

## CHRIST'S MOURNFUL VISIT TO OBSTINATE SINNERS

Luke xix. 41, 42—And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

There are two great and wonderful mysteries which may occasion much divine admiration and holy astonishment to angels and men; there is that unsearchable mystery of the condescending grace of Christ, that He should expose Himself to so much toil and labour, even to the pouring out of His soul, that He may purchase our love, which is but a small thing when it is purchased: and that He should entertain peace betwixt sinners and Himself.

But there is a second mystery which is no less mysterious, and it is, man's impertinent refusal of these precious offers that grace doth propose to us, and casting them behind our backs, and embracing the offers of idols: and that which does aggravate this sin is this, that even after frequent convictions of the vanity of our idols, we will embrace them, and solace ourselves in them. It is a question difficult to determine, whether the first or second of these be most mysterious; but they both make up a matchless mystery. The first is His doing; and the second

is our doing, which ought to be detestable to us. Heaven and earth may wonder at such folly as this, that we refuse that delicious feast of the gospel, which is full of marrow and fatness. Ought we to reject the counsels of him that is wise? Yet we have rejected the counsels of Jesus Christ, of Him who is wiser than any among the sons of men. O how have we rejected Jesus Christ, and set His counsels at nought, and cast Him behind our back! And O what a dreadful indignity is that which we put upon Him! But, O Christians, while yet it is today, harden not your hearts, but embrace this offer of Jesus Christ, which is freely offered to you.

Now all of you suppose, that if Jesus Christ Himself would come and preach this doctrine unto you, "Come unto me, and have life": yea, conceive, would there be any so impudent as would not receive His offer? Yet I suppose, if Jesus Christ himself would preach that doctrine to us, thorns and briers would arise after His preaching. He preached this to them among whom He was in the days of Isaiah, chapter xlix. 4, and yet what is His report of them? "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for that which is nought." And in John's time see what report He gives, chapter i.11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He could not persuade them, because of their impenitency and hardness of heart.

No doubt ye will condemn this refusal for impenitency,

the offer being offered by so excellent a messenger, even by Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, whose feet bring "glad tidings of great joy." Oh, I fear, Christ has often times laboured in vain amongst us, who have had the offers of this blessed gospel presented to us, and we would not; then woe eternally shall be unto us. O ye who slight the precious offers of Jesus Christ in this blessed gospel, and who still continue slights of it, are ye not afraid that Christ shall depart from you, and shall also remove His blessed ordinances from you, and ye shall be made to seek Him and shall not find Him, nor yet know where to seek Him? O slights and cursed undervaluers of Jesus Christ, stand in awe to slight Him any more, lest He consume you from heaven. O slights of Jesus Christ, what shall be the latter end of this? I am persuaded that it shall be bitterness to you at last.

What would you answer to God if He were pleased to call you at this very hour? What would you answer to Him for all these dreadful abominations of yours? Would ye be able to answer to these sad challenges of your conscience that ye shall have in that day? O be persuaded, that it is a sad thing to live and die slights of these blessed offers. If ye will not embrace them now, know that it is not long when God shall cease to be a reprove unto you, "and these things which now belong to your peace, shall then be hid from your eyes." O then embrace precious Christ, and delay not any longer.

Now to come to the words: Although Christ be so precious, yet here is a people refusing Him; but as He goes away from them, He weeps. He began to weep, desiring an invitation to stay. O did ever angels or men behold such a spectacle, that Christ should weep for the destruction of sinners, and especially that He should weep for the destruction of those sinners who would have destroyed Him! O saw ye ever such a wonder! Sure we are, Christ did not walk after the rule of men in so doing, but after the rule of His infinite love. O wonderful is that love of His, that He should have wept for the destruction of those who had delivered Him up to be crucified! But here He gives us a blessed confirmation of the everlasting covenant of redemption, that He delights not in the death of sinners, but rather that they would live, and repent, and turn to Him; "O if thou hadst known, even t.hou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!"

Certainly they might have sung here that blessed song, that He dealt not with them as they deserved, or according to their iniquities. I am persuaded of it, that Christ weeps more for the ruin of men than they do for themselves. If Christ had done with us according to our iniquities, or according to our merits and deservings, surely we had been long ago in that pit without any redemption. Now we have here the infinite compassion of Christ, that when he drew near the city, beholding such a multitude of persons posting to destruction, He was necessitated to

weep for them. And O what a sight was it, to see Christ weeping for sinners, who were not weeping for themselves! And he expresses His grief in the 42nd verse, wishing that they "had known the things that belonged to their peace."

In this verse there are three things to take notice of:

(1) That they would know their infinite obligation to the glory of God; in short, that they would be convinced of their misery, and things which belong to their peace.

(2) That they would be convinced of their utter inability to satisfy the justice of God of their own selves.

(3) That they would have recourse to Him, who is that blessed Lamb of God who saves the elect world from all their iniquities. Now these three things, to be convinced of our own misery, of our own inability to save ourselves and satisfy the justice of God, and of the remedy how to satisfy the justice of God, are the whole substance of the law and of the gospel; for the law is of the first and second, and in the third is comprehended the gospel. I confess, we shall never be able to tell our obligation to God. O, if our understandings were enlightened, that we might see how much we are bound and obliged to God for this very ordinance of His! Might He not have given it to another people, who would have made better use of it, and profited more by it, than we have done? Might He not

have suffered you to have gone the way that ye were going, even the way to your own destruction? And is not this a great and matchless wonder, that seeing Christ hath given us His ordinances, and invited us to receive His offers that are freely offered to us in the gospel? And if ye will not at all receive the gospel, or embrace this offer of Jesus Christ, the day is coming when ye shall know, that it was a work of soul- concern ment to have embraced the offers of salvation that were offered to you in the gospel, when ye shall curse the day that ever ye were born.

Therefore, O, study to make the law of God your meditation, and the rule of your walk. No doubt it were certainly for our advantage to be conversing betwixt Moses and Christ, betwixt the law and the gospel; to have our walk and conversation mixed with the law and gospel. O, but Christ rejoices that we would come unto Him. Therefore, O Christians, come and embrace this offer of your eternal salvation. We confess, if the joys of heaven were founded on that word, Luke xv. 7, on the repentance of sinners, we are constrained to say that there would not be much joy in heaven these many days. O Christians, when was there a song sung in heaven for the conversion of a sinner in this city? I fear there be many days of thanksgiving kept by the devil and his angels, for the success of his kingdom in this city. Now there are these considerations which render His compassion most mysterious.

First. Consider the person who did thus weep and lament. It was Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, and is not that a mystery? O how may we be astonished, that the second person of the blessed Trinity should weep and lament for the destruction of sinners! If an angel or a saint in heaven had done this, it had not been, so wonderful; but that He who is equal with the Father, that He who is infinitely exalted above the creatures goodness or evil, should weep for our ruin and destruction, certainly this is a wonder which shall never be enough wondered at! Christ rejoices as much at our conversion as if there were some profit redounding to Him by it; and also, He weeps as much for our ruin and destruction as if He had a disadvantage or prejudice by it. He is so infinite a Being, and all-sufficient of Himself, that by all the honour and glory we can give unto Him, nothing can be added unto His glory; and that by all the dishonour He receives from us, there can be nothing diminished from His glory. O what a wonder and matchless mystery is it, that even He who is so infinite and self-sufficient should ever have stooped so far beneath Himself, as to take on Him our nature, and undergo our punishment which was due and just to us for sin! O that the thoughts of this may be wonderful to us! We may wonder when we look over these pains that He has taken upon Him for our cause; we may wonder what it was that moved Him to it; and certainly it was nothing in us, but His own free love which put Him to it.

The second consideration which renders Christ's compassion more mysterious is this - Consider the time when He wept for them; it was after He was so much honoured, and garments spread on the ground before Him, and when his disciples sang that song, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And is it not then a great mystery, that then Christ should have fallen a-weeping for the destruction of sinners, in the time when people were all applauding and honouring Him? Certainly His compassion under that consideration is most mysterious and Wonderful. O Christians, will ye consider your own vileness, miserableness and wretchedness, that Jesus Christ who is altogether holy, and wholly free of all the pollutions of the world, should have wept at our destruction!

There is this third consideration which renders Christ's compassion most mysterious, that it was, as some conclude, fifteen days before He was to encounter with devils, principalities and powers. Now then ye may conceive, that the thoughts of that approaching death might have so taken Him up, that He might have forgotten the pitying any other body, and He might rather have pitied Himself than us, so to speak. But this is a mystery, and matchless wonder of the love of Christ, that He should not only have pitied such, but that He should have wept over their destruction, especially over the destruction of them who were to cry out "Crucify him, crucify him." O admire this infinite, patient and boundless love of Christ



towards the most wretched and miserable of mankind! O what a wonder may it be to men and angels, that ever our redemption and eternal salvation was after such a way brought about, that by His stripes we should be healed, and that He should have born the iniquity of us all upon His blessed back! O Christians, let this make you to have all your love and delight set and fixed upon Him! Let not your idols of the world or any other, be your delight any longer, but let God have the pre-eminence in all things you go about.

Now that which we shall next speak unto shall be this.- We shall propose the reason of this lamentation and weeping that Christ has because of their destruction; and it is, that contempt of the gospel, and of Him who was that glorious messenger of peace; and that is clearly holden forth in these words, "but now they are hid from your eyes." We confess, all sins, in comparison of this, are but as if they were little sins; and it may be a wonder to us, that there should be so much access to preach upon that subject, the contempt of the gospel, and of that glorious messenger, Jesus Christ, who publisheth peace, and whose feet bring glad tidings of great joy.

Now we shall sum up the contemnners of the gospel in these two sorts.

(1) There are some that do contemn the gospel with civility, Luke xiv. 1.8, 19, 20, all of them have that, "have me excused; I have married a wife, I cannot come; I have

bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." O what necessity can there be that should hinder us from the receiving of Jesus Christ? There are many of us who pretend an impossibility; we have married our idols, and after them we will go, and so we cannot come.

(2) There are some that do refuse Him more absolutely and absurdly, Matt. xxii 6, "They stoned and slew the messengers." It had been some reason if they had come to denounce wrath against them, but coming to pronounce peace and salvation to them, O it is a most irrational thing.

Now we shall speak to the impediments of their not embracing the gospel:

The 1st impediment is, the want of the faith of the truth of the gospel; 1 Cor. 1.18, the gospel was a real thing, and not a fancy, therefore says the apostle, "that he did not preach any devised fable," 2 Peter, 1.16.

The 2nd impediment obstructing our embracing the offers of the gospel is the want of the solid faith of these unspeakable dignities that come to any by embracing the offers of the gospel. We are not only advanced to a communion and fellowship with God, which indeed is a thing of most excellent nature; but we are made the adopted children of God; and O what can be desired more than that?

The 3rd impediment is, the want of a solid conviction of our misery and desperate estate wherein we are by nature. Sure we are, were we studying the law more, the gospel should get better employment by us.

The 4th impediment is, want of solid conviction of our inability to satisfy the justice of God; yet we, with the Jews, "go about to establish our own righteousness," Rom. x 3, being ignorant of the justice of God.

The 5th impediment is, there are some who, out of the strong conviction of their own unworthiness, have found themselves transgressors from the womb; who think it presumption to receive these offers; and that hinders them. I would propose these things to you:

(1) We would have you convinced how great a sin the sin of misbelief is. We conceive the want of the strong convictions of the sin of unbelief makes us be so fruitless.

(2) We would have you knowing that unbelief is a thing that hinders our liberty in conversing with God.

(3) There is this third thing that we would say, that when we set about the exercise of faith with unbelief, we find many trials. We would say this to them that find these trials, if they obtain victory over them, they will find great joy, and deep root in the Holy Ghost.

(4) There is this fourth thing that we would say - be much

in the consideration of these excellent things that unbelief causes us to quit; it causes us greatly to quit our interest in and love to God.

There is this last thing that ye would be much in studying, viz., the free proposals of the gospel, Rev. xxii. 17, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Now we shall shut up our discourse with this: We conceive, If Christ would come down, He would no doubt preach to you on this text, and desire you to know the things that belong to your peace. Surely if Christ were coming here today, as He drew near and beheld the Jews, He might weep over Glasgow. Certainly the despisers of this gospel shall be in that row that shall be summoned to depart from Him; and no doubt this shall aggravate both their condemnation and their pain, that there was a way found out how to be saved, "and they would not"; and except, "in this your day, ye know the things that belong to your peace," in this your day, the day is not long when these things "shall be hid from your eyes." O when will ye beware and know your own misery? O when shall that day come? O Christians, ye are like these that sleep on a top-mast, and are not aware. "O be not deceived, for God is not mocked; and that which ye have sown, that shall ye also reap." O beware, and stand in awe to sin any more, lest God with His justice pursue you, and also shall overtake you. Be persuaded, if ye have sown iniquity, ye

shall also reap the whirlwind; but if ye have sown your seed with tears, be comforted in this, ye have a joyful harvest-day approaching, when ye shall go forth to gather your vintage, and shall return with great joy and gladness, and your sheaves on your shoulders; and O what a joyful harvest-day shall that be to those who have waited on their Redeemer! We confess it shall be a day of joyfulness and great mirth. Now we shall say no more to you at this time; but let your soul wait with expectation until that day shall spring, and let that blessed and most excellent harvest-day come, and let all other harvest-days pass away. AMEN.