

SERMON XIV.¹

“And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”

Matthew 15:27

IT is a business of great importance that was prosecuted by this woman, in her depending on God, and in her address to Him through many difficulties. It was a discouragement that He was silent; but when He gives her an answer it was worse than silence. “It is not,” says He, “meet to give the children’s bread unto the dogs.” But yet she had better skill of this answer than of His silence. From this she presseth her point. She gets some footing here. Christ tells her she was a dog. “I grant, Lord; I cannot deny it; yet I am such a dog as may expect a crumb. If I may have a relation to Thee, let it be what it will; it is good enough.” She is content. He calls her so, and she says, “The dogs may eat of the crumbs.” She grants all He has said, and yet she gains her point well enough.

The point of doctrine is,

DOCT. True humiliation doth not justle with Christ Jesus, but sweetly complies with Him.

This poor woman did not justle with Christ. But when He calls her a dog, “Well, Lord, I grant I am a dog, and come of an evil kind, and evil of myself, and there are many much worthier to be set at the table than I; yet I will wait for a crumb, and that crumb is as effectual as a great piece of bread.”

In speaking to this doctrine, we shall consider,

1. False humility, and in what cases it justles with Christ.
2. What is true humility, and in what cases it sweetly

complies with God.

3. Some properties of true humility.
4. The advantages of them that have it.

I. The first thing we are to speak of is false humility.

This day we shall show what way false humility works. False humility is ever in one of these two extremities. It is either, 1st, ever low, that is lower than God would have it; or, 2ndly, it is higher than God would have it—higher than can be tolerated before Him.

1st, False humility goes lower than God would have it in these following respects:

1. False humility submits things to God that are not to be submitted, until they have all actual existence. For example, God never allowed a man to submit his salvation until it had all existence. There are many of you that will leave it to God whether to save or damn you. That is false humility; because He has declared His mind peremptorily to the contrary. People are still to press to get into heaven, until they be actually cast into hell. They will get no thanks from God for that kind of humility.

2. False humility leaves a latitude to God (where He leaves none) to save them whether they believe or not. “We know,” say they, “that people should believe; but He may save us any way. He may bring folk to heaven as well without faith as with it.” Do ye imagine that God will bring people to heaven except they believe? You are in a great mistake. “He that believeth not shall not see life. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” This is a sufficient proof.

3. False humility puts a man lower than the reach of free grace. When a man takes such a look of his guilt that he thinks himself below the free grace of God; though he will

not say that he has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, yet he thinks God cannot pardon him. It is a sin to think so, when He has said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven." Thus false humility justles out the whole device of God in the covenant of free grace.

4. False humility is more tender of the glory of God than ever He was Himself. It is a strange sort of humility when one stands up and says, "I think it were an encroachment on the holiness of God to show mercy unto me. He may condescend to show mercy to whom He will; but He cannot condescend to pardon me." That is a strange thing. What is that to you, what encroachment it be on His holiness, since He has declared that He has found a ransom? And will ye be wiser than He? He will never account that humility. It is enough to us that He has made a declaration through the world; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." I shall satisfy myself in myself. Trouble not your heads about that. I am satisfied.

5. The fifth case wherein false humility goes lower than God allows is, that it counts it indiscretion to put little things into God's hand. Many think it indiscretion for them at such a time as this, to bid God heal their sore head that incapacitates them to hear the preaching; to help your faint heart that hinders you to profit by the word. This is the devil's humility, for the Lord counts all the hairs of your head. Some think it a piece of indiscretion to seek a peek of meal from God, and a coat to put on their back at such a time as this; though He has commanded you to put all your wants upon Him, from your salvation to your shoelatchet.

6. False humility thinks it indiscretion to come often to God about one and the same thing. This humility justles with the majesty of God. This is the case with many of us. Ye have told God often what you are. You have frequented

many communions, and yet you are not the better. Ye have come often with one and the same thing, and ye blush to come to Him again. But in this ye are humble overmuch. I would have you ashamed that you have not come again and again about one and the same thing. Never account it indiscretion to come to Him, though the men of the world should think it so, while He has bid the brother forgive the brother, even to seventy times seven in a day. Oh, how much more will the great God of heaven forgive us in one day! So this humility is lower than ever God allowed it to be. Ye are ashamed to speak of your evil case over again, you have spoken of it so often. But truly ye must go again to Him with it, or else ye must do worse. For none of your ways are hid from Him. Ye think it would offend a saint to come so often to him about one and the same thing. But God will bear infinitely more with you than any saint will do. Although these things be marvelous in our eyes, yet they are not so in His eyes. You either grant that His mercy is like Himself, or else ye quite mistake Him. Now, these are cases wherein humility goes lower than ever God allowed it. And,

2nd, The next case is, wherein humility rises higher than ever God allowed it.

1. False humility goes higher than can be tolerated, in refusing to be in God's common. This is when people are still seeking for some qualification before they dare meddle with Christ in believing. They say they would not think much to go to Him, if they could get their hearts so and so broken—that is, if they could endure a penance for their sins. But this is to jostle with God, for He is upon this string, to “come without money and without price.” Oh, but there are many playing upon this string: “Had I such a measure of sorrow for my transgressions”—*i.e.*, I have no will to venture on Him absolutely. But nothing shall ye have but God's curse or displeasure, if ye take not another

way. Ye think it strange when people run still to Christ when they cannot do their own turn; but you may assure yourselves that it is the only way, for if ye stick at any qualification, ye spoil the market of free grace wholly.

2. A false humility has no will to be in Christ's common absolutely. It resolves to be but very little in it at all; though persons that have this kind of humility acknowledge they must be somewhat in His common, "For," say they, "He may show mercy to any other sinner, but not to such a one as I am. I know He can pardon sinners, but I cannot tell if He will pardon such as I am." False humility says, "There is nothing pinches me but to go to Him in such a case as I am in." When ye say so, truly it is a token ye know little what is betwixt you and Him. But remember what distance is betwixt you, the creature, and God; and betwixt sin and free grace. The difficulty here is, to make God stoop to man, there being such an infinite distance betwixt them. But there is no such disproportion betwixt your sin, and the sin of any others, as there is betwixt God and the creature. But has free grace stooped to pardon the sin of any? Then the hazard is past, so that your humility is proud humility, because ye will not be absolutely in His common. Ye dare venture the pardon of one sin upon Him, if it were but an ill thought or so; but ye dare not venture the pardon of such a sin that is great. That is strange ignorance. Ye think, if ye were like unto me, ye would venture upon Him; but if ye know what I am, and if I knew what ye are, we would see there is no such disproportion betwixt our sins and those of others as there is between God and the least sin that ever man committed. But know that if God stoop to pardon any man's sin, then the hazard is past, for your sin is not so far beyond the sin of any other as God is distant from the creature. But since free grace has stooped to pardon any sin, then if ye have the heart to venture the pardon of one idle word upon Him, then ye may venture upon Him the pardon of drunkenness, breach of covenant, yea, of

every sin. No sin can stand in the way, because the disproportion is betwixt sin and grace, and not betwixt grace and such a particular sin. Since God has stooped in this matter, the anger is past; His becoming Immanuel, God with us, is a greater difficulty.

3. This false humility justles with God about sin after conversion. At first it was content to be in His common absolutely; yet as to sin after conversion it hath no will to be in His common, for taking of new extracts of pardon or making special addresses to Him for the same. This is proud humility. There are many that think that, when they come first to close with Christ, they must resolve to take Him on His own terms, and to be absolutely in His common; but afterwards they think they cannot come, except they have such and such a stock of grace. "Would you have me going to God," say they, "in such a frame, before I get my heart humbled." But then, poor fools, ye may go any other way ye will. Are not all your repeated aetings of faith, repentance, &c., from God, absolutely from God? And therefore ye must be in His common for repentance and a broken heart, as well as for the pardon of sin. It is not a time now-a-days to be priggish with Him as ye were wont to do. Ye must be absolutely in His common, as at your first closing with Him. It is true ye ought to have better framed spirits, yet ye must be ever in His common Since ye want that, and cannot get it, ye must be ever in His common for new debt, as well as for the old. I grant it is duty to seek for a good frame of spirit at such a time as this; but if ye cannot get it, ye are to cast all upon Himself together, who careth for you.

4. This false humility will not acknowledge crumbs to be essential bread. Because persons meet not with special communication as others do, because there is something they have never gotten, because they never knew what sensible hearing of prayer and sensible presence was, therefore they

cast at all they have experienced. Truly ye are very proud; ye think nothing of heart conviction while you have a broken state; but consider that a man may have a worse thing than that. Ye think it nothing that ye apprehend Christ to be a precious jewel; ye think nothing that your desire runs that way. But indeed I think very much of it. Ye think nothing of it that ye account all His commands to be right, and that ye have a respect to small and great of them. That is a miserable humility of yours, since the Scripture has said that they “shall never be ashamed who have respect to all his commandments.” These crumbs are essential bread as well as big loaves. This was a prudent woman; she could be doing with little crumbs until she got more.

5. This humility that is over high will abate unto God some promise upon condition that He will perform other promises. But that is a cursed humility that would abate one promise, in order to obtain other promises that are of a greater concernment. I dare say there are many this day that would not seek health to their bodies all their days, nor the life of their wives or children, provided He would but save their souls and keep them from the troubles of this ill time. And is this fair, think ye, to set up such limits to the free bounty and holy majesty of God as not to deal liberally with Him according to His own Word? Doth He abate anything to thee? He is of a liberal heart, and allows His people to devise liberal things at His hand. Will He be in your common, so to speak, for giving Him down the performance of one promise for the out-making of another. Nay, He allows you to seek your salvation, your health, and the health of your children, with food and raiment to you and them, and every other thing that may be for your good. The people of God think it a singular virtue that they get all submitted to Him, except their salvation. I grant it is good if the Lord call for these things at your hand. In that case ye are to submit all to Him: but when He is not expressly putting you to it, ye are not to do it, but to put

Him to His promise. Has He not promised, thou shalt have bread, and thy water shall be sure? Ye may seek it from Him, for He can well spare it. He will never thank you for not asking a temporal benefit, though it were but the cure of a sore head, or sickly body. So never offer bid Him to pass from one promise to make out another. Ye will never come the better speed for doing so. I say, Seek health, food, and raiment, and as much means as may carry you through the world, without being burdensome to others. I warrant ye think that ye should never seek these things, but He hates the manner of a churl. It is still good to bode good, and get good at God's hand. "The liberal man deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand."

II. Now we come, in the second place, to speak of true humility. And,

1st, True humility complies with God in all the charges of sin. Let God charge the man with what He will, true humility takes with all. When He calls one a dog—"It is trite, Lord; we are justly called so, being come of an ill kind; and we ourselves being far worse, and like to grow no better. We are guilty of such and such things." Thus true humility grants all, and yet is never a bit the farther from its end; and this is the thing in which ye are to comply with Him this day. If there be anything in your way when approaching to Him at His table, and ye cannot tell whether it be a sin or not, take with it as a sin, and never stand upon it.

2ndly, True humility complies with God in all the charges He brings of corruption. God says, "Ye have an evil heart." "I wot well," say ye, "that is true." "You are not likely to amend, for all the pains I have taken upon you." "I think so, Lord; I come but little speed." "Your heart is as ready for an ill turn as ever it was." "Certainly that is a truth." "I think there was never an ill turn that fell out in the hand of any of thy people, but it is like to fall out in yours."

“True, Lord.” “Your heart sways some bad way at this time.” “Indeed that is as true as any of them all.” Thus true humility takes with all the charges of corruption that are brought against the soul.

3rdly, True humility complies with God as to the remedy both for the pardon of sin and for help against the power of sin. True humility accounts it no pride to submit to the righteousness of God. True humility complies with God as to the remedy He has provided for the guilt of sin, and as to the remedy He has provided for the dominion of it. It grants that it is a slave to many a lust; yea, a very fool; but it will grant more—it will grant that Christ is “made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption.” My heart faints and fails it is true, indeed, “But God is the strength of my heart, and portion for ever.” That is true. If God say, “There is life in my Son,” true humility is as ready to say, “That is true; I shall get life.” If He say, “There is no way to destroy corruption but by abiding in Christ.” “Well,” says humility, “I will cleave to Him as the branches abide in the vine.” “There is a fountain opened to the house of David for sin, and for uncleanness.” “Well,” says true humility, and it complies with this contrivance, as the only remedy for the purging away of corruption.

4thly, True humility complies with God by standing to the bit, and that over the belly of such boasting, and many difficulties, and does not take the Lord short at the first word, so to speak, *i.e.*, If God will not give this thing, at this time, let Him do as He pleaseth. It is but pride to take God at His first word. This woman was an example of true humility: she was a pattern to copy after. “Thou art a dog.” “I grant,” says she, “I am a filthy one.” “Thou art none of mine.” “I grant,” says she, “I was never worthy to be called one of Thine. That is true, Lord, but we must not part so. I will abide until I reach God’s design;” which was to save

sinners. All His hard sayings were never to put away a poor sinner; but to quicken their desires and bring them nearer to Himself. Thus true humility always complies with God in what He says. It will be grieving that it gets no more; but yet it still takes what it can have. Take good heed: this carriage of true humility lies much in these two things:

1. It will be taking the essentials of life and peace, viz., Christ Himself: and yet will be still complaining of the want of these communications, these precious things He useth to distribute to His people. Yet it will solace itself in effectual grace when it finds itself under the condemnation for sin, through the conviction of heart. It sees Christ the essential treasure, worth all in the world. It will take up Him thankfully, as the essentials of life, and peace, and all the other graces. The awe of God being upon the heart, they that have this humility will make conscience of their way; but still there will be much sorrow at heart that they cannot get the love of God more abundantly shed abroad therein, with sensible presence and prayer taken off their hand. Ay, but these things are not meat; they are beautiful rings and jewels, but they cannot eat them. They are good and delightful; but a man's life cannot be holden in by them. It is Himself that fills, and is all in all to them.

2. It will be taking what is essential, and yet it will know itself to want many things. It will be ever grieving or complaining for want of other essentials. True humility will be blessing God, and yet it will be loathing itself for what the person has done. It will be very low because it cannot get heart-breaking contrition, self-loathing, and self-judging for sin. It loatheth itself because it cannot love and take thankfully of God's hand, anything of love He bestows. It would gladly have more love. Though the person's heart be not so as he would and ought, yet he will take it thankfully off God's hand that He has brought him to this, to offer up the heart to Him, and also unto His whole law. But still it

breaks his heart that he cannot attain to practical obedience to all His commands. Yet since God has stated it as an evidence of His love to have some respect to all His commands—“Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments”—he will bless the Lord for all He has given him till he get more. Some will get leave to stand at the King’s table, and some to dip their morsel in the platter with Him; while others are set at a bye-table with a piece of dry bread, and all are fed with the same substantial food—even he that gets the crumbs as well as he that sits at the table.

5thly, True humility takes things in the naked promise, and leaves the performance of them to God’s own time. Give true humility a promise, and it will rest satisfied. It gives much glory to God, and is well pleasing in His sight, that we should hang all upon the promise. It is what God has designed, that we should all hang upon His word. True humility complies with God. If He will give me a word that will save me. Let Him do with me as seemeth Him good. Give me the promise that thou wilt break the dominion of such and such a lust, or idol; then I will leave it to thee to do it when thou wilt. Though I be impatient of its rule in me, yet I will not be so peremptory as to say that I will have it done at this communion or else never look for it more. Ye must not limit Him to such and such a time. Ye must not limit the Holy One of Israel. He hath said, “That it shall be well with the righteous.” And “The foot of the wicked shall slide in due time.” Then wait for it; it shall be accomplished, since He hath said that He will also do it.

6thly, True humility dares not help to bring about the performance of the promise in any way, but in the way He has allowed. If the Lord commands a peremptory duty, it dares not dispute with God about the event, whatever cross or difficulty may follow thereon. It deals more with Christ for the removal of the wrath than of the stroke in the cross. It

closes with Him as the only remedy; whereas false humility would shake off the cross and take some nearer way. But true humility will wait on a while, for it still expects good at God's hand. If He command me to go to such a communion, though I want a frame for it I must go there. And then I am to apprehend Himself, and exercise the faith of adherence, till I get more. Though I be not in a good frame, I am not to stay away from the communion; for where is a good frame to be had if not in His way? True humility dares not take any sinful way to bring about God's promise, neither dares it venture upon anything not commanded of God.

7thly, True humility complies with God in this, that it still makes more bold with its own things than with the matters of God. Hence, when its own interest and God's come in competition, it stands to God's and lets its own fall. For example, there is a thing the doing of which is a sin, or I shall be made to suffer. Well, but I will rather suffer before I sin. For there is but suffering on the one side, but there is sinning on the other. Ay, but there may be sin in it consequently. Yet that is but a may-be. The one may or may not be, but the other is clearly and manifestly sin. Suppose my suffering to be sin consequently; yet I am not called to venture upon what is manifest guilt, because my suffering may be sin consequently. True humility will venture more upon the body than upon the soul; and in this it complies with God, for God regards the soul most. Take this example for a proof: God cut down Job's children and all his worldly substance; yea, all he had, that he might get a little more grace. Oh, but God will squeeze a man strongly in his body, interests, and goods, to increase his grace.

III. The third thing to be spoken to, is: The properties of true humility. And,

1st, Although it is most condescending and complying, yet

it is most sagacious and wise to take up all that God says or does to His people. It discerns that God thereby designs to save and not destroy His people. It takes up all that God does, as what is in order to bring them to Himself, and not to chase them away from Him.

2ndly, True humility is wise to distinguish between spiritual truths and those called canonical. Every word of Scripture taken by itself is not canonical, as, “I will deliver you no more,” whereas He delivered them many a time after that. And, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Can these literally be called canonical? Then they must agree with other Scriptures, and with the analogy of faith. Every place of Scripture, taken by itself, could not be called canonical, except it were compared with other Scriptures and the analogy of faith.

3rdly, True humility is most wise and sagacious to take up sin as the worst thing in the world; and then it is most charitable towards God in all His procedure, but most uncharitable to itself in all the cases we have spoken to. True humility puts a good construction on all God does or says. If it cannot extricate or falsify itself by one particular truth, it will run to another that relates to the sovereignty of God. It still deviseth liberally of God. What if I cannot see a consistency between such a promise, and what He seems to say in such or such a particular; or how such or such a particular work shall be brought about—well, in this case, humility runs to some particular truth that is absolute, as, “Marvelous in our eyes;” yet it is not so with Him. Let Him do what pleases Him; for it is in His power. Then true humility has still true faith going along with it. It dares not question whether He will condescend to all these things, even to whatever He has said in His word. He says, “That in all the afflictions of his people, he is afflicted.” And yet all the world cannot tell how it is so. He has said, that He “will save his people in due time;” and that He “will be a

helper to them, and that right early.” True humility dares not question these things, since He has said it shall be so; though in the meantime He be breaking them in the place of dragons, and they see the wicked “flourish as a green bay-tree.”

4thly, True humility is most legal, and dares not dispute any of His commands whose will is a law, a prerogative that belongs to no sovereign power on earth. True humility dares not dispute His commands; but if He charge and command in His own name that any who sees his need should believe in His Son, and that he should turn the grace of God into wantonness, he must do it. He commands the man who brings his idols this day to be slain by the death of Christ, to take his communion as a seal of the pardon of them, and a seal of all the promises that ever He hath spoken. They know it belongs to them to perform duties, and not to debate commanded duty. Then true humility will weather out many blasts, and ward off many assaults. It sees a reason why it gets not such a thing it would have at such and such a time; and why He deals this and that way, and not another way, with His people. It sees a reason for all these things. Then true humility will not be wiser than God; for it knows He sees a way to glorify Himself more in pardoning and saving the person, by believing, than by letting him die or rot in the prison of sin through unbelief. He will never have so much glory in that way; for He is more glorified by believing in Christ, than He would be if ye should burn in hell to eternity.

IV. Therefore ye see the advantages of true humility, that whoever has it, their condition is most promising for growth in grace; for He “giveth grace unto the humble.” He giveth more grace to the man that will not strive with Him, but is still taking and waiting for more. If the Lord is dealing anything to His people, such a one is the most likely

to get something. He is the man that gets the quickest dispatches from heaven of any. For He hears the desire of the humble; yea, if it be but come to a desire, it will be answered, and that is a great advantage; and if he happen to fall or make a slip, such a man or woman has a promise to be raised, or made up again. "To this man will I look, that is of a humble or contrite heart." Then this humble frame has a great advantage in this respect, that God will let such as have it know what way to go in a dark and cloudy day sooner than any other; yea, and to keep the way when many others run wrong. Here it is, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." Nay, though he be otherwise a fool, he is assured (which is much worth in an evil day) that nothing will offend him.

USE. Let me then exhort you to beware of false humility at this time, and jostle not with God. Be not lower than what He would have you. Say not that ye will not come to turn again with reiterated guilt, and faults that ye have done over and over again, and confessed very often before Him; for there is no other way for you to go or to get your case helped. Never cast at crumbs, but remember that in true humility lies your best frame of spirit and most sure out-gate. Take with all your sins, and with all that God charges you with as to sin and corruption, and yet cleave closely to Him; and any bit that falls to your share take it, and be still weeping and seeking for more.

Footnotes:

1. The manuscript's title bears this to have been a Communion sermon at Fenwick, being the last Sacrament he had there, and so the last action-sermon he ever preached.

SERMON XV.¹

“And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”

Matthew 15:27

The DOCTRINE is this: *Although there be gradual differences in many things in God’s house, yet there is no essential difference amongst these things.*

This woman acknowledges that there was a feast at the table, that people might partake of, as also crumbs not essentially different from the great loaves. There are some that sit at His elbow at the table; and there are others that have a true interest in Him, and yet are but dogs in their own esteem in respect of others; and these creep in among the children and eat the crumbs that fall from the table; and yet these crumbs are essential bread as well as the great loaves are.

Now, in speaking to this subject, we shall,

1. Show what are these things or matters of God, wherein there is such a gradual difference, and wherein this doth appear.
2. Show you that, though there be such gradual differences, yet there is no essential difference.
3. Show you why the Lord hath resolved to keep such a difference amongst the receipts in the various administrations to His people, that often we think it would be much better if we had the managing of the business; and that all should be equal and of one size in this respect.

I. The first thing then, is, to show wherein this difference does most appear. And it appears,

1. In this, that there is a gradual difference among people’s

transgressions; and therefore there is a gradual difference amongst them in the law-work which they undergo. There are some that have such strong convictions of their sins that they can scarcely say they have any impressions of them upon their hearts. And again, there are some others that are kept many a day under the spirit of bondage. Yea, upon some they have been so heavy that they have been ready to kill themselves; and others put almost stone-blind with terror of conscience. But it is the mercy of some that they are not put upon that extremity.

2. There is a difference in the Lord's outletting of His saving grace. To some He has given but a little measure of grace, but yet so great that they still take up God to be God, and sin to be sin. But oh, how far are they from that sagacity and wisdom in grace that others are partakers of! The Lord hath given it to some only to look to Christ, and they dare do no more. But He giveth to others to receive Him with open arms. He makes out all His receipts in different proportions, and yet there is no ground of quarrelling; so it is in all the graces; some get strength to stand in a temptation, and there are some that dare not venture on sufferings as others do. And,

3. There is a gradual difference in the special manifestation of His favour, and in the shedding abroad of the light of His countenance, which ye call sensible presence, or the shedding abroad of His love upon a man's heart. There are some that have but tasted of these things, so that, even though they had them, yet they would scarcely have the confidence to affect that they have anything at all. Others have been feasted with apples and wine "well refined on the lees for many days." And yet there is no ground of quarrelling with Him where there is a gradual difference amongst His people in this respect. There are some called babes, being weak; some called young men, being strong; and some are called fathers, because of experience.

Lastly, There is a gradual difference in the promises relating to all these fore-mentioned sizes, the Lord having made one or other of the promises answerable to each person's case, size, and condition. There is a promise made to him that hungereth and thirsteth, to him that is called and to him that wills, to them that can but look to Him, to them that open their mouth, and to them that are far off. All these promises are moulded differently by Him to answer the case of each particular person.

II. The second thing we would speak unto is, to let you see that there is no essential difference amongst them. This will appear, if we consider the true nature of the things themselves that we have spoken of; for to partake of them in the meanest degree has in it no essential difference from partaking of them in the very highest degree spoken of in the Scriptures. For,

1st, As to the law-work, which makes way through people's souls for Christ, some have got but little of it; and yet they have walked afterwards, so that they durst not say but that they had the grace of God, as well as those who had more of it, for in both cases there has been a real belief of the wrath and curse of God, due to them for sin and transgression.

2ndly, There hath been a proportion of the curse of the law directly to themselves for sin; and then the party, from an apprehension of misery, flees from himself, being now past hope of any relief from himself, feeling his utter inability to help himself. Christ has thus made room for Himself to come in, and has discovered sin in such a light as has excited in them a hatred against it, even the most earnest beloved sin as the worst thing imaginable. This makes out that in these things there is no essential difference. Then,

3rdly, If we consider the nature of faith, there is no difference in this respect. There are some that have weak faith and dare never call it faith; and there are others that have strong faith, and yet, I say, there is no essential difference. It is called "the like precious faith," and not the like strong faith. For is there not in the former persons the denial of self-righteousness, or anything that could help to fit them for appearing before God. This is to be found in both parties. And have not both had the faith of Christ's fullness; they believe that there is a fullness in Him to satisfy and satiate the soul. But all the matter is, how to get it? However, there is real faith in both parties. Both consent that there is a fullness in Him suitable to their case. In the weakest faith there is a desire and an endeavour to have it implanted in the heart. Herein stands the true essence of faith; when the creature applies Christ in the promise to itself and its own case, although it knows not if it shall come speed. If so, then, what need ye make such a noise that ye have not so much faith as others have?

4thly, Then there is a gradual difference in the grace of love. There are some that durst never say that they have love to Christ; and yet are loathing themselves that they could never love Him. Again, there are others that find the passion of love so carrying them out toward Him, that they are made to disdain all other things besides Him. Oh, but there is a great difference here, and yet no effectual difference! For is there not that operating love to Him, that sets Him above all other creatures in their esteem? There is an invincible respect to Christ which sets Him beyond and above all creatures, "so that many waters cannot quench it, nor can the floods drown it."

Yea, I may say, many ill turns done you will not quench it, nor will many waters of afflictions alienate your affections from Him. If the dearest friend you have in the world had done the hundredth part of that which you did to Him, ye

would never be reconciled unto him; they would never have got your hearts again. Then, is there not respect to Him that turns to jealousy, and that jealousy burns like a fire? If ye have true grounds of jealousy of His love and respect to you, is there anything in the world that can quench it? As ye could not readily fall upon that thing in the world that could satisfy you, as to the jealousy that He loves you not. Again, if there are jealousies that ye have not a regard to God's commands, upon which the Spirit of God has terminated that love, although ye have not yet overcoming assurance or dare affirm that there is effectual obedience to His commands, yet I hope by this ye may find yourselves to have the essentials of true love. Again,

5thly, There is, in the grace of patience, a gradual, though no essential difference. I know that this sticks much with the people of God that they are so far different in point of submission from others; and that they cannot bear things as others do, and yet have a grudge to say they have no grace. Yet I must let you see that it is not the least degree of patience that they have; for they have given away their souls to Christ, and have respect to His commands, and that must fix the character of the party: for patience will not do where that is a-wanting. If ye grant that, then ye must grant this also, that all the graces of God are there in the habit. And then the exercise of this grace of patience appears in their self-judging and acknowledging that they have justly procured these things that they have met with. It looks like patience when they judge themselves worthy of much more punishment than ever He laid upon them. It looks like true patience, as I think, when there is a cordial justifying of God in what He does to them, and a deliberate submission to Him in cold blood; and when their heart will not go with them, then they appeal to God to make it submit. And herein, I say, lies the nature of true patience. By this ye may apprehend that there is no essential difference

in the work of grace amongst the hearts of His people; because the promises are equally directed to all the several degrees even to the meanest of His people. This says they agree with others essentially. Whatever promises are made to the man that receives Him with open arms are also made to him that but looks toward Christ, and cannot tell if he shall get Him; the promises are made equally sure to both. And this will make it out that there are many a time as good accounts had of the meanest of gracious recipients, and of the meanest sizes, in difficult cases in the day of suffering and testifying for Christ's interest in the world, as there are of them that are of a greater size and capacity; by which we may discern there is no essential difference. It has been often found that some who durst never claim an interest in Christ, nor had the confidence to do so, yet have been as bold for the interest of Christ, when it came to the bit, as those who were of a greater size both for gifts and graces. And many a time the man that could never think to bear an ill word from his neighbour has suffered cheerfully to be dragged to a prison and hanged for the cause of Christ without ever opening his mouth. Many a time the weakest, that ye never made any account of, have, at their death, made a better confession of Christ than the greatest professor in all the country. And the reason is, Christ has got His pennyworth, so to speak, of the man that has been a professor for years past, and was known to be such through all the country before his death. But there is a poor man, or woman, that was never known to have anything before he was taken by death, is seen glorifying God and His free grace to the refreshing of all who stand by. So that all these different degrees of grace are all of one and the same gracious spirit, and the same gracious work, and have the same gracious ends. And that says that there is no difference essentially, although there be different manifestations and administrations. It is unity with Him, and conformity to Him that all these administrations drive on; that is the great end of the whole.

III. The third thing is, Wherefore doth the Lord keep or make these gradual differences in His way of dealing to His people? Ye would think it much better for God to give a great stock of faith, love, patience, &c., to all His people, and that it would be more comfortable to them than when they are kept at such a great distance, and with such a scanty measure of gifts and graces. It is true we think so; but He is much wiser than we. For

1st, He does it because He has resolved to give out divers administrations to the body whereof He Himself is the Head. He will have different members of His body, and different qualifications with which he will be served. He will have in the body eyes, hands, feet, &c. And yet they are but one complete body, and communion of saints; which could not be if they were all alike. "Ye know more than I do," says one, "and have greater understanding in the matters of God." "Well," says another, "but I love more than ye do. Ye think ye would do more for Christ than I would do, but it may be if there were ought to do for the cause of Christ I would fight better than ye would do for all that."

2ndly, By this gradual manner of His administration, the Lord keeps the ransom still in request, and the intercession of Christ in heaven still in request. For if we had gotten it in our own hand, Christ would soon have been out of request with us, and we would soon lose respect to the ransom. But now when infirmities appear from day to day it keeps the ransom still precious to the soul. Oh, but Christ is precious to the soul when it thinks upon this, "I have gotten much from Him, but I want much, and I must have more from Him."

3rdly, The Lord is pleased to continue this diversity of administrations of grace because the earth could not bear grace in its perfection. Therefore hath the Lord given it out

in a small measure. For the Lord hath determined to transplant all the trees of grace into Immanuel's land, where only there is the full and uninterrupted breathing of the Holy Ghost. The creature while here cannot bear perfection. And then

4thly, The Lord is pleased to do so because He intends there shall be a clear difference betwixt earth and heaven. And oh, how sweet will heaven and Christ be, and the fullness of joy that is at His right hand to the poor creature that never could be satisfied with Him here on earth! If folk could get a satisfying sight of Christ here on earth, they would become out of conceit with heaven and eternal glory. Oh, but heaven and perfection will be sweet to those who could never get their corruptions mortified here in this world, but were trampled upon by them day by day; and many a sigh they heaved and many a groan for their redemption while on earth. Oh, but heaven and glory will be sweet unto them! since the hopes of it are sometimes so sweet and comfortable even now in this militant state.

USE. Now for use let me farther obtest you that since there is such difference in the administration of these graces, you do not mistake Him, nor go away with an evil report of Him, though ye find not these things in yourselves that others have.

1st, I obtest you that ye always account these crumbs essential bread and cast not at them though ye get no more at present. As for the being and true nature of grace, never cease till it have an existence within you. Make sure of this, and then have a respect to all His commands. Acknowledge God in this, and thank Him for it, although ye cannot attain unto a greater degree of grace.

2ndly, Although I would have you covet the best things, yet I would have you be thankful for the least things ye have

received. Be thankful, although ye have not attained unto such a frame of heart as you would have desired at this time. And,

3rdly, I pray all of you that ye judge not others because they are not of your own size. It is a miserable evil in these times, that a dreadful spirit of jealousy prevails one of another, of their falling in with the snares of the time; because below them in understanding in the matters of God that are now in debate. And yet when it comes to the point, these may be as particular in their confession of the truth as ye will be, and perhaps may abide better by it. Neither on the other hand are ye to think that those who can speak better in these things than ye can do are under a delusion. And,

4thly, Make this use of it, that if it is so, that gracious recipients under many degrees suffer many foils by corruptions, then what will grace suffer in them that have but a third degree but turn it over again? If he that has but a third degree of grace resist a temptation and comes honourably through, how much is your sin and shame that are soiled and snared by corruption, though you have received grace in the sixth degree? But be it known unto you that it is not the degrees of grace that hold out against corruption and enable to debate with it and to resist temptations, but the sovereignty of grace; otherwise how comes it that he that is in the lively exercise of grace is almost overcome and foiled by temptations when he that is out of frame, and grace much under with him, is not so much undone with corruption? Truly no man can give a reason for it but this, that He hath set a bound to the sea, and said, "Hitherto shall thou come, but no further." He hath set bounds to a man's corruption that such a length it shall come and no further. Therefore trust much to Him and His sovereignty, and little to grace received in the highest degree that men usually receive in the administration of it; for many times those from whom least is expected prove most forthcoming

for the glory of God. Who would have expected this of this Canaanitish woman? And oh but she proves a frugal and wise woman!

But let us then, Sirs, for farther use of this doctrine, observe, 1st, That the gradual degrees of grace and parts is not from the disagreement of natural properties; for many a time those persons that have but little promising-like, and are but like striplings, will get as well through as those who are of a greater stature; shrubs will sometimes stand, yea, even small plants in God's garden, when the most tall cedars will split, fall, or break in pieces before the wind of temptation.

2ndly, It is most consonant to the nature of grace that where least is expected most should come forth to the praise of God. Because grace runs in that channel, "Not many wise, not many noble, not many mighty are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty."

3rdly, This is most congruous to Christ's prophecy: "Many that are first, shall be last; and the last shall be first." And,

4thly, This is disagreeable to the experience of the people of God. In all ages it was still so, that there was most good found in the hands where little was expected. What then are these things that make us expect little at some people's hands?

1. They are come of an evil kind and of an ill education. But it is a small matter with God to make such profitable. For such was this woman. She was come of an ill kind, and of a bad education; and yet she was as wise a woman as was in all that country.

2. Where there is an unfruitful soil, and want of the means

of instruction, it is a circumstance that makes little be expected at their hand. But that will not tell; for there is many an openhearted Christian in the world that no person can tell where he got his knowledge, for in the bounds allotted him there is not one full meal to be gotten; but they have been obliged to break over into some other soil for sustenance.

3. Little profession of the party makes us suspect them and look for little good from them. They were never much heard of. But this is nothing; for truly ye will not know them. And,

4. They have fallen into some temptation so easily, that ye never look for more good at their hand. But what would ye have thought of Peter, that a simple girl put so shamefully out? Yea, but Peter will be hanged for the same cause afterwards for all that. There may be many like Nicodemus, that dare not make much public confession for Christ, and yet there may be rich forthcoming in them afterwards. Yet in these cases there will be,

(1.) In regard of solid acknowledgment and bearing witness to the truth in a declining time, when people that have greater knowledge and parts will make a foul slip and disappear, then others who never knew the tenth part of these things that they knew will stand it out to the utmost. It was so when a deluge of error came through the land. There were some poor folk that kept their feet better than those who had ten times more knowledge. It will be so yet in these times of trial that approach.

(2.) There will be forthcoming in many likewise, in respect of faith and of pure gospel ordinances, where little is expected. When there is no opposition, we use to say it is easy calling in the court when there is none calling again. So it is easy professing the truth and a work of reformation as

long as none are called to an account for it. But stay a little till the trial come as to the faith of the gospel ordinances, and then ye will see one who durst never profess much confidence in these things cleave fast to pure gospel ordinances, when many that now profess much will draw back and fall behind in the truth.

(3.) In point of charity there will be much forthcoming where little was expected. There is much talking of religion; but will ye evidence your religion by works of charity to the banished ministers and others of God's people who are in straits for Him. There are many who have no great profession, but they are liberal in love and kindness to the people of God. And I assure you that is no small piece of religion; true love to His friends in their straits for His sake is not one of the least parts of religion. And,

(4.) Such people as there will be little expected of in point of patient suffering for Christ may yet be as free and frank as can be; nay, go beyond others that more might have been expected of.

But then ye will say, "What makes our Lord Jesus Christ take that away, that in those of whom least was expected there should be most forthcoming for Him and His cause?" The reasons may be:

1. That God loves to take a way of His own with all His works; as we see ordinarily that whenever we pitch upon any way we think most fit, suitable, and convenient for carrying on any matter, it is a hundred to one if ever God take that way but another way with it.

2. He does so because where there is much, people are ready to idolize that stock of grace they have and trust much to it; but where there is but little on hand, there is much or more relying on God by faith in duty.

Then for another USE of improving this. If there be much forthcoming in those from whom little is to be expected, then there may be much expected from you who have received much. It will be both a sin and a shame if ye do not something for Him. And remember this, ye that are great professors, the more that is expected of you, if you come short of it, the more will be the loss and disadvantage to the cause of God and to yourselves also. Misgiving in you will be more shameful than in many others. Ye that are great professors in the country side, I pray you, take heed how ye desire the day of trial; for people will say they will do this, and that, and the other thing, and what not, when they are not put to it; but away with such foolish romances. Ye will find a trial in suffering for truth another thing than ye think. Some think they will do and suffer because of what they have received, and because of their former engagements and great parts, which thought is but a trusting to their own strength. But truly if ye look for standing in that way, it is a hundred to one if ye fall not, and that shamefully. Ye must never reckon upon your stedfastness in one trial, or your resolutions and engagements, or upon this, that other folk think much of you; but think ye still the less of yourselves. For ordinary in the day of trial God uses to stain the glory of all flesh. If others think much of you think little of yourselves, otherwise ye shall perhaps fall into some scrape, ere all be done, that shall make all the country think little of you. Then, if ye would keep your feet in a day of trial, keep up a constant trade with heaven for fresh supplies from God, for that will do it. Be content to be amongst the meanest in respect; for we always hope that the Master shall have most praise from many people's faithfulness and honesty, that have least help or hope in themselves. Then pray for them of whom we have little expectation, for their standing may be much for the Master's praise. Do not think it strange that you hear that some people that ye would have expected little from have given such testimony and not joined with the times, notwithstanding

their little or no profession; for it has pleased the “Father to reveal these things to babes and sucklings,” and hide them from the wise and prudent, even so it hath pleased Him to do.

And moreover, I would gladly engage some of you who are gentlemen, great folk and professors, to bear testimony for the truth. I would have you not to think it foolishness to be engaged in the matters of God. There are many of you gentlemen, and country men, that think we look for little at your hand as to your abiding by the truth and being valiant for it. Well, then, will ye beguile us? Indeed we think much of you, and we hope there is a good turn in some of your hands yet for the cause of God. I would not have you over busy to comply with the folk in the least. Since we look for your hand if there be ought ado, then will ye be commending the controverted truths to your families and poor things under your hand? Keep your hands now free of complying with the wicked party. Do not admit of a tentation, and that will be your peace and credit, and will much commend you to the hearts of the people of God to make them praise Him for you, and pray for you, and say “I have resolved to quit my estate as well as others, before I sin. I shall bear witness that I shall be as denied to it as others that may be promising more, and it may be I shall go to prison as well as others, before I deny the work of God and break the Covenants.”

And then we would have you beware of giving way to despondency. But leave room to the promises when the matter is come to this push, for God will bear your charges and give out the expenses.

Lastly, We shall speak a word to you who are great professors. Oh, but ye have need to study to be much to the Master’s praise both in word and deed; to be particular in faith, in doctrine, in temperance, and holy walking with God,

and generally to make it your study how to be for His glory, for He has taken much pains with you and for your encouragement. The Master's glory is much concerned in your being faithful, and His glory and your standing are twisted together, and that connection is of much value. And further, your standing in these evil times is an accomplishment of the great Gospel promise in the word for your comfort. And further, ye have the very flower of all the people of God's prayers in the three nations with you for your consolation. There is many a beautiful cloud of prayers going up in the three kingdoms in behalf of them that keep honest as they are engaged in the truths of God. And truly if we were not more beholden to others' prayers than our own, it would not be well with us; for though ye be not still at prayer yourselves, yet there is some still at prayer for you. Then behave yourselves honestly. God has given a good account of those gone off the stage for the truth already. God has given us a good break in them that have suffered and are banished. These have given the cross of Christ a noble testimony,² a circumstance that speaks much good to us who are to follow after. Then, Sirs, take up your ground and state yourselves. Has God given you Christ? "How much more will He give you with him every good and perfect gift?"

Now have ye gotten Christ? Truly, then, all other things will be but little to that; any other thing is but like a pin in your clothes. This will be your victory, even your faith. Faith is accounted the more precious that it endureth temptations—faith that dares cleave to Him in all opposition gets still the quickest dispatch in anything in the word of God answering it; then faith and patience are no empty things. This woman found it so; she found it even as He had said. It was no bare compliment; it was an effectual word, "and her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Footnotes:

1. This, the second sermon on this text, was preached upon the Monday after the last Sacrament Mr. Guthrie had in Fenwick.

2. By these gone off the stage here, no doubt, is meant Christ's cause in Mr. James Guthrie, the Marquis of Argyle, and Lord Warriston; and by the banished, those seven eminent ministers who were in the years 1662 and 1663 banished to Holland.