints and angels, before all the world another day; and so in Mat. xiii. 43, there is a promise that the righteous shall one day 'shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' It is true, they shall shine forth then in a great deal of glory put upon them; but this glory of their righteousness shall be as the shining of the sun, besides the other glory of their great reward in the kingdom of their Father. Now they are in the kingdom of the world, and they are where the kingdom of darkness doth prevail; but when they come to the kingdom of their Father they shall shine forth as the sun. It is meant of all righteousness, either that perfect righteousness of Christ that they shall be clothed withal, or the perfection of sanctification, or this righteousness whereby they shall be cleared from all aspersions that are cast upon them. Blessed are they, for they shall be cleared.

Yea, blessed are they, for they shall be filled. You shall be recompensed for all those accusations that are unrighteously cast upon you now: you shall be rewarded so much the more, it will increase your glory, therefore blessed. Look upon yourselves as blessed creatures when you are accounted thus unrighteous, for you shall be honoured so much the more; therefore we have that notable scripture in 1 Pet. iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' God will certainly recompense you for all that you shall suffer this way.

But further, Those that hunger and thirst after

righteousness. Not only that God would clear their righteousness—that is one kind of righteousness that they hunger and thirst after—but that there might be righteousness among men in general; that righteousness might prevail in the world. Blessed are they that have their hearts pained when they see the unrighteousness that is abroad in the world. I say, such as find their hearts pained at the sight of that unrighteousness that is in the world; and so they do long after righteousness, and cry out to God that he would appear and set up righteousness to rule in the world, such as are grieved in their hearts to see the unrighteous dealings among the children of men. This is that that Christ aims at: saith he, Indeed you will see a great deal of unrighteousness; but you that are my disciples, it will trouble your hearts, and you will long for that time when righteousness shall prevail: Blessed are you:—

For, first, The people of God cannot but be pained in their hearts when they see unrighteous dealings in the world, as much pained as a man is that wants bread; it more troubles them than all their persecutions, than all their afflictions; and there is nothing in the world that they long for more than the coming of Jesus Christ—to this end, not only that they themselves may be saved, but that then righteousness may prevail.

For, first, When the saints see unrighteous dealings in the world, by that they see the honour of God is much eclipsed. Why, they think thus within themselves, is not God a righteous God? Oh, then what a dishonour is this to such a righteous God, that there should be so much unrighteousness in the world as there is!

Secondly, This unrighteousness that they see among men it is very unsuitable to their spirits: for the Lord hath put righteousness into their hearts. In some measure their hearts are for righteousness. Now when they see men in public place, or men that make profession of religion, to carry things unrighteously, this pains them; it is that that is unsuitable to that gracious frame that God hath put into their hearts.

Thirdly, By this unrighteousness of men they see how the godly suffer: how precious servants of God are trodden under foot; and how wicked and ungodly men they shine and prosper, and they are made of. Now this cannot but grieve their hearts to see such a disorder; yea.

Fourthly, By the unrighteousness that they see in the world, there are many temptations to a great deal of evil; yea, sometimes temptations that do in some degree prevail with such as are truly godly, as they did with David, with his righteous soul. In Ps. lxxiii., when he saw the wicked prosper, and how the godly were afflicted, David began to fail, and his foot began to slide. When such as are godly see that men that

carry things unrighteously, and yet have their designs and prosper; and that others that are truly godly, that walk according to rule, they many times suffer much, this is a great temptation even to those that are godly. Now they long for the time to have this temptation taken away; to have the dishonour of God taken away; to have that that is unsuitable to their spirits taken away; to have the sufferings of the saints taken away, and to have this temptation taken away. As if they should say, O Lord, if righteousness did prevail, then thou wouldst be honoured more than ever; then we should have that that would be the joy of our hearts; then thy saints should not suffer as they do; then we should be delivered from those temptations that we meet withal.

Fifthly, By unrighteousness they see how the wicked are burdened in their hearts. Now, say the saints, this is grievous, to see that men in unrighteous ways should so prosper as to be hardened, and think that God is like to them. Oh that there were righteousness prevailing, that wicked men may be ashamed and confounded!

Sixthly, By this means they see that many grow atheists, and they doubt whether there be a God or no, ruling in the world; therefore, O Lord Jesus, let it appear that thou dost govern things in the world.

Seventhly, By this unrighteousness they see the kingdom of Satan set up, and the kingdom of Christ, which is a righteous kingdom, that is mightily hindered by it. Why, Lord, shall the kingdom of Satan always prevail in the world? O Lord, when shall the righteous sceptre of Jesus Christ sway among the children of men?

Eighthly, lastly, This unrighteousness it tends to wickedness, to ruin, to bring all things to confusion. Now, Lord, except thou dost appear in thy righteousness to right all these things that through the unrighteousness of men are in such a disorder, all things will run to ruin and confusion; therefore, Lord, hasten and appear to be a righteous God. Thus the saints do hunger and thirst after righteousness, that there may be righteous dealings in the world; and you see what it is that pains their hearts, what evil there is in unrighteousness, and what excellency they see in righteousness.

They hunger and thirst after righteousness; they have great desires, and they send forth many prayers to God. Oh that God would hasten those times! They send up strong cries to God that righteousness might come into the world. How long, how long shall it be, holy and true? &c. They send up mighty prayers to God that righteousness might prevail in the world. And for their own parts, therefore, they, whatsoever they do, will not meddle with any unrighteous ways, but rather suffer any misery in the world than to be any means to countenance or join with

any unrighteous ways, much less to do any unrighteous actions themselves. And therefore though they be in any public place, though there be much coming in by their places, they will rather be content to lose all the advantages of their places, than to meddle with any unrighteous actions. A righteous heart doth more hunger and thirst after righteousness than after bread or drink; and therefore will shake his hands of unrighteousness, though he lives in an unrighteous world; yet, saith he, God forbid that I should have to do with this unrighteousness. No, it is righteousness that my soul doth hunger and thirst after; and therefore though I lose all my friends, my estate, my outward enjoyments, yet I will be sure to keep my conscience right, and be a friend for righteousness as long as I live. I will manifest that I do not dally and trifle with God in hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and yet be unrighteous myself. I will labour to promote it as much as I can, that righteousness may prevail in the world. Now blessed are these.

For, first, They have for the present the image of God upon them. Thou that hast such a righteous heart hast the image of God; just as God's heart is, so thy heart is. The Lord is a righteous God; the Lord loveth righteousness, and so dost thou. Blessed art thou of the Lord, who hast the image of God in thee.

Secondly, Such as do thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, they are witnesses for God in this unrighteous world. They live now in an unrighteous world; but shall the great God have none to witness for him? Yes, there are a generation of men that live among others that are unrighteous, that do stand up to witness for God's righteousness, that desire nothing in the world more than righteousness. Oh blessed, blessed are you of the Lord, you are witnesses unto God.

Thirdly, You are blessed in this regard, for this your hungering and thirsting after righteousness doth deliver you from many temptations that others are overcome withal. Other men that it may be have some resolutions not to be unrighteous, but yet when they see the unrighteousness of others, they are overcome, for their hearts are not so set against unrighteousness as thine is to hunger and thirst after it; but now when the heart is so grieved for the unrighteousness that is in the world, and so longing after the righteousness of God, this will deliver thee from temptations; the temptation that takes other souls, it takes not thy heart; and that is a blessed thing, to be delivered from temptation.

Fourthly, Those that do thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, they are blessed; for they are fit to be used in public service. They are not men that would bring righteousness down to their own ends,

and seek to make a gain of the public. What use are they fit for? But now for such as do above all things hunger and thirst for setting up of righteousness in the world, these are men fit to be employed in public service; the Lord delights to employ such. And men, when they come to see it, that their hearts are set upon righteousness, they will love to employ such, though it may be for a while those that seek to keep themselves to the rule, some will fret and vex at them; but let such men go on in a constant way promoting righteousness, such will get honour before men in the conclusion. All that do converse with them will look upon them as blessed here, and such men as are fit to be employed in public service.

Fifthly, They are blessed, for they are the men that stand against the stream of unrighteousness, to hinder the floods of it, that it doth not overflow the world. Blessed are they that are willing to stand against the stream of unrighteous dealings, to keep it from overflowing of all; they are instruments of much good to others as well as to themselves. These the Scriptures saith are blessed. In Ps. v. 12, 'For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous.' Certainly the Lord he will bless the righteous; yea, 'the secret of the Lord is with the righteous,' Prov. iii. 32; 'The Lord loveth the righteous,' Ps. cxlvi. 8; 'The Lord upholdeth the righteous,' Ps. xxxvii. 17; 'And the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry,' Ps. xxxiv. 15. Thus the Scripture is full of promises to the righteous, and shewing that they are blessed. But this promise here is, that they shall be filled.

Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled. Certainly there is a time coming that the Lord will fill the desires of his righteous ones; as thus,

First, He will fill their desires: Prov. xi. 23, 'The desire of the righteous is only good.' It is good, therefore God approves of it. He will fill it, for,

First, There is a time coming that all those that love righteousness shall certainly see unrighteousness punished, and righteousness rewarded. Now and then you see unrighteousness punished and righteousness rewarded, but that doth not fill you. There is a time coming that thou shalt see all unrighteousness in the world punished and all righteousness in the world to be rewarded: in Ps. lviii. 11, 'So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.' The time is coming for all men to be forced to say, that 'Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.' This will fill the hearts of the saints with joy, when they shall see God's time to bring all the children of men to an account, and to have all the unrighteousness that ever was in the world to be punished, and all the

righteousness that ever was in the world to be rewarded. This will fill them, and be a joyful day indeed. And from hence all the disorder that is in the world now through unrighteous dealing, it shall all be brought into order again. He will make a comely work out of that chaos of confusion. You shall see all things brought to a most beautiful and comely order; and will not that fill you? In the book of Ecclesiastes you read of Solomon speaking of injustice, chap. iii. 16, 'Moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.' In the very place where I thought judgment would have been, wickedness was there; and in the place where I thought righteousness would have been, iniquity was there. What then? 'I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.' God's righteous ones, that now hunger and thirst after righteousness, make much of this text, you shall be filled; for there is a time that God will judge the righteous and the wicked; there is a time for every purpose, for every work, and you shall be filled.

And all the desires of all righteous persons since the beginning of the world shall be satisfied. From Abel that was killed by Cain, so all the patriarchs, and apostles, and prophets, and martyrs, and saints, all in their generations they did hunger after righteousness; righteous Abel, and so the rest: yea, their blood doth call to the righteous God that he would manifest righteousness in the world. 'O God, my righteousness,' saith David; and so of others. Now, when the time comes that all the prayers of all the servants of God, that ever they sent up unto God, when their prayers shall come to be all heard and all granted, surely it will be a blessed time. That will fill them. Will not that satisfy thee, to have every prayer of every righteous servant of God from the beginning of the world fully answered and fully made good what they desire. Surely this will satisfy thee. Blessed art thou, for thou shalt be satisfied.

And for the satisfying of the righteous that are crying to God against the unrighteous dealings in the world, do but consider some texts of Scripture: there are a great many very famous scriptures tending this way, that there is a time coming that righteousness shall prevail in the world. In Isa. i. 26, 'And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city;' and in Isa. iii. 10, 'Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.' Mark, Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him; ye that are righteous you are afraid that things will not go well. 'Say to the

righteous, that it shall go well with them.' Why? 'For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.' You go on in a righteous way, committing your righteousness to God; be content and quiet a while, you shall eat the fruit of your doings, and you shall be satisfied. Here is a promise that you should feed upon when any deal in an unrighteous way with you. It would be endless to speak of all the scriptures which shew how that shall prevail in the world. In Isa. xi. 4, there, speaking of Christ, he shews how he will come and judge the world with righteousness; Isa. lx. 17, 'I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness;' chap. lxi. 10. I could name near upon twenty scriptures out of the prophecy of Isaiah, that prophesy of a glorious time of righteousness, that violence and oppression shall be done away. My brethren, comfort we ourselves in this, whatsoever violence and wrong there is, yet there is a time, and we hope it may be even here in this world, that the Lord will deliver his people from violence, wrongs, oppression, and all unrighteousness. The exactor shall be righteousness: chap. lx. 17, where the Lord makes a gracious promise to his church, 'For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.' This is apparently a prophecy of the times of the church. There are such times that the officers that the people of God shall have to deal with, shall be nothing but peace to them; and those that are their exactors they shall be even righteousness itself; they shall be as righteous as their hearts would desire. Is not that a blessed time when all men placed in public places shall be nothing but peace to the saints of God, and never wrong them more? All those that were exactors before of them, that would lay heavy burdens upon them, the Lord will make them righteousness itself. No marvel though Christ doth express this by hunger and thirst, because it will be such a glorious time. And Christ knew that there was a very glorious time coming for righteousness to prevail in the world; and the saints of God knew it in those times a great deal more I believe than we do now. The people of God they knew there would be such times; and therefore Justin Martyr, that is one of the most ancient that we have, saith, there is no man or Christian but he doth believe such times a-coming. Speaking of the glorious times of the church and people of God, wherein they shall be delivered from the violence, wrongs, and oppressions of ungodly men; none a Christian but doth believe it. And this interpretation of hungering and thirsting after righteousness being not so usual among you, yet I verily believe they in the primitive times would as suddenly have pitched upon such an interpretation as any. So in 2 Pet. iii. 13, mark there

how the glorious condition of the saints is described: 'Nevertheless,' saith he, 'we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth,—not only new heavens, but a new earth. What is that?—'wherin dwelleth righteousness.' And this is, according to the promise that we have in Isa. lxy. 17, out of which chapter my text is taken, according to the opinion of all divines, 'Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.' A time of the church's restoration. Now a verse or two before this out of the same chapter is the scripture where my text is taken; for saith the text in ver. 13, 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed,' &c. My servants that now hunger, they shall be satisfied; when you that are full, you shall hunger, &c. So that it doth appear that Christ had a reference to such times. You that do hunger and thirst after such times—you, looking into the Scripture, find promises there, that though the Lord shall suffer wicked men in the world to prevail a while, and unrighteousness to have the upper hand; yet you find glorious promises in the Scripture, that there shall be a time that righteousness shall be magnified in the world, wherein the sceptre of the kingdom of Christ, that is, the sceptre of righteousness, shall prevail. And you long after these times. Oh that these times would come! Why, blessed are you, they shall come—certainly they shall come; you shall be satisfied. As if he should say, There shall be as glorious times as you can think of, and righteousness shall prevail as much as possibly you can imagine; you shall be filled. And so in Micah—almost all the prophecies are full of this—vii. 9, there you shall find that that time wherein Micah spake was a time wherein much unrighteousness was in the world; but now mark, the prophet speaks in the person of the church, and, saith he, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.' The church complains that now they did suffer most fearfully; ver. 4, 'The best of them is a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.' And so he goes on in shewing the unrighteousness which there was in those times; ver. 5, 'Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's

enemies are they of his own house.' But now mark, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me;' and in ver. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me,' &c. As if he should say, Lord, I will not murmur, but I will wait for thee, for I have sinned against thee; though I do not deserve such unrighteous dealings at the hands of men, yet, in respect of thee, I deserve that thou shouldst use them as instruments to afflict me, therefore I will wait upon the Lord; 'He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.' This text should help us against the unrighteous dealings that are here; and this makes way to the application of all.

Let the consideration of this point be a means to take away that great stumbling-block that now is before men, at which they stumble—namely, that God suffers unrighteous men to prevail as they do. Be not offended at this, for there is a time that righteousness shall reign, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come and appear in his glory, and take the throne unto himself; he shall judge the world in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31. This meditation doth mightily help those that are godly, that I am speaking of; whereas others that are not acquainted with this, when they see the unrighteous world to prevail, they will fall to them and be on their side: but the saints will keep still to the righteous, and be still on their side, for they know there is a time that righteousness shall prevail. The Scripture speaks of the root of the righteous that shall prevail, and the Scripture speaks of the fruit of the righteous that shall come forth from that root, though it be under storms and tempests for a while.

And then, in the second place, if those that hunger and thirst after righteousness be blessed, then certainly cursed are unrighteous men, cursed are those that seek after unrighteousness. What! shall Jesus Christ pronounce those that seek after unrighteousness, to promote that in the world, to be blessed? Then if there be man or woman in this place, whose conscience tells them that they love the ways of unrighteousness, that they seek to increase their estates by the ways of unrighteousness, by unrighteous mannan, to gain anything in unjust ways,—thou art the man or woman that dost join with this unrighteous world to uphold the kingdom of darkness in this world. Know that Christ curses thee; it is so implied. When he blesses such as hunger and thirst after righteousness; those are cursed that rather hunger and thirst after the ways of unrighteousness, and care not if they can get anything to themselves, though it be by hook or crook, as we use to say. Oh, fear and tremble for those servants of God that thou

hast dealt unrighteously withal! They cry to God, and tell God of all thine unrighteous dealings, and God hath promised them that they shall be satisfied in their cries, and their cries shall be answered. Whenas this servant of God shall manifest his desires to heaven, O Lord, I have suffered unrighteous dealing from such a man or woman, why, know that these cries do lie in heaven to be answered one day; and what will become of thee then? We read in Acts xxiv. 25, that when Paul was preaching of temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, before Felix, though Paul was a poor prisoner at the bar, and Felix sat upon the bench as a judge, yet he made him to tremble. What was Paul's sermon of? It was of righteousness and judgment to come. As if he should say, Well, though you think you have me in your hands, and may do what you please, yet there is a righteous God that will call all over again; and he being conscious to himself of unrighteousness, did shake and tremble, though at the preaching of a poor prisoner at the bar. You are here now hearing a poor minister of God preaching to you that righteousness shall prevail. What will become of you then? Let there be taken away from some rich men all that they have gotten by unrighteous dealings, and you may leave them poor enough. Now cursed is that estate and those enjoyments that are gotten by unrighteousness—thou must vomit it all up again. And therefore the Lord now strike thy heart, that thou mayest be willing to restore! Now be a friend of righteousness so far as to restore, and labour to undo thy unrighteousness as much as possibly thou canst, that thou mayest have comfort in the day of Jesus Christ, when he shall come to manifest righteousness before men and angels.

And then the last thing should have been this, To encourage all the servants of God to go on in the ways of righteousness, follow after righteousness, and seek righteousness. In Rev. xxii., about ver. 11, 'He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.' Are there any of you that the Lord hath sown the seed of righteousness in your hearts, that your hearts do now cleave to the love of righteousness, you can say, Well, let God do with me what he will, I will walk righteously. I will walk by rule, though God hath cast me into such a generation, where I see the generality of men and women to be unrighteous. Yet I am resolved to walk by rule in righteousness, and commit all to God. Well, be of good comfort, thou shalt be satisfied, and 'be righteous still.' The Lord, the righteous God, he is with thee; and Christ, who is thy righteousness, he is with thee to fill thy soul with that that shall satisfy thee for ever. I will but give you one scripture which doth shew that both these shall be satisfied; the wicked shall be satisfied, and the righteous shall be satisfied: Prov. xiv. 14, 'The

backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways : and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.' Mark, every man shall be satisfied one way or other. The apostate, such as was forward and made show of religion, and yet to provide for himself in an unrighteous way, because he would not trust God to make provision for himself and family, he would

depart from righteousness. Well, saith the Holy Ghost, they shall be satisfied. God will fill them by giving them their own way ; but a good man is satisfied from himself. Such as are good and righteous, and walk according to the rule of righteousness, peace be to them. They are now blessed, and they shall certainly be satisfied.'

SERMON XV.

OR,

TIMES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PROMISED TO THE CHURCH.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.'—MAT. v. 6.

THERE is a great blessedness in this hunger and thirst after righteousness, and that I have shewed in many particulars. When the time comes that God shall appear to all the world righteous in his ways, it will be a blessed time indeed. The saints that know anything of it, cannot but hunger and thirst for that time. God's omniscience, his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, faithfulness, will then be glorified in another way than now they are. Then all the groans and sighs and complaints of the saints shall be heard by God, and it shall appear that they are heard ; then all their appeals unto God shall be examined and judged ; all their endeavours and services shall be rewarded ; all their sufferings shall be recompensed. And the end why God hath suffered so much unrighteousness in the world for so long a time shall be declared ; their enemies shall be subdued and ashamed ; all their innocency shall be cleared, all secrets shall be disclosed ; the base ends of men shall be discovered, mistakes shall be rectified, the vanity of the plots and designs and ways of the wisdom of the flesh shall be manifested ; and this will be a blessed time. Oh when will that time come, say the saints, that this will be, that there shall be this righteousness ?

And the rather I took it to be the meaning here, because I find so many promises in the Scripture of an estate of the church that shall be wherein righteousness shall prevail, as in 2 Pet. iii. 13, 'New heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness.' Now that it is meant of a state of the church it is plain by comparing it with Isa. lxxv. 17. In Isa. xi. 4, there is a promise that is suitable to this in the

connexion of it with that that went before, 'Blessed are the meek ;' and then, 'blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Mark now, 'But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.' And then, ver. 5, 'And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. This is the promise of Christ, and many such promises in Isaiah, for there is no prophet more full of the prophecy of the state of the church, what yet it shall be, as Isaiah : chap. xxxii. 16, 17, 'Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.' When was this ever yet fulfilled ? There is such a time that the saints do long for, and in Isa. xxxiii. 5, 'The Lord is exalted ; for he dwelleth on high : he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.' There is a time of filling Zion with judgment and righteousness ; and in Isa. lx. you have many expressions, one of which we spake to the last time : 'I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.' And it follows, 'Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise,' when God shall make their exactors to be righteousness to them ; and in ver. 21, 'They people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever.' Here is that suitable to the former promise, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the