

SERMON IX.¹

“Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.”

Psalm 69:6

THERE are many mysteries in the world, amongst which these five following are none of the least:

1st, Who are those who are called “the Godly Party” in the world? This is a great mystery.

2ndly, How comes it about that this party, called “the Godly Party,” cleaves so closely together? It is likewise a mystery that they are so strongly united to one another.

3rdly, The variety of lots in this one party. Though they are so closely united together, yet they are led to heaven in different ways. Here is a great mystery.

4thly, What the exercises of that party are, when they are at the worst, is likewise a mystery.

5thly, How they come to be guided and preserved in composure in their exercise, amidst all troubles, is another mystery.

Now these five things, I conceive, are contained in the text; and I perceive that there are five doctrines that will natively arise from them.

DOCT. I. *The godly party are such as wait upon the Lord.*

Make of them what ye will, this is the true description of them. They are so described, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee.”

In this distinction of them, ye may take up these things following, that hold out clearly what they are:

1. It says that their expectations terminate upon God; their thoughts are conversant about an invisible God. In Psalm 39, when David has told us that every man walks in a vain show, he says (verse 7), “And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.”

2. It says that whatever that party be, their stock is in hope, and not in their hand; they are but waiting; they are but just looking for it; they have not as yet overtaken it. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” or sense.

3. It says they are a party devoted unto the service and attendance of the God of heaven; they are waiting upon God; their eyes are fixed upon Him; and they look to what is His will, and to what He commands, and not to what man wills or commands. Many wait upon poor masters, if it were known; but the godly party wait upon God, and what He commands them.

4. They are a party that have committed their lot, and all the events thereof, unto the God of heaven. They are waiting on Him, and are content that their sentence should come forth from Him. “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence.”

5. It implies an inclination to wait, and hope for good from God’s hand. He only is a godly man who is actuated by the Spirit that inclines him to mercy’s side of the question.

USE. For use, try yourselves by these things, whether or not ye are waiting on God? Whether or not does your expectation terminate on God only? Whether or not are ye devoted unto His service? Do ye commit all events to God? Are ye content that your sentence come forth from before Him?

Look if your heart inclines you to mercy's side of the question, and to look for good from God's hand? Can you say these things? There is no man in a natural state that can say so, or plead these things.

DOCT. II. *There is a strange unity and communion among the godly.*

There is a strong bond of union amongst them. The Psalmist here supposes that all the godly will have their eye upon him, and he is afraid that he may carry not aright before them. "Jerusalem is builded as a city, that is compact together." But here I shall show you:

1. Some things wherein they are mostly united.
2. What makes them to be so closely united in one body.
3. What are the consequences that natively flow from these.

Now,

I. For the first of these. They are,

1. A party that are one in heart. They have all one heart given them. It is a promise to all the godly, that they shall have one heart; that is, the new heart which is given to them all.

2. They are one as to their interest. Their first aim is, that the Lord Jesus Christ may reign and be great in the world, and that His kingdom may prosper; and then that they may be found in Him on that day, and in His righteousness. That is their interest, in which they are all one. If they were all asked, "What is your interest?" this would be their answer: "Let Christ reign, and be great; and let us be found in Him."

3. They are all one as to their design and endeavours. Their design is to be like unto Him, and to be conformed to His blessed will and command. This is the one way that is promised unto them all. "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear thee for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them."

4. They are all one as to their outward profession in the world. In the primitive times it was so. In the days of the apostles they had all things common. There was a communion of goods, or of worldly substance amongst them.

5. They have all one lot, which is, to be persecuted by the seed of the serpent. Whoever he be that is not in some cases a sufferer with them, he has reason to suspect his state, since it is the lot of all the seed of the woman to be persecuted by the seed of the serpent.

II. Now would ye know why they are all so completely united in everything.

1. They are all cast in one mould of the Divine decree, that is from everlasting.

2. They are all actuated by one spirit; therefore they must be one. This spirit is promised to them all to cause them to walk in His ways. They are all actuated by this one spirit. Hence the spirituality of their duties.

3. They are all designed for one end, that is, full conformity to God, and the immediate enjoyment of Him to all eternity, in so far as they are capable of enjoying Him. Since they are cast in one mould from everlasting, and actuated by one spirit, and designed for one end, then how can they but be one? Which brings me,

III. To what are the consequences that natively follow from this oneness of heart and mind. And,

1. A unity in exercises follows on it, amongst all the people of God. They are all exercised about some spiritual thing. They are all exercised about a corrupt heart, that is disobedient in the matters of God and will not abide in His way. They are all exercised about the threatenings of God in Scripture; such as that, "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully."

2. They are one as to temptation. One temptation they are all assaulted with is, whether or not there is a reality in religion and godliness; and whether there is a God above that rules all things on the earth below, since He lets all things go through one another in such a manner, and one man devours another, as the fishes of the sea. In this, and some other things, I would say, they have a oneness in respect of temptations. Satan loves to assault a man with that temptation whereby he prevails oftenest or most readily over him. But,

3. This follows on it: They are one in respect of the same precious truths that they believe in and feed upon. They have the same *michtams*, or golden Scriptures. They have the same great and precious promises. Was not that a good word that you and many love well? "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure." Was not this a word ye loved well? "I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely;" and that word, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

4. There natively follows on it a mutual sympathy in one another's case and condition. They stand and fall together. When one of them is glad, all of them rejoice. They joy and sorrow together. The wicked are not so. It is true, they are all one in evil. They are all one in the crucifying of Christ. Herod and Pilate were all one in this. They are all one

about a visible God; but the other is all one about an invisible God. The one goes upward; the other goes downward.

USE. Try yourselves by this, how it answers your condition. Can you say, ye are all one with the people of God in these things. If ye be one with them in these things; think it not strange if ye be one with them in persecution, and the cross of Christ also. If ye be not content to take that lot with them, then you want one special point of your character. Wherefore let me obtest all the godly to be more and more one. Let us be one, come of us what will. I would use these arguments with you, to make you study this oneness.

1. It is your strength.

2. I hope it has been your happiness. For some years past, we walked together in one profession. Therefore let us be one, seeing we have walked together as one these many years past. Therefore I would obtest and charge you to be still of one heart, and of one mind.

3. This feast that we have been at, says, that we are all one. We have all sealed it this day, and taken our sacrament on it. The unity of communicants is the report of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

4. I believe if ye were all posed on it, ye would own you had no great temptation to join with any other party in the world. What can be your temptation to be one with another party Therefore be one amongst yourselves.

And I shall only add—I put this question home to everyone of you—Whether the Scriptures do not speak most favourably of the godly party? For as low as they are in the world, the Scripture speaks much to their commendation. You scarcely open your Bible, but you find it smile upon God's people, and frown upon their adversaries. Is it not of great advantage then, to be of the godly party?

DOCT. III. *Although this party be most singularly knit together, yet it pleaseth their Master to exhibit some of them, as on a stage for Himself, more singularly than others.*

Thus it was with these men here. He does so ordinarily in one of these three cases.

1. He exhibits some of them singularly with regard to the temptations to sin they are assaulted with. Some of them have ugly messengers of Satan, impudent devils haunting them. Again, others have not such gross things following them, but only sins of infirmity.

2. There are some of them shown, as it were, upon the stage of their personal afflictions and sufferings. Justice is still pursuing your house or family, sometimes taking away the wife, sometimes the husband, and sometimes taking away the children. Job stands as a pattern for us of all this.

3. He uses to make spectacles of some of His people in their public trials, for the cause of Jesus Christ. He exhibits some of them singularly, in order to the trial of the cross of Christ. Paul was so; "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep." The reasons of this dispensation are various. The Lord brings some of His people, as it were, on a theatre more than others.

(1.) Not because there is more sin in one, than in another.

(2.) Neither is it out of less respect to some, that He suffers devils to haunt and tempt them more than others. Nor,

(3.) Is it a greater stock of habitual grace that makes Him exhibit some as bearing the cross of Christ more singularly than others.

But the reason is, The absolute sovereignty of God, who will do with any of His people as He pleaseth; and that His wisdom and strength may the more illustriously appear in bearing them up under all their trials.

USE. Let never one of you, great or small, dream that ye may not be exhibited, as on a theatre, in one or all of these three ways, and mistake not the reasons why it is so.

DOCT. IV. *The thing that vexes the people of God, when at the worst, is, lest they should be a shame, or an affront to all the rest of the godly, by disowning the Lord's way.* "Let none that wait upon thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake."

This says, that unless the carriage and deportment of the godly man redounds to the comfort of all the rest of the godly, through his being enabled honestly to bear up when he is any way called out to a public appearance for God, it some way tends to the discredit of all the godly. Since this is the case, when they slip aside or carry not aright, since they are all in hazard of doing so, it should be matter of affecting and afflicting exercise lest they do so. Fellow professors are ashamed of the person that carries not aright; they are ashamed that ever they should have been in company or fellowship with him; they are ashamed that ever such a person should have owned such a cause, and that ever such a thing should have befallen a professor of such a cause; and, besides, they are weakened by him in their hopes of through-bearing for themselves.

Again, they are in hazard of being a discredit to all the godly, because, say they, it seems the Lord has granted no peremptory promise, as to the manner of their through-bearing, and corruption enough remains in them still to overturn all their stock of grace, if they get not present renewed influences.

USE. All of you know how many ways ye are in hazard of being a discredit to the cause and to the rest of the godly, by yielding to temptations after this communion. And we will be ashamed of you if any of you fall into drunkenness and other vices after you have been at this communion. Oh, think on it, that ye are in hazard of being a disgrace to all the honest folk that know you, if ye fall so, and wrong the work and cause of God!

DOCT. V. *The way to secure every one of God's people is, to improve and make use of God, as He has revealed Himself, according all the cases and conditions wherein they are in hazard of being a discredit to all the godly.*

And wouldst thou improve this art, thou who art dogged with some vile temptation? Hast thou reason to fear that thou mayest be a discredit to the godly? Then improve the Lord as He has held out Himself in a most answerable way to your case and condition. Dost thou fear that thou mayst wrong the cause of God and be a discredit to His people, thou art so weak and ready to fall? Then, look unto the Lord of hosts, who is able to bear weak ones through, even such as thou art. But when I bid you improve Him, then I allow you to look unto the glorious titles that He takes to Himself, that are most consonant and agreeable to your case and condition. Cleave unto Him; hang on Him for the performance of the promises by faith; wrestle with Him by prayer to make out these promises to you. "Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel." This is the way to carry fair under every temptation; and may the Lord Himself help and enable you to do so. Amen.

Footnotes:

1. This sermon seems to have been preached immediately after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.