

## SERMON XXX.

OR,

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDEPENDENCY AND PRESBYTERY.

*'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'*—MAT. v. 9.

You know I have not as yet meddled with any matters of controversy among you, but give me leave in a few words plainly to speak a little to that great controversy that they call independency and presbytery. I will but shew you, first, where lies the principal difference there; for a great many there are whose spirits are mighty hot and violent one against another. But come to demand of these men, Do you know the controversy? do you know what it is? They are not able to give you an account where doth the main thing lie. Some will tell you that Independents would have no kind of government at all, and a general toleration for all things; this, they think, is the difference. And upon this they are misled to those things that, were they rightly informed, they could not be misled unto; for I make no question, but many whose spirits are very hot this way, yet are very godly, holy, gracious men, and go according to their conscience, and think they do God good service in a very strong opposition of them, and were it not for that they would not do as they do. Therefore, but in a word, to give you the main thing that is called independency, and that that is called presbytery, that hinders so much the peace among us.

The great thing is this, those that they call Independents, they are persuaded, first, that there can be no kind of power and authority in the church, but that that is set in it by Christ, no officers at all but them that are set in it by Christ—some of the other judgments go thus far; but here it may be it may weigh a little further, that as every office in the church and officer must be appointed by Christ, so the extent of that office, how far it should go, must be appointed by Christ. For as it is in the commonwealth—though this prove not, yet it may illustrate—as there can be no court and judicature in a commonwealth but by the authority of the supreme judicature, so no jurisdiction in the church but by the authority of the supreme, Jesus Christ; and as it appoints the office, so it appoints the extent of the office, how far it should go. But this to make way.

Now for the controversy. Say those they call Independents, For our part we think this, that the ruling power of ministers, that Christ hath appointed to feed people by word and sacraments, extends no further than where Christ hath appointed them, for to feed, by word and sacraments, in their pastoral power. Look, how far Christ hath given them power and authority to feed a people by word and sacraments, to take charge of the souls of a people; so far Christ hath given them power to rule over them in his name, and no further.

Now those that they call presbyters, they think they may go further, that though such and such ministers have only a pastoral charge but in one congregation, he cannot challenge in any pastoral relation to come and preach and administer sacraments but in this congregation; yet they think that by joining with others, his ruling power shall have an extent to a hundred or a thousand congregations that his face never saw, whereas the pastoral charge of his for word and sacraments doth extend in an ordinary way but to one. Now for my part, whoever thinks there is a greater controversy in these two, but this I am speaking of, he sees further than I can do in it. Here the controversy mainly lies, whether the ruling power of any minister extends further than his pastoral power for word and sacraments—whether he hath the charge of others to rule them together with others, and not the charge of them in an equal way to feed them in word and sacraments. Now I do not come to plead this way or that way for either side, but only so far as may be for peace.

If the controversy lies here, I appeal to your consciences, Are you so certain, so sure of one side, that you can join in a violent opposition of the other? Is one so clear and evident to you, as you can take upon you, as you would answer it before Christ, to use all the power of civil magistracy for to force one or the other side? For so I speak of either; for I would account it a very great evil for those that profess independency to force such as profess presbytery to be of their minds or practice. And so I think it will

not be acceptable to Jesus Christ for the one by a civil way to force the other, and it will never prove to be the way of peace.

But now if you will say, We will force them to do so; it is true you may by an iron chain tie men close together that they shall not be able to go at such a distance; but will that make peace here in the church of Christ in respect of men's hearts?

There is one thing more that I have observed hath been a cause of the breaking of peace exceedingly, and that is, the mistake of the point of schism; for that because we have that word in the covenant, men think in conscience that what is indeed truly schism they are bound to oppose with all their might, let become of peace what will; for that that the Scripture accounts schism, certainly we are bound by all lawful means, according to the covenant, to oppose.

But I beseech you consider this first, whether if any man that is a member of a church—for this is cried out of—that whosoever shall depart from the church that is acknowledged by himself a true church, and especially shall join with others, this man is a schismatic.

For to understand this aright, that there may not be the breaking of more peace than need, suppose that there be some men truly godly and conscientious that are in a church, but there is something done in the church that they cannot believe to be the mind of Christ; nay, after all examination, after prayer, after seeking to God, yet they cannot see it to be the mind of Christ, but they should sin if they should join with them. They can testify to God, their own consciences witnessing for them, that they would gladly join with such a church in all the ways of God's worship, but in such and such ways they cannot without sin to their own consciences. They labour to inform themselves, they go to the elders, go to others in all humility to shew their doubts in this thing; and after the receiving of reasons from them, they depart, and they do in conscience to God examine them between God and their souls, and pray over them, that God would reveal these things unto them if they be his mind. Now after all this is done, yet if they cannot see, what would you have these men do? Suppose there be a hundred of them; they cannot communicate, yet they are not presently to rend from the congregation, but to wait a while to see whether God will convince them. Now after all means used, and they cannot be convinced, shall these men live without the ordinances of the sacrament all the days of their lives? Hath Christ so tied a member of a congregation, that if he cannot without sin to him join with the church, that he must never join with any other? Truly there had need be clear warrant for this if any one shall affirm it. But now suppose these should in all humility desire that

they might have liberty together to join in the ordinances of Christ. They hold all the foundations of this church, yea, they account them brethren, they look upon them as godly, and in those ordinances wherein they can, they will join with them; but they cannot in such and such, and they must either join in some other fellowship, or they must be without those ordinances all their days. Now if these men shall in their lives appear godly, and walk peaceably towards others, so far as they can see the mind of God, do you think in your consciences that this is the schism that is spoken against in Scripture, that we are to oppose, and that that men so oppose now, which they call schism? I would put the case thus: In the bishops' time there were a company, you know, that were accounted non-conformists, which were very godly men; they could not conform to kneeling, suppose, or in any other ceremony, either in baptism or the supper of the Lord, and so they could not join with the congregations in the supper of the Lord. Upon this the bishops called them schismatics; and it was upon no other ground, they said. Now there are many of our brethren at this day, yea, I believe most of the godly ministers in England within a few years, did account those men that could not join at sacraments, because of kneeling and the cross, to be in an error; I say, the most godly men in the kingdom did believe it, and I believe many do so still.

But you will say, Though withdrawing from a congregation indeed which they could not join with without sin, that was not schism; yet if they had gathered into another congregation, that had been schism. Then this satisfies,

First, In the point of negative schism; but for positive schism, to that I put this consideration to you, only that we might a little mollify men's spirits: Suppose these men might have had leave from the state—as suppose this law had been made that all men whose consciences cannot be brought to submit to kneeling at sacrament, and the cross in baptism, and cannot acknowledge the authority of prelates, that they shall have in such places in the city such meetings and such congregations where they shall enjoy the sacrament without those ceremonies, and without the acknowledgment of the authority of bishops—I say, suppose the state had allowed this, had these men been schismatics? As suppose all our brethren of Scotland that were in England in former times, why, abundance of them that lived in parishes they could not kneel at sacrament; now if this liberty had been given them, that all of the kingdom of Scotland that lived in the city of London, that they should have some particular place in the city, and should enjoy what they would there.

Ay, you will say, if the state had allowed them, then they were not.

But now consider of this, Schism is a church sin; and if anything be schism before the state allow it, it is after the state allows it. When it comes to break any order in the state, then it is a sin of another nature; but when we speak of schism properly so called, it is only a sin of the church. Now, if it be a schism before the state allows it, it will be a sin when the state allows it, that is certain; the allowance or not allowance of the state doth not change the nature of the thing. And I am confident that there is scarce any of you that are godly but would have thought it in former times a great mercy if those that were Non-conformists had had so much favour from the state as to have liberty to have joined together in such and such places appointed for them; that so long as they are orthodox in their opinions, so long as they lived godly and peaceable, they should have had liberty. If this had been, I believe not one of you would have accounted them schismatics. Now, if there be other godly men in the kingdom whose consciences cannot be satisfied in some other things, and yet you know their lives are godly—you know they are orthodox in all fundamentals of religion, they join with you, they desire to communicate with you in hearing the word and prayer, and all ways wherein they can; now if they should have a desire to enjoy the ordinances of Christ in that way wherein they may do it with peace of conscience, why, they are cried out of as schismatics; it is against the covenant, and must not be suffered. Here lies a mistake, and were there a right understanding of things, there might be ways for brethren to live together in unity, and enjoy their consciences in the fear of God, and walking peaceably one with another. But this shall suffice for this thing, Blessed are they that are peacemakers in such times as these. For my part, so far, through God's mercy, God hath made me sensible of the evil of breaches of peace, that should my life go for the procuring of it, I should account it as great a mercy, next the revealing Christ to me, as ever I had in my life. If, I say, my life might go for the making peace between these two sorts of men, and so it should be all your resolutions not to go violently on in any way, but to study what ways there may be for peace between brethren and brethren. Now I shall say no more about this, and it is like you may never hear me further to speak about such things as these are, except there should be very great occasion for it. We therefore proceed to the promise:

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'

Here is a most excellent promise to peacemaking. One would think it would encourage any living to labour for peace what they could, when from the mouth of Christ it is said, 'They shall be called the children of God'—the sons of God, so you may read the word.

First, Why are peacemakers called the children of God? And

Why is this promise here annexed to peacemaking rather than to what went before?

They shall be called so, saith Christ, because in this work of peacemaking they are like to God; they do work in the work that the heart of God is as much in as in any work whatsoever. There is no work, as I have told you before, that ever the heart of God was more in from all eternity, no work *ab extra* more than in reconciling the world to himself; and so those that are peacemakers, their hearts are in that work wherein God's heart is in so much; therefore they shall be called the children of God, for they are so like God. God is of a peaceable spirit, of a loving spirit, of a spirit of kindness. Now peacemakers they shew themselves to be of the same spirit that God is of; and so, being so like God, are said to be the children of God. As those that are like the devil are said to be the children of the devil, so those that are like God the children of God.

And further, As by their peacemaking they shew themselves like to God, so by being the sons of God they come to make peace. As thus, they look upon their Father, that is a God of peace, and this moves them to peace, and the sweet satisfaction that their souls have in the fatherly love of God, in those privileges they enjoy as the children of God—I say, that sweet satisfaction that they have in this, it makes them to be of peaceable dispositions; there is nothing makes a man or woman to be of a peaceable disposition more than when they find satisfaction within their own hearts. As now, for instance, suppose a merchant that hears of a rich ship that is come home from the Indies, wherein he hath a great venture; ay, but now when he comes home perhaps his children be untoward, and his wife not in any good temper, yet he hath so much satisfaction within, in his own spirit, that you will not have him readily angry then, because he is so comforted with what news he hath heard concerning his estate, he will bear with a hundred things in that family at that time. But let the same man at another time go abroad and meet with crosses, and hear of ill news abroad, he comes discontented home, and he is froward with everybody then, and ready to fly upon servants and children; and the ground is for want of satisfaction within, in his own spirit. Certainly this is the cause of much wrangling and contention in men's spirits; they have some guiltiness within, and have not satisfaction within in their hearts. But now those that are the children of God, that know God to be their Father, and enjoy those sweet and blessed privileges of God's children, they find so much satisfaction within in their own hearts, as, let the world do

what they will—for the world must be the world, and wicked men must be wicked men—let them go on in their way, let me indeed pray for them, and mourn for them, but let not them disturb my peace. 'Oh my soul, return unto thy rest.' I find that that satisfies me; and so these will be very peaceable towards others, and therefore this is joined to the peacemakers, 'they shall be called the children of God;' that is, they shall be so, and so accounted.

And they shall be so accounted; that is a higher degree. It is a great blessing to be a child of God, that you will all say, though the world should think you the child of the devil, and call you devil; though they should deal with you as they did with John Huss—they pictured devils upon his coat when he went to martyrdom, as if he were come out of hell. Ay, but he was the son of God for all that. Christ himself he was not always called the child of God, but he was called Beelzebub and the prince of devils. But it is some addition to this blessedness here that they are called so; that is, that they have such a promise from Christ as not only to be the children of God, but they shall be so in the very hearts and consciences of the men among whom they live. Peacemaking is so convincing, there is so much beauty and excellency in it, as will convince almost any man. Peacemaking hath such a convincing power, as that men that are wicked themselves, yet they shall be forced in their consciences to believe; surely these people, these men and women, are no other than the children of God—it is the Spirit of God that acts them and guides them. You may plainly see that peacemaking is very convincing, because no man or woman will own to have any hand in breaking of peace; as I remember I told you that if we should go and ask all the men and women in England from one to another, What! do you hinder our peace? there is never a man or woman would own it, and yet there are many guilty certainly. Well, as that is so foul to break peace that none will own it, so to make peace is so excellent that everybody is in love withal. Though men and women that have perverse and crooked spirits of their own, so that they cannot bring their hearts to be peaceable with others, yet they can love it where they see it in others, and especially when they see men to be of peaceable dispositions in things that do not much concern themselves; yea, they are at peace so as they are willing to suffer much in their own private cause, so be it that they may make peace, that there may not be sin committed; but that the glory of God may go on, that this peace may be furthered, they are willing themselves to suffer. Now when others that are of froward and selfish dispositions, when they see this in such a man or woman, it causes other manner of thoughts. Indeed my conscience tells me that if

any anger me I will be even with them, I cannot bear it; ay, but I see others bear it. My conscience tells me that if one, especially my inferior, doth wrong me, I will make him come and submit to me, and he shall begin first. Ay, but I see others, though they be wronged, they will be willing to suffer, and all out of love to peace; for they get nothing by it but merely to make peace between neighbour and neighbour, or man and man. Why, certainly this is no other than the child of peace. Methinks every time I see these I am put in mind of God, the God of peace; I am put in mind of Jesus Christ, the prince of peace; I am put in mind of the Holy Ghost, that dove-like Spirit; certainly these are the children of God. By this men shall come to be convinced that they are the children of God. That is the meaning of this promise.

Now then for the thing itself: 'They shall be called the children of God.' There are these two points:

Doct. 1. That it is a blessed thing to be a child of God.

Doct. 2. It is a great mercy and blessing likewise not only to be so, but so to give and so to walk before others, as to convince the consciences of others, so as they cannot but account us to be so. These are the two points.

For the opening now of this blessedness of being the child of God. The point you cannot but think it should be large, if we should handle it in common plain ways; but that I shall not do. I need not name scriptures to you: 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' Oh this is the love of God indeed, that we should be called the sons of God; and it is the fruit of election: in Eph. i. 5, 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.' 'Hath predestinated us.' To what? 'Unto the adoption of children.' That is the special thing that God aims at in predestination; that is the blessing. When God was looking upon the lump of the children of men, Well, saith he, there are some that I mean to pass by and leave to the course of justice. Oh, but there are others that are good in mine eyes—that is, I make them so; and I will set them apart to the adoption of sons; they shall be my children; and I will be a Father to them for ever. Now that that I thought to have spoken of in this point should have been first the opening of this blessedness, in being the child of God.

First, What is the mystery of godliness in this point? And then,

Second, What are the great privileges those that are the children of God do come to enjoy by it?

First, the great mystery of godliness that there is in this point. God works very wonderful in this, in bringing sons to himself.

As, first, We must understand it as a mystery of godliness; because those that were before children of wrath, children of disobedience, are now made the children of God. There is no child of God that God hath, but only that only Son Jesus Christ, but was a child of wrath before he was a child of God actually made. Every man or woman that is a child of God now, certainly was a child of wrath before. And for God to make of children of wrath to be his children, this is a mystery revealed in the Scripture only, that we would not have come to have known by the light of nature. And it shews the blessedness of man, too, to be the children of God, when we were the children of wrath and of disobedience, and enemies to God.

Secondly, The mystery of godliness consists in this, that though they be adopted children, yet they are by regeneration too; this is a mystery of the gospel. We are said to be adopted children in Scripture. Now, among men, the same man cannot be adopted and begotten both, a child by adoption and a child by generation, of the same man. But it is so here; all the children of God are the children of God by adoption, and yet the children of God by generation, not in that way of generation as the second person in Trinity is the Son of the Father, nor as he is God-man, conceived by the Holy Ghost; but by another work of the Holy Ghost, which is next unto that. The next most glorious work of the Holy Ghost is for to regenerate children unto God by an immortal seed of the word, to beget them unto God; and yet for all this they are children by adoption. Now adoption is that whereby a man, when he hath no child of his own, doth take up and own another to be his child or heir. So we, that were not children ourselves by nature, God now, by his unspeakable grace, doth adopt us. But in that he doth adopt us and regenerate us both, this is a great mystery of the gospel that is in this point.

Thirdly, The great mystery is in this, that they are the children of God by their union with Jesus Christ the only Son of God; they come to their sonship by their union with Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God; they come to be children of God in a higher way than could be by creation; in a higher way than the angels are children of God. The Scripture, indeed, calls the angels the sons of God. Ay, but the saints are sons of God in a higher way than the angels are. The angels are not the sons of God by their union with the eternal Son of God, and being made one with him; and from the rays, as I may say, and glorious beams of his sonship, they are not made so. So that every believer, every peace-

maker that is godly, is a child of God by virtue of his union with the eternal Son of God, and he hath the rays and the glory of that sonship of his to shine upon him. Now this sonship is a higher degree of sonship than by nature. Adam was a son of God so, and the angels; but this is higher. By faith we are made the sons of God.

Fourthly, There is this mystery in it, that all the children of God are heirs, every one of them. It is not so with men. Men that have many children, yet but one is an heir. But all the children of God are heirs; every one, sons and daughters too, they are all heirs. This is the glory of the saints; for so the scripture saith, 'If sons, then heirs.' He doth not say, if we be eldest sons; but if we are sons, we are heirs. So in Rom. viii. 17.

Fifthly, But then there is a fifth mystery that is higher than this. Not only every one of them heirs, but they are joined co-heirs with Jesus Christ. To be co-heirs one with another is a great blessedness; but for every one of them to be co-heirs with Jesus Christ, that is a high blessedness indeed. As thus, look what inheritance Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God hath, that inheritance, so far as any believer is capable of the enjoyment of the good of it, he hath and shall have together with Jesus Christ. It is in the same place, Rom. viii., 'And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.' Perhaps before they come to inherit, here among men they have not a foot of land; but they are the heirs of God. Though not heirs of a nobleman or prince, or have not, I say, a foot of land in the world, yet they are the heirs of God—yea, and they are joint heirs with Christ. There are these two things in that:

First, They have an interest in all Christ's inheritance. Surely thou art rich and glorious however thou art in the world—the poorest youth, or man, or woman, or maid that God brings to himself to be reconciled. I say, whatsoever thou art in the world, Jesus Christ is not an heir to more than thou hast an interest in. Thou hast an interest in all that glory and blessedness and excellency there is in Jesus Christ, in all that ever God the Father will do for Jesus Christ; and therefore, in John xvii. 23, saith Christ there, speaking to his Father, 'And hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.' Surely there is blessedness enough then, if thou shalt come to have the same love from God the Father that Jesus Christ hath from God the Father. Why, so it is; thou art a co-heir with Christ. That is the first thing.

But then, secondly, Thou art as certain of thy salvation and glory as it is certain that Jesus Christ shall be happy for ever; because thou art a co-heir with Jesus Christ. You know, when men are co-heirs, the title of one is as certain as the other. If you be but a co-purchaser with another, then you have as true a

right in such a land or house as they have. Now Jesus Christ, though he be our elder brother, yet he is called an everlasting Father. Now, we are joint co-purchasers; ay, but it is more to be a co-heir than a co-purchaser: the right of inheritance is better and a more noble right than the right of purchase, and in some case it may be more certain. Now this is the right of the saints to all the good that Jesus Christ hath, they may be as certain of it as Christ himself. Christ himself shall be disinherited as soon as a believer, because a believer is a co-heir with Jesus Christ. Oh, blessed then are the peacemakers, for they are the children of God, and the children of God in a glorious mystical way. Such children, as they are co-heirs with Jesus Christ, have interest in his glory, and can be no more disinherited than Jesus Christ himself can. And I will give you one scripture as a

most excellent comfort to the saints, that Christ here doth join himself and them together in the relation that he and they have to his Father: in John xx., the latter end of ver. 17, 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God,' saith Christ. It is as comfortable a scripture almost as I know any in the book of God. I ascend to my Father; ay, and your Father too. He that is my Father, is your Father; you have interest in my Father as well as I: 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God.' Oh, who can utter the soul-satisfying, soul-ravishing consolation there is in this, that the same God that is the God of Jesus Christ is my God, and the same Father that is the Father of Jesus Christ is my Father! Oh 'blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be called the children of God!'

## SERMON XXXI.

OR,

### WHAT THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS IS IN ADOPTION.

*'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.'*—MAT. v. 9.

YEA, they are heirs of all, of all the inheritance—the whole inheritance is every one's. Among men, the more one hath, the less the other hath. A father, though he be rich, if he gives one child a great portion, if the elder doth inherit, the younger hath the less; or if he would divide his inheritance, if one hath a great deal, the other hath but little. But it is not so in the children of God's inheritance. There is no one child of God hath less because the other hath more, but every one inherits all there is in God, all there is in Christ, all there is in heaven; it is the inheritance of every child of God one way or other, for the good of every one.

Sixthly, Another particular is this, that now in Christ there is a great deal more privilege than there was in former times to the child of God. That is one of the mysteries of the gospel. Oh, it is true: Is not Ephraim my dear son? The saints in former times were God's children, but in the times of the gospel they have far higher privilege and prerogative than before; this is a part of the mystery of the gospel. Formerly God had children in nonage, under tutorage: all the saints, the most eminent of them,

were as children in their nonage, and came not to their inheritance; but we are as children, in comparison of them, that are of years. That is made out clearly to us in Gal. iv.: 'Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of this world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' So that it seems, till Christ came, there was no receiving the adoptions of sons. Why, were not the saints children before Christ came? Truly, in regard of God's usage of them, they were not as children, they were not sons—that is, they were not sons of age, to come to enjoy their inheritance, but they were sons; as kings' sons, when they are little children, have their tutors and governors, that use them as other children of meaner men, so were they used, and God revealed little to them of the excellency of their inheritance then. But as noble-