

SERMON XIII.

OR,

A REPREHENSION OF PROFESSORS THAT ARE NOT MEEK.

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'—MAT. v. 5.

WE shall now come to the application, which I intend but in two particulars. The reprehension of those that profess themselves disciples of Christ, and yet we cannot see the stamp of the Spirit of Christ upon them; in this particular, in regard of meekness, we have cause to draw buckets of tears to bewail, and to quench, if it were possible, the fire of the passion of men's spirits. And those that I shall direct myself to, shall be such as profess themselves willing to be Christ's disciples, to hear Christ, for it is Christ's sermon, and he directed himself to his disciples in this sermon. And it is no marvel to see men who are carnal, who are led by an earthly spirit, for them to be froward, passionate, and proud; but for those that are godly to be so, this is that that goes very near to the Spirit of God. It is made a special argument against passion and frowardness, and so for meekness, because otherwise the Spirit of Christ would be grieved. In Eph. iv. 30. 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed.' Why, what will grieve it? what should we take heed of, that we may not grieve the Spirit of God? Mark in ver. 31, 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' The giving way to passion and frowardness will grieve the Spirit of God. You that ever have found any good by the Spirit of God in your hearts, take heed of frowardness; labour for meekness and kindness, that the Spirit of God may delight in you, for that is very suitable to the Spirit of God, that is a dove. I confess I had some thoughts to speak of the vain pleas that many have for their passion and frowardness; but I consider for that, if God gives life and liberty, in going on in the handling of this sermon of Christ, I shall meet with that again in the 22d verse of this chapter, 'I say unto you, Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.' Therefore I leave these things to that place. But now this one thing only in this use of reprehension, and that

is to labour to shew those that profess themselves saints, that frowardness, want of meekness, it is that that is as much contrary to true grace as almost any corruption that can be named, which it may be they little think of. They think they have angry and passionate natures, they are somewhat hasty, but they are delivered from other corruptions that men do wallow in. Know that a hasty, froward spirit, a spirit that is not commanded by this grace of meekness, so far as it prevails, it is as contrary unto true grace almost as anything you can think of; and truly there may be a great deal of suspicion whether there be true grace or no in those that have not, in some measure, this meekness prevailing in them, but rather passion and frowardness. As thus,

First, Frowardness and anger is contrary to true grace; for what is it that grace doth in the heart when it first comes? The first thing is to shew unto the soul its own vileness, its own wretchedness and baseness by sin, and the danger that it is in through sin. Now how contrary to this is a froward, passionate heart, to the sight of its own vileness and baseness. What! dost thou see thyself to be a vile, base, sinful worm, and yet canst bear nothing that is against thee, but presently thy heart is in a flame if anything come cross to thee? Surely thou knowest not thyself. And,

Secondly, The first lesson that Christ teaches any that comes into his school, it is the lesson of self-denial; that is the A B C of a Christian: 'Whosoever will follow me let him deny himself.' Now how contrary is a froward, passionate spirit to the grace of self-denial, which is the A B C of a Christian, the very first lesson that Christ doth teach any that come into his school! Wilt thou come to learn of me? let that be the foundation of all. You must deny yourselves, you must not be set upon your own mind, and own will, and own thoughts, so as you have been. Ay, but now there is no such self-seeker as a froward heart. What is it that raises passion, but because I conceive myself to be crossed? I am crossed in my own will, and that I would have; whereas did but self-

denial prevail in the least, there would be way for meekness presently.

Thirdly, When grace comes into the heart, doth it not discover to the heart the infinite need it stands in of mercy? I lie at the feet of mercy, at the dispose of mercy, and if mercy comes not in to save me, I am undone for ever. Now, how doth this stand with thy sight or sense and need of mercy, that art of a froward disposition, and canst bear nothing with others, and yet confesses thou standest in so much need of mercy thyself?

Fourthly, When grace comes into the heart it brings the heart into subjection unto God, unto another rule than it walked by before. That is a principal work of grace, to subdue the heart of a sinner to God. The hearts of sinners are naturally stout and rebellious against God, and go on in a stubborn way till grace comes and lays them under. But now this is quite contrary to frowardness and passion. A froward heart would indeed be above God and any rule whatsoever; it cannot keep itself under and lie in subjection unto rule; and hence is the reason that froward and passionate people use to have such expressions, I will, and I will, and I care not; their hearts are not subdued to the authority of God. The heart that is subdued to the Lord and to his authority, come and bring it but a scripture, it yields presently; but a froward spirit is not so. How contrary is frowardness to true grace!

Fifthly, As soon as ever there comes any grace, there comes in the spirit of Jesus Christ to the soul. That makes the soul, in some measure, to be like unto Jesus Christ. Now the spirit of Christ, as I shewed you in the opening the excellency of meekness the last day, it is a spirit of meekness: 'Learn of me, for I am meek.' Now this frowardness of thine being opposite so much to the spirit of Jesus Christ, it is opposite to the work of grace.

Sixthly, Grace, when that comes in, it brings light into the soul, it brings wisdom to the soul, and guides it wisely. Naturally, we are foolish as well as disobedient, we are darkness itself; but now there is no disposition of soul that is in greater and thicker darkness than froward and passionate people. Passion doth exalt folly; such a soul is not guided by wisdom, and therefore very contrary to the work of grace.

Again, seventhly, You know the promise of the gospel, it is to meek spirits, to meek men. When the gospel comes, then the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together—those that were of wolfish spirits; and the lion and the ox shall eat together; there shall be a great deal of peace, love, and quietness, where the gospel comes. Now, then, that which is contrary to the work of the gospel is contrary to the work of grace in the heart. How hath the gospel been fulfilled then, if it hath come into thy soul, to cause

a quietness in the heart, and there is none? I beseech you that profess godliness, to consider there is more danger in a froward, passionate spirit than you are aware of; and though you may think, because you make profession, and come to hear the word, and spend a great deal of time in prayer and fasting and longing after ordinances—you think now that certainly you have grace; but you may be mistaken, the frowardness of your hearts may be your bane eternally. We read of Moses, though he be commended to be the meekest man that ever lived upon the earth, yet one froward, passionate act of his shut him out of Canaan; though in the whole course of his life he was so meek that God commends him to be the meekest of all, yet shut out of Canaan for one act. Canaan, you know, was a type of heaven; though Moses was pardoned so as he was received to heaven, yet as for Canaan God would not hearken to his prayer, but would take that advantage of him to shew his displeasure against that act of his of passion, and shut him out of Canaan. Take heed lest that froward heart of yours shut you out of heaven eternally. You mightily cry out of those that are drunkards; you are no such, and you think that cannot stand with grace—they are shut out of the kingdom of heaven. Why should there not be as much danger in a drunken passion, as in drunkenness by beer or wine? Certainly the drunkenness that comes by passion doth cause often as many, as great sins as that that comes by wine or beer. You would think it a foul thing if it could be said that once a year you should be overcome with drunkenness. Oh, how often have you been drunk with passion! and that drunkenness may be as grievous to the Spirit of God as if you were drunken otherwise, by beer or wine; and therefore look upon it as a greater evil than you are aware of.

But we proceed to the use of exhortation.

Blessed are the meek. Let us all learn to be of meek and quiet spirits. I remember in the sixth of Numbers it is said of the Nazarites, that they must drink no wine; so the text saith, they must drink no vinegar neither. The Nazarites were a people separated for God—from thence they had their name, from separation—and all the saints of God they are Nazarites. As Christ was a Nazarite, so all that are Christ's are Nazarites—are separated for God's people, separated from others: the Lord separates the godly man for himself. Now this is the law upon all Nazarites: they must drink no vinegar—that is, they must not be of vinegar spirits, of sour spirits, but must be of quiet spirits, of loving and meek spirits. It concerns us all, especially those that are inferiors, that they should be of meek spirits towards their superiors; those that are under afflictions, bodily or spiritual, they should be of meek and

quiet spirits. It is unbecoming any to be of a froward, passionate heart, but especially those that are under afflictions. The Lord sends afflictions upon thee to humble thee, and to meek thee; and if thou beest not meek now, when wilt thou be meek? We ought to be meek towards our brethren, towards one another, and to be meek towards neighbours. There are many that are so used to frowardness and passion towards their servants, their children, or wives, that even when they have to deal with God himself they shew themselves froward and passionate then too. My brethren, let us learn to be in love with this amiable and lovely grace of meekness. And all that I intend to do therefore in this use, it shall be to propound unto you some various ways or helps whereby you may come to get a habit of meekness, to behave yourselves meekly and gently in the places where you live, that so this promise may be made yours, that you are the blessed ones of Christ, and shall inherit the earth.

In the first place, if you would have meek spirits, learn to set a high price upon the quiet and sweetness of your spirits. Set a high price upon it; account it to be a rich jewel of great worth, as we told you that God accounted the meek spirit to be of great price. It is one way to get it, to have a right esteem of the rest of spirit and quietness that meekness will cause in the soul. We may say of it as Tertullus the orator said to Felix, By thee we enjoy much quietness; there is many good things done by thee, and by thee we enjoy much quietness. By meekness there is much quietness enjoyed in the heart; therefore saith Christ, 'Learn of me, who am humble and meek, and you shall find rest to your souls.' There is rest. Put a high price upon the rest and quiet of your spirits. Say as the fig-tree did, Should I lose my sweetness, and come and reign over you?—when a temptation comes to passion, Shall I lose the sweetness that I have had in my spirit, to have my will in such and such a thing? Through God's mercy I have found this, that when I have been able to overcome my passion I have had the sweetest time that ever I have had in all my life. When I could deny myself, and exercise meekness, oh the quiet of my heart! it was worth a world; and shall I lose this for a trifle now, for a toy? Oh the poor trifles and toys that men and women do cast away the quietness of their spirits for, as if they were nothing worth! If a man had a golden ball in his hand, and any in the street should cast dirt upon him, would it not be accounted a folly in him to throw his golden ball at them again that cast dirt upon him, to revenge himself that way? Truly thus you do, you that have any of this grace of meekness in your hearts, and ever have had any quietness through the exercise of this grace. Now there comes a temptation; such a one doth things displeasing to you, and crosses your will, how do you

revenge yourselves? You cast this golden ball away upon them—that is, the quietness and meekness of your spirits, you lose this upon them. Account it at a high rate, and therefore lose it not for a little. That is the first rule.

A second rule to help us against passion, from the exercise of meekness and quietness. It is often to covenant with God, yet in the strength of Christ; and though it be but for a little time, as thus, why may you not covenant thus with God, you that find that you are overcome in your passion, and you say you are troubled for them, and would fain get victory over them to the exercise of this grace of meekness, why may you not, when you rise in the morning, thus bethink yourselves, Why, it is like this day there may fall somewhat out that may stir my passion, and take away the comfort of meekness that I have had; well, I will covenant, (through God's enabling of me,) now this day that, whatever shall befall me this day, I will be quiet till night at least. I will bear it but till that time, and upon this consideration, that if there be any cause for me to be stirred and angry, I may be stirred and angry afterwards for it, and I may right myself as well afterwards as this day; but for this day I am resolved that I will set myself to curb my passion and my will for this one day. And if you think that be too long, do it but till noon; to resolve that from this time till noon, whatever befalls me, I will manifest no passion, but I will rather take it into consideration after noon, or the next day, than now. One would think this were not impossible for a man, though of a very hasty spirit, yet to be resolved for one day that, whatever falls out, to bear with it that day. But you will say, this will not mortify that corruption of passion. But though it will not mortify it, yet you cannot imagine what power there will be in keeping down your passion but for a while. As fire, we know if it be but smothered it may be put out that way; and that man or woman that can but overcome themselves for one day, will find such sweetness that day that they will begin to think with themselves, Why may not I covenant for to-morrow too? And then they will find so much sweetness for that day, they will think they may resolve for the next day. Oh, if you could but overcome yourselves for a day, you find so much good as it would exceedingly help you against another day.

But thirdly, This covenanting will not be sufficient, except there be humiliation for that that is past. Those that only resolve to set upon a duty, and are not humbled for the want of the duty before, they are like to do little good by their resolutions. You must therefore, if you would overcome yourselves, and set upon anything that God requires of you, you must be humbled for that that is past.

Physicians use to purge out cholera by bitter things; and those that would tame wild creatures, it is by keeping them in the dark. So humiliation for the distempers of passion is a special means to purge out passion, and to tame and quiet the spirits of men and women. Many of you have been overcome in froward fits, and you have seen the inconvenience of them, and it may be after you have thought, Oh this is ill, and you hope you shall do so no more; but although you think you will do so no more, yet except you be humbled for that you have done, you will fall to it again. And so it is a rule in all other things, that those who do resolve to amend in any particular, if they be not humbled for that that is past, they will fall to their sin again. It is a very remarkable example that we have of the people of Israel. Read but the two or three chapters of Exodus. Chap. xv., towards the latter end, there you find that the people did chide with Moses because the waters were bitter. Well, they were not humbled for this. And in chap. xvi. you find them at it again; though God was merciful to them then, yet when they came to another strait, they were froward and angry again; and when God delivered them there, you shall find them at it again, in chap. xvii. 2; so that upon every new occasion they fall to it again. Why? Because we do not find that in the interim they were humbled for their former distempers. Therefore you that have such froward distempers, oh get alone, and apply the salt tears of humiliation unto that cholera of yours, and see what this will do. Humiliation for that that is past will be a special help for time to come.

Fourthly, If you would have meek and quiet spirits, take heed of the first beginning of passion. We know that when a fire is, we do not stay quenching of it till the house be all in a flame; but if there be but a little fire kindled in any part of the house, if there be but a smoke, you will say, Where is it? and are not quiet till you find it out. So should it be when passion begins to arise; your house begins to be on a fire, your souls begin to be on fire; and you should be as much set upon quenching of it at the first rising as you would be when you see the fire break out in your house at the very first. Perhaps a dish of water may quench that now, that if you stay but till half an hour hence many pails of water will not. So it is in the point of passion. If so be that people would be careful at first, then with a little ado they may quench their passion, if they will take it when their passion begins to kindle; but stay a while, and there will be no rule at all, no coming near a man. So poison: take it as soon as ever a man feels his body distempered, and there may be means to help against it; but if you stay a while till it hath got power over nature, there will

be little help then. Oh, look upon passion as if it were poison, and take some remedy presently; let not your passion be working any longer. So a fever; it oftentimes may be easily cured at first. So passion; it is a fever. Take the fever at the beginning. There have been most fearful distempers of passion risen from very small beginnings, which have broken out to most fearful outrages. As I remember in the history of Venice, I have read of two sons of the Duke of Florence, that having been a-hunting, there was contention about which of their dogs killed the hare. Saith one, My dog caught it first; and the other, No, but it was mine. And so they continued till one drew the sword upon the other, and so slew his brother; and the brother's man that was slain, seeing his master slain, he draws upon the other brother, and kills him. And so the duke loses two of his sons at the same time upon that occasion.

How often is it in your families, that a little spark, what a fire doth it kindle! At the first there may be but a word spoken amiss, that might easily have been passed over. No; but that word begets another, and that word begets another, and that begets yet another, and so it grows to a most hideous flame. Take heed of the beginning of passion. Whenever any anger begins to arise in the family, or in your souls, oh it is time for you then to look to yourselves. Sometimes you shall have friends that at first their fallings-out begin but in the very countenance. One man thinks, Surely such a one looks not upon me with such a pleasant countenance as he was wont to do; and from thence he begins to have surmises and suspicions, and then comes to make misinterpretations, and from thence there comes a strangeness; and from being strange they begin to hearken to tales that are carried one against another, and to believe them, and to aggravate them; and then they begin to speak some hard words one against another; and then they begin to do some ill offices one against another; and then break out into violent and eminent contention and actings one against another; whereas, had there been but care taken at the beginning, all this might have been prevented: Prov. xvii. 14. 'The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.' Take heed of the beginnings of sin, if so be that you would keep your spirits in any meek and quiet frame.

Then a fifth rule is this, If you would keep your spirits in quietness, make account beforehand that you will meet with things that shall cross your wills. That is a good help against passion. And to quiet our hearts, as Anaxagoras said, when he heard of his son that was dead, saith he, I know that I begat him mortal; so when you hire a servant at first, make account that there will be weakness in your servant

beforehand—certainly there will be many things done by him that will displease me. When you marry a wife, you should beforehand make account—there will something fall out between us that will displease one another. And so when you take a friend, beforehand you must make account—it is a friend that hath both his frailties and infirmities. Now if we make account beforehand that while we live in this world we are not like to have our wills to be satisfied in everything, this will be a means to quiet our hearts. This is no more than I made account of. A soldier that goes into an army, when he meets with hardship, he is quieted with this, it is nothing but what I made account of beforehand. Mariners, when they are abroad and meet with storms, were it seemly for them to vex and fret? they knew that it was likely they should meet with storms. So whenever anything falls out that crosses you, remember this: If I had wisdom beforehand, certainly I could think none other but that I should have divers things would cross me; and now God puts me to trial to see whether I will bear these crosses or no that doth befall me.

The sixth rule is this, Consider thy own frailty. Others there are that do provoke thee and stir up thine anger; but thou must go by that rule, We seek pardon, and we give it. I meet with such and such things in others, and it may be within a while they may meet with things amiss in me; they offend me, and I am like to offend them too; and that is a marvellous help to quiet the spirits of those that are truly gracious. Therefore in Gal. vi. mark the argument of the apostle there, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;' and then it follows, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Bear ye one another's burden; consider you may be tempted, and then bear ye one another's burden. The burden is like to be mutual; I bear my brother's burden, and my brother is like to bear my burden; I have a burden that may as well try his patience, as his tries mine; and therefore let us bear one another's burden. As now among servants, when one of them is sick, we would account it an unreasonable thing if the other should murmur for the helping of his fellow-servant—No, he will not do it. But reason thus: I must help him now; why, I may be sick ere long, and then he will help me. So do others cross you, be you meek towards them, as you would expect that they should be meek towards you. It is ordinary for men that have the greatest weaknesses, for them to bear with the weaknesses of others, lest they be like, in this case, to the gony leg, that must have all the attendance itself, but is useful for nothing; so it is with many that have such proud and froward spirits, that everybody must seek to please them, and

yet they will seek to please nobody themselves. Oh remember your own frailty!

And if any of you shall say, Ay, but I am not so great a burden to others as they are to me, and therefore there is no equality for me to bear his burden because he is like to bear mine.

I beseech you, do but observe what the answer to that is.

First, Every one is ready to think that he is not so grievous to others as others are grievous to me. Grant it; but then observe, it appears that thou art stronger than thy brother, and therefore if the heavier end of the burden be upon thy shoulder, then thou shouldst quietly bear it, because it seems God hath made thy shoulder more able to bear it: and it is not more difficult for a man to bear the offences of others against him, than it is for him not to be offensive to others. And therefore rather bless God when thou thinkest thus: The burden of my brother is greater than mine, and it is God's mercy to me that he hath made my strength greater than his, and so, considering one another's burdens, let us labour to bear them meekly and quietly.

Again, a seventh rule to help is this, Labour to keep thy peace with God. There is no such means to keep the heart in quiet as to keep peace with God. Let all be well between God and thy soul, and that will quiet thee when thou meetest with crosses. As if all be well within the earth, the tempests and storms that are about it will never shake it; and so that that disquiets men's hearts, it is the corruption that is within, and not so much the temptation that is without. But for this peaceableness of spirit that comes from our peace with God, it may be we shall have some occasion to speak more of, when we come to speak of that blessedness, 'Blessed are the peacemakers;' and therefore I pass by that.

The eighth rule is this, Convince thyself that there can be nothing done in anger, but may be better done out of it. 'The wrath of man doth not accomplish the righteousness of God,' saith the apostle. As now, wouldst thou reprove a man, the best way is to reprove him in meekness; you that are spiritual, restore in meekness such as are fallen. Physicians must not give physic scalding hot. Reproofs are physic; do not give it them scalding hot; give it them but merely warm, in a spirit of love; no hotter than love will warm it. And so, whenever thou correctest thy children or servants, thou thinkest that if thou doest it not in a passion, thou must not do it at all; that is thy folly. Thou mayest do it better out of a passion than in a passion; and therefore divers of the heathen, they would not correct their servants merely because they were in a passion. If thou wouldst give an answer to another who speaks to thee that is amiss, wouldst thou convince him, thou mayest do

it better if thou canst overcome thy passion. Thou mayest reason the case with thy brother a great deal better out of thy passion than in thy passion. Ay, the truth is, those that have power over their passion have a great advantage over any that they contend withal. Consider but of this, and this will be a means to meekn thy heart: when the heart is up in anger, it would fain be acting presently; but keep down thy passion, and call in the grace of meekness. Consider, I would now be acting, but why may not I act as well out of passion as in passion? yea, I may do it better, and therefore I will do it then. If passion do but stay a while, then it will be clarified. It is true, anger is the whetstone of virtue, if it be done in a right manner; but it is as it is in physic—if the gross be given, it will do no good, but if it be clarified, then it may be of a great deal of use; and so it is with passion.

In the ninth place, When thou feelest thy passion begin to arise, labour to turn thy passion another way, upon some other object: as thus—I feel anger begin to arise against my brother, or wife, or husband, or servant, now let me labour, instead of anger, to exercise mourning; such a one hath displeased me, my wife, or child, or servant; before thou givest way to thine anger, get alone and bemoan their sin. Thou sayest they have done exceeding ill. Have they? then they have sinned against God as well as against thee; and if so, then take this rule: before thou shewest any passion—get alone, and mourn for their sin against God; then come out and see how thy passion will work after thy mourning for their sin. You would find this rule of very great use—if husbands and wives that have not lived quietly, or masters in their families—if you would but observe it that when anything is done amiss; if it be not sin against God, then there is no great matter to stir your anger, but if it hath sin in it, then be sure to mourn for it. First before God you let out your passion, and so turn anger into love. Physicians, when they would stanch blood that runs too much in one vein, they seek to turn it into another; and so should we do with our affections. And that Christian hath a great deal of skill, wisdom, and strength that is able to turn his affections: Now I will exercise anger, and now I will exercise love, and now I will exercise sorrow, and now I will exercise joy, and now I will exercise hope; so that he is able to turn his affections this way and that way. If a man be not able to turn his affections this way and that way, surely there is some distemper; but this is the excellency of a Christian, he hath command over his affections, he can turn them this way or that way. It is a good thing in dealing with children, when they are dogged or sullen, not to fall upon them in a rage, but if you can turn their

thoughts to something else. You have displeased them in one thing, do not be grating upon them in that one thing, but see if you can turn them to be thinking or looking after some other thing, and by that you shall get them sooner out of their sullen mood than by opposing it. So it is with ourselves; many times there is a sullen, dogged, froward mood upon our hearts; now the way perhaps will not be to oppose directly that sullenness of our hearts, but the way will be to have some object before us to turn the stream of the heart to.

Tenthly, Another rule to help against anger it is this: Do not multiply words; take heed in froward passion that words be not multiplied. In Prov. viii. 13, and in Mat. v. 22—divers scriptures I might shew that the multiplying of words is very dangerous in time of passion, and especially to give liberty to wild speech. Words are wind; ay, but they are that wind that blows up this fire to a mighty heat. In Prov. vii. 11, it is said of the whore that 'she is loud.' It is a most unbeseeming thing for women, though they be provoked by anger, to be loud in speech, to be loud in their words, and to multiply their words. The whorish woman is described by that she is loud; and therefore those that would behave themselves as matrons in sobriety and modesty, take heed of loud speeches. And then of adding word to word; the best way is rather to be silent, rather to turn away, as we read of David, when he had to deal with his froward brethren, in 1 Sam. 17, 'He turned away from them, and would answer no more.' I confess to turn away in a sullen manner, that is not good neither; but to give a few gentle speeches and then to turn away—to turn away without any answer that may provoke as much; but first to give some gentle answer and then to turn away, and resolve not to multiply words at such a time as this is; that is another rule.

Eleventhly, If you would not be passionate, but of meek and quiet spirit, take heed of putting yourselves into too much business that God calls you not unto. And the reason is this, because there is no business but will have somewhat or other to fall cross; therefore be sure to be about nothing but what God calls you to, and there you will have the blessing of God. But when men will have many irons in the fire, more than God calls them to, no marvel though their fingers be burnt; we find that those men that are very busy are very froward. But now when you know that your business is but that that God calls you to, and you do it in obedience to God, you may expect the blessing of God upon you to quiet you; but otherwise there will be many temptations in it.

Twelfthly, Further, take heed of too much curiosity. A man that is in a family, if he will be prying into everything in the family, he must have his eyes in

every room, and take notice of every passage in the family; if so, a thousand to one but there will many things fall out that will disturb his passion. 'You must not take notice of every little fault in a servant, nor every small offence in wife or children; but you must see and not see, if you will be of meek spirits. A foolish, nice curiosity in men in prying into everything in a family, and those things it may be that do not concern them, as it is very unbecoming a man, so it is that that occasions a great deal of disturbance in the family.

Thirteenthly, Another help will be to consider thus: Oh, what if this be now a temptation of the devil! The devil owes me a spite, and who knows what the devil is now putting me upon! If thou hadst but so much power over thy heart as to think thus: Whenever I am in a fit of passion, this is like to be a temptation; the devil intends to do me some mischief at this time. It is an excellent similitude that Augustine hath about this: 'As it is with a fowler,' saith he, 'he sets his net near a hedge where the birds are, and then he goes and takes stones and flings into the hedge to scare the birds. The fowler doth not think to kill the birds by the stones, but it is to drive them by the stones out of the hedge, that so they may fly into the net.' So it is, saith he, when the devil hath an intention to draw thee to some sin; saith the devil, I cannot tell how to draw them to such and such sins except I stir their passion; let me but stir their passion, and then I shall get them to that sin well enough. The thing that the devil aims at is some sin he would have them fall into. When the devil comes to stir up passion—as the fowlers throwing stones into the hedge—he cares not so much for thy passion; but the thing that he aims at, it is the evil he would bring thee into by thy passion; so that the very thoughts of this, now a passion is come, and if this should prove but a temptation to some vile sin, what would become of me? and therefore I will sit still and do nothing rather than I will be thus hatched by the devil.

Fourteenthly, Set the example of God, of Jesus Christ, and of his saints before you; it is a mighty way to help against passion and anger, considering how meek the Lord is. When God had to deal with Cain, with what meekness and gentleness did God himself deal with Cain. 'Why, where is thy brother?' saith God; and when Cain answered God churlishly, yet God goes on in a meek way, and saith, 'If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?' And so when God had to deal with Jonas, which was that froward, pettish prophet—for so he was. 'Now,' saith God to him, 'Jonas, dost thou well to be angry?' when he saw him in a fit of anger. It is a good pattern for us, when we have to deal with others that are of angry spirits, to say, Do you well to be angry?

God did not come in a boisterous way to Jonas, but comes in a gentle and meek way: 'Dost thou well to be angry?' saith the Lord. Consider how God deals with his poor creatures; and it is no dishonour to you to deal so with your servants and children, that are not so injurious to you as you are to God.

I might also set before you the example of Jesus Christ. I remember I have read of one, that his wife asking of him how he was able to overcome himself when he had such wrongs and injuries offered him. Why, truly, this is the way that I take, saith he: I go and meditate on the sufferings of Jesus Christ; what wrongs Jesus Christ had, and yet how he was as a lamb that opened not his mouth, and I never leave meditating until I get my spirit quieted. The mediation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and of his wounds, and his wrongs, and how gently and meekly he bare them, oh it is a special means! I remember Camerarius tells of some, when they were in a mad rage they would set a sheep or lamb before them, and it would be a means to quiet them. When we are in a passion, in a mad rage, let us but set that meek lamb, the Lord Jesus, before us, and that will be a means to quiet us. So you have it in 1 Pet. ii.; there the apostle makes use of the example of Christ to keep our spirits in a quiet and meek way. 'For,' saith he, 'hercunto were ye called,'—that is, to take patiently what wrongs were offered to us—'because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' Read but this text, and set but this example of Jesus Christ before you, and it will be a special means to quiet your spirits.

And so I should have set before you the example of the saints, of Abraham, of David, of Stephen, of Paul, and others; but I will only name one or two others. I remember the example of Calvin towards Luther is very famous, and especially it concerns ministers. Though there were a great deal of difference in judgment and ways—Luther was of a hot and fiery spirit, and Calvin more tender; and Calvin had such a speech concerning Luther; 'Well,' saith he, 'let Luther call me devil, call me what he will, yet I will acknowledge Luther to be the servant of Jesus Christ, and one whom Christ doth use as an instrument of a great deal of good.' Here was a sweet and quiet spirit in Calvin, that was a man so instrumental for God. There is no such way to heap coals of fire upon the heads of those that do oppose us, as to carry ourselves meekly and gently towards them.

Therefore, for the close of all, I beseech you lay up these rules that you have heard.

And let this one be added more. Fifteenthly,

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