

SERMON XXII.

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WHEREIN ARE WE ENDANGERED BY THINGS LAWFUL?

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.
—Luke xvii. 27—29.

HERE is set down what the generality of people were doing in the world: they were brutish in the days of Noah, before the flood came and drowned them; and in the days of Lot, before the fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. In Matt. xxiv. 38, it is expressed by participles: "They were eating," &c., *τρῶγοντες*, &c. This shows the vigour and activity of their spirits spent on those things in which they were engaged; and the word *τρῶγοντες*, *proprie de brutis dici volunt grammatici; ut etiam videatur magna esse hujus verbi emphasis, quod significatur homines brutorum instar fore ventri deditos.** (BEZA.) This word signifieth a kind of "brutish feeding themselves without fear," as it is [in] Jude 12; but here in the text the words run, *Ἡσθιον, ἐκινον, ἐγαμουν*, &c. They are expressed by an *ασυνδετον*,† without a copulative. Camerarius observes: *Hæc ita ασυνδετως posita magis notant et arguunt hominum temporis illius securitatem; †* so that the vehemency, and eagerness, and intension of their spirits in the things they were employed in, is hereby noted. They were very busy; their hearts, and heads, and hands, all taken up in eating, drinking, buying, selling, &c., the actions named; and the comforts which they were enjoying, those natural and civil employments in which they were engaged, all good and lawful in themselves; but they were not well employed in them. The use of those things was lawful, but they did sinfully use them; for there is in all these actions a narrow way and a broad way: (Matt. vii. 13, 14:) the narrow way which is bounded and limited, and under a rule as to the end, namely, "the glory of God," (1 Cor. x. 31,) and also [as] to the circumstances; though there be but few that find it: but the broad way,

* "The Greek word which we translate *eating*, as the grammarians observe, is properly applicable to beasts; so that the use of this word may likewise appear to be very emphatic; since by it an intimation is conveyed, that men addicted to appetite would be degraded to as low a condition as that of the brutes."—EDIT. † Subjoined is Kersey's definition of this word: "*Asyndeton*, in Grammar, a defect or want of conjunctions in a sentence."—EDIT.

‡ "The words in this collocation, without the intervention of a single conjunction copulative, more forcibly describe and condemn the state of security into which the men of that age were lulled."—EDIT.

which is without bounds and limits,—this is the common road which most walk in. “Thus far, but no further,” saith God. The will of God is the boundary of the narrow way; but lust knoweth no bounds, and will not be prescribed to.

The very Heathens looked at their common actions as under bounds: they had their *Ανεχου και απεχου*, *sustine et abstine*, *ευποιητεον και ανεκτεον*.* (GELLII *Noctes Attice*, lib. xvii. c. 19: ANTON. (?) PIGHIUS, lib. iv. sec. 3.) But the difficulty lies in observing the just limits in the use of lawful things; and therefore one said well, *Licitis perimus omnes*, &c.: “Ruin usually ariseth from the use of lawful things;” there being most danger where it is least suspected. In all our comforts, there is a forbidden fruit, which seemeth fair, and tasteth sweet, but which must not be touched.

The observations may be these:—

1. *That all our actions, natural, in eating, &c., and civil, in buying and selling, &c., come under a rule.*—This is implied, else the Lord would not have brought those great judgments on them, barely for their eating, &c., had they not in those employments transgressed a rule.

2. *Such are usually the miscarriages of men in the use of lawful things, that they are the procuring causes of the most dreadful judgments.*—For we see that the Lord makes mention of these very things, lawful in themselves, as the causes of the flood on the world, and fire on Sodom.

3. *The Lord puts great weight and stress on those very things which we take but little or no notice of.*—The old world and Sodom little thought they should come to so severe a reckoning for their eating and drinking, &c.

To bring things to an issue as to the case, *concerning our danger of sin and miscarriage in lawful things*, I shall inquire,

I. When lawful things become sin to us?

II. How we may judge of our hearts and selves, and discern their miscarriage and sin in the pursuing, enjoyment, and use of lawful things?

III. What are the sins that attend the immoderate and inordinate use of lawful things?

I. As to the first, I answer, *When lawful comforts, which are given us for helps, become hinderances in our way to heaven, then they become sin to us.*—When we, by our abusive cleaving to the creature, by our inordinate affection to it, by our exorbitant, disorderly pursuing of it, do abuse our helps, they become hinderances to us; and, as it was said of Gideon’s ephod, he made an ephod, which, when it became an idol, “became a snare.” (Judges viii. 27.) When lawful comforts are immoderately and passionately desired, pursued, enjoyed, then they become an idol and a beloved; or at least they become beloved so far as to carry it from Christ, from duty. Now, when any thing becomes an idol in the heart, so as that the soul begins to bow before it, and yield obedience to it, then it becomes an idol; and what is an idol in the heart, is a stumbling-block of iniquity in our life; (Ezek. xiv. 4;) it is a stumbling-

* “Sustain and abstain, bear and forbear: it must be well done and firmly maintained.”—EDIT.

block, an hinderance in our way. Such idols in the heart usually prove great offences, and both *σκανδαλον και προσωκομμα*, “stumbling-blocks and occasions of falling:” (Rom. xiv. 13:) the first signifies “a stumbling-block to keep one off from duty:” such an offence Peter was to Christ. (Matt. xvi. 23.) He would have hindered him in that great work which he had to do. The second signifies a gall-trap, which will vex and trouble one in duty; so that when our comforts become idols, images of jealousy in our hearts, then they are stumbling-blocks, and so obstacles in our way to heaven.

Again: *When our lawful comforts by our dotage become beloveds, or greatly, passionately beloved, then they become hinderances.*—When your hearts inflame themselves with your comforts, as the Lord speaks of them in Isai. lvii. 5: they inflamed themselves with their idols. When the heart doth inordinately love creature-comforts, they are then turned into lusts, so that of lawful comforts they are made unlawful lusts. (1 John ii. 15, 16.) The things of the world, or the profits, pleasures, honours, which usually men’s hearts and thoughts are taken up withal, are good and lawful things in themselves; but, being abused, they are called, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye,” &c. The Holy Ghost puts the lust that is within us, to express the profits, pleasures, and honours of the world which are without us: so that the good things of this life, by our inordinate love to them, being abused, the very nature and property of the things are altered; for, instead of proving good helps to us when lawfully loved and used, [they] become lusts that hinder us, (for they fight against our souls, 1 Peter ii. 11,) and members of the old man, and weapons in his hand to fight against God; they become one with old Adam in us, and therefore we are bid to mortify our earthly members. (Col. iii. 5.) He doth not say, “Mortify your lusts,” but “members;” they being all one, and make up together a body of sin, one “old man,” as it is called, Eph. iv. 22. Now, it is certain, that the old man in us, the body of sin, is an enemy and a hinderance to us in our way to heaven.

In this case those foul sins of idolatry and adultery are committed with the creature; in both which sins, the heart is stolen away from God, drawn away from the proper object. The apostle useth that expression, *υπο της επιθυμιας εξελκομενος*, “drawn away by lust,” (James i. 14,) or some object, in an unlawful conjunction with the heart: then the heart comes to be glued to it, as God speaks: they are “joined to idols,” (Hosea iv. 17,) fixed to them; so that as in idolatry the heart is joined to and fixed to the idol, so as that it will not easily part with it; (as it is, Jer. ii. 11: “Hath a nation changed their gods?” As if he had said, “No, they are fixed to their gods, and they will not change them;”) so it is in the sin of adultery, the heart is stolen from the proper object; as it is in Hosea iv. 11, speaking of wine and women, it is said, they “take away the heart,” and it is glued to that which it goes a-whoring after, so that it will not be taken off from it. (Prov. ii. 19.) When the creature becomes an idol in the heart, then there is idolatry committed; and when it is a beloved, there is adultery committed; the hope, and trust, and confidence of the soul are gone; the

love and care, the joy and delight of the soul are gone; and the soul, with every creature that it thus enjoys, "poureth out her fornications," as the Lord spake of them in Ezek. xvi. 15; and as they in Isai. xxiii. 17, are said to "commit fornication with all kingdoms," so a heart which inordinately loveth, and doteth on, and is glued to, creature-comforts, commits * fornication and abomination with them.

II. The second inquiry was, *How we may judge of our hearts, and know when they miscarry and offend in the pursuing, use, and enjoyment of lawful things.*

1. *When our desire of, and our endeavours after, worldly things grow strong and vehement, and very eager and impatient.*—As Rachel said, "Give me children, or else I die." (Gen. xxx. 1.) When we begin to say, "I must have such an accommodation, whatever it cost me; I must have such a comfort, or I am undone;" such a pursuit after worldly comforts argues a heart very carnal; and he that miscarries so much in seeking after the things of this world will not mend the matter much when he comes to enjoy them. When the heart groweth sick after worldly things in the desire of them, usually it surfeiteth when it gaineth it: as Amnon was sick for his sister, (2 Sam. xiii. 1, 2,) he had a surfeit after; and as Ahab,—he was sick with impatient, earnest longing for Naboth's vineyard. (1 Kings xxi. 4.) When your heart is very impatient till you do obtain your desires, you are never well with that thing which you do so obtain. When the affections grow strong and warm, that you can endure no opposition or contradiction in the pursuance of your desires, but you can bear any trouble or hardship that you may obtain the things desired: (as we see in Shechem, who could endure circumcision that he might have Dinah; Gen. xxxiv. 19; and in Jacob, who did endure very much that he might have Rachel: Gen. xxix. 18;) then there is a match towards,† then in such a case, when it is gained, the heart becomes glued to it, and commits fornication with it, and cannot endure to be touched or thwarted in the fruition of it; as Demetrius and the silversmiths, when they found their Diana began to be touched by Paul's doctrine, they made an uproar, they would not endure that. (Acts xix. 24, &c.) When ye look on any thing with a greedy and impatient, longing, lusting eye; THAT, if you do obtain it, (if God doth not otherwise order it,) will prove a snare to you, as the Psalmist speaks, an idol, an image of jealousy, a curse, and a cross. (Psalm lxix. 22.)

2. *When you have raised expectations and hopes of great contentment and satisfaction from your comforts.*—When you promise to yourselves greater matters from the creature than it can yield; then you miscarry when you look on the creature through the multiplying glass of your affections and lusts, and see them as they are so represented bigger and better than they are; and from thence you have high valuation of them, and raised expectations also of great things from them. When

* All the editions, except the first, have the word *re-commits* in this place.—EDIT.

† All the editions have *match towards*, which, as the language of that age, is susceptible of a good interpretation: "There is a match in great forwardness:" "A contemplated union is in hopeful progress."—EDIT.

we fancy an excellency in the creature that is not, we fancy a fulness in an empty thing, a satisfaction in an insufficient, unsatisfying comfort ; we fancy a stability in a vain, fleeting, vanishing thing. When we fancy a fountain-excellency in a broken cistern, as they did Jer. ii. 13 ; then upon this the heart is raised to great expectations of pleasure, profit, &c. ; then the heart shamefully miscarries ; and, as it is said there is a strange beast that turned the eyes of all the world after it, they looked with an eye of great expectation from this beast, and then they wondered and adored also ; so that they looked with an eye of admiration and adoration too. (Rev. xiii. 3, 4.)

3. *When the obedience and willing submission of the soul is brought off to any worldly comfort, and the soul stoops to its sceptre, and the faculties, like the centurion's servants, do as they are bid.*—Such comforts which are slavishly obeyed, are sinfully enjoyed. When we are afraid to displease them, the fear is at command ; when we are careful to please such a lust, then the care is under subjection ; when we are troubled if crossed, then our sorrow is at command ; if rejoiced when that is gratified, then the love and delight of the soul are at command : “His servants ye are to whom ye obey.” (Rom. vi. 16.) When the soul is even as the servant that looks to the hand of the master with an obedient eye, expecting a command, and ready to yield obedience, (Psalm cxliii. 2,) such a comfort is a sin and a curse to you. Christ calls to us to deny ourselves. (Matt. xvi. 24.) Profits, pleasures, carnal advantages say, “Rather deny Christ's command.” Who is obeyed ? Christ saith, “Mortify your lusts ;” lust saith, “Gratify us.” Consider, who is obeyed ? If family duties, and personal private duties ; if praying, holy meditation, secret close communion with God, be neglected, because multitude of worldly business, and full and great trade in the world, command you another way, and require the love, and zeal, and strength, and care of the heart to another attendance, then you are under another sovereign than Christ. The obedience of the heart is carried to another law : other lords rule over you. Now, the soul that is under the command of the creature, as I have showed, that comfort becomes a sin which usurps the throne of the heart.

4. *When the soul groweth very tender and compassionate towards such a comfort, and begins to spare that above other things : then that becomes a lust, and lust is very tender and delicate, and must be tenderly used.*—Right eyes are very tender ; the least touch fetcheth tears. When thou canst not endure that either the word of God, or the rod of God, should come too near, or so much as touch upon such a carnal contentment, such a comfort, such a husband, such a wife or child ; thou canst not endure that the Lord should smite thee in any of these, but thou criest out, “O spare this,” as David concerning his Absalom, “O tender the young man, pray deal gently with him ;” (2 Sam. xviii. 4, 5 ;) and as old Jacob with his Benjamin,—he could more easily spare his other children than him ; he looked with a very tender, compassionate eye on him ! Whatever thou dost enjoy with such a tender, bleeding heart and eye, it hath ravished thy heart very far, and it is become thy idol and beloved very far, and thy sin.

5. *When the care, anxiety, and solicitude of the soul runs out after the comforts of this life: saying, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? How shall I live and maintain my wife and children? what shall I do to get, to keep such or such a thing?"*—When the thoughts of the heart are taken up for protection, for provision, to get and hold the things of this life; such comforts as are so gotten, and so enjoyed, they are sinfully obtained and maintained; and this our Lord Christ doth clear to us. (Matt. vi. 25, 26.) And he warns his disciples in a special manner against all such cares: Προσσεχετε δε εαυτοις.* (Luke xxi. 34.)

6. *That comfort which thou art not dead unto, neither is that dead to thee, thou wilt hardly enjoy with safety to thyself, or thou wilt part withal but upon severe terms.*

If when God, by his providence, calls for such or such a comfort, husband, wife, child, yet thou canst not, you will not, resign and give up that comfort at God's call; but thou growest impatient and sullen, when he doth but attempt to bereave thee of it; God may perhaps let thee have thy lust, as he dealt with the Israelites; but thou shalt have that comfort without any comfort, it may be with a curse. (Psalm lxxviii. 18, 30, 31.)

When we cannot bear the thoughts of either absence or loss of such or such things, cannot endure the thought of parting; it is like the tearing off a limb from the body, when God takes away such a husband, or wife, or child, or estate, &c.; it argues that they were greatly abused while we had them. If there were an indifferency of spirit in us, as the apostle speaks, that they that were married, were as if they were not married, &c., (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, &c.) they would part upon easier terms by far. When the life is bound up in a comfort, it is death to part; as it was with Jacob to his Benjamin. (Gen. xlv. 22, 30.) When the creature hath got too great an interest in thee, that thou canst by no means bring thy heart to think of leaving it, or its leaving thee, though God seems to call for it; the heart begins secretly to rise up against God, and to murmur and quarrel at providence; this argueth a very carnal heart. If the heart did hang loose from these things, thou mightest enjoy them with more comfort, and part with them with more ease.

7. *If after God hath been weaning us in a more special manner by his word and rod, and taking off our hearts from our worldly comforts, yet the strong bent of the soul is towards them, it argues much carnal love to them that we are not crucified to those comforts.*

When the soul hath its secret, sinful converse and fellowship with a creature-comfort, against its own conviction to the contrary; it may be, thou hast repented, or at least hast seemed to repent, of such a way and course; yet, for all this, thy heart continually hangs that way; and as it is [in] Prov. ix. 17, her "stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." When a stolen glance of the eye, a stolen kiss from a lustful object, is still pleasant to the soul, there is much of a meretricious carriage in that heart, it is so far sinfully enjoyed.

When the heart hankers much after such a thing, it is stolen away; (Hosea iv. 11;) when it hangs after it, as it is in Jer. xxii. 17, their

* "And take heed to yourselves," lest at any time, &c.—EDIT.

hearts went after their covetousness ; when the heart hath its secret haunts and postern-doors to get out to such or such an object, and that object hath its secret passage to the soul. There be some secret correspondencies betwixt the heart and the object. When the lustful object hath its welcome, it no sooner knocks but it is admitted ; when it hath a free passage into the heart, and the heart hangs after it, nay, perhaps admits it when it is in duty ; if it comes even when we are with God in prayer, and is admitted ; it argues a sinful, whorish familiarity.

8. *If, after solemn and frequent warnings, invitations, and earnest beseechings, perhaps corrections too, God calls thee to a more strict and close walking with him in a severer way of self-denial, in a more free and full enjoyment of himself.*—If God would sequester thee from thy oxen, farm, married wife, that he might have thee more alone from the crowd, and dust, and tumult of the world ; if yet, after all this, thou then settest thy wits on work to frame excuses ; if Christ speak to thee as he did to his spouse : “ Come, let us go forth into the field ; let us lodge in the villages ; ” (Canticles vii. 11 ;) “ Come, let us go out of the city-crowd and multiplicity of worldly businesses, and let us retire alone, that we may more fully enjoy one another.” If he saith to thee as he speaks to his spouse, “ Let us get up early to the vineyards,” &c., (verse 12,) and calls thee off to a more early, earnest, diligent attendance on him ; and thou doest as the spouse, makest lazy excuses, (Canticles v. 2, 3,) for thy easy gainful trade and way of life thou ledest ; if so it be with thee, thou keepest thy comforts upon sinful terms.

When the arguments, and pleas, and excuses, and pretexts, are for lust ; when denials, equivocations, and thy reason, are all at work for lust ; when God calls to self-denial in some creature-comfort, and then the heart forms excuses for the enjoyment of it ; (as they in the gospel ; they all began to make excuses, when they were called to the wedding-supper ; their lawful comforts became a snare and sin to them ; Luke xiv. 17, 18 ;) if thy heart, in such a case, studies *colours* to adorn or set it out, or set it off, or *covers* to protect it, then it is sinful. The heart miscarries in the enjoyment of its comforts, when it studies how to hide itself in the enjoyment of it, as much as may be, even from the eye of God.

III. The third thing propounded was, *What are the sins that attend the immoderate sinful use or abuse of lawful comforts ?*

I will confine myself to the sins in the text.

1. The first sin in their eating and drinking, &c., was *sensuality* ; and that is expressed by the word *τρωγοντες*, which, as I have showed, is properly applied to brutes, an eating after a brutish manner ; and by the *ασυνδετον*, [“ asyndeton,”] which notes the vehemency and intension of their spirits, laid out in their sensual enjoyments. Men are apt (especially in abundance) to grow sensual and brutish, to use their comforts without fear, to indulge themselves very far, and so say to themselves, as the rich glutton, “ Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry ; ” (Luke xii. 19 ;) a sensual, brutish speech, fitter for a swine than a man. Abundance of the things of this life hath a strange virtue to corrupt a man into a brute. “ Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.”

(Deut. xxii. 15.) How is he degenerated to a fat heifer or horse, that kicks and winceth! The Lord complains, that "when he had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery," &c., and were like "fed horses," brutish and sensual. (Jer. v. 7, 8.) Such as gratify their lusts in eating, &c., are "strong bulls of Bashan." (Psalm xxii. 12.) The Psalmist says, he was compassed about with them, who were like bulls in a fat pasture, well-fed and strong, and ready to gore and push. The great, and rich, and potent ones are compared to these brutes. We are very apt in the midst of comforts to grow sensual, and before we are aware, as Noah and Lot, who both were overtaken. Our Lord Christ exhorts his disciples against these, and bids them to beware. (Luke xxi. 34.) The word notes a very diligent and intent study and intension of mind to what he said, "lest their heart should be overcharged." It seems strange that he should give the disciples an exhortation against sensuality and brutish sins, but that he knew their natures; and though they were most temperate persons, yet he bids them "beware of surfeiting," knowing that if the best did not watch, they might be overtaken with sensuality.

2. *Pride, ease, and idleness usually go together, the immoderate or inordinate use of the creature.*—This was it which God warned his people of: "When thou hast eaten and art full, beware lest then thine heart be lifted up." (Deut. viii. 11, 12, 14.) So, Psalm cxxiii. 4, there it is said, "Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud:" they are put together. When we fall to eating and drinking, the next thing is to take our ease. (Luke xii. 19.)

So the Lord speaks: "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." (Hosea xiii. 6.) Ease and idleness attend sensuality; these gratify a brutish disposition very much. Fulness of bread and abundance of idleness were Sodom's sins; (Ezek. xvi. 49;) and the rich glutton sang a requiem to his soul. Usually, when men abound in outward comforts, they are most apt to grow lethargic and slothful, or at least they will not take much pains; it may be, they will be doing something, but they will not be at much pains, especially as to their souls: "Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn," &c.; (Hosea x. 11;) but not to plough; he cares not for that. They were wont to use beasts in treading their corn, instead of threshing of it: now, it was God's command, that the ox that trod out the corn should not be muzzled, but that he might eat as he did work.

Then here is Ephraim at a good lazy work, that hath meat in the mouth of it, wages for work, and present pay; here is corn, he abounds in outward things; and though he treads out the corn, he will not plough, that is too hard labour; he will not go abroad in the wet and cold: and [this] seems to have reference to those of the tribes that would not go to Jerusalem to worship, they would not take so much pains. Ephraim considers his ease, he loves no hard work. Ephraim did abound, and grew rich. (Hosea xii. 7, 8.) He drove a great trade in the world, and took pains; but yet it was in a way that might gratify

his lust, and carry on his gains : but what saith God to this temper ? See Hosea x. 11 : the Lord saith, he will pass upon his fair neck : “ I will make Ephraim to ride.” He had a fair and a beautiful neck ; he led such a life, that though he trod out the corn, he lived in plenty, ease, and idleness ; no yoke came on his neck, he would not abide a yoke to be put on ; but by his lazy life and good trade he had a beautiful neck, he became tender and delicate : but, “ I will pass over his fair neck ;” as some take it, “ I will cause a heavy yoke to come over his neck, and will make him work, and set him to hard labour. I will make him a drudge. I will make him ride.” Some take it for their speedy captivity, that shall tame him : by his plenty and ease he is grown so lusty, like a restive jade, “ I will ride him, I will set some on his back [that] shall ride him off his legs.” And, “ Jacob shall break his clods ;” (verse 11 ;) the ten tribes. This is a base, drudging work, to break the clods ; but this servile work shall be his. We see, in Laodicea, their plenty and idleness went together ; and they were to be spued out. (Rev. iii. 16, 17.)

3. Then there is *security* follows this eating, &c. ; and usually where there is abundance of these, and that men are much taken up with these, there is a secure, sleepy, forgetful spirit goes with them : and, doubtless, this was the sin of the old world, that though Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and his making the ark was a public alarm to the world, yet they went on in their way, eating and drinking, &c., very securely, promising to themselves peace and safety. Such as are filled with what they eat and drink, are apt to drop asleep ; and then they are secure ; they apprehend themselves safe from danger ; they are compared to a drunken man, that doth not know in what condition he is. In 2 Tim. ii. 26, the word *ανανήψασιν* is “ to return to one’s self after drunkenness,” “ that they may awaken :” for it signifies one that is secure, and so goes on in his way ; when he returns and recovers himself, he is as a man that was drunk, and awakes and returns to himself. Whence it is that God did so often caution his people against a secure, sleepy, forgetful frame of spirit ; and when the Lord was to bring the children of Israel into Canaan, he still bids them [that] they should not forget him. (Deut. vi., viii. 14.) But this sin he complains of in them. (Hosea ii. 13.) When David was in the midst of his comforts he grew secure. (Psalm xxx. 6.) We find some brought-in, speaking in their thoughts that they had “ made a covenant with death and hell,” &c. (Isai. xxviii. 15.) They in their secure thoughts apprehended themselves free from danger : such thoughts ever carry impenitency and hardness of heart with them ; when they are “ settled on their lees,” they never consider or say, “ What have I done ?” (Zeph. i. 12 ; Jer. xlviii. 11 ; viii. 6.) Incogitancy and security go together. A secure person never considers his own estate, danger, nor duty. When once a man grows sleepy, promising to himself freedom from danger, and good days, then he falls into some sin or other, or some evil falls upon him. The evil servant said his master delayed his coming, and he began to beat his fellow-servant. (Matt. xxiv. 48—50.) (1.) He is secure, he promiseth to himself safety ; his master delays, &c. (2.) He falls to beat his

fellow-servant. Or else they fall into some sin. While they slept, their lamps went out : Matt. xxv. 5, 8. Or some evil befalls them ; (Lam. i. 9 ;) “ Sudden destruction,” &c. (1 Thess. v. 3.) When men grow secure as to their state, and of a supine, sleepy, careless spirit, such are ever in a most unsafe, sinful condition, nigh to cursing, and on the very brink of ruin and utter destruction.

SERMON XXIII.

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HOW MUST WE MAKE RELIGION OUR BUSINESS ?

Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?—Luke ii. 49.

THESE are the words of our Lord Jesus, whose lips dropped as an honey-comb. The occasion was this : Christ having the Spirit of wisdom and sanctity poured on him without measure, being but twelve years old, goes to the temple, and fell a-disputing with the doctors. (Verse 46.) Where should learning blossom but upon that tree which did bear several sorts of fruit ? Who could better interpret secrets than He who lay in his Father's bosom ? (Col. ii. 9.) “ All that heard him were astonished at his understanding.” (Luke ii. 47.) In the Greek it is ἐξίσταυτο, “ they were out of themselves ” with admiration.* Well might they admire, that he who never had been at the university should be able to silence the great rabbies : “ How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? ” (John vii. 15.) While they were wondering, his mother, who now was come to seek him, propounds this question, “ Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? ” (Luke ii. 48 ;) that is, “ Why hast thou put us to all this labour in seeking thee ? ” † In the words of the text Christ makes a rational and religious reply : “ Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? ” In the Greek it is, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Πατρὸς μου, “ in the things of my Father.” As if Christ had said, “ I must be doing the work which my Father in heaven hath set me about : for this received I my mission and unction, that I might do the will of Him that sent me.” (John ix. 4.) What am I in the world for, but to promote his glory, propagate his truth, and be as a load-star to draw souls to heaven ? “ Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ? ”

DOCTRINE.

From this example of our blessed Saviour, in making his Father's work his business, we learn this great truth :—

* *Usque ad stuporem percussus.*—BRUGENS. “ They were completely surprised, and overcome with stupor.”—EDIT. † *Minimè objurans, sed rem fidenter et modestè quærens.*—BRUGENSIS. “ His mother did not utter this in a chiding tone, but inquired into the matter with modesty, and in confidence ” that she would receive a satisfactory reply.—EDIT.