

## THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF GIVING THE HEART TO CHRIST

Proverbs xxiii. 26 - "My Son, give me Thine heart."

How beautiful upon the mountains ought their feet to be, that bring glad tidings, and publish peace? I have glad tidings from a far country to declare to some of you this day; and what are they? There are two great suitors come to Bothwell kirk this day, suiting you all; the one is Jesus Christ, that noble Plant of Renown, He is suiting you; and He says, 'Son, give me thine heart.' The other is the devil that is suiting you, and he says, 'Son, give me thine heart, likewise. Now which of these two will ye answer and hearken to? I do conceive, that it may fill us with astonishment, that He that is infinitely perfect in Himself, should suit the like of us, and that He who lacks nothing, should seek from us.

Now, we would ask these three questions of all of you.

1st. Did ye ever behold such excellency in Christ, that ye were forced to cry out, 'O, for a thousand hearts to give to Christ, O, for a thousand eyes to behold Him, and O for a thousand hands to do Him service, and O for a thousand feet to walk in His ways.' Were ye ever at this'?

And the second question is - what think ye of this desire,

that heaven puts forth to you this day? It is a question difficult to determine, whether this text speaks more love, or more condescendency in Christ; but it breathes forth both. O that such a Noble Plant of Renown as Christ is, should seek us sinners!

And a third question - what can be the reason that heaven should put forth such a desire unto you this day? This is the great petition of the great King to you, 'Son, give me thine heart'; and we have no more ado, but woo you to Christ, and ye have no more ado but give Him your heart. O, if once we saw Him in His beauty, there would not need to be much preaching to persuade us to give Him our hearts! Now, in the words that are read unto you, there are three things to be considered.

1. The suit and desire that Christ puts forth to sinners, and that is, "Son, give me thine heart.'

2. There is this consideration from which Christ presses this desire on sinners, that they would grant Him this desire, to give Him their hearts; and, we conceive, there are these six considerations in the words to press this on sinners.

The 1st is taken from the excellency of the person that asks this suit, that is ME; give dying Me, Crucified Me, excellent Me, give glorified Me, thine heart. All that can be said, is here said when He says, 'give me'; and there is great reason for it, that we give such an excellent person

our heart.

2ndly. If ye would give Christ your heart, and make a resignation and deliverance of it over unto Him, He would look upon it as a gift, although it be our debt and duty to do it; therefore, He says, 'Give me thine heart.' O who will refuse such a gift to precious Christ! Blessed be the giver of this gift.

3rdly. Consider the smallness of the gift or thing that He asks. It is thine heart. Would He say, 'Give spotless Me thy spotted heart, give holy Me thy profane heart, give glorified Me thy foul, loose, black heart? There is no more here, but 'give me thy heart"; 'me' and 'thy," and yet there is a great difference between them, though not expressed in these words.

4thly. Consider that loving and soul-conquering way that Christ takes with folk to gain their hearts. He comes not by charge and command, as He might do, but by way of humble supplication, as it were, sitting on His knees, and asking sinners' hearts, although He might command them.

5thly. Consider the noble and excellent dignity unto which he is advanced, who gives Christ his heart, in that word 'my son.' Although they have been all strangers to God before, yet now they shall have the state of adoption, and shall be God's sons, that give Christ their hearts. And,

The 6th consideration by which He presses it, is this, that if we give not Christ our heart, it is impossible but we must give it to some other thing. This is clear in the text, comparing it with the next verses (verses 27, 28, etc.), that the whorish women will get their hearts, if Christ do not get it. Would He say, 'The devil will get thy heart and give it to whoredom, if I get it not?'

Now, 3. The third thing in the words, is the time when the heart should be given to Christ, and it is in the morning of their days, for the word in the original is 'My young man, give me thy heart.' Now, we spake before to the commendation of young religion; I shall only propose six or seven considerations whereby to commend young religion, and the early giving of the heart to Christ.

1. Christ's earnest desire to have the heart at that time, Eec. xii, 1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth", that is Christ's earnest request to sinners, to remember Him in their youth.

2. A second consideration is, because thy work is great, and thy journey long; therefore give Christ your heart in your youth, that ye may begin this long journey in time.

3. Ye have but a short time to work that great work, and to go that long journey in; yea, there is much of our precious time gone by, and but little of our work done; yea, we are scarce begun to it. And yet, I may say that word, that the husbandman said to the vineyard dressers, 'Why

stand ye here all the day idle?' Matth. xx, 6. Now, will ye give your hearts to Him?

4. Consider, that the giving of your hearts to Christ in your youth, will help you to escape ills, that ye and your hearts are ready and apt to fall into in time of youth, as Eccles. xi, 10, 'Childhood and youth are vanity.'

5. Consider, that if ye give Christ your hearts in your youth, it shall be more acceptable and welcome to Christ, than when ye are old, or when ye come to sixty years old; therefore, do it now in time, when Christ will take them.

6. Consider, that the sooner ye give your heart to Christ ye are the sooner admitted to the partaking, and fruition, and enjoyment, of many excellent things in Him, and in His company, that, if ye do not, ye shall want.

7. Consider, that if ye delay to give Christ your heart to-day, you shall be the unfitter to do it tomorrow; for there is not one hour's delay, but it indisposes you the more for giving your hearts to Christ for many days again; therefore, I say to you, young men, give your hearts to Christ: I have no better advice to give you all than this. O shall we send Him away with a refusal on the first day of the feast? O will ye refuse Christ all the three days? I charge you do it not, but give it to Him.

Now, we come to the first thing in the words, and I shall speak a little to it, and it is this, that Christ puts forth this

suit, and desires sinners to give Him their hearts. In further discoursing of this, I shall speak to these four or five things.

First, what it is to give Christ our heart; and I shall hold it out in these four or five things. And,

1st. It is to give the thoughts to Christ. There are some that will give the devil their thoughts, but they would give Christ their affections; but I say, thou must think on Christ when thou sittest down, and when thou risest up, and in the Right seasons, and in the day when thou walkest in the way; but I may say Christ is not in all our thoughts.

2ndly. It is to give our desires to Christ, that so thy desires, that before were running in so many different channels, may now all run Christward, and out in Him.

3rdly. It is to give all our affections to Christ, our joy and delight, and our love and patience; yea, all affections to Him.

4thly. It is to give Christ our mind, the light of our mind, and all the knowledge that we have, to improve it for His glory.

5thly. To give our heart to Christ, is the giving of our soul unto Him, the whole soul and faculties thereof.

Now, in the second place, we shall propose some considerations to press this home upon you; and I charge and adjure you, as ye would not despise that noble Plant of Renown, Jesus Christ, to give Him your heart.

1. The first consideration is this, that if thou wouldst weep forty years, and pray other forty years; yet, if thou givest not thy heart, it will be said to thee, who required these things at thy hand? This is clear, Mark xii, 33. To love God is better than sacrifice; and see 1 Cor. xiii, 2, 3. If I have not love, I am nothing, though I should give my body to be burnt, it is nothing. So then, as thou wouldst not have thy prayers, and communicatings, and fastings counted thy dittay [ground of accusation), give Christ thy heart.

2. The second consideration is this, that if thou givest thy heart to Christ, He will give His to thee; and is not that a sweet exchange? John xiv, 21, 23, 'He that loveth me, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.' O but these are sweet guests to lodge with thee, and they shall lodge with thee, if thou dost so.

3. Consider, that your heart which He seeks is not much worth, Prov. x, 20, 'The heart of the wicked is little worth'; and I may say so of all men's hearts, therefore give it to Christ.

4. Consider, that Christ is exceedingly pressing and earnest to have you giving Him your hearts. Cursed be the

man and woman that will not give Christ their hearts, and let all the congregation say amen; yea, the broad gospel curse and malediction will be upon that person.

5. Consider, that the giving Christ your hearts, will set you free from a great fivefold burden that ye lie under.

. (1) From the great burden of desires; for the desires of one that is a stranger to Christ, are like the grave, that cries ay, 'Give, give,' and will never be full. The desire of the sluggard slays him; but, if once thy heart were given to Christ, it would do, as it is Psal. xxvii, 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.'

. (2) This would deliver and set thee free from a burden of fears; for persons, as long as they are strangers to Christ, fear such a curse, and such a loss, and such a sad dispensation; but, if thou hast given thy heart to Christ, it will be a grave to thy fears, to bury them in.

. (3) The giving thy heart to Christ, would deliver thee from a burden of sorrow; for, as long as a person is a stranger to Christ, he has no cause of joy but sorrow; but when the heart is given to Christ thou shalt rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The believer may have sometimes bitterness indeed, but not for his lot; Prov. xiv, 10, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger

doth not intermeddle with his joy.'

. (4) There is the burden of doubts; but the giving the heart to Christ, would set us free from all our perplexities, and our anxious cares would be sweetly resolved in this freedom, if Christ had our hearts.

. (5) This would set free from a burden of anxious hope. The stranger to Christ has many imaginary and vain hopes, but when he gives his heart to Christ, he has it set free from all these; so then, consider this, to stir you up to give your heart to Christ, that it will set you free from all these.

. (6) Consider, that all thy other gifts that thou canst give to Christ, can never, nor will never, be acceptable, till once thou givest Him the gift of thy heart. And there are these five gifts that an hypocrite may give to Christ, and yet not give Him the heart.

1. An hypocrite may give Christ the tongue, yea, he may speak very excellently to any religious purpose. Now, there are many here that have never given their tongue to Christ; and therefore, know this, that thou art one step below an hypocrite, that hast never given thy tongue to Christ.

2. The hypocrite can give Christ a profession; he will put on Christ's robe, but not His graces; yea, he will cast lots for Christ's coat, ere it be long. Now, are there not many

such here? Then thou art one step below an hypocrite, and hast never given Christ thy heart.

3. An hypocrite can give Christ the outside of all outward duties; yea, he can pray, communicate, fast, and read, and meditate, yea have the outside of all duties, and yet never give his heart to Christ.

4. An hypocrite may sometimes give his conscience to Christ, and let it speak for him and his honour, and yet never give Christ his heart.

5. An hypocrite may give his outward man to Christ, his eyes, hands, and his feet, so that outwardly he will do nothing but what Christ bids him; yea, many give Christ their tongue, face, eyes, feet, and hands and yet never give Him their heart. Now, all these gifts are unacceptable to God, till once thou givest Him thy heart; therefore, let this stir you up to this duty.

6. Consider, that except thou givest Christ thy heart, the march-stone betwixt thee and an hypocrite is never rightly laid; because there may be a change in an hypocrite that has not given Christ his heart.

And there is a sevenfold change that a hypocrite may win to, that has never given his heart unto Christ. 1st. There may be a change in his light, 1 Cor. xiii, 2, 'And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.' How many glorious

speakers of Christ are in hell this day. Read the 23rd of Numbers and see this. I doubt if there be a minister in Scotland that can speak of Christ like Balaam, and yet he is in hell this day; yea, an hypocrite may solve doubts and cases that a Christian cannot solve, such may be his light, and yet he will never give his heart to Christ. 2ndly. There may be a change in an hypocrite's conscience. Believe it, his conscience may challenge him for neglect of duty, and for wrongs done to Christ, as Judas' was; yea, they sometimes come as far on in this, as the truly godly, if not further.

Now, there is a three-fold change that may be in hypocrites' consciences. As (1) It may challenge for committing of sin, and that very deeply, see in Judas, Saul, and Cain; Saul wept for it, and Judas hanged himself; and Cain cried out by reason of this, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' And (2) an hypocrite's conscience may be convinced, that when he meets with a sad stroke, it is for his sin, and he will acknowledge that God is just in it. 2 Chron. xii, 6, where Rehoboam cried forth, 'The Lord is righteous,' and yet otherwise he was but a bad man, 'he did evil in the sight of the Lord.' (3) An hypocrite's conscience may lead him to reason, and dispute his interest in Christ, from some reasons, and yet never have given his heart to Christ.

3rdly. There may be a change in an hypocrite's affections: There are places to prove this; one is Isa. lviii, 2,

'They take delight in approaching to God.' Now I pose you, if ye dare say this? and if thou never delightedst in approaching to God, thou art one step below a hypocrite, and so hast not given Christ thy heart: O tremble at that! Another place to prove that, is Rom. ii, 18, "Thou knowest God's will, and approvest the things that are more excellent.' And yet it is said, they rested in the law, and never gave their hearts to Christ: O but that is a fearful thing.

4thly. An hypocrite may have a change in his will, and that is one of the strangest changes that can be; yea, he may have a half desire to take Christ, as Balaam had, when he cried out, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' Numb. xxiii, 10.

5thly. An hypocrite may have a change in his conversation. Believe it, many of our walks are like painted tombs; many have on Christ's coat, but not His graces; and therefore, let no man judge after the outward appearance, but of the giving of the heart to Christ.

6thly. An hypocrite may have a change in his expressions: O to hear some hypocrites pray, how finely will they talk of Christ; Solomon says, Prov. xxvi, 26, Cursed be he whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.'

7thly. There may be a change in an hypocrite's experience, and there are some great steps of experience that

an hypocrite may win unto, that has not given his heart to Christ. (1) He may distinguish betwixt Christ's absence and his presence; that presence of God that he useth to have, he may distinguish betwixt it and absence; Saul could do so, 1 Sam. xxviii, 15, 'God is departed from me,' and He is absent. (2) A second step of experience that an hypocrite may have, is this, he may know when his prayer is not answered: 1 Sam. xxviii, 15, says Saul, "God answers me no more." (3) A third step of the hypocrite's experience, which is a strange one, is this - he may be anxious and sorrowful under absence, and for the want of return in prayer; in the forecited place, says Saul, 'I am sore distressed'; what ails you Saul; what ails you, atheist? 'God answers me not', says he, 'and that is the thing that ails me.' Are there not many here that the want of the return of prayer did never put them to their feet, nor yet made them sore distressed? Thou that art so, art one step below that atheist Saul, and so hast never given thy heart to Christ. (4) An hypocrite may be convinced of the insupportable weight of sin; Cain cried out, Gen. iv, 13, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear'; here, then, is an atheist convinced of the insupportable weight of sin, that never gave Christ his heart. (5) A hypocrite may have some small experiences of the joy of heaven, Heb. vi, 5, there are some who have tasted of the powers of the world to come, and yet these may fall away. Hence, they are but hypocrites, that have not given their hearts to Christ. (6) A sixth step is this, an hypocrite may discern betwixt a good preaching and an ill, as these in

Heb. vi. They can discern and tell when they find sweetness in the word, and when they find it not. (7) This crowns the hypocrite's experiences; he may have some small desires to have Christ, and yet never give his heart to Christ. See Heb. vi.

Now since the hypocrite will win so far, and does so in these days, let this press you to give your heart to Christ, because it is the march-stone betwixt you and an hypocrite. Now will ye answer to this? Old and young, have ye gone that length that the hypocrite may reach? O vile and profane atheist, have ye come this length? O stand in awe, lest ye be disappointed of your expectation of heaven. I shall only mention these three steps that the hypocrite may come; and I shall ask you, if ever you came that length, and if ye have not, ye are far below an hypocrite, that never gave Christ his heart; and they are these things that may be most convincing to you.

1. Didst, or durst thou ever say, that thou delightedst to pray, and to hear preachings? And thou delightedst in approaching to God? Now, if thou hast won to these, thou mayest be an hypocrite for all these; but if not, thou art one step below an hypocrite, and hast never given thy heart to Christ.

2. Didst thou ever mourn for the want of the return of prayer? I ask your consciences, if ever ye durst say that ye did this in earnest? Will ye answer, did ever this affect

your heart? But although it did, yet ye may be an hypocrite in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; and if ye dare not say this, ye are one step below an hypocrite, that never gave his heart to Christ.

3. Did ever this befall thee, that thou couldst put a difference, and distinguish in thine own condition, betwixt absence and presence; but thou that understandest not this, then thou art one step below an hypocrite, that never gave his heart to Christ. Now, beloved, since the hypocrites may win this length, be stirred up by this to give Christ your hearts, and that will lay the march-stone [boundary; dividing line] betwixt you and them.

(8) Consider the excellency of the person that pleads for your hearts; it is the eternal Son of God that desires to have your hearts; Psal. xxiv, 7, 8, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors,' etc. This is the great argument that He uses to persuade them to open; it is a noble guest that would come into them even the King of Glory. O shall there be a person here, that shall hold excellent and precious Christ at the door? O let Him in.

(9) Consider this, to provoke you to give Christ your hearts, that He has waited exceedingly patiently for this, that ye would condescend to give your hearts to Him; see this, Song v. 2. Christ prayed His bride for this; 'Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, etc., for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.'

This is His own argument that He uses with her. O will ye open and let me in. But let me ask all of you, how long has Christ courted you to get your heart? Now will ye let Him in? For Christ's sake give Him your hearts, for He has waited well for you.

(10) If thou givest not thy heart to Christ, the devil shall get it. There is a contest, if we may speak so, between the two wooers, to wit, Christ and the devil; but I fear Christ may return his contest alone from the kirk of Bothwell. O shall the devil prevail more with you, than Christ? Shall this devilish courtier prevail with you! I charge you, by Him that is white and ruddy, that ye would give your hearts to Christ. O what arguments can we use with you to persuade you to give your hearts to Christ? I intreat you to give Him your hearts. And though I have spoken much of the length that an hypocrite may come, yet will ye also venture upon Christ, for He will not put you away, if ye come to Him and offer your hearts to Him. O will ye do it, I beseech you.

(11) Consider, that if ye will give Christ your heart, He will look upon that petty small gift as a reward to Him for all the travail of His soul; yea, He will think it good enough recompence to Him for all His sufferings. Now shall the Son of God be content with such small recompence and reward for all that He has done, and will ye not give Him that? O precious Christ, wilt thou return at this time without dividing the spoil, and taking the prey

from the strong? Now, ask your own souls, O shall I give away my heart to Christ, or not?

(12) Consider, that till once ye give your hearts to Christ, all that ye do, communicate, fast, pray, read or whatsoever it be, it is but an abomination unto the Lord. O how much more when it is done with a wicked mind! Now let all these considerations press you to give Christ your hearts.

Now, in the third place, we shall propose some evidences, whereby ye may know whether ye have given your hearts to Christ or not. And we charge you to search and see whether ye have done it or not; and if ye have not done it, make haste and do it.

And, The 1st evidence of it is this, Christ will have many of your thoughts; the thing that has our hearts, has most of our thoughts. Now, whereon are thy thoughts first in the morning? Are they on Christ? I fear they are on some other thing, when thou sittest down, and when thou risest up, then, and in that ease, Christ has not gotten thy heart.

2ndly. These that have given their hearts to Christ, their eyes will observe His ways; these two are joined together in the text. Now are there not many here, and commanded duties are a burden to them? That is an ill token that thou hast never given thy heart to Christ.

3rdly. The man that has given Christ his heart, Christ's

absence 'will be his burden', Song iii, 2. It was Him whom her soul loved, that was gone, and therefore she mourns for His absence.

4thly. The man that has given Christ his heart, he answers all temptations with this: "O temptations (says he), I am not mine own, now I am in Christ; ye must go and seek me from Christ, if ye get me"; that is a noble way to answer assaults from Satan; 'I am Christ's, and not mine own.'"

5thly. He is the person that will be lothest to offend Christ, Song iii, 5, 'I charge you (says the spouse), that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please'

6thly. When once he is admitted to taste of the sweetness of Christ, he endeavours, by all means, to keep Christ and soul together, Song iii, 4. 'I held him, and would not let him go.' Now are there any here that have not these evidences, and that are convinced that they have not given their hearts to Christ as yet? I shall speak to these impediments, which, I conceive, hinder their giving of their hearts to Christ. 1. We are not convinced of, and do not believe the excellency that is in Christ. Durst we stand out so much against this command of Christ's, 'My son, give me thine heart,' if we knew Him. Ignorance of Christ is that indeed which hinders the marriage with Him; for if we had known the Prince of life, we would not have crucified Him, who is the King of Glory. But,

he is both unknown and despised amongst us. 2. The second impediment is, the perverseness of our will. There are many who cry out, 'We will have none of Christ,' like that in Psal. lxxxii, 11, 'Israel would have none of me.' But I say to thee, what knowest thou, but Christ will say, 'I will have none of thee'? And what knowest thou but that sentence is passed against thee, be it according to thy word, thou shalt have none of Christ, and He will have none of thee? O but that is a dreadful sentence! 3. A third impediment is, the whoring of our hearts after things of a present world, has taken the heart from Christ. O but that is a great hindrance of giving our hearts to Christ, when our hearts run out on the things of this life, and take pleasure in them. 4. We are not convinced indeed of the necessity, and advantage, and pleasure in giving our hearts to Christ. O stout-hearted and far from righteousness, will ye not give your hearts to Him, there being so great a necessity of it, and advantage in it? 5. The fifth impediment is, the soul-union and heart-conjunction that is betwixt us and our idols.

There are three words in Scripture that speak this heart-conjunction, that is betwixt us and our idols, Hosea iv, 17, 'Ephraim is joined to idols,' it is in the original, "Ephraim is married to idols"; Ezek. xiv, 2, 5. Consider these two places at your leisure; for there is such a word as union betwixt us and our idols, so that we cannot get our hearts given to Christ. Now I charge you to answer this, whether ye will give Christ your heart or not, in this

last and great day of the feast. What argument will persuade you and what argument has not been used with you? O unpersuadable creatures, will nothing persuade you? I say this one thing to him that gives his heart to Christ, believe me, he shall never rue it, nor yet have cause to rue it. O but Christ is well worthy of your heart! and that knot of union that is casten betwixt you and Christ, that golden indissolvable knot, shall never be loosed again.

There are four things that break bonds, and loose knots between dearest friends; and yet these things will not dissolve this knot of union with Christ. (1) The sin of whoredom, will break the bonds of friends, and yet it will not break the knot of union with Christ. See Hosea ii, 7, 'I will return to my first husband,' says she, when she had been playing the whore, yea and had been married to some other lover since she went a-whoring from Christ; and yet this breaks not the knot of the first marriage with Christ; therefore she is made welcome when she returns unto Him again. (2) Ingratitude will break the knot of friendship amongst dearest friends. If one friend did a great courtesy for another, and that other friend proved ungrateful, O how would this break their friendship one to another; but O how ungrateful have we been to Jesus Christ, and yet it will not loose this knot of union betwixt Him and us. But as it is in Zeph. iii, 17, 'He will rest in his love.' (3) Mistakes will break union betwixt dearest friends and choice friends, and yet this union betwixt

Christ and us cannot be broken thereby; although we mistake Him, it lies not in our power to get this knot broken, and it is not possible that He can mistake us. (4) Passion and anger, Solomon says, separate chiefest friends; but anger cannot separate betwixt Christ and these that have once this knot of union casten. O blessed are we, that the knot is in His hand; for any anger will not make Him break it; yea, He will hale us to heaven, before He breaks this knot with us.

Now, shall I leave you without giving your consent to Christ? And shall we return to Him, and have nothing to say? O will ye give your hearts to Christ, because He is importunate with you? I think, Christ must steal away your heart, before He get it; but, if ye would give Him this gift, it would blind your eyes to all other things. Then give it to Christ. O what say ye to it now? We are to leave you and go away, and ye know not when ye will be wooed so much to Jesus again, as ye have been at this time; but, if we have gained our point, we labour not in vain; and, I say, whether ye grant or refuse, Christ will have His honour. Angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, will praise and glorify Him, though ye do it not. I shall close with this:

Let all the angels praise Him, and let all the congregation say, Amen.

Let all the saints in heaven and earth praise Him; and let all the congregation say, Amen.

Let the sun, moon, and stars, fire, hail, stormy winds, vapours, frost and grass, fowls in the air, and fishes in the sea, old men and young men, old women and young maids, praise Him; and let all the congregation say, Amen.

Yea, let all our souls, and all that is within us praise Him that woos us; and yet is, by infinite degrees, exalted above all our blessings and praises; to whom be everlasting praise, and glory, and honour for ever and ever. Amen.