

SERMON XIII.

BY THE REV. NATHANAEL VINCENT, A. M.

OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

HOW CHRIST IS TO BE FOLLOWED AS OUR EXAMPLE.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.—1 Peter ii. 21.

THE persons to whom the apostle wrote this epistle are, in the beginning of it, styled "strangers." So they were, because dispersed and "scattered" in several kingdoms of the Gentiles; and they were pilgrims and sojourners in the earth itself; being "regenerated and born from above;"* and minding "a better country" than was to be found here below. The apostle endeavours to strengthen their faith, to enliven their hope, to fix their hearts upon "the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance," and to keep them in the way that leads to it.

In this chapter, where my text lies, he admonishes them to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." He exhorts them to a "conversation" that would glorify God, convince the world, and adorn the gospel: their zeal ought to be so great of those works that are good, that they should not think much to suffer for "well-doing." *Bona agere, et mala pati*; "to do good, and to hold on in so doing, though very ill requited for it:" this is high and noble indeed; this is an honour not vouchsafed to "the elect angels," who are not capable of suffering. This is to be a Christian in truth and eminency; and to resemble Christ himself, "who suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps." (Verse 21.)

In the words which I have read, you may take notice,

1. *Of one end of Christ in suffering; and that is, that he might leave us an example.*—To say that this was the principal end of his passion, to deny his satisfaction as if it were impossible or needless, is heretical in a very high degree. To deny the blood of Christ to be the price of our redemption, is to "deny the Lord that bought us." And truly, the only propitiatory sacrifice for sin being rejected, there is no other remaining, "but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. x. 27.) And yet, though Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Peter ii. 24,) he is not only our Redeemer, but our example. He hath bequeathed blessings never enough to be valued, in his testament: he has also left us an incomparable example. The Greek word *ὑπογραμμος*, which signifies "example," is either taken from excellent writing-masters, who set a fair copy for their scholars to write after; or it is taken from painters, who draw a curious master-piece, for inferior artists' admiration and imitation.

* Δει ἑμας γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. (John iii. 7.)

2. *They were remarkable steps that Christ took when he was here in the days of his flesh.*—And among them all he did not take one wrong one. He was “made of a woman, made under the law;” (Gal. iv. 4;) and he did not in the least transgress the law. He came upon this earth to do his Father’s will: “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God!” (Heb. x. 7.) And never did he any thing that was in any degree contrary to it.

3. *The steps of Christ are to be followed.*—Good men in scripture are our patterns, whose faith and patience we are to follow: “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. vi. 12.) “The cloud of witnesses” is to be minded; (Heb. xii. 1;) and the bright side of it gives a good light unto our feet. But there is a dark side of the cloud, which may make us cautious: we must take heed of resembling the best of men in that which is bad, in their falls and infirmities. Abraham is renowned for his faith; yet not to be imitated in the carnal shifts [which] he made for the saving of his life. Barnabas “was to be blamed,” for being “carried away by Peter’s dissimulation.” (Gal. ii. 13.) But Christ is such an example, as [that] to walk according to it, and to walk by the strictest rule, is all one; for our Lord did whatsoever became him, and exactly “fulfilled all righteousness.” (Matt. iii. 15.)

4. *Here is a special intimation (as appears by the context) of a Christian’s duty patiently to bear injuries, and to take up the cross.*—Though the gospel be the gladdest tidings, yet *suffering* is a word that sounds very harsh to flesh and blood. But the apostle bids us behold Christ in his sufferings, and not think much of our afflictions, which were but a drop compared with his, which were a vast ocean. The sufferings of Christ the Head were unconceivably greater than those which any of his members, at any time, are called to undergo. And, indeed, when he drank the cup [which] his Father gave him, he drank out the curse and bitterness of it; so that it is both blessed and sweetened to the Lamb’s followers who are to drink after him.

5. *The sufferings of Christ and his example being joined together in the text, here is a signification that by his death he has purchased grace to assist and enable us to follow his example.*—Our Lord knows our natural impotency, nay, averseness, to follow him, or so much as to look to him. His death is effectual therefore to kill our sin, and to heal our depraved nature. “His power rests upon us,” (2 Cor. xii. 9,) that we may tread the path in which he has gone before us. “I am able to do all things,” says the apostle, “through Christ strengthening me.” (Phil. iv. 13.)

I am desired this morning to speak of *Christ as our example*; and to show *how Christians are to follow him*.

This is a theme that commends itself to you, by its excellency, usefulness, and seasonableness, in such an age, wherein there is such a sinful, sad, and almost universal degenerating from true and real Christianity. Glorious Head! hadst thou ever on earth a body more

unlike thee than at this day? How few manifestly declare themselves the epistles of Christ, written by the Spirit of the living God! Few professors have his *image*, who yet bear his *superscription*.

In the handling of this subject, I shall,

I. *Premise some things by way of caution.*

II. *Show you in what respects Christ is an example to be followed.*

III. *Produce some arguments to persuade you to the imitation of him.*

IV. *Close with some directions how this duty may be done effectually.*

I. In the first place, I am to *premise some things by way of caution.*

1. *Think not, as long as you remain in this world, to be altogether free from sin, as Christ was.*—He indeed was, from his conception in the womb, to his ascension far above all visible heavens, altogether immaculate and “without blemish.” Some have fancied spots in the sun; but sure I am, in “the Sun of righteousness” there is none. The sins of all that are saved were “laid upon him;” but no sin was ever found in him, or done by him. The apostle tells us, that he was “holy, harmless, and undefiled.” (Heb. vii. 26.) You are indeed to imitate Christ in purity; but perfect holiness you cannot attain to, while you carry such a body of death about you, and are in such a world as this. It may comfort you to consider, after the fall of the first Adam, and the sad consequences of it, how the Second Adam stood and conquered, and kept himself unspotted from the world, all the while he conversed in it. But as long as you remain on earth, some defilement will cleave to you to admonish you where you are, and to make you long for the heavenly Jerusalem. More and more holy you may and ought to be; but to be completely holy, is the happiness not of earth, but heaven.

2. *Think not that Christ in all his actions is to be imitated.*—There are royalties belonging to our Lord Jesus, which none must invade. He alone is Judge and Lawgiver in Zion; and that worship is vain which “is taught by the precepts of men.” (Isai. xxix. 13.) Christ “is all in all.” He “fills all in all.” (Eph. i. 23.) When the fathers of the last Lateran council told Leo X., that “all power was given to him in heaven and earth;” as it was blasphemous flattery in them to give, so it was blasphemous pride and right anti-christian arrogancy in him to accept, the honour. When our Lord was upon earth, there were several acts of power which he exerted; as, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and such-like; which Christians now must not think of doing. I grant, that the power of working miracles was communicated to the apostles and others; but it was *res unius ætatis*, “a thing that lasted little longer than one age.” These miracles were necessary when the gospel was first to be planted in the world;* but now they are ceased: and if there were

* *Elegit apostolos humiliter natos, inhonoratos, illiteratos; ut quicquid magnum essent et facerent; ipsi in eis esset et faceret.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. cap. 49.
“God chose men who were of humble origin, devoid of worldly honours, and illiterate,

but a general exactness of exemplariness in Christians' lives and practices, this might be *majus omni miraculo*, "a great deal more than miracles," toward the gospel's propagation.

3. *Think not that your obedience can be meritorious, as was the obedience of our Lord and Saviour.*—The apostle tells us, that "by the obedience of one," (that is, the Second Adam,) "many are made righteous;" and to this obedience is owing that "abundance of grace" which believers receive, "the gift of righteousness," and also "reigning in life eternal." (Rom. v. 17, 19.) The merit of our Lord Jesus is so every way sufficient, that believers' merit is as needless as, all things considered, it is impossible. It was very orthodox humility in Jacob, when he confessed he was "less than the least of all mercies;" (Gen. xxxii. 10;) and Nehemiah, though he speaks again and again of the good deeds he had done, was certainly very far from the opinion of merit, as appears, Neh. xiii. 22: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

4. *You must not imagine that your greatest sufferings for the sake of righteousness are in the least expiatory of sin, as Christ's sufferings were.*—"Christ was delivered for our offences," (Rom. iv. 25,) and "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) The offering was but one, the sacrifice of himself; and it was offered but once. Other sacrifices are unnecessary; it is unnecessary that this should be again offered. Our Lord upon the cross, with his last breath, cried out: *Τετέλεσται* "It is finished." (John xix. 30.) As if he had said, "All is done, all is undergone, that was needful for my church's acceptation with God, and the full remission of all their trespasses." Understand, that no sufferings that you can undergo for Christ's sake, are satisfactory for your iniquities. Do not, by such a thought, offer to derogate from Christ's complete satisfaction. We read of some "that came out of great tribulation." But did the blood of these martyrs justify them? No such matter: "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.)

II. In the second place, I am to show you *in what respects Christ is an example to be followed.*

1. Christ is to be followed *in his great self-denial.*—It had been a great stoop in the Son of God, if his Deity had been veiled with the nature of angels. A greater stoop it would have been to be made flesh; though he had been born of an empress, and had been as glorious a temporal monarch as the Jews fancied he would be. But this is exceedingly amazing, to behold Him that "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the form of a servant." (Phil. ii. 7.) He "did not abhor a poor virgin's womb," nor afterwards to be laid in a manger; and

to be his apostles; that how great soever they might afterwards become, and however wonderful might be the enterprises in which they engaged and were successful, it might be apparent that He was with them and in them, and performed those mighty works by his own energy with which they were endowed."—EDIT.

though he was Lord of all, "yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Thus "he pleased not himself;" (Rom. xv. 3;) neither did he seek himself and his own honour, but the honour and glory of him that sent him. (John vii. 18.)

How can he be a follower of Christ who is so utterly unlike him in being selfish? Our Lord knew the prevalency of self-love, and how opposite it is to the love of God, and [the] care of the soul; therefore he strictly requires self-denial: "If any man will come after me, *ἀπαρνησάτω ἑαυτόν*, let him deny himself:" (Luke ix. 23:) *seipsum abdicet*, as Beza translates it: "Self-abdication is called for." A man must have no regard to himself, to his own ends and inclinations, as they are opposite unto and lead him away from God, and from his duty. O, act as new creatures, and as those that are not your former selves! Seek not your "own things." (Phil. ii. 21.) "Let nothing be done through vain-glory." (Verse 3.) Be ever diffident and jealous of yourselves. Self is the enemy that is always present, and most within us, and that has the greatest power to sway us. "We are not our own, we are bought with a price;" we should "glorify" the Lord that has bought us, as those that are debtors, (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20,) not to ourselves, but of ourselves to him.

2. Christ is to be followed in *his patient enduring the world's hatred, and the slights and contradiction of sinners.*—It was the Father's and the Son's love to the world, that brought Christ into it: and he came "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John iii. 17.) Yet what strange kind of usage from the world did he meet with! The world was mad upon sin, venturous upon hell and wrath, and with contempt and hatred rejected the only Saviour. His person they are prejudiced against; his doctrine they contradict; and his design they oppose, though their deliverance and salvation were designed.

Christians should not think it strange that they meet with hard and unworthy usage from the world. Cain did quickly show his enmity against Abel his brother, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John iii. 12.) "If the world hate you," says Christ, "ye know it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 18, 19.) Now as Christ was unmoved by the world's malice either from doing his work, or from looking to "the joy that was set before him;" (Heb. xii. 2;) so should Christians also be. Conquer the world by contempt of its fury. Overcome its evil with good. And as Christ "made intercession for the transgressors," that cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," so do ye "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt. v. 44.)

3. Christ is to be followed in *his resisting and overcoming the prince of darkness.*—Satan assaulted the first Adam, and was too hard for

him. He was so bold as to set upon the Second Adam, but was foiled by "the Captain of our salvation." If you read the history of Christ's temptation, Matt. iv. 1—11, you may perceive that nothing from the tempter fastens upon our Lord Jesus. The subtlety of the old serpent was in vain; and by the sword of the Spirit all his force was repelled.

Christians are to look upon the evil one as an enemy that Christ has conquered; and this should encourage them in their conflicts with him. They are to despise his offers. They are not to be persuaded, by his misapplication of scripture, to any thing that is unjustifiable and irregular. "The word of God should abide in them;" that they may be "strong, and overcome the wicked one." (1 John ii. 14.) The Head always resisted: shall the members yield to this destroyer? Let not your hearts be filled with Satan; let not your heads and hands be employed by him who works in the children of disobedience.

4. Christ is to be followed in *his contempt of the world's glory, and contentment with a mean and low estate in it.*—Never was the world so set forth, in such an alluring dress, as when the god of it, "in a moment of time," showed unto our Lord Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them." (Luke iv. 5, 6.) Yet the heavenly mind of Christ is not taken with the sight. He knew he saw nothing but what was vanity; and his kingdom, which was not of this world, was a far better thing than the world's best kingdom. Instead of pursuing, he flees from, a crown, which the people were ready to force upon his head.

Ambition and covetousness after worldly grandeur and gain, which make us so unlike to Christ, should be far from us. If the world be the great thing with us, mammon will have us at command, and Christ will have but little service from us. Why should that be high in the esteem and affection of your hearts, which Christ so little minded? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." (1 John ii. 15.) "Set your affection on things above, not on things that are on the earth." (Col. iii. 2.) If you have the world's riches, let not your minds be high, "nor your hearts set upon them;" (Psalm lxii. 10;) and "be rich in good works." (1 Tim. vi. 18.) If you are in a meaner estate, be satisfied; remember who said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The best men in the world, that have done most good in the world, have least cared for the world; and have been most willing to leave the world, and go to a better.

5. Christ is to be followed in *his living a life so very beneficial, doing good being his perpetual business.*—The apostle Peter, who was one of his greatest and most constant attendants, says, that "he went about doing good." (Acts x. 38.) To do thus, was meat and drink to him. How great were his kindness and compassion to souls! How much mercy does he show to the bodies of men!

You that are Christians, be very active, in the best sense. The true members of Christ have the Spirit of the Head in them, whose "fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." (Eph. v. 9.) What

have you faith for, but that it may work by love? Why are you "created in Christ Jesus," but that you may be employed in "good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them?" (Eph. ii. 10.) Be sure to "do justly:" be injurious to none: render unto all their dues. And do not only consult *the dues* of others, but *their needs* also; and "love to be merciful;" (Micah vi. 8;) and let the perishing souls, as well as the distressed bodies, of others have a great share in your compassions. "As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," and good of as many sorts as may be, "especially to the household of faith." (Gal. vi. 10.) The apostle speaks with great authority and asseveration, when he presses Christian practice; "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (Titus iii. 8.) A Christian by profession, who lives wickedly, is not a true member, but a monster in the church; and will not be endured long, but is near to be cut off and destroyed. It is a true saying, *Ψυχὴν θανάτου οὐκ ἀπολλύσιν, ἀλλὰ κακὸς βίος*. "Death does not destroy the soul; but it is an ill life that ruins it."

6. Christ is to be followed in *his most profitable and edifying communication*.—We read, that "grace was poured into his lips." (Psalm xlv. 2.) "The gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," were the wonder of the hearers. (Luke iv. 22.) Exact truth always accompanied his speeches: he never spake a word that was offensive to God, or injurious to any man. Was he chargeable with "guile?" Or "when he was reviled, did he revile again?" (1 Peter ii. 22, 23.) No, no: he gave a better example: he speaks words to awaken sinners; to search hypocrites. And how does he comfort the mourners! calling "all the weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) He takes occasion almost from every thing to discourse of the heavenly kingdom. His parables of the sower, of leaven, of the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, and such-like, plainly show that the most ordinary things may spiritually be improved unto great usefulness.

All professors, and especially you of London, "set a watch before the door of your lips;" (Psalm cxli. 3;) and let your words be like the words of Christ Jesus. Your lying and corrupt communication, your slanderous and backbiting words, your passionate and angry speeches and revilings,—are these like Christ's language? "An unbridled tongue," though it utters many a falsehood, yet it speaks one certain truth,—that "your religion is but vain." (James i. 26.) Let conscience be tender; and purpose, with the Psalmist, "that your mouths shall not transgress." (Psalm xvii. 3.) Let the word of Christ be more in your hearts; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Let your speech be always with grace." (Col. iv. 6.) Discourse as those who do believe [that] you are debtors of edifying words one to another; that "idle words" are heard by Him that is in heaven, and "an account must be given of them in the day of judgment." (Matt. xii. 36.)

7. Christ is to be followed in *his manner of performing holy duties*.—Never was he negligent in an ordinance. His “cries” were “strong,” his “tears many.” (Heb. v. 7.) And how does he wrestle with his heavenly Father!

Christians should take heed of doing the work of God deceitfully. (Jer. xlviii. 10.) They should be “fervent in spirit,” when “serving the Lord.” (Rom. xii. 11.) Look to your hearts in all your performances; for God’s eye is fixed upon them; and if they are not present and right with him, your duties are but dead duties; and dead duties are really dead works; so far from being acceptable, that they are an abomination. When Christ was here upon the earth, as he taught in other places, so he went to the temple, and to the synagogues; though there was much corruption in the Jewish church. Christians should learn so much moderation, as to own what is good even in them in whom there are mixtures of much that is bad; and there should be a cause that will pass for just and sufficient at the great day, before they resolve upon a total separation from their brethren.

8. Christ is to be followed in *his great humility and meekness*.—“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. xi. 29.) Pride overcame the first man: he affected Divinity, and would needs be as God. But, behold the Lord Jesus, who is the Eternal God; and he humbled himself and became man. Humility was the constant attire and ornament of the man Christ Jesus.

Though this great Redeemer be “the chief of all the ways of God;” (Job xl. 19;) though more of God is visible in him than in the whole creation besides; though he glorifies his Father more than all the creatures in heaven and earth put together; and though he is exalted “far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come;” (Eph. i. 21;) yet our Lord never was in the least high-minded.

Humility is one most remarkable feature in the image of Christ; therefore resemble him in being humble. Be not proud of habit, hair, and ornaments. *Την ταπεινοφροσύνην εγκομβώσαθε.* (1 Peter v. 5.) Etymologists derive the word from *κομβος*, which signifies *nodus*, “a knot.” “Be clothed,” or “be knotted,” “with humility.” I wish that other knots were less, and this, which is incomparably most becoming, were more, in fashion. Let not your estates puff you up. “Riches are not always to men of understanding;” (Eccles. ix. 11;) and there may be a great deal of gold in the purse where there is no true wisdom in the head, no grace at all in the heart. Let not your natural parts, your acquired endowments, your spiritual gifts, though never so excellent, make you to look upon others with contempt, upon yourselves with admiration. You owe all glory to that God from whom you have received all. Let humility look out at your eyes. “A proud look” is one of the “seven things which the Lord doth hate.” (Prov. vi. 16, 17.) Let

humility express itself at your lips ; let it attend you in all your addresses to God, and beautify your whole behaviour and converses with men. The more humble you are, the more of every other grace will be imparted to you, the more rest and peace you will have within yourselves ; and, since you will be ready to give him all the praise, the Lord is ready to put the more honour upon you in making you useful unto others.

9. Christ is to be followed *in his love to God, great care to please him, and fervent zeal for his name and glory.*—"That the world may know," says Christ, "that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." (John xiv. 31.) He obeyed that "first and great commandment," and "loved the Lord his God, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Christ's love made him do whatever his Father pleased : "He that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him." (John viii. 29.) Christ's love was stronger than death : "no waters, no floods, could drown it ;" neither could the baptism of blood "quench it." (Canticles viii. 7 ; Matt. xx. 22.) Christ was "consumed" with divine and holy "zeal ;" (John ii. 17 ;) and he matters not what [might] befall him, so he might but "glorify his Father," and "finish the work which was given him to do." (John xvii. 4.)

O let us bring our cold and careless hearts hither to the consideration of this Great Example ! that the frost may melt, care may be awakened, and there may be something in us, that may deserve the name of "warm zeal for God." Let us be importunate in prayer, and restless till we feel the constraints of the love of God forcible ; till we find really the greatest delight and pleasure in doing that which pleases him ; and, aiming at his glory, we think not much of labour, difficulty, and hazard, that this our end may be attained.

10. Christ is to be followed *in his sufferings and death.*—And unto this my text has a more particular reference. Christ's "faith was strong," though he was under a dismal desertion. "The Sun of Righteousness" did set in a dark cloud. He submitted to his Father's will ; and, being confident of a joyful resurrection, he "endured the cross, and despised the shame." (Heb. xii. 2.)

When Christians come to die, their faith should be most lively, as being near finishing. It should by no means fail when there is most need of it. "Though he slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.) Christians should submit, when the Lord of time will grant no more time to them ; and they should gladly enter upon a holy and blessed eternity. When the body is about to be "sown in corruption," by faith they should see that its lying there will be to advantage ; for it will be "raised in incorruption and glory." (1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.) Let death be more natural or violent, it is yours in the covenant, if you are true believers. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) Fear not to follow our Lord Jesus through that dark passage into the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.) And, all the while you remain on earth, study a conformity to your

Lord's death, by crucifying the flesh, and dying to the world: the more dead you are with Christ in this sense, you will live to the better purpose, and die in the greater peace.

III. In the third place, I am to produce *some arguments to persuade to the imitation of our Lord Jesus.*

1. *Consider the greatness of the Person that gives you the example.*—Christ has this “name written on his vesture, and on his thigh; KING of kings, and LORD of lords.” (Rev. xix. 16.) A Roman historian * commends a prince who is *maximus imperio, exemplo major*, “greatest in authority, and yet greater by his example.” “Every thing in heaven, and earth, and under the earth does bow” and is subject to the Lord Jesus; (Phil. ii. 10;) and yet whose obedience ever was so exact as his was? He gives us precepts, and he himself is the great Pattern of performance. Claudian, the poet, has a notable passage concerning the examples of monarchs, and what a mighty influence they have:—

*Tunc observantior æqui
Fuit populus; nec ferre negat, cum viderit ipsum
Autorem parere sibi. Componitur orbis
Regis ad exemplum. Nec sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita regentis.
Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus.†—
De quarto Consul. Honorii Aug. Panegyris, 296—301.*

Kings have many observers, who very much eye them; and their high estate both awes and allures their subjects to the imitation of them. If they keep within the bounds of their own laws, their subjects will be the more unwilling to transgress them. Christ is the universal Sovereign, who commands both heaven and earth, and has the whole creation at his beck. He has kept the laws [which] he gives his church. It is duty, it is interest, it is reasonable, it is honourable, to resemble him in obedience.

2. *Remember the relation wherein you that are saints do stand unto the Lord Jesus.*—You are espoused to him: and should you not consent to be like to him, “who has betrothed you unto himself in loving-kindness, mercy, and faithfulness for ever?” (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) Nay, “you are members of his body.” (Eph. v. 30.) Therefore you “should grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.” (Eph. iv. 15.) You should discover such a mind as Christ had; you should manifest the same spirit; and act as he acted when he was here in the world.

3. *Consider, that God did fore-ordain you that are believers to a conformity to the Lord Jesus.*—“For whom he did foreknow, he also

* VELLEIUS PATERCULUS, lib. ii.

† “Be first thyself obedience to observe,
And none will from thy laws attempt to swerve.
To mandates of their own if monarchs bow,
The people readily their force allow.
The sovereign's actions modify the whole:
No powers the human mind so well control,
As bright examples beaming from the throne:
The prince to copy, are the vulgar prone.”—HAWKINS'S Translation.

did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29.) If you would appear with Christ in glory, you must be now changed into his image. Holiness and patient suffering will make you like him, and is the decreed way unto his kingdom.

4. *Walking as Christ walked will make it evident that you are indeed in him.*—"He that saith he abideth in him, ought" to prove what he saith, and "himself so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) To be in Christ, is to be a new creature: and these new creatures do all resemble him; for he is "formed in them." (Gal. iv. 19.) Naming the name of Christ will never demonstrate your Christianity, unless you "depart from iniquity," which makes you so unlike unto your Lord.

But likeness to him will prove you his in truth. And an evidence of this,—what strong consolation will it afford! If you are in Christ, how safe are you! You are secured from the curse of the law; the stroke of vindictive justice; the wrath of the destroyer; the bondage of corruption and sin; the sting of the first death, and the power of the second. If you are in Christ, his God is your God, his Father your Father. (John xx. 17.) You are loved as he is loved: "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.) And, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (Verse 26.) You "are joint-heirs with Christ" unto the same "incorruptible inheritance." (Rom. viii. 17; 1 Peter i. 4.) How firm and sure is your title! How certain and soon will be your possession! And, after possession is taken, you shall not be dispossessed unto eternity.

5. *Your following the example of Christ very much honours him, and credits Christianity.*—It is a sign that Christ's death has a mighty virtue in it, when it makes you to die to sin, and to be unmoved by the biggest offers that mammon makes to you. It is an argument that he is truly Christ, when you are truly Christians; that he is indeed alive, when he lives in you, and makes you to live to him and like him. It is a demonstration that our Lord is risen indeed, when you "rise with him, and seek those things which are above." (Col. iii. 1.)

Christ is very much unknown, and, being unknown, is undesired and neglected, because so little of him is seen in Christians' conversation. How few deserve *digito monstrari*, "to be pointed at," and to have such a character given them [as this]!—"There go the persons who discover such a spirit, who talk and walk, too, after such a manner, that it is evident Christ dwells, and speaks, and walks, and works in them."

Be all of you prevailed with to honour your Lord Jesus, by showing the world what he was when here upon earth, and how powerfully he works in you, though now he is in heaven. Chrysostom, with great reason, does call good works *συλλογισμούς αναντιβήτους*, "unanswerable syllogisms," and demonstrations to confute and con-

vince infidels. The world would flock into the church, being struck with the majesty and glory shining forth in her, if she were but more like unto her glorious Head. But when they who are called Christians are so like unto the world, it is no wonder if the men of the world continue still as they are.

6. *Christ frequently speaks to you to follow him, and observes whether and how you do it.*—His word is plain, that you should learn his doctrine, and live after his example. And “his eyes,” which “are as a flaming fire,” are upon professors’ ways. (Rev. i. 14.) His omniscience should be more firmly believed, and seriously considered, by the church itself: “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works.” (Rev. ii. 23.) I shall here, by a prosopopœia, bring-in our Lord Jesus speaking to you, and himself propounding his own example, that you may hear, and heed, and follow the Lamb of God. To this effect Christ speaks to you:—

“‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.’ Look unto me, and become like me, all you that profess yourselves to be my members. What do you see in me, that in any reason should turn away your faces or your hearts from me? ‘Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.’ (Matt. xi. 6.) The Father is well-pleased in me, and so should you; as you value his favour, and would consult your own interest. I never took so much as one step in the ways of misery and destruction; be you sure to avoid them. I always trod in those paths which to you will prove pleasantness and peace; though, to satisfy for your deviations and going astray, I was fain myself to be ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ (Isai. liii. 3.) Consider your Lord and Master, you that call yourselves my disciples. Many look upon you that will not look into my word, and will judge of me by your practices. Be not so injurious to me, by misrepresenting me; as if I allowed those evils which you allow yourselves in. Why should I be ‘wounded’ in my honour ‘in the house of my friends?’ (Zech. xiii. 6.) Why should you ‘crucify me afresh, and put me to an open shame?’ (Heb. vi. 6.)

“When you yield to Satan’s temptations, are you like to me? When you are eager after worldly wealth, the applause of men, and flesh-pleasing delights, are you like to me? When you are proud and haughty, bitter, envious, and revengeful, do you at all resemble me? When you seek yourselves, and please yourselves, and matter not how much God is forgotten and displeased, am I in this your example? O, all you upon whom my name is called, content not yourselves with an empty name! Be my disciples in truth; and ‘let the same mind that was in me be in you also.’ (Phil. ii. 5.) Be my disciples indeed. Live as I did in the world: to honour God, and to do good to man, let it be your business; for ‘I have left you an example, that you should follow my steps.’” (1 Peter ii. 21.)

7. *Follow Christ’s example, that you may enter into his glory.*—“For if we be dead with him,” says the apostle, “we shall live with him: if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” (2 Tim.

ii. 11, 12.) Be of good courage; and conflict (but do it in his strength) with your spiritual enemies; and you shall be conquerors, nay, "more than conquerors," over them: and hark what Christ promises to them that overcome; nay, to every one of them: "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." (Rev. iii. 21.) Conformity to Christ in his humiliation will end in a conformity to him in his exaltation: all in the next world shall resemble in glory, whom grace in this world has made to resemble him: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

8. *One word farther I would speak to myself and my brethren in the ministry of the gospel.*—We are under special obligations to follow Christ's example. All the flock should be like the Great Shepherd; but especially the under-shepherds should resemble him, that they may be able to say with the apostle: "Be ye followers of us," for "we are followers of Christ." (1 Cor. xi. 1.) How clear should be the light in our heads, who have special instruction from Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" (Col. ii. 3.) With what authority should we speak, who speak in his name; who speak his words, and preach his everlasting gospel! and what we bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what we loose on earth is loosed in heaven! (Matt. xviii. 18.)

How should we "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way!" (Heb. v. 2.) How faithfully should we warn the secure to flee from wrath! (Matt. iii. 7.) How earnestly should we entreat sinners "to be reconciled!" (2 Cor. v. 20.) How should we "long after souls in the bowels of Jesus Christ!" (Phil. i. 8.) And since He thought not his blood too dear to redeem them, we should not think much of our prayers, tears, study, sweat, and labour for their salvation.

How self-denying should we be, counting it far greater wisdom "to win souls," than to "seek great things for ourselves!" (Prov. xi. 30; Jer. xlv. 5.) How exemplary should we be "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity!" (1 Tim. iv. 12.) In all things we should "show ourselves patterns of good works," (Titus ii. 7.) that our sermons, being practised by ourselves as well as preached, may be with greater efficacy upon others.*

And since our Lord Jesus, after he had preached the kingdom of God, was himself a sacrifice; we should not be unwilling to confirm the doctrine we deliver with our blood; nor refuse, if called to it, to "be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the church's faith."

* *Memento voci tuæ dare vocem virtutis; ut opera tua verbis concinant. Cures prius facere quàm docere. Sermo quidem vivus et efficax exemplum est operis, facile faciens suadibile quod dicitur, dum monstrat factibile quod suadetur.*—BERNARDUS, *Epist.* 201.
"Remember to impart to thy words the tone of virtue, that thy works may be in perfect unison with them. Be careful first to practise that thyself which thou art desirous of teaching to others. Indeed an example in actual exercise operates as a living and efficacious discourse, easily rendering that potent and persuasive to which its exhortations are directed, while it demonstrates the practicability of that to which it persuades."—EDIT.

(Phil. ii. 17.)* This kind of spirit made the apostle like to Christ indeed: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 24.)

IV. In the fourth and last place, I am to conclude with *some directions how you may be able to follow the example of our Lord Jesus.*

1. *Let your unlikeness to Christ be matter of your great humiliation.*—It should be your trouble, that you have been so long learning, and have learned Christ no better; "that so much of "the old man" remains to be "put off;" that no more of "the new man is put on." (Eph. iv. 22—24.) Look upon the passions and lusts of the flesh as so many foul blemishes, as so many deforming wrinkles, of the old Adam: the more of these there is in you, they make you the more unlike to Him who "is altogether lovely." (Canticles v. 16.) Be humbled for your sin, and hate it: that is the way to be rid of it. Sin cannot stand before a perfect hatred, but languishes and dies away; whereas love to it is the life and strength of it.

2. *Study more the admirable excellency and fairness of the copy [which] Christ has set you, and how desirable it is still to be growing up more and more into him in all things.*—The beauty of men and angels is black to Christ's fairness. To be like him, is to have that which truly deserves the name of excellency. "With open face" and intente eyes, "behold, as in a glass, the glory of your Lord," that you may be "changed into the same image," and become glorious yourselves. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

3. *Being sensible of your own impotency, live by faith on the Son of God.*—Remember, it is "in him that you have both righteousness and strength." (Isai. xlv. 24.) Grace to be like Christ is from him. He strengthens the weak hands, he confirms the feeble knees, that we may work and walk after his example. If you should attempt to do this in your own might, that attempt would be, not only vain, but an argument of your pride and ignorance. Can the branch bear fruit of itself? It is from the vine that sap is communicated to it, to make it fruitful. You must *be* and *abide* in Christ, and ever be deriving life and virtue from him, that you may bear fruit worthy of him. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 4, 5.)

4. *Give up yourselves to the conduct of Christ's own Spirit.*—How often is it said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!" (Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29, &c.) The Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus; represents his amiableness, "and anoints

* *Passiones ostendit quid pro veritate sustinere; resurrectione, quid in aternitate sperare debeamus.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. cap. 49. "By his passion our Lord shows us what it is our duty to endure for the cause of truth; and by his resurrection, what ought to be our hopes respecting eternity."—EDIT.

the eyes with eye-salve, that it may be seen." (Rev. iii. 18.) And wherever the image of Christ is, it is this Spirit that has instamped it upon the soul. "Live in the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit;" so your feet shall not decline from the steps of Christ; "you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16, 25.) He will cause you to look unto Jesus; and enable you to follow him, without turning aside, or drawing back; till you come to be where he is, and behold his glory: and then "you will be satisfied with his likeness," and be for "ever with the Lord." (Psalm xvii. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 17.)

SERMON XIV.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW SYLVESTER,

OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

The case proposed :

"HOW MAY A LUKEWARM TEMPER BE EFFECTUALLY CURED?"

I add,

"IN OURSELVES, AND IN ONE ANOTHER?"

The resolution given :

Και κατανοωμεν αλληλους εις παροξυσμον αγαπης και καλων εργαων· μη εγκαταλειποντες την επισυναγωγην εαυτων, καθως εθος τισιν, αλλα παρακαλουντες· και τοσοιτω μαλλον οσω βλεπετε εγγιζουσιν την ημεραν.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day (to be) approaching.—Hebrews x. 24, 25.

THE inspired author of this profound, sublime, nervous epistle (whether St. Luke, or Barnabas, or Clement, or Apollos, or the apostle Paul, as I most think, I here dispute not) is evidently walking in the searches of the great excellency of Christianity, as it was brought unto us by, and took its denomination from, and serves the purposes and speaks the eminence, unction, and prerogatives, and designs of, Christ the Son of God. And this discourse he here directeth to "the Hebrews;" by whom we may understand those Christian Jews that were in Syria, Judea, and principally at Jerusalem; for those that were dispersed through the provinces of the Roman empire, were commonly called "Greeks." And those, indeed, who were converted to the Christian faith were terribly persecuted by the Jews their brethren, and assaulted by seducers to work them back again to their deserted Judaism; and much ado they had to stand their ground. Whereupon this author (mindful of what his Lord had said in Matt.