

those that give themselves liberty to satisfy the lust of the flesh; Rom. viii. 13, 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' That is, if there be any man or woman, he or she that give themselves liberty to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, and make that to be the chief contentment to satisfy the flesh, that man or woman shall perish for ever; they shall die. These scriptures have great matter in them to get out the corruptions of men's hearts. You that will attend on the ministry of the gospel, you will find at one time or another, but that the word will find out your particu- lar sins,

and then go home and rub it with salt. Labour to kill and mortify your sins; the ministers of God cannot so well do it as you. Remember this: Christ speaks here by similitudes, because he would have it to be remembered by you; you have occasion when you have salt on your tables, and when you go to salt your meat. If I did not salt my meat, it would be putrefied and unsavoury, and so is my heart. Whatever God lets me have in the world, I cannot relish it or savour it without the gospel, and without salt I cannot offer any sacrifice savoury to God. The doctrine of the ministry of the word is as salt to the benefit of nature.

SERMON XXXIX.

OR,

HOW PROFESSORS ARE SAID TO BE UNSAVOURY.

'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden down under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world.'—MAT. V. 13, 14.

WE read in Scripture that sometime salt makes barren where it is sown: Judges ix. 45, 'And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.' Much salt on the earth will make the earth barren; so it is with many of our hearts. We have so much of the salt of the word sown continually, and there is no fruit at all, but rather our hearts grow barren by it. Certainly there is a curse on that ground that hath salt thus sown on it, and there is a curse on this heart that lives under the ministry of the word, and have these blessed truths preached to them, and yet be barren. Now it follows,

If salt hath lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

Now this is applicable either to professors of religion, that do in their degree carry about with them the truths of the gospel, Luke xiv. 25, compared with ver. 36, or to ministers. If they have lost their savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

To speak briefly of the words in reference to professors of religion, who have understanding of many truths of the gospel, and for a time do hold them forth and embrace them, and have been of very good

use in former time in the towns, parishes, and in families where they have lived. They have been as salt. Many have received great benefit from them by that knowledge that they have, and by the excellent gifts that they had through the gospel; but yet some of them lose their savour. Where there is true grace in the heart, that will never be lost; but where many truths and gifts come by the gospel, they may be lost; and many that have been professors of religion have lost their savour—that is, they were very full of ferventness and zeal and heat in their duties and performances; none could come amongst them but found their hearts bettered by them than they were before; but now they have lost their savour, now there is no such vigour and liveliness, but now they are grown flat and cold, flat in their duties, formal in their ways. There is little good to be gotten by them, or expected from them. When you do converse with them, many of them are grown unsavoury. They have mingled base lusts with their profession and zeal, and have lost the power of it. They are grown earthly; their corruptions have prevailed over the salt. Though they for a while seemed to be kept down, yet afterward they had got power over those truths that they had in their under-

standings, and that they had openly professed. Their corruption now has got the power, and so they have lost all their savour and vigour, and are grown formal in their duties, and all their savour is gone. This is said of such as have made profession of religion, that have lost their savour. Some do say, how are these changed or they were? If salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? * How shall this be recovered again? So the meaning is. It is not impossible, but it is a rare thing for any one that hath been a forward professor of religion, and hath had vigour and strength, and now is grown flat and cold—it is an impossible thing almost that such a one should be recovered, it is a rare thing if such be recovered. † Heb. vi. 4. † For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, &c. It is a most dreadful place; yet the scripture doth not mention in words the sin against the Holy Ghost, but lays it down in a more general way, to leave them to a most dreadful fear, to take heed that they never, never fall away. Let such take heed how they nourish any corruption. Where almost have you any recovered—any that return after that they are fallen from profession of religion? And why? It is so because that when they have had the experience of truth, the truths of God that work on other men's hearts, do no good to them at all. They knew what these truths meant many years ago, but to many it awakens their consciences, and stirs their hearts. It humbles their spirits and casts them down, and causeth them to see the dreadfulfulness of their natural estate; but let a formal professor that is fallen off from the truth of God, let him know such things, he hath got power over his conscience. There is little efficacy to prevail over it. Wherewith shall it be salted when the salt hath lost his savour? It follows of them, it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out; that is, an apostatising professor of religion is an unuseful member in the church of God or commonwealth. He is almost good for nothing. One that is a forward professor of religion, if he be not fruitful, he is not good for anything. Salt, when it hath lost its savour, there is no more use at all for it, as there can be of other things: as money, if it be broken, if it cannot go for coin, yet it is good for the goldsmith; but salt is good for nothing at all; and so professors that are apostatising from the truth. There is not a more miserable creature than an apostatising Christian; they are good for nothing, for now neither God nor man will trust them. They have been forward in religion, and they are now fallen off, and God will not trust them any more, nor will man trust them any more, because of their unfaithfulness to God. They that are not useful, they are

* See Perkins on the place. † See Dickson on Heb. vi. 4.

east out of men's hearts. There was a time that it may be you rejoiced to be in their company, and lookedst upon it as a privilege, but now you look on them as contemptible. They go up and down as poor wretches, forsaken of God and men, because they are of no use at all to the world, of no note or account in the church, but do hurt wherever they are. God ordinarily takes their gifts away from them. When they professed religion they had gifts, and God hath taken them away. Now they cannot pray as they could formerly do; and there is a secret curse of God that goeth along with them in all that they do. That in the time of their youth, and at first when they began to make profession of truth, there was some gifts of God in them and upon them for the edification of others; but now God is gone from them, and their gifts they are gone, and they themselves are departed from God—what change is in them!—and they go up and down as burdens to the towns and families, and they are trodden under foot. No men in the world do more mischief or hurt than those that are forward in profession of religion, and yet fall off afterwards: they then look on the name of God as vile and contemptible. God will look on you as vile and contemptible; and you are the stumbling-blocks and discouragements to young beginners in the ways of God, when God begins to work on their hearts. You harden the hearts of wicked men, when once you were forward, hot, and zealous, and are fallen off. They that are wicked think that religion is but a fancy, and it is but a mere humour that men are possessed withal; and so you are discouragements to poor weak ones. They think, Lord, what shall become of me, that those that were such great ones in the church of God as they were, and they fall off that were so eminent in profession? O Lord, how shall I hold out if they fall off? You are discouragements to others, those that made profession afore, and may be not grown profane in their profession neither; but they grow sluggish, and they are vexed to see young ones come up more forward than they. And the truth is this, they should lay their hands on their hearts and say, Have not I lost my savour? and am not I more sluggish? and is it not just with God to take my esteem and repute away from the church of God? They should be willing to cry out, having apostatised from the truth, as he did: Tread upon me, tread upon me, unsavoury salt; let all tread upon me. It is just with God that all his servants should tread upon me. And I beseech you, consider of this, you that now begin to make profession of religion, and have some work of God in your hearts. Many of you that are young, there is some relish of savoury things among you. When temptation comes in, then consider of the dreadful condition of one that apostatiseth from the profession of religion; for when you are young, you

think, surely you shall hold out these truths of God that now you have; here you are persuaded that they shall never get out of your hearts again. You do not know, you do not know your own hearts.

I come now to the words as they respect the ministers. The general stream almost of all interpreters is that way; they are the salt of the earth, and if they have lost their savour, &c., that is thus: when any begin to preach at the first, their preaching is full of strength—they are mighty zealous, mighty forward; but afterwards the temptations of the world, when they come and they get livings to feather their nests well, and are settled in the world, then they begin to grow more slack, loose, and empty in the world. Their preaching is more flat than it was; there is not the savouriness in it as formerly there was; they do not speak to the hearts of men as formerly; yea, it may be, now having met with temptations, they are grown very frothy, begin to mix other things of their own invention with it, and are loath to speak those truths that should go to their hearts and consciences, and will rather preach those truths that are easy, general truths, that shall not come near any man's conscience. Then there is not salt in their teaching, but rather a flattering and slight kind of way they minister the truths of God, and they come to mingle their preaching with superstitiousness, and their preaching is only to lift up external things, to preach for superstitious vanities. A child of God, one that hath grace in his heart, how unsavoury is this preaching to him! Many that have been slow in preaching, when they come to speak against those that preach the true word of God, they are mighty hot and fierce against them: these preachers are such as Christ calls unsavoury preachers. If so be that ministers have lost their savour, and now come to be slothful in their ways and sluggish in their ministry, then they have lost their savour: wherewith shall it be salted? It is almost an impossible thing ever to recover a minister that hath fallen off from the truth of the gospel. Take any minister that heretofore hath been anything forward, and now is fallen off from the truth of the gospel, it is rare if ever he be recovered—I will not say none at all, but it is a rare thing.

First, In regard of the pride of their hearts. They seem to be taught of others, or to be known that they have gone in erroneous ways; yea, though sometimes their consciences condemn them, yet the pride of their hearts will not let them acknowledge the error of their ways.

Secondly, The strength of their natural parts being corrupted by their sin, is now employed to keep off the truths of God that should do them good. Just as it is with a man that hath a sore in his body, the nourishment of his body will run to the feeding

* Query, 'word'?—Ed.

of that sore; and so with man's wickedness. And there is a curse of God upon them; and it is very rare that ever they shall come to recover again. How few ministers that were malignants and wicked, that did return only at such times when they were absolutely necessitated therunto! And therefore, by the way, it should take off the offence that men stumble at when they see learned men do thus and thus. When learned men have lost their savour, do not be offended at that, and make use of it thus: I see it is a dreadful thing for a man to sin against light. Were I in such an auditory that were full of young ministers, who are full of quickening vigour for the present, I would have these things to be caveat for them, that those that know them savoury now, may know them savoury at the last. Their natural parts may decay, yet you may see a light, and quickness of spirit, and love for God—to all that come to them such savoury and wholesome counsels to them, from what experience they have had; blessed are these; but it is most miserable for such as have been forward when they were young ministers to grow unsavoury, and not to be recovered. Henceforth good for nothing. What should we do with them, if they be good for nothing? If you send them to congregations where there are good people, it will but dead the hearts of that people. It will grieve their hearts if you send them to such congregations where the people are naught; it will make them worse. And besides, ordinarily there is a curse of God on their parts and gifts, and they will hardly be trusted, because of their unfaithfulness to God. I remember a papist, in his comment on Mal. ii. 3, saith, They are good for nothing, they shall be cast out and trodden under foot. 'Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.' What shall become of them? To beg they are ashamed, and to dig they cannot. What shall become of them that are unsavoury? It may be some would pity them; but it is the just judgment of God that they shall be trodden under foot; yea, such ministers, it may be, that people have flocked to them heretofore, now there is no use for them in the church; and those that are the most understanding, they do reject them, they are cast out of their hearts. There may be a great deal of evil in men's hearts in withdrawing themselves from them that do preach savoury truths, that is a rarity in them; but now I speak in general, that all saints generally do cast them out, and not esteem them. Yet they may preach good things; and if they do preach good things, yet they will but little regard them. So they are of no use at all, they shall be cast out; the Lord would have men to cast them out, and tread them under foot, to despise them. There is no people in the world that

are more justly under contempt than ministers whose ministry hath turned from savouriness to unsavouriness, and that from God himself, through the just judgment of God on them. I will give you some scripture for it, because it is reasonable at this time: 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' They regarded themselves in their office more than God's honour. No men in the world are set more on their honour than ministers are that have corrupt hearts. Saith God, They will set up themselves above me; they will set up their own trash and invention above that savoury word of mine. They shall be lightly esteemed, they shall be trod under foot, they shall be cast out. So in ver. 36, 'And it shall to come pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.' There is the threat of God on the priests, that they shall come and crouch for a morsel of bread, come and crouch to others, that afore they did scorn and contemn. This is the curse of God on them. And in the other text—it is in the prophecy of Jeremiah, chap. xxiii. 40,—'And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten. I will bring an everlasting reproach, contempt, and shame on them.' That which is most remarkable of treading under foot, and casting out, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chap. xlv. 10–13, 'And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols, they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.' They shall have some low place, but he saith they shall never come into their places again; that is, there was a time of trial of men. The generality of men went such ways; some for superstitious ways, they set themselves against the saints, and the ways of godliness, and truths of God; and the Levites they would

go that way they saw which way the stream went, and they went that way too for honour and preferment. And let them get their bread how they can, they shall never come to their places again, because they departed from me; they should have taught the people, they should have resisted them, and stood for my cause. Here is the judgment of God on them. And in the prophecy of Hosea, chap. iv. 6, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.' Tremellius noteth on this scripture, that there is one letter more than usual in that word, 'I will reject thee;' and it is only, saith he, to shew the strength that God speaks with; as if he should say, it is not an ordinary rejection, but a strong rejection. Another remarkable place in Mal. ii. 7–9, 'For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.' You took upon you to be the priests of God, and the law should be in your mouths, and knowledge should be preserved in your lips; but you have corrupted the covenant, and been partial in the law. And you have sought to maintain your own superstitious vanities by my word; you have abused my word. What then? therefore saith God, 'I made you base and contemptible.' Saith one in his comment on this scripture, this is not so much to be expounded as waived: What is a more despicable thing than the priests? Oh how the Lord hath fulfilled this scripture! Who more in triumph about seven years ago than the prelatical priests? what stuff did they preach? what unsavouriness was in them, and proceeded from them? And now hath the Lord scattered them, and cast them down; as it is in Rev. iii. 21, 22, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' Let us all say, The Lord is righteous, and acknowledge the hand of God in this, and acknowledge the Lord's goodness that hath stirred up our governors to cast out unsavoury salt. It is a sign of much unsavouriness of men's spirits that they yet could savour such ministry—they thought it better than the ministry now. This disposition of men's spirits puts me in mind here of that scripture in 2 Cor. xi. 20, 'For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the

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