

SERMON III.

OR,

A DESCRIPTION OF A POOR-SPIRITED MAN.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' &c.—MAT. v. 3.

DIVERS things have been spoken by way of preface to this excellent sermon of Christ: you have heard the scope of it. First, to shew unto the world wherein true blessedness doth consist. That that men are so much deceived in, that there is so great a mistake about. And there is nothing more contrary unto blessedness in the world's esteem, than what Christ pronounces to be blessed. Blessedness is the enjoyment of the last end, and so of the chief good that the rational creature is capable of; for it is proper to the rational creature. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'

There are men of poor base spirits that are far from blessedness; as,

First, Such men as have their designs, ends, and aims only in money, and base and unworthy things; that mind no higher things but to eat and drink, and to have pleasure to the flesh. But as for God, and Christ, and heaven, and eternity, the gospel and the word, they are notions to them; but give them money, and meat, and drink, and in that they account themselves happy. Why, here is a poor, sordid, base-spirited man; when such things are adequate to a man's spirit, then he hath a base and poor spirit. The spirits of the saints are all raised spirits high; though they look upon themselves as unworthy of any crumb of bread, yet they account heaven and earth not sufficient to be their portion.

But secondly,—to add two or three particulars, to shew you a base, poor-spirited man,—A man that when he sets about any excellent work, he is presently discouraged with every little difficulty; here is a poor-spirited man.

The first was so base as they mind no excellent work at all; they have no excellent thing in their aims, in their thoughts. But suppose by seeing of others they do begin to set upon some work that hath an excellency in it, but as soon as ever they meet with any difficulty in it, they are dead in the nest presently—they are quite discouraged, and fall down and leave all; he is a poor, base-spirited man that, that is hindered either from a work by foreseeing

of difficulty, or when he meets with a difficulty he is discouraged, when he meets with any opposition, yea, if it be but a mere fancy that he meets with, he is discouraged. Some that have begun to set upon religion, a mock, a scorn, every little opposition presently discourages them, and they turn off. And others in any public business that concerns church or commonwealth, though being put upon by others, they set upon it a little, but if they be opposed, or find it difficult and hard, their hearts are down; oh, these are poor-spirited men!

And then, further, Men that are selfish, that are narrow-spirited men, that are only for themselves, and let the public go which way it will, they regard not that; but if they can provide for themselves, there is all they look at. Oh, these are poor, base-spirited men likewise, and come not to the height and excellency of spirit that many heathens have come.

And then, lastly, Such as are led aside like fools by every temptation, every little temptation can lead them aside like fools to their own slaughter. For a man though he is convinced in his conscience that such and such things he should not do, yet he is not able to resist the temptation; let but his companions come and call him to an alehouse or tavern, he cannot resist it. For a man not to be able to stand against a temptation, but to be led by every poor temptation like a fool to his own destruction, here is a base, poor-spirited man—a man that hath no excellency, no natural excellency of spirit in him. And yet how ordinary is this in those that look full highly: they are men of poor and mean spirits. This poverty of spirit that is in many, it is a curse of God that is upon them; and it is a heavy curse when such men are in public place—they are causes of hindering a great deal of good, and doing a great deal of mischief. It is a miserable curse, either upon kingdoms or countries, when the Lord by his providence shall so order things that men that have no excellency of spirit in them, but are poor, base-spirited men, should sit at the stern and have no

power to manage things. Oh this, wherever it is, is a grievous affliction ! and therefore we have cause to pray, that those that are in place of power that they should have spirits suitable to the places wherein they are, not men of sordid and low spirits. Well, these are not the poor spirits that are here blessed.

Who then ? I the last day shewed you three or four several poor-spirited men that are blessed ; but to let that pass, and to proceed to that that further remains—and that, indeed, is of great concernment, and is more close to the words. The poverty of the saints, even godly men, though they have grace in them, yet still they are spiritually poor. Now this poor in spirit is one that doth apprehend and is sensible of his spiritual poverty, together with several other things that were mentioned before. But now, I say, suppose God hath given grace, yet still there is a great deal of poverty.

As, in the first place, That grace thou hast, it hath need of continual supply. There is no Christian can live upon the grace he hath without new supply. It is not with a Christian now as it was with Adam—to live upon the stock that was given him, and so able to act by it now. God will not trust thee with the stock of grace ; it is not in thy hand, but in the hand of Christ : and this is the condition of the strongest godly man in the world ; he must go daily and continually to Christ to fetch new supply, or he cannot subsist. The poor condition that we are now in, in respect of what Adam was in, may be set out in this similitude : a man that is set up to trade with a stock, and so is able to go on in his trade, and hath skill in it, his father lets him go on till such time as he proves an ill husband, and breaks and loses all, and runs into debt. Yet his father afterwards takes pity on him, will set him up again, but so as he will not trust him with the stock any more ; he will give the stock into some trusty friend's hand, and his son shall go every day to give an account to his friend, and to fetch money from him, and to return to him every day, because his father will not trust him any more. This is just our condition. In Adam we did receive a stock of grace, and God enabled us to go on and trade with it for himself ; but all mankind fell in him ; we turned bankrupts—we lost that stock. Now the Lord is pleased to set up again those that he hath chosen for himself, to trade again in a way of godliness, but so as God will not trust his stock in their hands. The stock, therefore, of God's grace, it is now in Christ, in our head, and we must have supply daily from him. And this is the poor condition that we are in—this spiritual poverty even of the saints.

Secondly, The poverty of the saints consists in this : the graces that they have are but small. Godly men and women, though they have grace bestowed

upon them, yet for the most part it is so small as they can scarce know whether they have grace or not—I say, for the most part it is so. Now that is a poor condition ; thou art a very poor creature, for though thou hast grace, yet it is so little as you cannot tell whether you have any or no. Though God hath given thee grace, yet how often art thou at a stand in thy thoughts about thy grace, whether there be any or no in thy heart. Thy grace is like a little spark wrapped up in a heap of embers, so that the maid is raking a good while before she can see it. Oh, how long art thou a-raking many times in thy heart, in the examination of thy heart, before thou canst see one spark of grace, so as thou canst say, This is a spark of true grace ! Surely thou art but poor, then.

Thirdly, Even those that are godly they are very poor, for they are always needy. We use to say of a man or woman that is always in want, and always complaining, surely they are poor people. Why now, all godly people they are always needy people, always in want, always complaining ; though indeed they have cause to be thankful too, yet they have cause of complaint in themselves, and therefore poor.

Fourthly, Their services are very poor services that they do perform. All their duties and services that they do, when they do but look over them, what poor things do they see they are ! how unworthy to be tendered up unto such an infinite great and glorious God as the Lord is ! They are ashamed of the best of their services, they are so poor, when they consider how unbecoming they are for such a God as they are to tender them up unto : they are poor in their duties, in their services.

Fifthly, Take them at the best, and they are very poor and weak ; but ordinarily, yea, always, there is such mixture in what they do, as it doth deserve to be rejected. Considering how mingled both graces and duties are with corruption and evil, their services are a poor thing indeed—so poor, as were it not for the covenant of grace, the righteousness of Christ and his merits, it were impossible but that the Lord should cast all that comes, from the best man in the world, as filth and dung back again in his face.

Sixthly, Again, poor are the very saints, the godly, for little temptations doth overcome them, at least unsettle them and put them out of frame. Though they have not such poor spirits as we spake of before, to be led like fools by every evil temptation to that which would ruin them, yet thus far they are poor in spirit, that little temptations do unsettle them and put them out of frame. Oh how often hath it been so ! You cannot but be conscious of this, that when God through his grace hath put you into frame, yet a little temptation hath put you out of temper again. It may be thou hast been with God,

and hast had some comfortable communion with him, and thou comest out of thy closet, or chamber, and seest but something amiss in the family, and it puts thee quite out of frame again. Oh, what! is this the soul that was with God, and enjoyed such communion with God, but it may be an hour ago, and yet at every little thing in the family is presently out of frame? What a poor spirit is this! Even the saints are very poor, for they are quickly put out of frame, and unsettled by small temptations.

Seventhly, Poor they are, further, for they have but little ability to help others. There are very few golly people have ability to do any more but even to keep life and soul together, as we use to say. It is even as much as ever they can do to live and to hold their own, to maintain their peace with God; but to be able to be useful to others among whom they live, that very few are. What a deal of do have many golly people to live themselves, to maintain what once they have had; they are ever and anon afraid that they shall one day even perish. As poor people that have even but from hard to mouth they think, Why, though I can get bread now, yet I know not where I shall have it to-morrow, or next week: surely we shall come to beggary one day. Godly people live at such a poor rate for the most part, as they are little useful unto others, and have much ado to provide for themselves. Now here you see the poverty of spirit: first, what our spiritual poverty is naturally—that hath been opened the last time; and now even what the spiritual poverty of the saints is.

But you will say, This doth not make them blessed that they are thus poor; this is part of their misery.

That is true; it is part of their misery that they are poor: but yet blessed are they that are thoroughly apprehensive and sensible of this spiritual poverty of theirs—that come to know this their poverty, and come to be thoroughly affected with this their poverty, they are blessed. There be few in the world who come to understand what their poverty is. Where is the man or woman that knows the poverty that we are in by nature? And then for poverty in respect of weakness of grace, or otherwise, this is taken little notice of; but now blessed are they that do apprehend this, and are sensible of it. Therefore, that you may understand who the blessed one is that Christ speaks of, we must now turn our thoughts to consider of the behaviour of the soul, or the workings of the heart in the sight and in the sense of this spiritual poverty, which makes him to be thus blessed. Now for that there are many particulars, which I shall go over briefly.

As, in the first place, A man that is poor in spirit truly, so as to be blessed, is such a one as looks upon himself as vile and mean; whatsoever outward excel-

lency he hath, yet I am a vile and mean, wretched creature in myself, in respect of this poverty of mine. God hath given me indeed an estate above my brethren, to live comfortably in the world; oh, but what am I in respect of my spiritual state! I that am richer, and have more comings in than others, how many poor servants of God that live in a mean condition outwardly, yet do honour God more in one day than I do in a month, it may be in a year! God hath more service from them in a month perhaps, than he hath from me in a year, or seven years! He looks upon himself as mean and vile, notwithstanding any outward excellency; whatsoever parts of nature that he hath, why, yet he looks upon himself as mean in comparison of others. Oh, this is an excellent thing indeed for a man that hath excellent parts, and yet sees another to have more grace! Perhaps there is some poor man or woman that hath more humility, and more faith, and more sweetness, and more savouriness in their conversation, and more holiness, and more heavenly-mindedness, now he looks upon himself as mean in comparison of that other; though perhaps he is learned, and of esteem in the world, yet because he sees others to excel in grace, he looks upon himself meaner and lower than they. Why, here is a man poor in spirit that is pronounced blessed. Some men are proud of their vices, but the poor in spirit is humble at the sight of his graces. Carnal hearts are puffed up with that that should make them ashamed; but a gracious heart sees enough in his graces to make him humble—in his love, knowledge, faith. In that that is his best parts, he sees enough to make him humble: and blessed are such poor.

Secondly, Hence he thinks it not much if he receive not such respect and honour as others do. Why, though God by his providence order things so that others have respect and honour, and many encouragements in the world, I have no cause to envy, nor to be troubled; I have rather cause to wonder at what I have; it is not for me to expect such encouragements as others have, for I am a poor creature. Thus, you know, poor people whose hearts are subdued by their poverty, when they see others that are brave in the world, Ay, they may do thus, but it is not so for us; so those that are poor in spirit, when they see others that God blesses, and have respect and honour, he then thinks thus with himself, But it is not for me to expect this, I am a poor vile creature.

Thirdly, One that is poor in spirit is one that doth admire at every little good that he doth receive, that it is so much; he wonders at every affliction that it is no more; every mercy he thinks it very great, and is very thankful; and every affliction he wonders it is so little. Quite contrary to the world: they are troubled their afflictions are so much, and that their mercies are so little; but a poor-spirited man, he

wonders that his mercies are so much, and that his afflictions are so little : and therefore is thankful for every little. Poor people whose spirits are subdued with their poverty, give them but a halfpenny, they are thankful ; so a poor-spirited man or woman, he admires at mercy, and is thankful at everything that God affords to him ; and if there be an affliction, he doth not murmur and repine, but wonders that God doth lay his hand so tenderly upon him as he doth.

Fourthly, A poor-spirited man is one that is often craving ; he is a praying man, a beggar, that is often begging for an alms. There is none that are truly poor in spirit, but are great praying Christians : God always hears from them, and God is not weary of such beggars. In Prov. xviii. 23, ' The poor useth entreaties ; ' and so in Prov. x. 14. Now such kind of men as can live without prayer, and can go day after day without seeking of God in prayer, God hears but little of them ; they are grown high and rich—as a company of the wantons of our age, that scorn and contemn duty, and think that they are grown so rich, and have so much comfort, and so much assurance and grace, that they have no such need as others have. Well, but when they are so flush and high, blessed are the poor. Those that are needy, and see themselves thus, so as to be begging at the throne of grace ; those that God hears much from at his throne of grace, these are the blessed ones.

Fifthly, The poor, they are the admirers of free grace, and the great extollers of free grace ; whatever they have they look upon it as free grace, and overlook themselves, overlook their duties when they have done ; they are as much in duties as any, but when they have done they overlook all ; they stand not upon anything, but it is free grace only that is admired by them. Certainly these are the honourers of free grace.

And from hence, in the sixth place. The poor in spirit, this is his behaviour—he is emptied of himself ; whatsoever he hath in himself, or whatsoever he doth, he dares not rest upon it, not for his spiritual and eternal good, but is delivered as it were from himself, looking upon himself as undone, utterly undone in respect of what he is, of what he hath, or of what he can do. One that is emptied, I say, of himself, and of every creature, and is in a preparation now for to trust only in the grace that is without him, in the grace of God that is tendered in the gospel, he dares not lay the weight of his eternal estate upon anything that is in himself, or what comes from himself, but merely upon the grace of God revealed in Christ in the gospel. This is the poor-spirited man that is thus blessed. One that commits himself to God, and trusts in God ; so do the poor. Thus you have it in Ps. x. 14, ' The poor committeth himself unto thee ; '

he is emptied of himself, and commits himself to God ; commits his soul to him, and all his ways ; he dares not trust to his own wisdom for the guiding of him, not in any of his affairs, but especially for the guiding of him in the great affairs that concern his eternal good. And in Zeph. iii. 12, the Scripture saith that the Lord would leave in the midst of them an afflicted and a poor people, and they should trust in the name of the Lord. It is the poor that commit themselves to God, and that trust in the name of the Lord. Now blessed are these poor, that is, such poor as from a sight of their own emptiness, vileness, wickedness, and inability to help themselves, shall give up themselves to the grace of God revealed in the gospel, and commit themselves and all their ways to be guided by God, and are willing to live upon alms for his present and for his eternal estate. It is in the nature of man ever to be seeking to have some righteousness of his own ; and that is the reason that men can have no comfort. Those that have their consciences awakened, can have no comfort till they be able to do thus and thus, and be able to perform duties after such a manner, and overcome corruptions thus and thus. Thou wilt not come, as it were, a mere beggar to God, as one that hath nothing, but thou wouldst fain bring something to God. But the Lord will have thee come as a mere beggar, as one that hath nothing at all, and to lie down flat before him, stripped of all, even of thy rags ; for, you know, many poor people they are proud of their very rags. And so it is with the hearts of men ; though they have nothing but their civil righteousness, yet that they will be proud of. Now the Lord will strip thee of all, and make thee come naked before him, and be willing to live upon alms for eternity. Now it is hard for a man to live upon alms for a little time, but to live upon alms all the days of one's life is harder ; but now to live upon alms for eternity ! And yet this poor spirit is such an one, as is so sensible of his own poverty, as can commit itself to God in such a way as to be content to live upon alms, even for eternity ; and blessed are these poor.

Seventhly, A poor-spirited man is one that is willing that God should choose his condition. We use to say that beggars must be no choosers, but now I am speaking of one whose spirit is suitable to his spiritual poverty. Now if thou be so spiritually poor, then do not think that thou must be a chooser ; no, thou must not choose what thy comforts shall be, or thy ability shall be, or what thy worth shall be, or any wages shall be, or at what time or means God shall come in unto thee, thus or thus. No, thou must leave that wholly to God ; only this, thou must look up to God for mercy. O Lord, let me have mercy. But how, and when, or at what time, and what degree and measure, that I leave wholly to God ;

only my soul's desire is, that the Lord would have mercy upon me. Many do discover that there is not poverty of spirit in them by this thing, for when they seek to God for mercy, if they have not comfort coming in as they would, their spirits are froward, even with God himself: such a spirit is not down. But blessed is the poor in spirit, that is, those that shall lie down flat before the Lord, and be willing to be at God's finding. Here I am, and let God do with me whatsoever he will; I lie absolutely at his mercy, and I do not expect to have myself to be chooser of anything that I do desire.

Eighthly, Those that are truly poor in spirit, they look upon others that God hath blessed with eminency of grace, and bless them in their souls; they think their condition high. Oh, such and such do I see excellency of grace in; oh how happy is their condition, saith a poor-spirited man or woman. As those people that are poor, when they come by those that have great houses and great comings in, say they are happy men indeed. So those that are poor in spirit, when they see others that have eminency of grace, they look upon those as such as have obtained excellency indeed; they look not upon the rich and honourable in the world as the most excellent, but those that have the greatest eminency of grace, they look upon them and bless them. Oh how happy were it if I could walk so with God as such do, if I could overcome my corruptions as such, if I could prize and profit by the word as such! oh how happy should I think myself to be! This is a good poverty of spirit indeed.

Ninthly, And further, blessed are the poor. The poor in spirit are such as are willing to wait. Though God doth not come according to their desires, yet still they are content to wait upon God. God shall choose what the thing is that shall be given them, and they are willing to wait. So you have it in Zech. xi. 11. Those two are put together: 'And it was broken in that day'—that is, the staff of beauty and of hands was broken—'and the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.' Men that are men of estates, and rich men, when they come to a door for business, if so be that they cannot have presently what they desire, away they will go; they will not stand waiting. Why? because they are rich, and so proud in a suitable way to their riches. But now, one that is poor and comes for an alms is content to wait, especially if he knows that there is no other door for him to go to at that time; if, indeed, he thinks he may have it at some other door, he will not wait, but if he comes for an alms, and he must have it here or nowhere, he is content then to wait. So those that are truly poor in spirit, they are content to wait at God's gates, knowing that there is no other door that they can have

their alms at but only at the gates of God. Thou hast been seeking God, it may be a month or longer, half a year or a year, and yet canst find nothing; oh, but if thou canst have mercy at last, thy condition is happy. Thus a poor-spirited creature will say, and so will be content to be waiting all the days of his life.

Tenthly, One that is poor hath an awful respect to God and his word; he is one that is struck with an awful reverence of the greatness of God and the authority of his word. This you have in Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.' You have those put together, the contrite and poor, and that trembles at God's word; when he comes to the word and hears it opened, he looks upon it as having a dreadful authority in it; he looks upon the word as a thing to be above him, and his heart trembles lest he should not give that due respect to the word that he ought to do; and when a promise is revealed, he trembles for fear that it should not belong to him, and the divine lustre that he sees in the word to be so much above him, causes his heart to fear and tremble before the Lord; this is a poor-spirited man. It is opposite to that boldness of spirit that is in man, which is from hence, that he thinks he hath something to bear him out. But now one that is poor in spirit looks upon nothing in himself that can bear him out against anything that is in the word; no, it is the word that must prevail, whatsoever becomes of me either for my present or eternal estate. It is the word that must prevail, and therefore he gives an awful reverential respect to the word when he hears it.

Eleventhly, One that is poor in spirit is such a one that hath a melting heart likewise at the word. A little thing in God's word strikes him presently, and will cause his heart to melt; as you shall see men and women that are truly poor indeed—not your ordinary vagrants and rogues, that will make themselves so in illness, but those that are truly poor—you shall find if you do but speak to them, a melting spirit presently in them; anything you say almost will make their hearts to melt within them. So one that is poor in spirit hath a melting spirit at the word; a little thing from God works upon him, and he doth not stand out against the word so as others do; he hath not a heart to give the word a rebound so as others have, but when the word comes, there is a yielding of spirit unto the word. Now all these put together that have been named, will plainly demonstrate who that man or woman is that is pronounced thus blessed here by our Saviour Christ.

Now if you would ask and demand why it is that God hath such a respect and regard to such as are thus poor in spirit, only a word or two.

The great reason why the Lord hath such regard unto such, it is because this disposition doth best serve the great design that God hath of glorifying himself in the world, namely, the lifting up of his free grace. God would have his glory from the children of men. But what glory? The lifting up of free grace, that is the glory that God would have above all other. God would have the glory of his power, the glory of his wisdom, the glory of his bounty, of his patience; ay, but that is not the glory that God doth look at most; but that he might magnify his free grace in his Son, that is the glory that God doth most delight in. Now of all dispositions in the world, this disposition of poverty of spirit is that that serves God's end and God's design best; and therefore no marvel though God doth so much accept of it.

Secondly, Such a disposition makes the soul to be conformable even unto Jesus Christ. We know that Christ was willing to be poor, and the Scripture tells us that Christ did empty himself; he was willing to lay aside that glory that he had, and to come and empty himself and be in the form of a servant. Now when Christ shall see a spirit that hath a conformity to his, Christ looks upon it and saith, Here is one that is conformable to my spirit. I was willing to be poor; and so is such a one. I was willing to empty myself, and to be anything for the furtherance of the glory of my Father; and so do I see here such a poor creature that is willing to empty itself of anything that it hath, and is willing to give up itself for the glory of my Father and me. Oh, blessed are these poor! But how few of such as these shall we find in the world! We tell you who they are if we could find them; that they are such as are thus and thus qualified, and whose hearts do work after such a manner as this is; but, O Lord, where are they? Ordinarily we find that men's spirits are jolly, high, proud, stately, surly, stiff, stubborn, rebellious, and bold in the ways of wickedness, this is the juice of men's spirits; they scorn this kind of poverty of spirit; their hearts are up, and they stand upon themselves, and stiff they are in their own way. It is true in Isa. lxvi., 'That the Lord that dwells on high, in heaven, he doth look upon the poor and the contrite;' he looks upon them. Oh, but where shall God have objects, such objects to behold? How few such objects are there in the world! Now cursed are the proud, cursed are the haughty in spirit, the stubborn and the stout-hearted: the Scripture speaks most dreadful things against them; but we are not now to speak to them, neither am I willing to defer what comfort Christ hath for those that are poor in spirit, by turning aside to speak to those of haughty and proud spirits. Therefore I am to address myself to the opening of that that Christ means when he saith that they are blessed. Many

things might be said for the opening of their blessedness, but for the present there is only one scripture that I will apply to those that are poor in spirit. Those that are such, whosoever they are that are in the presence of God this day, whose consciences can tell them that, though in much weakness, yet they can find such workings of spirit, I will give you but one text to uphold your spirits till the next day, and then we shall come to open what Christ saith of you, that yours is the kingdom of heaven. The text is in Luke iv. 18: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book.' Christ comes to the synagogue, and, a book being opened, he doth find this place of Scripture out of Isaiah, which was a prophecy concerning himself. The meaning of it is this—that God the Father hath anointed Jesus Christ his Son, appointed him solemnly to that office, to come himself into the world, and to preach good tidings to the poor in spirit. As if God should say to his Son, Son, I have many of my poor servants in the world who are poor in spirit, who are sensible of their own wretchedness and poverty; now I appoint thee and anoint thee to go and preach unto them the glad tidings of salvation; and be you sure to comfort them, be you sure to speak peace to them; pour oil into their wounds, and relieve and refresh them. I see that they are ready to be discouraged, but do you encourage them. I appoint you to this. You will say then presently these are blessed, whereas God the Father from all eternity hath set Jesus Christ, as it were, apart, appointed him to this office to preach comfort to thy soul. This one scripture to one that is truly poor in spirit is worth a thousand worlds. For, what! saith such a one, doth God regard me? Yes, such a regard he hath, as he hath appointed his Son to that office to take care of thee, to comfort thee and to help thee; and Christ must be unfaithful in his work if he doth not preach comfort to thee. This care hath God of the poor; whereas he doth, as it were, slight, neglect, contemn, and scorn the rich ones of the world. Then he sends empty away; but for these that are poor in spirit he hath given Christ a charge over them. Now were there nothing else said but this, that thou hast such a promise as this is, that Christ, when he comes into the world, must come and preach glad tidings to thee, it were abundant mercy; and so in effect the very scope of the gospel is to preach glad tidings to the poor. And indeed we shall shew that that is a special thing that is meant by 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven;' not only that they shall go to heaven when they die,

but by 'kingdom of heaven' is often meant the ministry of the gospel, and that is one especial thing intended here, that the riches of the gospel, the state of

the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, all the good of the gospel, doth belong to those that are poor in spirit.

SERMON IV.

OR,

PROMISES TO THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' &c.—MAT. V. 3.

I SHALL now briefly give you a few promises that are made in Scripture to such as are God's poor, and then proceed to the blessedness that Christ pronounces of them—namely, that 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Now for the promises to those that are poor.

First, God thinks upon these. It may be thy friends think not of thee. Thou art a poor man or woman, and yet godly; thou hast rich friends that perhaps have their full dishes and want nothing, but have all coming in according to their hearts' desires, and they think not of thee: ay, but if you be one of God's poor, as hath been described, God thinks of you, P's. xl. 17.

Secondly, The Lord looks towards the poor as an object that he takes content in; he doth not only think of you, but 'his eye is upon you.' Poor men when they pass by others, they scarce have a look from them, but God's eye is continually upon them for good; so you have it in Isa. lxvi. 2, 'He looks to the contrite and poor.'

Thirdly, He so looks as he would not have his dreadfulness to daunt thy heart; so in Isa. xlv. he begins it thus: 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; he raises up his glory to shew what a God he is. Alas! now may a poor soul say, oh, how glorious is God! his glory will daunt my heart. How shall I be able to stand before him! Nay, though heaven be his throne, and earth be his footstool, yet 'he will look to him that is of a poor spirit, and that trembles at his word.' As if he should say, Let no poor soul be daunted with my glory, for it is for their good, and no hurt at all to them.

The fourth is this: The Lord he prepares his good-

ness for the poor, Ps. lxxviii. 10. Perhaps thou hast not mercy for the present as thou desirest; but God is preparing all this while mercy for thee, and preparing thee for mercy.

Fifthly, The Lord hears the poor. It may be poor people may petition to others and they cannot be heard, but if the rich petition they can be heard; but the Lord he hears the poor. You have many scriptures for that, Ps. lxix. 33; and we find the psalmist makes it a rise of his prayer, because he is so poor and needy, P's. cix. 22—'For I am poor and needy'—that God should hear him the rather; and so P's. lxxxvi. the rise of his petition is, that God should hear him because he is so poor.

Sixthly, The Lord will not have the expectations of the poor to be frustrated. Poor men may wait and wait long enough, and yet may fail at the last. But now if thou heest one of this poor spirit, the Lord will not have thy expectation to be frustrated, but there shall come good of it at last, Ps. ix. 18.

Seventhly, The Lord will not forget the poor, Ps. ix. 12. Others may forget them, it may be, even when they have granted their petitions; but the Lord will not forget the poor. Many such kind of promises doth the Lord make to those that are of poor spirits. But what do we speak to particular promises? we have one in the text instead of all, 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' This hath all promises joined together in one. Now from the words before, we come to search into the bowels of them; from that that doth appear at present view, you have these three or four notes: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Obscrv. 1. The first is this, That God loves to honour those that are willing to debase themselves.