

face.' That people when they were under them that their own consciences told them that their ministry was unsavoury, and they got no good by it, and that they mixed a great deal of superstitious trash; and these men, though they did tyrannise over them, yea, though they did make spoil of their goods; and that could not have a child buried but at a mighty rate, and yet notwithstanding all that they suffered under them, yet their hearts could close with them still rather than those that come to preach the truths of the gospel to them for the salvation of their souls. I wondering at this disposition of men's spirits, it brought me to think of that scripture in 2 Cor. xi. 20; the meaning is this, saith the apostle St Paul, when I come to preach the savoury truths of the gospel, your hearts are smitten; but if a man comes and teacheth false truths, you will bear with him. Is not this scripture fulfilled amongst many at this day? they would be content to bear anything from those that were unsavoury, they could bear their ministry among them, but for the faithful ministers of God, every word that proceedeth from them offendeth them; this is an argument of unsavoury spirits.

Lastly, Had I to speak to such as are young ministers, I should give a rule of direction to them to take a wise course to keep up their honour. There is no such way to keep up their honour in that way

that God hath set them in, as in a savouriness in his ministry and in his life. Let wicked men in taverns scorn at you, and say what they will of you, yet on their sick-beds they will be forced in their conscience to say otherwise of you. Let not ministers fret and vex when they lose repute; let them consider whether they have not lost some of their savour, and labour to be savoury, and then they need not stand for honour, for God will honour them. Certainly Austin speaks of this very excellently. A man cannot be trod upon except he be inferior, except he be under another; he is not under that doth suffer in his body— if so be that his heart be fixed in heaven, he is not under any man. This is to be thus applied, that is, let a man come and basely submit himself to the lust of any man; but let a man in his doctrine keep above the contentment of the lust of the flesh, and let his doctrine be evangelical, his life heavenly and holy, he cannot be trodden upon, his name will be above them all, above all that can be east upon him. How savoury is the very memory of those that have been precious in former times, nay, lately; they lived above the content of men, therefore they could not be trodden upon, God hath preserved their names from generation to generation; therefore let ministers and let Christians labour to keep their savour, if they would not be trodden under foot of men.

SERMON XL.

OR,

TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS A GREAT HONOUR.

'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.'—MAT. v. 14.

THE salt of the earth, and the light of the world, is a great honour that God puts on his ministers eminently, and on his saints in their degree. Christ having told his disciples what suffering they were like to meet with, for their encouragement he tells them what service the Lord will employ them in however. As if he should say, Men may revile, persecute, and speak all manner of evil on you, yet go on your ways, be not discouraged: 'Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world.' Those who are qualified according to what went before, they indeed only are

fit to have such honour put upon them, as the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and they which are persecuted; these are the men that are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In the 13th verse, which we last finished, there we opened how the ministers of the gospel are the salt of the earth; and those who are in their ministry like salt, had need be in their ministry like light. The more provoking a minister speaks to a people, the more convincing he had need

speak. If he be salt, he had need be light: 'Ye are the light of the world.' It is as high an excellency this with the other almost as could be said of creatures—for a few poor fishermen to be the salt of the earth, to keep it from putrefying, and to be the light of the world. What honour could be said of men more than here is? Luther speaks of this place: * It is an excellent employment, an honour greater than all honour, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Light is an excellent creature; we know but little of it, and herein is discovered man's ignorance. What a poor creature man is! he hath little cause to be proud. There are two things that are most necessary, that we scarce know what to say of them, light and life. They are two things that have much of God in them. By some effects and fruits, we can see some workings of them; but what they are we know not. We find that the most excellent things are called by the name of light. God himself is light, saith the Scripture; and the uttermost of God's glory is light. And Christ he is light; he is called light, the light of the world. The angels they are light; the word, that is called light. Grace in Scripture is called light, the saints they are called light, comfort that is light, God's favour the light of his countenance, prosperity is called light, deliverance from evil is called light, and heaven itself. But here this light that is here spoken of, 'Ye are the light of the world,' it is in reference to the gospel and the ministry of it; and then in their kind and degree even the saints they are the light of the world; but the gospel, and the ministers of it, ye are the light of the world. As if he should say, Ye are now going into the world, and there to be dispensers of the glorious gospel; and this gospel that you are going to carry to the world, it is that light to the world. Ye are those luminaries that are in heaven, that scatter up and down light on the earth; so that first there is implied,

Obs. 1. That all the world is darkness till the gospel comes amongst them; all kingdoms, countries, towns, families, persons, souls, all in darkness till the gospel comes.

First, The world is in darkness. The Scripture sets out man's natural estate by darkness itself; before the gospel comes to any place in the ministry of it, they know not God; 1 Cor. i. 21, 'For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' Men of the greatest parts and abilities, they know not God. Learned men are in darkness till the gospel comes. Oh the poor, the low, the base, mean thoughts that men have of God naturally! what strange conceits have they of the infinite, glorious first being of all beings! The

* On Mat. v. 14.

foolish hearts of men are darkened; they know not the way of light, the rule of light; they know not the way of the right worship of God before the gospel comes; they know not now to worship God aright, but worship God after their own imaginations and inventions. In vain do they worship; they know not the end of man's life—what is the end that God made man for, that happiness and glory that man's nature is capable of, this is not known but when the gospel comes. They understand not what man's estate is naturally; know little of sin, of original corruption, of any breach that is between God and us. They know not what the way is that God hath appointed for reconciling the world to himself. This is a hidden mystery, that the princes of the world have never known; but by the light of the gospel they know nothing of that great work of mediation; they know nothing of the covenant of grace, that second covenant that God hath made with mankind; they know nothing of the excellency of grace. Thus man naturally is in darkness till the gospel comes; hence he doth hold little or nothing of God. He lets the great and glorious things of God pass from him without holding of them; he goeth he knoweth not whither: 1 John ii. 11, 'But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.' He walks in the ways of darkness, and his works are the works of darkness, and he stumbles at everything. He stumbles at the ways of God; every scandal that falls it makes him dislike the ways of God; and every reproach that is cast out, it makes him to judge evil of God's ways. Man naturally is in a dismal condition; he may think he hath comfort, but certainly he hath none; he may think he hath light, but he is far from it. He hath no more than a child that is in the bottom of a dungeon, and was born there. So wicked man in a natural state; he may think that he sees spiritually, but his eyes are carnal. And again their ways are dangerous; they do not know what shall become of them the next step they go, but that they may fall into perdition.

Further, They are ruled by the spirit of darkness, by reason of the darkness that there is in their own spirits. Hence the spirit of darkness and their spirits come to suit one with another more; whether the devil would so much as tempt any other way but by propounding of outward objects, were it not for the sinfulness of our hearts, were very questionable. When he came to tempt Adam when he was in innocency, we only read he came by serpents, and such like suggestions. When he came to tempt our Saviour Christ, he came not to tempt him spiritually but outwardly, taking him up to the top of the mountain, and such like temptations. Therefore, where there is no sin, the devil, that is, the spirit of darkness, cannot suit

himself to the spirit, but only by outward things can present that which is evil. But those that are in darkness, and have their spirits full of darkness, they can be suited to the prince of darkness, that he doth not only propound outward objects to wicked men, but he doth as it were mingle with their spirits, and this is the misery that natural men are in.

Lastly, All the world are so in darkness, that if they be left to themselves they will have their portion in everlasting darkness. It may be many may think that they are not in darkness: but as Christ saith, 'Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye shall have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth;' John ix. 41. The more conceited men are that they are in the light, their sin remaineth so much the rather, or is the more exceeding sinful now than before it was. No man can naturally judge of his natural estate, because he is in darkness: much less judge of spiritual things. Let us never take the judgment of men, because they have great and strong parts of nature, in spiritual things, because their foolish parts are darkened. In dark vaults there are roads and noisome things, and so there are in dark hearts. Ps. lxxix. 20, 'Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitation of cruelty.' It is no marvel though men be so fierce and froward, because in the dark places of their hearts there are the habitations of cruelty. Men are in darkness before the gospel comes; where the light of the gospel comes not, the devil, the prince of darkness, doth rule in a kind of outward way, as well as in a kind of inward way. In some places where they have not heard of the gospel, the people worship the devil in a visible shape. This darkness that men are in naturally, it is that that is opposite to God himself, for God is light: it is that that is hateful to God. Yea, the darkness of men's spirit is not only privative but positive—that is, there is in their hearts an opposition to light, a hatred to light. All the darkness in the world cannot oppose the shining of the light of the least candle. The light of the least candle will prevail against all the darkness of the world; but the darkness that there is in man's heart, there is not the want of the light of things, but there is an opposition in his heart that keeps the light out, that hates the light—their darkness is the shadow of death; hellish darkness, not only that that tends to hellish darkness, but it is the beginning of hell that is in their hearts. No marvel though men do rest on such vain hopes and props of their eternal salvation. Ye are the light of the world: hence the whole world is in darkness. This being the state of man by nature to be thus in darkness, that that brings light into the world it is the gospel, the gospel in the ministry of it, ye are the light. First, Christ he is the light eminently. As that light that was made at first was scat-

tered up and down, at last was brought into the body of the sun: and whereby men come to be lightened it is all in Christ, and so Christ he scattereth up and down in the world by the ministry of the gospel. John i. 8, 9, 'He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Every man that comes into the world that hath any light, he hath it from Christ, that is the true light. It is said of John that he was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light; and that is the work of the ministry, to bear witness of that light. But Christ is that true light: John viii. 12, 'Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' 'I am the light of the world.' Christ is the light, Christ is the gospel: the gospel is nothing but the doctrine of Christ, the good tidings that come unto the world about Jesus Christ: that is the gospel now that is the light of the world, that gives light unto the world—it gives light. First, Light you know it is a most lovely thing: Eccles. xi. 7, 'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing is it for the eyes to behold the sun.' There is no object so amiable to love, so delightful as the beholding of that glory of God that shines in the gospel. There are sweet things to behold there: it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold that light. A poor sinner that hath lived in darkness all his days before, when he comes to have his eyes opened to see the light of the gospel, he stands admiring and wondering, and is amazed at the things that he seeth. The conversion of a sinner is like bringing a poor man out of a dungeon that was born there, which doth come suddenly and seeth the glorious creatures; he seeth the earth, the stars, and men, he cannot but stand amazed at it. Just so is the conversion of a sinner: examine whether you have found the light to be amiable and lovely, that your hearts have been filled with wonder, with seeing those things that you did never see before. The light, as it is pleasant to behold, so the nature of it is to discover things; that that makes manifest is light: Eph. v. 13, 'But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.' That gospel that you bring into the world is that that discovers great things to the world. What doth it make manifest? It makes God himself manifest. Men that lived without a God in the world before, men that had vain and unworthy thoughts of God, now by the preaching of the gospel they come to see God as a God, they behold God in the face of Jesus Christ; then the light of the glory of God appears indeed unto them. So the apostle in the second to the Corinthians, speaking of the light that shines unto the heart of those that God doth work upon. In 2 Cor. iv. 6, 7, 'For God, who com-

manded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not by us.' There may be some glimmering sight of God from the beholding the works of creation and providence, but the soul doth never see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God till he seeth it in the face of Christ. Ye have the glory of God, the knowledge of the glory of God, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The gospel discovers God to the soul; those that come to understand the gospel aright, they can say they could never understand the gospel afore. Again, it discovers men's estates. They never knew the breach that was between God and their souls till now; this is made manifest now to their souls. The foulness of sin can never be known by all the preaching of the law, so as it is known by the preaching of the gospel, when they come to see what the fruit of sin was. Then the happiness of man's nature, the gospel makes that manifest too. Who could ever have thought that the nature of man had been capable of union with the second person, with the Son of God? Before the gospel comes it doth nothing but to satisfy the flesh; but when it comes to hear that man's nature is come to be joined with the second person in the Trinity, surely God hath high things in it. It is the gospel that brings to life and immortality, saith the apostle: 2 Tim. i. 10, 'But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' It is the gospel that brings life and immortality to light. So people that have not been accounted with the gospel, what know they of the glorious things of heaven, and of eternal life? It is the gospel that brings life and immortality, the main and principal thing of the gospel that it makes manifest: it is the way of mediation, a mediator between God and man, how God hath reconciled the world to himself. There are glorious mysteries for the soul to behold—that great way of making God and man one, Christ building up the vast breach that before was made between God and man. It is all in Christ that all our good comes by a mediator. Who could ever have known this but by the ministry of the gospel revealed? Yea, that God hath filled Jesus Christ, God-man, with all good, and he resolves that not one drop of his infinite goodness, in order to eternal life, shall be given to any of the children of men but through Christ. Here is that interest manifested that the world could never have known; but this the gospel doth discover—yea, it doth discover the right way to worship God. If we be left to our own

* Query, 'acquainted'?—Ed.

thoughts, we wander infinitely out of the way. The greater light God made to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night: the gospel, that is the greater light to discover spiritual things and the things of God's worship. Now, human nature may rule the light of the night. Had not you lived under the preaching of the gospel, what would you have known of the second covenant that God hath made with mankind? And this light of the gospel is that that brings in comfort to the heart; the heart never knew what true comfort meant till the gospel came: John viii. 12, 'Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' It is light that hath a quickening power that goeth along with it. Human learning it is like the lighting up of candles and torches; there is a light, but not the light of life. But the gospel is the light of life; it brings life to the soul, it is a light that enlightens the blind eye. If a man be blind, and the sun shines on his eyes, it can never take away the blindness of his eyes; but the gospel, when it shines on those that be blind, it takes away their blindness that is on them. There is the power in this light that takes away their blindness, and this is a light that goeth beyond the eye and shines in the heart: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' It goeth beyond the eyes, it goeth beyond the head, it goeth into the heart: it is a transforming light, it transforms them into the same image; it is a light that makes those that were darkness to be light itself, 'Ye were once darkness, but now ye are light'; it is an increasing light; it increaseth according to the times and ages of the gospel. All is not let out at once, but by degrees—and so increaseth in the soul where it comes; and it is an everlasting light. It is the very beginning of the light of glory; it is impossible that you can conceive it till you see it. If one should speak to blind men, and make to them orations about light, is it possible for a man that never saw the light to know what the light means? He cannot conceive of the excellency of it until he sees it. So we may tell you of the gospel what light it is, but till you come to see it yourselves you are never able to understand it, nor to know the excellency of it. This light of the gospel, it is the way of God not to convey it but by the ministers of the gospel. Ministers are the light of the world, so that here is the work of the ministers of the gospel, saith Christ. All the glorious counsels of my Father are made known to me and hid in me. Saith he, I send you abroad to go and preach these things to the world, that they may come to know them; this is the work of the ministry of the gospel. Though John was that primitive light, John

v. 35, 'He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' The ministers of the gospel, if they be as they ought to be, they are shining and burning lights, or as the Greek signifies, that lamp* burning and shining. Wherever they come, they should shine in their doctrine, and be burning in their conversations. By doctrine and life they should hold forth the light of the gospel wherever they come: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' Here is the end of the ministry, to open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light. That which is called darkness in the first, is called the power of Satan in the second clause; for the devil, having and holding a man in ignorance, holds him in his power. It is the gospel that brings in the day of grace and salvation in the ministry of it. According to what degree the preaching of the gospel comes to any place, so the day of grace and salvation comes to that place; and as God takes that away, so he takes away the days of grace and salvation: 2 Cor. vi. 2, 'He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' The meaning of the apostle is this, that now you come to have and enjoy the ministry of reconciliation, now is the accepting time, the day of salvation, ver. 19 of the former chapter—to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' Now doth the sun rise—the night is past, and the day is come. When God sends a faithful minister to any place, there God sends light to that place. Then the light of the gospel breaks forth there; now is the day of grace and salvation come. As long as God continues the light of the ministry of the gospel, so long doth the day of grace and salvation continue; but when that is taken away, then the sun is set. You are the light of the world. We have this light in earthen pitchers, but there is the lamp of the light of the knowledge of God that shines in them.

The application might be very rare if I had to speak to an auditory of ministers. I should tell them how it doth concern them to be full of light themselves, full of knowledge in the mystery of salvation, that so when he comes to preach he may come with the lustre of the gospel, it may shine on them. He may come to them as Moses came to the mount, with his face shining; so he should come with his light shining, and scatter the beams to the souls where-

ever he comes, that some souls may bless God for that light that is darted into such a soul; and his work should be to communicate light to his people, the whole counsel of God, and not to restrain anything that may give light to others. John was a burning light, and yet he consumed himself; so ministers should spend themselves, and should lay out themselves to give light to others. He should pity poor souls that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; he should consider what a great work he is sent for to do, that he should carry light to those poor souls that sit in darkness. The ministers of God should have their ministry full of light; let them take heed then of mixing anything of their own human invention and the like. Some men when they come to preach, they will have fine mixture of their own human invention; the more of human invention is mixed with preaching, it makes it give the less light. The simplicity of the gospel and the purity of the gospel it is that lets in light to the soul; a minister should take heed that he doth not vent his own passion.

Again, further, hence is the special providence of God over them if they be faithful. If they be so they may expect a special providence of God over them to preserve their lives, and to preserve them in their ways, because they are light: Rev. i. 16, 'And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.' They cannot be plucked out nor fall, for Christ holds them in his right hand; so long as Christ would have light to shine in any place, he doth let out some star or other to them to give light; and others they shine to people but as the snuff of a candle in the socket of a candlestick. They had light in their youth, but now they have drowned those excellent parts that formerly they had; they have drowned them in sensual lusts and delights of the flesh.

Further, they should rejoice in the knowledge that the people get. God forbid that ministers should vex at the people that they have found knowledge. So ministers should be like light; light shines on dung-hills and doth not defile itself, so ministers in places should labour to do good to all, and to the worst of all, and to suit himself with them, but not so far as to defile himself. If a minister converseth with any it is to shine on them; take heed therefore of being defiled with their conversation.

Learn to prize the ministry of the gospel, because it is that that is the light of the world, and they bring the light of God unto you. Bless God that ever the gospel hath come amongst you, that ever God was pleased in mercy to look on you in your generation; as if he should say, Though I have left many generations to perish for want of the light of the gospel, yet

* ἄνευρος. Lucerna scilicet eximie et singularis.—*Cornel. A Lap.*

this generation shall have the light of the gospel. Though there are many that seek to blow out the lights, yet, saith God, I will keep these lights in my right hand, for why, I have the number of mine elect ones. So long as God keeps the light of the gospel shining amongst them, it is a sign that God hath good for them; be willing to maintain the charge. The light! is there any man in the world that knoweth what it is to see the light? He would rather give ten thousand pound than to be without the light. In Chrysostom's time, the good people that lived in them were so affected with the light of the gospel that Chrysostom preached to them, that they professed it were better for the sun to withdraw her beams than the mouth of John Chrysostom to be stopped. John was a burning and shining light, therefore precious; and therefore Herod needed not have stoodso upon his oath. He might have saved John's head, for his oath was that he would give to the half of his kingdom; but when she asked the head of John the Baptist he was sad, he would not reject her for his oath's sake. We should account the light a mighty blessing. Now suppose we that live in these parts of the world, that never had seen the light of the sun in all our days, if so be that the time that God appointed the sun to come should have been at its time, and we should have seen the sun rising in its glory and beauty, how should we have been amazed at it! But we, seeing the sun every day, therefore we prize it not, and so we prize not the ministry, because it is so ordinary amongst us, and so common; but if it were not so common amongst us, we should prize it more. The light of the gospel, we should rejoice at it. What an alteration would it make in our hearts if we prized it as we ought to do! The enjoyment of the gospel it recompenseth any affliction whatsoever. I will give you an excellent scripture for that instead of all, in Isa. xxx. 20, 21, 'And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.' Although, saith

he, the Lord shall give you the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction, is there anything can recompense this? Yes, there is somewhat that can recompense this. Although he gives this, yet your teachers shall be removed into the corners no more. You shall have them that shall convey the ministry of the gospel unto you. Now the putting out of our lights is not so much in the power of proud men as heretofore; but the Lord hath delivered us from them. This is a mercy to be prized, and we should be willing to endure some trouble, that we might have light. We love lightsome houses; we are loath to live in dungeons and dark houses. If you would have light, you must endure some trouble, by breaking the walls for a window for to let in some light; but he is loath to endure trouble, and so sits in darkness—you would account this man to be foolish. If a child seeth his father breaking a place in the wall, the child wondereth what his father doth; but the father is willing to endure trouble for to have light thereby. There hath been a great deal of trouble and disquiet in our kingdom, as if it had been a-breaking in pieces; but we hope it is but for the letting in of light; nay, there is now a great deal of error prevails more than ever, for the devil envies at the light of the gospel, and he raiseth out of the bottom of the pit fumes and fogs and mists. He labours to raise them for to put out the lights. Though you see a great deal of smother and smoke come out of chimneys, which seems to darken the sun a little while, but it cannot put out the sun; stay but a while, and you shall see the sun shine bright. Be patient and quiet. Notwithstanding the smother and smoke that many errors and heresies that abound do make, yet the light of the gospel doth shine, and will prevail more and more, even to the day of Jesus Christ. The fire, when it is first kindled, makes a great smoke; but when the fire is well kindled, then the smoke is gone. The Lord is kindling a great light, and there is a smoke for the present; but let not that so offend you as not to prize that glorious light of the gospel as now you have and do enjoy. When any faithful minister is taken away from a place, that place is darkened, if the Lord doth not supply that place.