

## SERMON XIII.

*“But I said unto you that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

John 6:36–37

ALL these things that we preach seem to show you whether ye be in Christ or not. Now, all this is to clear it up whether ye believe or not. It is needful, especially at such a time as this, to know who is the believer and who is not.

Now these words speak somewhat unto believers or unbelievers. There was a great number of people that followed Christ in the days of His flesh; they were still proposing questions to Him, and running here and there after Him, and yet were strangers unto God, and knew nothing of Him. On this account Christ tells them that their god was their belly. They gave royal titles to Christ, and called him “Rabbi.” When they heard of heaven, they were bent on performing works to attain it. They sought great things from Christ. When He was speaking of the bread of life, they said, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.” And yet they knew no more what this bread signified than a child did. Now Christ brings the charge home to their own bosoms, saying, “Although ye have run after Me, and have heard and seen Me do miracles, yet ye are as far from Me as ever ye were. Ye do not believe. But if ye were included in the covenant of redemption, ye would come: ‘For all that the Father hath given unto me, shall come to me.’” He knew His people would say, “It does not belong to us to know whether we be thus given or not.” But at leisure, says Christ, “I hold you upon this ground: ‘He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’”

Now in the words there is a challenge given them that followed Him. In the text says He, "Ye also have seen me, and believe not." The reason is, "Because ye were not given me of the Father;" for, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me." They did not understand how this could be the reason of their unbelief. He expresses Himself somewhat darkly, yet His own people are satisfied; besides, He hath sent forth His ministers to clear up such things further unto the people.

Again, here is a large promise to support His people, and to direct their attention to the revealed word of God: "And he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." There is a word of election, "They that are given me;" and then the effects of it, "They shall come." Then there is a word to believers, a large promise for a ground of faith: "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He said unto them, "Ye also have seen me, and have not believed." Now consider the persons He is speaking to; they were such as ran up and down the country and professed much religion, and yet He says unto them, "Ye have seen me, and believe not."

DOCT. I *There are many that run here and there after the Son of God, to see what He doth, and yet have nothing of God in them.*

And no doubt there are many of this sort of folk come unto this feast to-day.

Now for proof of this doctrine we think that all will grant that many do so that know nothing of God. And,

1. One sort is of those that professedly follow Him, though they believe nothing, and know nothing of God. These are they that follow Him with the half of the law in their hand. They will pray a while; they think that they may serve God well enough, and yet ban, curse, or swear twice as long for

it. They will pray half an hour in their families, and then they will drink till it be day again. These strangers to God are spoken of: "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." They will profess and say that they have been serving God ever since they were born; but they cannot do any good thing, but are reprobate to every good work.

2. A second sort that run after Christ, and yet know nothing of God, are those that come to Him with the second table of the law in their hand, as that young man in the gospel did, saying, "Master, what shall I do to be saved?" Do not commit adultery; do not steal; bear not false witness. "Oh," says he, "All these have I kept from my youth." "Then," says Christ, "I will try you with one, and the first one: 'Sell all that you have,'" says Christ. But the young man understood not what that command signified: "Thou shalt have no other God but me." He loved the world better than Christ. Take heed to yourselves. Are there any that come with the second table of the law in their hands? They defy their neighbours to say an ill word of them, to lay any fault to their charge; and yet they know not where their thoughts are when they go a-whoring after the world. To such I say, You know not the first command, and therefore go home again and touch not these holy things.

3. A third sort that know nothing of God will one while seem to run with Christ, and then will run with His enemies another while. These are known enemies to Him. When they meet with the people of God, they will speak ill of the atheist: and when they meet with the atheist, they will speak ill of the people of God. They will go as the bush goes. Some of them will come into the company of the people of God, to see what liberty the people of God take, that they may laugh at them afterward. Go ye home, and touch ye not these holy things.

4. A fourth sort run with their head, but not with their heart. They gather something that is spoken in a preaching, and get it exactly in their heads, but they take it not home into their hearts, in order to make use of it. They are like seed sown by the way side, which the fowls come and pick up. Satan is like these fowls. Such persons sit, and hear the preaching with their ears; but their heart is never moved with it. They keep not His commandments. Now we wish that these would go home again, and not approach the table of the Lord.

5. A fifth sort are they that run after Christ, to see what He can do; but they run with their idols in their hands—their idols which they would not have mortified. Their heart is on these idols. These are they of whom it is said, “The word was to them as seed sown among thorns.” There are some when they begin to speak, that cannot speak three sentences, but their kine or their corn is in the hinder-end of them.

6. A sixth sort run, and have not any ground on which they run. Many come here to the communion, yet to this day they could never produce any ground wherefore they run. Such never had their heart humbled before God under the sense of guilt. They will be content to hear, and yet as soon as they are out of the church, other vain thoughts get their heart. Such hear the word with joy for a season, and are compared to the seed sown on rocky ground. As soon as the storm blows in their faces, then their religion is delivered to the wind. Now there are many folk here that run as the tide runs; and think they are in no esteem, now-a-days, that profess nothing of God. Therefore they will go as the most part go; and yet they have no ground whereupon they were ever caused to come to the church; they were never made to believe.

7. A seventh sort that run, and know nothing of God, are

such as have a ground; but it is a false ground. They make common providence a ground. "I think," says one of them, "to get good of Christ;" and why? "Because He has fed and clad me all my days." But stay, friend, He has given that to His enemies, and to reprobates. I say, He will give all that to heathens that He gave to you. If ye have not another ground, take heed to that word, "Friend, how earnest thou thither, wanting the wedding-garment."

8. An eighth sort come, too, and come not aright, who are ever sticking about the door; but they never come in. Come to them now, and come to them three years afterwards, you will never know them an inch farther advanced in the knowledge of God. They never grow more clear in anything. God is not in such. For where God is, there is light. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Thus there are a great many that run to and fro after Christ, and yet are still taken up with this and that earthly thing; but they abide still in the law, and they know not what it is to be justified by faith in Christ. We say, such as never have light in this point have no faith in Christ.

Now, all these sorts we have spoken of know nothing of God. Therefore we wish that ye would try yourselves. Provided ye have made no progress in anything that we have spoken of, hold off your hand. And yet if ye will come now and submit and yield yourselves to Christ, and fall down at His feet this day, and lay claim to Him, and believe in Him, we call upon you to come forward. Now,

1st, With regard to them that seek Him, there are many that seek the kingdom of heaven, but not the righteousness thereof. "Seek ye this kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof also," says Christ.

2ndly, There are many that seek the kingdom of heaven and

the righteousness thereof; but they do not seek it principally and chiefly.

3rdly, There are many that seem to seek the kingdom, and the righteousness thereof principally and chiefly, but they seek it not constantly. They seemingly begin to seek it chiefly at such times as this; before, or at communions, when they hear of damnation and salvation. At such times they make a kind of stirring; but it falls away again, and they forget all when they go home.

4thly, Others would seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof; and that chiefly and contentedly; but they do not seek it satisfactorily. Some appear contented with their condition, but yet they never seek so much of God as to satisfy them; they do not seek to get satisfaction in the ways of God.

5thly, There are some that appear to seek the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, first, principally, contentedly, and satisfyingly; but yet they do not seek it upon a right ground.

6thly, There are some that appear to seek the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof, first, chiefly, principally, contentedly, and satisfyingly, and do it on some ground—I mean, they will give you a ground for their doing so—yet they know nothing of God savingly. They will give you a ground out of the Scripture that will satisfy you well enough; but yet there is no real change in them at all. You know nothing truly of God, if there be not any change nor growth in you. You have not grace; hold off your hand. “But,” say ye, “Who will come, then, if all these must keep away?” I answer, All that the Father has given to Christ, in the covenant of redemption, shall come. In regard that atheists are never satisfied—in regard they say that, if they be elected, they will get to heaven whether they do good or

not, we must now speak a word about the covenant of redemption and election from the next verse of our present reading.

The Lord purposing to set forth the glory of His justice, and the glory of His mercy, creates angels and men. He lets men fall; and when they are fallen, Christ purchases some of them again. And these purchased ones are they that are given to the Son. Now, here stands election. The Lord speaks to two pieces of clay. To the one He says, "Thou shalt be with me in glory hereafter;" and to the other He says, "Thou shalt be a spectacle of my justice for ever."

Now, He does this as the absolute Lord God Omnipotent, having His being of Himself. "I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy," says He. He renders to no man a reason of His ways. He acts even as if one should take two stones out of a quarry, and say to the one, "Thou shalt have a conspicuous place in my window," and should take the other and place it as a steppingstone in the mire. If we may exercise our freedom in this manner, far more He, who is the great Creator, do so. The Lord, as He is absolute, says to one, "Thou shalt be employed in an honourable piece of service to me," and to the other, "Thou shalt be a reprobate, a stepping-stone to me." Upon the foreknowledge of man's folly, the Father bargained with the Son. Now, this bargain should be seriously thought on at this time, for now is the proclamation of it made to you. It is certain the elect were given. "Whether or not," say ye, "were they given freely?" No; they were not given freely; the Son paid for them. The truth is, the Father and the Son bargained for them; but, being fallen, they are not able to answer the law. Poor man can do nothing for himself. He cannot get a penny of the debt off his head; but in everything he does he still runs more and more into debt. Now the Father bargains with the Son, and He offers so many to Him if He would pay Him for them; and, says He, "These shall set

forth the riches of the glory of my grace." Says Christ, "I will do it; I am well content. Behold, I come to do thy will; in the volume of thy book it is written of me." Then says the Father, "I will bear thee through, and defray thy expenses: wrath will enter upon you." Says the Son, "I am well content. Give me a body that I may be such a one as wrath may get hold of." And when He has got one, He says, "Behold I come to do thy will, as it is written; whatsoever they owe, I am content to pay; they shall be freed from death for ever; they shall be my children." And then He and the Father bargain when He has taken on their flesh and bone, and stands in their room. Then says Christ, "Let all their guilt fall on me." It falls on Him. Then says God, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Stir up thyself, O wrath; thou shalt get one that will bear all thy wrestling. Now, the wrath of God never got full wrestling with any till it got it with the Son of God. And so, for the price of our redemption, He quitted all His movables in the world, so to speak, and laid down His life. He had not one drink of water; He gave up even that for us. And when He had given up all His movables, He said, "Take the rest out of my body;" and then they plucked the hair from off His face. "He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." And then they got a stone, and put it upon Him when He was dead, to hold Him in the grave. But when the time came that He should rise, He said, "O death, I will be thy death; where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Now comes the intimation of this to a lost world. It is declared to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, where the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." This day there are messengers sent to declare that there are so many given to the Son. This verse shows us that all whom He has covenanted for

will believe; and this may satisfy the minds of the people of God. We have been proving that the Son has bought them, and they are bought.

Notwithstanding all that the Son has given for them, yet He counts them a gift, and this testifies that Christ is well pleased with the bargain. Yes, He is well-pleased with it, notwithstanding all the evil treatment that we gave Him; and He sets down this in Scripture, to let us see that He counts all His people a gift, notwithstanding all the price He has paid for them. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me." This He does, that He may put jealousy out of the breasts of His people. Look to His carriage towards His spouse, when she refused to lend Him a lift in His greatest need. He never says an ill word to her. This is a token that He loved them well. When He was in His greatest need, He says, "Shall ye be offended this night because of me." Says He, "I know that ye will be offended, and take ill with it. Ye will not lend me a lift. But when the deed is done, I shall remember you." This tells us He was well-pleased with the bargain. When an ill-natured woman would not give Him a drink of water, yet He gives her not an ill word, but says that it was His meat and His drink to do that same ill-natured woman's soul good. And even to this day He is sending out His messengers to tryst His bride and spouse. He is so well pleased that He says, "Those who convert many shall shine as the stars in the firmament." Now look on His carriage, and ye will see His willingness. He says, "If ye will but grant that I have died for you, and honour me by believing." But His bride will not do that. She will not believe, though life pursues her in the time of her backsliding, and says, "I shall never leave thee nor forsake thee." Still she will not grant that He has bought her. But yet He will not tell all the house what is between thee and Him. And is not that a token that He loves thee? For the Father He is very well pleased. For,

1st, He sets the business on foot, and furnishes the Son for it.

2ndly, He gives the Son, that is His dearly beloved, and is content to want His company a while to send Him to you.

3rdly, There is none that comes to the Son, but those whom the Father draws.

It is clear that the Father is content with the bargain. "Ask of me," says He, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Come then, be content to take Him, and believe in Him. Whatever ye have been, He will regard you as a gift. "But," say ye, "how shall we know whether we be one of these that are given or not?" The text answers, "All that are given shall come." If ye come and lay hold on the refuge set before you, then ye are given. "But whether or not is my name in the decree?" say you. We say, ye must first read your name in the promise, before ye read it in the decree. Inquire, then, whether or not are ye poor, and feel yourselves to have nothing? Then, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Or are you one that is hungering for righteousness? Then, "Blessed are they that hunger for righteousness, for they shall be filled." If these be your names, then they are written in the promises. Or is your name Sin-abounding? Then, "Grace doth much more abound." Or if you be one that wants repentance, and your name is a Wanter of repentance: then He is exalted to give repentance to Israel. "But that is still my question, What if I be not elected?" The Lord says to thee, "Come down; ye are too high when you would pry into the decree of God." He will have you go upon the ground of His revealed will. Try, in the first place, if ye be coming, or have come, and so ye shall know that ye are elected. But say ye, "Alas! I am in as great doubt as I was. I see some making a fashion of coming; but what wot I what is right coming?" "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast

out.” By “coming” here is meant believing, according to the 35th verse of this chapter. “He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” This is a promise to them that believe. Now we will lay down some reasons.

Coming imports a removal from one thing to another. Now,

1. If we would know who they are that come rightly; let us examine from whence, and to what place, and by what way they come. We are to enquire from whence, that is, whether or not he comes to Christ; and by what way, that is, whether or not he comes by the new covenant exhibited in the gospel. Now there are many that come wrong, that seem to come for a little, but stop short of Christ.

(1.) There are some that come from themselves in part, and come to Jesus in part. They come to Him in the matters of righteousness, but not wholly. They stick to some righteousness of their own. Ask them what will they do to win to heaven? They say they can do no good. All that they do is wrong. And yet in their hearts they are saying, “I thank God that there is so much right in my doings.” That is just to take a piece of new cloth, and put it upon an old garment; or to take a piece of Christ’s righteousness, and set it on your own righteousness. “Good prayers will do no harm; they will help something,” say most. I take Christ’s righteousness for everything. “That is wrong,” say they. But, I say, Thou must take Christ for everything thou dost, whether it be right or wrong. Ye must either take none of Him, or else ye must take Him wholly.

(2.) A second sort seem to come wholly from themselves in the matters of righteousness, and to venture themselves on the goodness of God. When they are challenged, they still say, “We are great sinners, but God’s mercy is greater, and

that will help us to heaven.” But then they do not come wholly from themselves in the matter of wickedness; they love their sins as well as ever they did. Such may not touch this feast.

(3.) A third sort seem to come from themselves in the matters of righteousness and justification; and from themselves in the matters of wickedness, in part, but not wholly. Such a one was Herod. Herod would take Christ’s righteousness to save him; he would seem to flee from himself wholly in justification, but not wholly from himself in the matters of wickedness. He refuses to let go some sin that was beloved of him. “Oh,” say some folk, “such a sin sticks to me by nature.” I say that and that nature shall go to hell together, except ye say with delight, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.” Hold off your hands, except ye resolve wholly to quit your iniquity and to regard none of it.

(4.) A fourth sort seemingly come from themselves wholly in wickedness, but not one bit from themselves in the matter of righteousness. Such were the Jews: they fled from themselves in the matter of wickedness; but they would abide by their own righteousness. Let not such approach the Lord’s Table.

(5.) A fifth sort seem to flee from themselves wholly in the matters of righteousness and justification, and also in the matters of wickedness, as far as they can, yet their foot slips by many a time, and they continue not their course. When they commit any sin, then they resolve they shall never do the like again. And yet, perhaps, on the Monday evening, they slide again into the same sin. But such know no exercise of spirit, nor grief for sin. Hold ye off your hands here.

(6.) A sixth sort are such as flee wholly from themselves in the matters of righteousness and justification, and in the

matters of wickedness; but they close not with Christ. They think it an impossibility that the like of them can ever be saved by Christ's righteousness, and so they lose hope. They are convinced that they have nothing in them that is good, or can ever do good, and yet when they see this they are not stirred up to flee to Christ to get help and relief.

2. Now there are some that come aright, and can produce their grounds. Now for satisfaction to the minds of Christians, we shall speak something of the various degrees of them.

(1.) There is a sort, or rather a degree, that come in a confident manner. And then presently the Lord lays out large allowance to them and enables them to lay hold of it. When they are convinced of their iniquity and of their inability to be saved by their own righteousness, then they flee to Christ, and He so lets out of Himself to them that they are satisfied.

(2.) A second degree is, of those that come out of themselves wholly in the matters of righteousness and in the matters of wickedness; but for their life they dare not close with the offered relief, but stand and tremble. Now there is one word unto you. "Who is amongst you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." This man feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant; he has fled from himself in the matters of righteousness, and the matters of wickedness; he is sitting in darkness, and he thinks he has no light. But the man we spoke of before, that comes from himself in the matters of righteousness and of wickedness, would not grant a possibility of his help. But this man is persuaded there is a possibility of his being helped. Let such a man trust in "the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God"; a man that has fled out of himself and is saying,

“What shall I do to be saved?”

(3.) A third degree, is of those that come out of themselves in the matters of righteousness and the matters of wickedness, and yet they dare not boldly lay hold of Christ, because they see the iniquities of their practices. They dare not say they regard not iniquity in their heart, and yet they are content to yield to Him. They dare not say that they are come, but they are coming unto Him. All these we have spoken of are coming; and there is strong consolation allowed them that flee to the refuge set before them, as well as to them that are fled already. These folk are fleeing to lay hold of the refuge.

(4.) A fourth degree of those that have fled from themselves in the matters of righteousness and in the matters of wickedness, are such as have come and laid hold of the hope set before them, and yet they are fallen from close walking with Christ. Therefore, He says to such, “Strengthen the things that remain.” They are prisoners that are recovering their liberty. It is not their purpose to remain in that condition. They had stepped aside into the mire; but that is not their path-way, for the law of God is their pathway. Any good that a wicked man does is extraordinary; it is not his path-way, which is iniquity. But thou mayst come boldly to Christ, to get that strengthened that remains, when thou art put to exercise about the course of thy life, and when thou seest much iniquity in it, and art afraid to go to God. “But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.”

(5.) A fifth degree, is of those that when they have fled from themselves in the matters of righteousness, and the matters of wickedness, and have closed with Christ, grow careless and inactive. As soon as they have gotten security of their salvation, down they sit and rest themselves there. There are many of the people of God in this case now-a-days.

These are fallen from their first love. But ye must set to again and get God's loving countenance. You must work, and work over again; and fight, and fight over again, till ye be made to rejoice in His love. If ye do not this, ye shall want the fruit of this feast.

(6.) A sixth degree of those that come from themselves in the matters of self-righteousness, and the matters of wickedness, and close with Christ, are such as hold not on constantly in their motion. When they are convinced of this wrong, they do not renew the acts of their faith. They think shame, as it were, to trouble God so often with their sins and with their evil heart. O fool that thou art, He that bids us forgive our brother seventy times seven times in a day allows none to forgive so often or so much as He Himself will forgive.

(7.) A seventh sort or degree of those that are wholly come out of themselves in the matters of self-righteousness, and out of themselves in respect of wickedness, are such as continue their motion. As sin prevails, they renew their actings of faith and abide in Him. All these are real and true comers.

Now a word to clear a doubt in the way. How do they come to Him? There are sundry ways of the Lord's calling folks, and drawing them to come. But we shall speak of the ordinary way that He takes to bring in His people. When all the people are going one way, and everyone is thinking with himself he is like neighbours and others, some day something comes into his mind, and he thinks there is a possibility that he is wrong. Now this is the first stoop or goal he turns. And then he begins to think, "I trow I need something." Then says God, "Come, buy of me fine gold, tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that ye may be clothed; and eye-salve, that ye may see." Now, when all this is done, the soul is but on the way

to grace. The next stoop that he comes to he says, "Verily I think I shall be damned." This is according to that condition of Isaiah before cited. "He that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." He fears the Lord, and he has no comfort, he has no hope in himself, and he is crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" And if one would ask him, "What think ye of your ways?" "Verily," says he, "I think they are most abominable. I will not be proud of my poverty; but I will flee to another, to get gold, that I may be rich." For now ye must understand, that folks that see themselves poor are not blessed folk; for there are some that see their poverty even on this side of time, that are proud of it, and they will despair. But blessed is the man who is not proud of his poverty; who ends his prayer with this, "Who knows but God will have mercy;" who thanks God that he is kept out of hell so long. But still He knows not whether to give God thanks for his creation, or not. He sees not as yet whether it had not been better for him to have been a beast than a man. At the next stoop he turns, he says, "I must have it from God; I wait and long for it;" then, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." He sees that he wants much; but yet he sees not that the goodness of God can supply his needs. He next comes to this stoop, "I daresay," says he, "I am lost for all that myself can do; but He knows that the desire of my soul is, that He may reign in me, and that He may deliver my feet from falling." But what have ye resolved, friend, in the meantime? I have resolved to lie at his door, and die at it, for I know that there is help at Christ's door only, and nowhere else. I am not only content to live with Him hereafter, but I am also content to have Christ for my King. So the soul advances step by step till it close with Christ.

Now, I say, this is a way of coming that is approved of God.

There are many other ways of coming. According as our wise Lord thinks fit, so He will give them so many stoops or marks to run about. Any other way of coming that ye see in the Scripture, if your way has been like it, will prepare you for coming to this feast, and ye shall not be cast out.

Now, when times of trial are coming on, ye have need to make sure work of your coming. Amen.