

A S E R M O N

PREACHED UPON OCCASION OF

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WITH A CONCISE ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 7.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

DIVINE Providence has in the mournful occasion of this solemnity given us a sensible proof of the truth contained in the former part of my text, that *we have the heavenly treasure in earthen vessels*; for here is one of those vessels broken and laid by, by which it appears to have been, though a strong one, yet an earthen one. And now, O that divine grace would, by its sanctifying quickening influences upon all our hearts, verify the latter part of the text, and give us a proof, that notwithstanding this, there is an *excellency of power* going along with the gospel of Christ, which depends not upon dying men, but upon a living God; and is mighty through him to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin, and the setting up of stronger for Christ, that he may divide the spoil, and possess the throne in the soul! And if we have experience of this, that though faithful ministers are removed one after another, yet the Spirit of the Lord is not departed from us, it will be our best support and comfort under all afflictions of this kind; for though our ministers have their strength weakened in the way, and their days shortened, yet Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the same to his church. They are wearied and worn out, and are gone where the weary are at rest; but the *everlasting God, even the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary*; so that, thanks be to God, still we have the treasure, and if it be not our own fault, may make it ours, though still we have it in earthen vessels.

1. By the treasure here spoken of, it is plain we

are to understand the gospel of Christ, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, in which is set before us, and offered to us, the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is this treasure, which the apostle's heart was so much upon, and so full of: this, which in the verse before he had called *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*. That is the treasure which we Christians have, and glory in. And a noble description it is of the everlasting gospel which is preached to us, and professed by us.

It is light: it is such a light as in the dawning of the day of the creation shone out of darkness, when the Almighty said, *Let there be light*, and was the first-born of this visible world: it is such a light as every morning shines out of the darkness of the night, that, as the gospel did, it may take hold of the ends of the earth, which is turned to it as clay to the seal, Job xxxviii. 13, 14. What is more bright and glorious than the light? what more pure? what more self-evident? and what more welcome to them who sit in darkness? Light is indeed a treasure, and we have it from the Father of lights.

It recommends itself to those who would improve their natural reason; for it gives knowledge, sound knowledge, useful knowledge, the knowledge of duty, the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins; a knowledge infinitely preferable to that which the inquisitive part of mankind amused and perplexed themselves with in the Gentile philosophy, which did but darken counsel by words without knowledge. The light of joy, which the gospel brings, results from the light of knowledge, and that is no Christian devotion which has ignorance for the mother of it.

It recommends itself likewise to those who would improve their natural religion; for it gives the knowledge of the glory of God, the founder and

centre of all religion; it sets that glory before us, as the object both of all our adorations, and of all our aims. The heavens indeed declare the glory of God, but they show us not how and which way we may glorify him, much less be glorified with him: here, therefore, where natural reason and religion both leave us at a loss, the gospel of Christ takes us up, and leads us on, shows us the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, where it shines clearer, and stronger, and brighter, and with more satisfaction, than it does in the face of the whole creation; for it declares the glory of God reconcilable to us, and accessible by us, nay, and in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and taking a remnant of the children of men into covenant and communion with himself through a mediator; in it life and immortality are brought to light, are brought to hand. Such a knowledge as this well deserves to be called a *treasure*, and it is this treasure here spoken of.

2. By the earthen vessels here, it is plain we are to understand the apostles and the ministers of the gospel, here in their present state, while they are in the body. We have this treasure lodged with us for the use of others, whose bodies are as earthen vessels. These were the gifts Christ gave unto men when he ascended up on high; (and valuable gifts indeed, if we consider the treasure lodged in them;) not only prophets and apostles, but pastors and teachers, whose office and business it is, to preach the glad tidings of redemption, by the Redeemer's offering himself to be a sacrifice for us, and a Saviour to us.

The very same gospel that was preached by the apostles and evangelists then, is preached by the pastors and teachers still; only the business of the first preachers of the gospel was to propagate it to distant nations, to carry it from place to place, that Christ might be known as salvation to the ends of the earth. The business of the pastors and teachers since has been, rather to propagate it to succeeding generations, to carry it from age to age, that *the name of Christ might endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven*. The former was intimated in the command, *Go, disciple all nations*; the latter in the promise, *Lo, I am with you always, with you and your successors, even to the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Now those who are employed in this work are here said to be *earthen vessels*; we have it *ἐν οσπαινοῖς οστρίων*—*in vessels made of shells of fishes*, so the learned Dr. Hammond thinks it might be read; the shells of oysters, (which have their name from the word here used,) and other the like, resemble our bodies, in which our souls dwell as a fish in the shell, and are fastened to them; and he observes from Grotius, that the Platonists making two bodies of a man; one more inward, which the soul was immediately lodged in, which they called *ὄχημα ψυχῆς*—*the chariot or vehicle of the soul*, an aerial body; the other,

which is terrestrial, more gross and carnal, which we see and touch, they call *ὀσπαινον*, the word here used, the *shell* of the soul. But he owns that the word signifies likewise an earthen vessel which has passed the fire, and is therefore brittle, and soon broke, such as that earthen bottle which the prophet broke for a sign before the ancients of the people, Jer. xix. 10.

3. The force of the reason why God has been pleased to put such a treasure in earthen vessels, is also plain, *that the excellency of the power may be, that is, may appear to be, of God, and not of us*. "We carry bodies about us" (so Dr. Hammond paraphrases it) "subject to all manner of oppositions, pressures, and afflictions; and this on purpose designed by God also, that all the good success we have in our apostleship may be imputed to Christ, and not to us, as it would be if we came with any secular power or grandeur to plant the gospel." And a very considerable proof it was of the divine original of the gospel, that though the preachers were not only destitute of all worldly advantages, but laboured under all imaginable disadvantages, yet it made its way, gained its point, and did wonders, which was an evidence that there was an excellency of power above that of any creature going along with it.

Three doctrines we may observe hence:

- I. That the gospel of Christ is a treasure indeed, and it is our unspeakable privilege that we have that treasure.
- II. Ministers are earthen vessels, in which this treasure is put.
- III. That God has put the treasure into earthen vessels, that all who are enriched by it may give him the glory of it.

I. In having the gospel of Christ known and owned among us, we have a treasure truly valuable, nay, invaluable. It is our happiness as Christians, that we have the gospel written to us in the Scriptures, which are of divine inspiration, preached to us by a ministry of divine institution, under the direction of a divine warrant, and the influence of a divine promise, and professed in the world by a church called out of the world, and incorporated by a divine charter.

We live in an age of infidelity, when, under colour of opposing bigotry and enthusiasm, (two very detestable things,) the gospel of Christ is ridiculed and run down, and set upon a level with the pagan theology: *It is time for thee, Lord, to work, when men thus make void thy gospel*; and it is time for us in our places to appear in defence of that which is the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys, when it is thus virulently, thus violently, attacked. It is *pro aris et focis*—*for our God and our country*, that we contend, when we contend for *the faith once delivered to the saints*, and for the common

salvation, and therefore we ought to contend earnestly. Upright men are astonished to see such sacred truths and laws treated with such contempt, and the innocent cannot but stir up himself against the hypocrite. When they speak slightly of the gospel who hate its laws, and despise its comforts, we ought to speak honourably of it; and how can we speak more honourably of it than to call it, as the text does, our *treasure*? We know it, and believe it to be so, and that, in comparison of it, all the learning and policy of this world is but trash and trifle.

The gospel of Christ is indeed a treasure. For,

1. There is in it an abundance of that which is of inestimable value. If the things themselves be truly precious, and there be plenty of them, then we call them treasure; and such things there are, and such a fulness of them, in the gospel of Christ. As the merchandise and trade of this wisdom, so its stores and treasures, are better than that of silver, or of fine gold, or precious stones. *The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, the onyx, or the sapphire, Job xxviii. 19.*

There are treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the truths which the gospel discovers to us, about which the understanding finds the best employment, the best entertainment. There are treasures of comfort and joy in the offers which the gospel makes us, and the blessings it assures to all believers, in which not only the necessities of the soul are well provided for, but its desires abundantly satisfied, and its true and lasting happiness inviolably secured. There is a treasure of merit and righteousness in Christ, and in his mediation, his sacrifice and intercession for us; a treasure of grace and strength in the Spirit, and his operations on us; a *fulness of grace, grace for grace*, grace for all gracious exercises, which it pleased the Father should dwell in Jesus Christ, that thence we might receive.

These are things of value to the soul of man, and which every soul puts a high value upon, that truly desires to know and love its God, to serve him, enjoy him, and be for ever happy in them: things which angels themselves put such a value upon, that they desire to look into them; and which Christ himself put such a value upon, that he thought it worth while to pour out his soul unto death to purchase them for us, since they could not be obtained for gold, nor could silver be weighed for the price of them.

And there is an abundance of them, infinitely exceeding that of light in the sun, or water in the sea. In Christ there is enough of that, of all that, which our souls need; enough for all, enough for each, enough for you and me; enough for as many as will come and take of these waters of life. *Lord, it is*

done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. When God entered into covenant with Abraham, (and it was the covenant of grace that he made with him,) he engaged to be to him *El-shaddai*, a God *All-sufficient*, Gen. xvii. 1. a God that is enough. Justly therefore is that gospel which proclaims this covenant called a treasure, for in the most valuable, durable riches it infinitely exceeds the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. It is an inexhaustible fountain of life and living waters; it is a bottomless treasure; not a treasure in a chest, but a treasure in a mine, continually searched into, but never wasted.

2. This is safely laid up for a perpetuity, and therefore it is a treasure. It is deposited in good hands, whence we may draw from it, but cannot be deprived of it; it is *hid treasure*; not hid from us, but hid for us: it is a treasure under lock and key, and it is in the hand of Christ that this key of David is. The riches of Christ, which fill those treasures, are unsearchable riches; are such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive.*

It is hid in God, in his wisdom and counsel, and that eternal purpose which he has purposed in himself, which can never be altered: it is hid in his glorious perfections, which are all made over to true believers for the constituting and ensuring of their happiness by that all-comprehending article of the New Covenant, *I will be to them a God*; which is treasure enough.

It is hid in Christ, and in his undertaking for us: which contain all that we need as sinners, as God's being to us a God, contain all we need as reasonable creatures. He is the treasurer of this treasure, is intrusted, as Joseph was in Egypt, to dispose of it, as he was to lay it up; and in him it is safe. All the promises of God, which are real treasures, and the best securities, are in him *yea and amen*.

It is hid in the Scripture: there it may be found: thence it may be fetched by faith acting on divine revelation, assenting to it with application and resignation. It is in the parable a treasure *hid in a field*, where it must be digged for; and the Scripture is that field, which we must make ours, and make use of, and then the treasure is ours. The word is nigh us, and Christ in the word.^a It is hid from the wise and prudent;^b the worldly wise, who look with contempt upon the field of the Scripture, as Naaman upon the waters of Jordan, preferring before them Abana and Pharpar, *ivers of Damascus*; ^c leaving God's fields for a rock, and for the snow of Lebanon,^d as the prophet speaks. But it is hid for the humble and holy, the willing and obedient; they have an incontestable, indefeasible title to it: in it they have a portion that is safe, which

^a Rom. x. 8.

^b Luke x. 21.

^c 2 Kings v. 12.

^d Jer. xviii. 14.

neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal; * a good part, which shall never be taken away from them.^f

It is a treasure; for it is laid up for hereafter. The bulk of these riches is that which is reserved in heaven for us; † a glory that is to be revealed in due time. It is a treasure, that will not only suit the present exigences of the soul, but will last as long as it lasts, and run parallel with its never-failing duration. It is an everlasting gospel that is preached to us,^h that word of the Lord which endures for ever, when all the glory of man is withered as the grass:ⁱ it is a treasure, which glorified saints will be living plentifully and pleasantly upon to eternity.

3. It is of universal use to us; and therefore it is a treasure. It is not only valuable in itself, but every way suitable and serviceable to us. He who has a treasure has that which answers all things;^k and that the gospel does: it is accommodated to the case of our souls in all respects; and the riches of God's glory in Christ Jesus, will, as the apostle speaks, *supply all our need.*^l

In our contemplations, in our devotions, and in our whole conversation in the world, the gospel of Christ is of constant use to us, does that for us which we need, and which nothing else could do for us. We could have no acquaintance or communion with God, but under the conduct and direction of the gospel; no comfortable enjoyment of ourselves, nor peace in our own consciences, but upon gospel grounds; nor any sure rule of speaking and acting, but that which the gospel furnishes us with in the law of Christ; nor any powerful principle of well-doing, but what is wrought by the Spirit of Christ.

It is a treasure of food for all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is *manna*, bread from heaven; not a pot of manna, but a cloud of manna. The bread which the Son of man shall give, is that which endures to eternal life, is the pledge of it, and nourishes believing souls to it. It is a treasure of physic for diseased souls, that apply themselves to Christ as their physician; and there is in it a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady. And the universal cures which Christ wrought when he was here upon earth, were an indication of that inexhaustible fulness of healing virtue that there is in the gospel of Christ; as his feeding thousands with a little food, was of the abundant nourishment that there is in it to them who by faith live upon it, to whom his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed.

It is a treasure of arms and ammunition for our spiritual warfare; a divine magazine, whence the good soldiers of Jesus Christ may be furnished with answers to every temptation, and with the whole

armour of God, with which they may not only secure themselves, but resist and vanquish their spiritual enemies, and become more than conquerors.

It is a treasure in the world; it puts honour upon it, and puts good into it. God's love to the world, in sending his only-begotten Son, that through him righteousness and life might be brought in where sin and death had reigned, is the best treasure that ever was in it, far exceeding the riches of the sea, or the treasures hid in the sand. The enlarging of the borders of the church, by the spreading of the gospel, is called the *riches of the world*, the *riches of the Gentiles*; and those parts of the world that have the gospel, have no reason to envy those who have the gold, nor should wish to change with them.

It is a treasure to any nation or people. Those are truly rich among whom the word of Christ's gospel has free course, and is glorified; who have it in its purity, power, and plenty; and Christ in that chariot going forth, and going on, conquering and to conquer. As wisdom and knowledge are the stability of our times, so the fear of the Lord is our treasure. Bibles and ministers are the wealth of a nation; the growth of Scripture knowledge, the increase of the gifts and graces of ministers, their zeal for Christ, and love to the souls of men, may be reckoned the growth of a kingdom's wealth, of its honour, and of its strength.

Let us bless God, that we of this nation, that you of this city, have this treasure, and have it in such abundance; that the gospel of Christ is read, and preached, and professed among us; O that it were more practised and lived up to! The kingdom of God among us is the treasure of our kingdom; let us see that we bring forth the fruits of it, that we receive not the grace of God therein in vain, lest we provoke him to take it from us, and give it to another nation (for some where or other he will find a place for it) that will make a better use of it. Dread the loss of wisdom's merchandise, more than of any trade; of the liberty of the gospel, more than our civil liberties; and deprecate the threatening inundations of atheism and popery, either of which will rob us of this treasure.

It is a treasure in the heart of every true believer who receives it, embraces it, and is delivered into it, as into a mould. If the gospel of Christ has, as it ought to have, the innermost and uppermost place in our souls, if it command us, if it constrain us, and so if we become interested in its promises and privileges, we are rich, and increased with goods, we are truly rich, rich toward God, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. And out of this good treasure in the heart, a good man upon all occasions brings forth good things, for his own use, and for the service of others: as the good householder, so

* Matt. vi. 20. † Luke x. 42. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 4. h Rev. xiv. 6.

i 1 Pet. i. 25.

k Eccl. x. 19.

l Phil. iv. 19.

the good scribe, who is well instructed concerning the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, from that treasury produces things *new and old*, to the glory of God's grace and truth.

Let us therefore get our hearts enriched with this treasure, by a true and lively faith in Christ and his gospel: we are wretchedly and miserably poor till we do this; and then, and not till then, we begin to be wise for ourselves. There are many who, through grace, can call God theirs in covenant, Christ theirs, all the benefits of the New Testament theirs. Come, O come, and cast in your lot among them; receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and give up yourselves to him, to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him; and as you have received him, and resigned yourselves to him, so walk in him; and you have a treasure which will be your heritage for ever, and in the mean time may be the rejoicing of your heart.

II. Ministers are earthen vessels in whom this treasure is put. What is laid up in order to its being used hereafter is laid up in some vessel or other, where it may be ready when there is occasion for it, or to which those who have occasion may have recourse. Now the treasure of the gospel is committed to the preachers of it, as proclamations to the messengers of the government, to be dispersed; and this is like putting a treasure into earthen vessels.

They are said to have this treasure, not only because they ought to have it, in their hearts themselves, firmly to believe it, and to abide under the impressions and influences of it; for how can they expect to be instrumental in bringing others to the belief and obedience of that which they do not themselves believe and obey? but because they have the exhibiting and dispensing of it to others. They have (as the Levites under the law) the *charge of the holy things*, because if there were not some to whom this charge were committed, that which is every body's work would soon be nobody's work. The ministers of Christ are said to be *stewards of the mysteries of God*, and have the keys of the stores committed to them, that they may give to each of the household their portion of meat in due season; it is a dispensation, not a dominion, that is committed to them. The gospel is said to be *committed to their trust*, to the use and behoof of the church of God, and all the members of it; yet, blessed be God, not excluding themselves: their concern, therefore, is to pursue the trust, and to be faithful to it.

The preaching of the gospel is put into their mouths, and they are like John Baptist, the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*, crying as to travellers in a wilderness who have lost their way, and if not called to, will wander endlessly; and they are but the voice, God is the speaker. The applying of the seals is put into their hands, the admitting seal, the

confirming seal; by which those are sacramentally invested in the privileges of the gospel, who, by the working of the Spirit on their hearts, are become entitled to them: and thus they have the treasure.

1. They are but *vessels*, that afford no more, no other, than what is put into them, nor can give but just as they have received. God is the fountain of light and life, and living waters, and all our springs are in him: they are as all other creatures are. (angels themselves not excepted,) that, and all that, and that only, that God makes them to be. It is Christ who is the *fountain of gardens*, Cant. iv. 15. they are but *cisterns*: it is the commandment that is the lamp, and the law is light; they are but as candlesticks in which this light is set up, and by which it is held forth.

Ministers must remember this, and religiously adhere to their instructions; and as they must dare to declare the whole counsel of God, so they must not dare to declare any thing else under the name and shadow of that; but must be able to say, *we have received from the Lord that which we have delivered unto you*; for a man can receive nothing which he can depend upon himself, or recommend to others with any assurance, unless it be given him from above. You like not the liquor that tastes of the vessel; nor will a gracious soul relish the doctrine that is of man, and by man. It is the *pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb*,^m that waters the New Jerusalem, and makes it glad.

People must remember this, and not expect *any* more from their ministers than from vessels: we have a gospel to *preach*, not a gospel to *make*: we can but *declare* the grace of God, we cannot *bestow* that grace; and therefore why look ye at us, as if we could speak to the heart? What is Paul, or what is Apollos?ⁿ They are but ministers, not masters; they can but prophesy upon dry bones, but to no purpose, unless a spirit of life from God enters into them; they are but like Gehazi with Elisha's staff, or Elisha with Elijah's mantle; it is the Lord God of both who must do the work.

2. They are but *earthen vessels*. It was agreeable enough to the external glory of the Old-Testament dispensation, that the lights of the sanctuary should be put into golden candlesticks, of pure gold; but the glory of the New Testament being spiritual, the exhibiting of the light of that is in earthen lamps, like Epictetus's. Some think here is an allusion to Gideon's soldiers, who, advancing to battle in the night, took lamps in their earthen pitchers, with the glaring light of which, upon breaking the pitchers, the enemy was terrified, and so discomfited.^o By such unlikely methods is Christ's cause carried on, and yet is victorious.

^m Rev. xxii. 1.

ⁿ 1 Cor. iii. 5.

^o Judg. vii. 16.

Let us see why the ministers of the gospel are here compared to earthen vessels.

(1.) They are made of the same mould with other people. All the children of men are earthen vessels: the body is the vessel of the soul, and it is of the earth, earthy; and ministers are partakers of flesh and blood, as other men are, hewn out of the same rock, and digged out of the same hole of the pit.

God has not sent us his gospel by those messengers of his who are spirits, and a flame of fire, but by such as have bodies, and are *clods of clay*, and *worms of the earth*, as those are to whom they are sent: they are to you in God's stead indeed, and their embassy is high and honourable; but, as Elihu speaks, they also are formed out of the clay; and God, in compassion to us, chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, because their terrors shall not make us afraid, as those of angels would, if God should send his errands to us by them; nor shall *their hand be heavy upon us*.

St. Paul has an earthly house, which he expects the dissolution of, and finds already in the dissolving; and St. Peter a tabernacle, which he knows he must shortly put off, though they were both great apostles, and one of them had been in the *third heavens*, and the other in the *holy mount*. And it is not only an honour put upon the human nature, that God is pleased to commit the ministry of reconciliation to those of that nature, but an encouraging token of God's favour and good-will to us, and an evidence to us that he is in earnest in the embassy of peace; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us such things as these, much less would he have showed them us by those who are our bone and our flesh, who belong to that world which he has justly a quarrel with.

We are not only children of men, as you are, but we are by nature (blessed Paul puts himself into the number) children of wrath, even as others, guilty and corrupt, and as certainly ruined and undone, without a Saviour, as any of you. We are making the same complaints that you are, and groaning under the same burthens. We have the same need of the merit of Christ for our justification, and of his Spirit for our sanctification, that you have. We will never lay any other yoke upon your necks, but what we desire to submit our own to; nor wish you to embark for another world in any other vessel, but what we desire to venture ourselves and our own salvation in. We would deal for your souls as for our own; for your case is ours; and therefore the priests were taken from among men, that they might deal tenderly with men, Heb. v. 1, 2.

(2.) They are oftentimes, in respect of their outward condition, mean and low, and of small account, as earthen vessels are; not only *men*, but *men of low*

degree, sons of earth, as the Hebrew phrase is. Their family, perhaps, like Gideon's, poor in Manasseh, and they the least in their father's house,^p who have nothing distinguishing in their extraction or parentage, their birth or education; they have reason to rejoice (as Christ tells his disciples) that *their names are written in heaven*, but they must never expect to have a name like the names of the great ones of the earth.

The first preachers of the gospel were poor fishermen, earthen vessels indeed, bred up to the sea, and before they were intrusted with this treasure, were unlearned and ignorant men.^q Christ's kingdom not being of this world, he did not make use of the princes of this world, not men of honours and estates, not their learning or politics; but as the poor received the gospel, so the poor preached it.

And still they are not many mighty, not many noble, who are called to this work; it is honourable enough itself, and needs not borrow any additional lustre from the glory of this world, which God would thus put contempt upon, and give more abundant honour to that part which lacked, as the apostle speaks with reference to the dispensing of spiritual gifts. The poor in the world are often made rich in faith, rich in the gospel treasure.

(3.) They are subject to many infirmities, to like passions as other men, and upon that account they are earthen vessels; they have their faults, their flaws, their blemishes, as earthen vessels have. John Baptist takes notice of it, that it is Christ only, who cometh from heaven, and is above all, who is perfectly pure and spotless; but he *that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth*: the treasure is wisdom from above, it is all heavenly and divine; but the vessel in which it is put, has too much in it of the wisdom from beneath, for it is earthen, and savours of its original.

God has chosen not only the weak, but the foolish, things of the world, by them to carry on his cause, and by them to carry it at last. *The law made men priests who had infirmity*, and so does the gospel too. Jonah was a prophet of the Lord, and yet peevish and passionate, and often out of temper: Elijah himself was so. St. Peter at Antioch was to be blamed, when he went in with Barnabas into a piece of dissimulation;^r and I doubt St. Paul at Antioch was not altogether to be justified, when he fell out with Barnabas in a heat of contention.^s There were those who preached Christ, even of envy and strife; and many who sought their own things more than the things of Christ;^t and yet, as long as they preached Christ, and held forth the gospel treasure, St. Paul rejoiced^u in it. He was a great apostle, who put himself in, when he said, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves*.

^p Judg. vi. 15.

^q Acts iv. 13.

^r Gal. ii. 11, 13.

^s Acts xv. 39.

^t Phil. ii. 21.

^u Phil. i. 15, 18.

Ministers are men, and therefore it cannot be thought they do what they do by their own power; they are sinful men, and therefore cannot be thought to do it by their own holiness. They are pressing toward perfection, but they have not yet attained; they own they have not, they own it to you, and desire you will not think the worse of the treasure that is put into their hands, for any mistake or defect of theirs in other things: you may see a divine excellency in it, though you see much human infirmity in the vessel that keeps it. Bear with them then, and be not severe in judging them, whom you have so often heard going before you in judging themselves.

4. They are made of different sorts of earth, as earthen vessels are; all of the same nature, but not all of the same natural constitution. The bodies of some are of a stronger make, and more cut out for labour, while others are feeble, and soon foiled. *Quies meliore luto finxit præcordia Titan—Some have souls that seem to be made of finer mould than others;* the capacities of their minds more elevated and enlarged; while others, who yet have their hearts upright with God, in comparison with them, are but babes in understanding.

But those of the finest mould, even the china vessels, are but earthen ones; the head and the eye in it are made of the same earth with the rest of the body; and those who are of a coarser mould, yet may as effectually answer the end in keeping the treasure, as those of the finest composition. The living creature in Ezekiel's vision, that had the face of an ox, did as good service in his place, as that which had the face of an eagle.* Therefore let not those of eminent gifts be puffed up, they are but earthen vessels; nor let those of meaner abilities be cast down or discouraged, God can make them who seem poor, yet to enrich many.

A great deal of difference there is likewise between some and others of those earthen vessels, in respect of natural temper: some are more bold, others more timorous: some more warm and eager, others more soft and gentle. I remember Gregory, in his book *de pastorali curâ—on pastoral care*, observes, that St. Paul, writing to Timothy, bids him not strive, but be gentle to all men, and to reprove with all long-suffering; but, writing to Titus, he bids him rebuke sharply, and reprove with all authority; for which he gives this reason: "Titus was a man of a mild disposition, and needed a spur; Timothy more sanguine, and needed a bridle." Some are of a sorrowful spirit, reserved, and inclined to melancholy; and that is turned to their reproach, as it was to David's, when he wept and chastened his soul with fasting, Ps. lxxix. 10. and to John Baptist's, who, because he came neither eating nor drinking, not conversing so familiarly with the world as others

did, they said, *He has a devil, he is a crazed, distracted man.* Others are of a cheerful spirit, and jocular sometimes, and that shall be made a blemish in their character; as, because Christ came eating and drinking, they called him a *gluttonous man*, and a *wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.*

So likewise, as to the manner of exhibiting and dispensing the treasure, there is a great variety of gifts: Apollos is an eloquent man; but Paul's speech is contemptible, (2 Cor. x. 10.) yet his letters are powerful. Even among the inspired writers there is a great variety of phrase and diction, much more among the other earthen vessels, that are left more to themselves. And all these, as far as they have an aptitude to edify some or other, either the learned or the unlearned, are wrought by one and the self-same spirit; and yet by men of corrupt minds, both the one and the other are exposed to contempt. He who delivers his message, as St. Paul did, in tears, is ridiculed as a whining preacher: he who delivers it now and then with a pleasing, surprising turn, is ridiculed as a facetious one; as Isaiah was bantered for saying, *Precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line,*† which in the original is a jingle of words, *Tsaf betsaf, kaf bekaf;* and this made a song of, c. 13. *The word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept.* Jeremiah is jeered for saying, *The burthen of the word of the Lord;* and they said of Ezekiel, *Doth he not speak parables?* and yet, after all, laid to their charge a thousand things which they knew not: but wisdom is, and will be, *justified of all her children.*

(5.) They are of different shapes and sizes, as earthen vessels, and vessels of shells, used to be; notwithstanding which they may all receive and keep safe, and minister the treasure, according to their different capacities. While they hold the foundation, Christ, and him crucified, and the truth as it is in Jesus, yet in matters of lesser moment, that do not so immediately affect the treasure, there may be a great variety of sentiments, and of practice accordingly.

It was so in the apostle's times: *One believes he may eat all things, another, who is weak, eats herbs: one esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike.*‡ Both cannot be in the right: yet the apostle interposes not his apostolic authority in the matter to determine it either one way or other; but rather chooses to give a rule, which would be of lasting use to the church, in all differences of that kind, when apostolic authority should cease; and that is, each to practise according to their sentiment, with true devotion to God, giving him thanks, and with true charity toward their brethren; not imposing upon them their own sentiments, no, nor so

* Ezek. i. 10. x Isa. xxviii. 10. *Per illusoriam μυστικὴν ὁρὰν prophetarum subornant.* Grot.

† Rom. xiv. 2, 3.

uch as judging and censuring theirs, or judging and despising them for practising according to them; at both sides may reserve their zeal for the weightier matters of the law and gospel, faith in Christ, and holiness of heart and life.

(6.) They are all what God, the great potter, makes them; for if they are earthen vessels, they are in his hand, as the clay in the hand of the potter, who has a sovereign power over them; and it is not to be asked, *Why hath he made them thus?* The wise God knows what he designs men for, and what use he will make of them, and fashions their hearts accordingly: *Before I formed thee in the belly,* says God to the prophet, *I knew thee,* and knew what service I would employ thee in, and formed thee accordingly, fitted thee to be a weeping prophet in calamitous times.^a As God intrusts talents with his servants according to the ability^b he has given them, so he gives them ability according to the talents he designs to intrust them with.

Therefore we ought not to envy the gifts of those who excel and eclipse us; for may not God do what he will with his own? Nor should we be discouraged, though our capacity be small, our faculties weak, and the sphere of our activity low and narrow; if we be faithful in the little we are intrusted with, and diligent to improve it, it may be our comfort, that it is the place which God has seen fit to put us in; and where he has given but one talent, he expects the improvement but of one, for he is not a hard Master.

(7.) They are all vessels of use and service in the family, though they are but earthen ones. The apostle observes, that in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, (the angels who are God's ministers in the upper world, and employed in this, are vessels of gold and silver, vessels of honour,) but there are also vessels of wood and earth, which are comparatively vessels of dishonour:^b but it does not therefore follow, that they are no part of the furniture of God's house: *If the feet shall say, 'Because I am not the hand, or the ear shall say, 'Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?'*^c God knows how to make use even of earthen vessels, how to make them truly beautiful and valuable, by putting a treasure into them, which may be and must be received from them, and use made of it.

(8.) They are oftentimes despised and trampled upon by men, notwithstanding the honour God has put upon them, and are thrown by as despised broken vessels, and vessels in which is no pleasure. So this similitude of the earthen vessels is explained here, in the following verses; where the apostle shows, that he called himself and his fellow-apostles earthen vessels, because they were *troubled on every*

side, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down;^d and because they past by so much *dishonour and evil report as deceivers,* and *unknown,* though they were true and well known.^e

It has often been the lot of some of the most faithful, useful ministers of Christ, to be loaded with reproach and calumny, to be exceedingly filled with the scorning of them who are at ease, and the contempt of the proud, and to have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Thus the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, and every way preferable, have been esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.^f Our Lord Jesus himself was one whom men despised, whom the nation abhorred,^g and the disciple is *not better than his Lord*; and Satan finds his account in it, for by casting dirt upon the earthen vessels, he prejudices the minds of people against the treasure that is put into them. "But" (as I remember Archbishop Tillotson somewhere expresses it) "it is no disparagement to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so; nor ought we to think the worse of the food at Christ's table, because it is not served up in plate, but in earthen vessels."

(9.) They are frail, and mortal, and dying, and upon that account they are earthen vessels. Thus the apostle explains it here, *We which live are always delivered unto death.* They are dying daily, and yet this is so far from being any allay to the rejoicing which they have in Christ Jesus our Lord, that the apostle protests the truth of it by that rejoicing, as a thing of unshaken certainty. These earthen vessels are soon broke, and return to their earth; they must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; but, blessed be God, the treasure in them is not so: the word of the Lord abides, but the prophets do not live for ever.^h

They are worn out with their labours; and as they spend, they are spent, in the service of Christ and souls. They are subject to the same decays of nature, the same distempers of body and mind, the same accidents, and the same infirmities of age, as others: they are cisterns at the best, and will shortly be broken cisterns; flowers at the best, and will shortly be withered flowers. *I have said ye are gods,* but *ye shall die like men,* for ye are earthen vessels.

Ministers are workmen, and they shall accomplish as a hireling their day; and having patiently borne the burthen and heat of it, shall be called in by the shadows of the evening to receive their penny, and enter into their rest: they are watchmen, and when they have staid their time shall be relieved; they are soldiers, and their warfare will shortly be accomplished; witnesses, and their testimony will be finished; they are Christ's ambassadors, and will be

^a Jer. i. 5.

^b Matt. xxv. 15.

^c 2 Tim. ii. 20.

^d 1 Cor. xii. 15, 16.

^e 1 Cor. xii. 8-10.

^f 1 Cor. vi. 8, 9.

^g Isa. xlii. 7.

^h Lam. iv. 2.

ⁱ Zech. i. 5.

recalled, and an exchange made. This is not the world that ministers and people are to be together in. O that the one in preaching, the other in hearing, and both in praying, would look upon themselves and one another as dying! that what their hands find to do therein, they may do with all their might!

III. God has put the treasure of the gospel into earthen vessels, that the divine power which goes along with the gospel may be so much the more glorified. The great design of the everlasting gospel, is to bring men to fear God, and give glory to him; and that he may be the more glorified, those are employed in propagating it, who were least likely for such a purpose, that his strength may be manifested in the weakness of the instruments. He ordains strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, that thereby he may perfect praise; as if this were the perfection of the divine praise, not only to help the weak, but to employ the weak. And he chooses to make use of such, to confound the wisdom of this world, and that he who glories, may glory in the Lord, and give glory to him.

There was an excellency of power going along with the apostles, which appeared to be of God, and not of themselves.

1. To strengthen them for the work they were employed in; to preach down Judaism and paganism, and to preach up the kingdom of a crucified Jesus, was a service that required a far greater strength, both of judgment and resolution, than the apostles had of themselves; so that if they had not been full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, they could never have spoken, as they did, with that wisdom, which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay or resist; could never have made such vigorous attacks upon the devil's kingdom, nor have gathered in such a large harvest of souls to Jesus Christ. They were in labours more abundant, and yet, like their Master, did not fail nor were discouraged; for though they knew and owned that they were not sufficient of themselves for such a service, yet they found their sufficiency was of God, and they could do all things through Christ strengthening them.

2. To support them under the hardships that were put upon them. Therefore God chose the service of such men as were despised, that he might magnify his own power in keeping the spirit he had made, and made fit for his own use, from failing before him. One would wonder how the apostles kept up their spirits; it was not by any power of their own, but underneath them were the everlasting arms; and when they were *pressed out of measure*, above strength, so that they despaired of life, yet they did not faint, being born up by the power of a God who

raises the dead. Then it was, that Christ's strength was made perfect in St. Paul's weakness, when he was enabled not only to bear reproaches, and persecutions, and afflictions for Christ, and to say, *None of these things move me*, but to rejoice that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ; to glory in these tribulations, and even to take pleasure in them. Let it never be said, it was by any power of their own, that the apostles were enabled to bear the shame so boldly, and sorrow so cheerfully, and to die daily, and yet live pleasantly; no, it was according to Christ's glorious power, and by his might, that they were thus strengthened unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.¹

3. To give them success in that great work to which they were called. The world was to be enlightened with the lamps, and enriched with the treasure, that was lodged in these earthen vessels. By their agency the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, the stream of the world was to be turned, the sea must be made to fly, and Jordan must be driven back: this work must be done; and therefore such earthen vessels shall be made use of in the doing of it, that it may appear, that the victorious power that does it, is not that of the apostles, but that it is a divine power; it is not what they have wrought, but what God has wrought by them to make the Gentiles obedient;² it is mighty through God, to the casting down of imaginations,³ and the captivating of high thoughts. The gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation,⁴ and in that, as in his chariot, the exalted Redeemer goes forth conquering, and to conquer.⁵

O the wonderful achievements of the gospel! the trophies of its victory over the powers of darkness! the numerous instances of its convincing, converting, sanctifying power! How many sinful hearts have by it been made to tremble, and how many gracious souls to triumph! Had the preachers of it been princes or politicians, had they been philosophers or orators, this success would have been attributed to them; but when they are such despicable men, and so despised, men who, like their Master, were of no reputation, it must be owned, that therefore so many are brought to believe their report, because the arm of the Lord is revealed to them.

Now, for the application of this,

1. Let us see how this Scripture is this day fulfilled, in the removal of the master of this assembly from its head. The gospel treasure was faithfully dispensed here; but hereby it appears to have been put into an earthen vessel, that the vessel is broke, and is returned to the earth out of which it was taken. We are here bewailing the death of a minister of Christ, who was intrusted with the gospel treasure, was enriched with spiritual gifts, and has been

¹ Col. i. 11.

² Rom. xv. 18.

³ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

⁴ Rom. i. 16.

⁵ Rev. vi. 2.

in his day instrumental, through the grace of God, to make many rich. But he has finished his course.

My personal acquaintance with him was small, and therefore I wished, and laboured, that this service had been put into the hands of some other person, every way better able to do him justice; but since it is thrust into my hands, I think I need not study to do any other honour to his memory, than to take notice of the honour God has done to his ministry, in blessing it to the conversion and edification of many precious souls; which I find there are multitudes ready to bear their testimony to; who, though they have had many instructors in Christ, have called him their spiritual father; for under his preaching, the grace of God has turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and those who have been effectually called, he has been many ways instrumental to build up in their most holy faith. And this I know, there were many very judicious Christians, and who had spiritual senses exercised to discern things that differ, to whom his praying and preaching were both very acceptable and very serviceable, and who sat down under his shadow with delight; yet none more mindful than he, that he was an earthen vessel. An instance of which comes to my thoughts; I once saw a letter from him, to which, instead of his name, he subscribed himself "dust and ashes." Now if those who have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, are to be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, much more are they to be so esteemed, who have obtained this further mercy, to be successful for the sake of the fruit of their labours.

Two things he was an eminent example of:

(1.) Great industry and courage in his work, while his health and strength were continued to him. It is a great blessing to any man to have a good constitution of body, and especially to a minister, and is a great talent, that must be accounted for. Such a one he had, and made a good use of it; for he laboured more abundantly, on Lord's days, on week days, *in season, and out of season*, and was in his element when he was in his work. He took pains in preparing what he preached, and then took pains in delivering it, and did not think that either one would excuse the other; either that if a sermon was well studied, it was no matter how dully and carelessly it was preached; or that if it were preached with liveliness, it was no matter how slight and superficial the preparation was: no, he knew, that they who are made fishers of men, have need to mind their business, both when they are fishing, and when they are mending their nets.

You who knew fully his doctrine and manner of life, remember with what unwearied vigour he went on in his work for many years; how he went from strength

to strength, and his bow was renewed in his hand; with what courage and holy contempt he looked upon the reproach of men, and their revilings, and like the prophet, *set his face as a flint*, for the advancing of serious godliness. And he found that in waiting on the Lord he renewed his strength, and therefore would not hearken to those who suggested, *Master, spare thyself*. Those who are enabled to do thus have reason to be thankful; while those who are not may yet be very useful, and ought not to be discouraged, since God requires, and will accept and bless, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. So much was his heart upon his work, that he complained of being too much hindered in needed and desired ministrations, in which he would willingly give his pains, as that which was a great grief and burthen to him, I have reason to think, that which at length sunk his spirits, and broke his strength, was not so much his working as his not working.

(2.) Great cheerfulness and holy confidence, when he saw the day of death approaching. Many who are very gay and pleasant while they are well, and in health, when they come to be sick, when painful threatening distempers grow upon them, when they find death working in them, and that they are already taken into the custody of its messengers, how are they cast down, and how is their countenance fallen! But it was not so with him: the cheerfulness of his spirit being founded on a good basis, continued to the last, and he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, as one who even there feared no evil.*

He looked back with comfort upon all the way in which the Lord his God had led him in this wilderness,^p and encouraged his family to trust in God and his providence, from the experience which he had had of God's goodness to him, and particularly in the abundant kindnesses he received from his friends, now in his last illness, which he had a very grateful sense of, and for which he gave thanks to God.

He looked forward with comfort upon a blessed state on the other side death. When he found nature sensibly decaying, he said to some of his friends, "Well, if God has any more work for me to do, he can repair these decays, and will do it; and if not, blessed be God, I have a good home to go to, and this is a good time to go home."

A little before he died, he said to those about him, he had four props, which he staid himself upon, and that he found them firm, and they did not sink under him when he leaned on them: 1. "The incarnation of Christ, and his taking our nature upon him." 2. "His oblation of himself a sacrifice for our sins." 3. "His resurrection from the dead for our justification." And, 4. "The intercession which he ever lives

to make for all that come to God by him." These he resolved to rest upon. Thus to him to live was Christ, and to die gain. Christ was all in all to him. Thus, thus he ventured into the invisible world, thus embarked for eternity in the never-failing vessel of Christ's mediation, as a poor sinner in the arms of an all-sufficient Saviour: and it is the excellency of our holy religion, that it furnishes us with living comforts in dying moments, and enables us to triumph over death and the grave, as those who through Christ are more than conquerors.

2. Let us see what improvement we may make of the truth contained in this text, and confirmed by this providence, that we have the gospel treasure in earthen vessels.

(1.) It may be many ways instructive to us who are ministers, and may remind us of our duty.

[1.] Are we earthen vessels? Then we have reason to be very humble, and low in our own eyes, and to take great care that we never think of ourselves above what is meet, but always think soberly. Let us watch over our own spirits, that we harbour not any conceit of ourselves, or confidence in ourselves, or contempt of our brethren, remembering what we are. We are but vessels, and have nothing that is valuable but what we have received, and are intrusted with; and if we have received it, and received it but in trust, why then do we boast?^a or what have we to boast of? We are no more, no better, than what the free grace of God makes us every day.

We are of the earth, and therefore it becomes us to abase ourselves before God, and to put our mouth in the dust, and acknowledge ourselves unworthy to speak to, or speak from, the Lord of glory.^r We are of the same mould with others, and therefore ought to condescend to the meanest of the flock of Christ for their good; and to be so far from *lording it over God's heritage*, as to make ourselves the servants of all, as being less than the least of all saints, and the meanest creatures that ever called God Father.

[2.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us not be indulgent of our bodies, nor of their ease, or appetites. What needs so much ado about an earthen vessel, when after all our care and pains about it we cannot alter the property of it, but brittle it is still, and must inevitably be broken after a while. Let not this earthen vessel be enshrined, and made an idol of, nor the belly made a god of; but let it know its place, let it be kept under, and brought into subjection,^s and kept employed as a servant to the soul in the service of God: our principal care must be about the treasure, duly to dispense that, and about the vessel, only in order thereunto. We then, indeed, make much of our bodies, it is the

most we can make of them, when we make use of them as instruments of righteousness to God's honour.

[3.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us not be empty vessels. A vessel of gold or silver is of considerable value, though it be empty; but an earthen vessel, if empty, is good for little, but is thrown among the lumber. Let us get our hearts replenished with the gospel-treasure, with sanctifying grace for our own benefit, and with spiritual gifts for the benefit of others. Let us be filled with the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, filled with the Scriptures, filled with devout affections and holy dispositions, that we may be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work; and, in order hereunto, let us give attendance to reading, to meditation; and, as long as we live, be still improving and adding to our stock, that we may bring forth things new as well as old; and it may appear, though we are still spending, we have still, by the blessing of God on our studies, fresh supplies.

[4.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us be clean vessels. It is enough, that as earthen we are mean by nature, we cannot help that, but let us not make ourselves vile by sin. Let us possess these earthen vessels in sanctification and honour,^t as temples of the Holy Ghost, which it is sacrilege to pollute: the bodies of all Christians are so, much more the bodies of ministers, with whom the gospel treasure is lodged, who are therefore concerned to keep themselves unspotted from the world and the flesh, lest if, like Eli's sons, they make themselves vile, they make even the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred,^u as good food is in a dirty vessel. If they must be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord,^v much more must they be so who are themselves his vessels. Let our conversation be with all purity,^w nor let any blot of any kind cleave to our hands: let us carefully avoid filthy lucre, and every filthy lust, every thing that looks like it, and leads to it. And since it is our business to compass God's altar,^x let us, with the priests under the law, frequently wash in the gospel laver. Lord, *not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head,*^y and my heart.

[5.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us take heed of dashing one against another; for nothing can be of more fatal consequence than that to earthen vessels, no, nor to the treasure that is deposited in them. It is not only the duty of ministers, in conformity to the design of their ministry, to be at peace among themselves, but it is their interest; for if they clash with one another, both sides are in danger of being broken: no better can come of it, when the *potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth.*^z They who think, because they are stronger vessels they can crush the weaker, should remember they are still

^a 1 Cor. iv. 7.

^r Gen. xviii. 27.

^s 1 Cor. ix. 27.

^t 1 Thess. iv. 4.

^u 1 Sam. ii. 17.

^v Isa. lli. 11.

^w 1 Tim. v. 2

^x Ps. xxvi. 6

^y John xlii. 9.

^z Isa. xlv. 9.

but earthen ones, and it may prove a crush to themselves.

What if some, according to the light God has given them, stand up for a Christian liberty, in those things wherein others, according to the light God has given them, yield a Christian obedience, since there are those on both sides who do it unto the Lord, and give God thanks,^a why should they judge or set at nought each other? They are both earthen vessels, that have their infirmities, and seeing through a glass darkly, may be mistaken;^b why should they not bear with one another, strengthen the hands of one another, since they both are intrusted with that treasure which consists not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.^c

Let us therefore study the things which make for peace, and unite our zeal against popery, that common enemy; for if God, for our sins, should suffer that to prevail against us, it will be a rod of iron to break in pieces all these potter's vessels: and we cannot do it better service, than to quarrel among ourselves; for if we bite and devour one another, we shall soon be consumed one of another,^d at least so far as to become an easy prey to that great devourer.

[6.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us bear contempt and reproach with patience, and not think it strange, or fret at it. It would contribute very much to the quiet and repose of our own minds, if we could but learn *spernere se sperni*,—to despise being despised, and not to be disturbed or moved by it. Now those who overvalue themselves, cannot easily bear to be undervalued by others; let us therefore, not only by keeping a good conscience, have this to say, to those who think and speak ill of us, that it is false and unjust, and our hearts condemn us not; but by keeping the grace of humility in its strength and exercise, have this to say, to those who think and speak slightly of us, that they cannot have a meaner opinion of us than we have of ourselves, nor lay us lower before men, than we lay ourselves every day before God. What else can earthen vessels expect, but to be despised and thrown under foot? Let us make sure the honour that comes from God, and then reckon it a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment.^e

[7.] Are we earthen vessels? Then let us often think of being broken and laid aside, and prepare accordingly. We are in use for a while, and it is our honour and delight to be employed in the service of Christ and souls. But what is our strength, that we should hope to be long thus employed? And what is our end, that we should expect to prolong our life? Is our strength the strength of stones? or is our flesh of brass?^f No, we are earthen vessels, and are hastening to the dust; let us therefore work

the works of him that sent us while it is day;^g let us fill up our time with that which will turn to some good account or other, and improve all our opportunities of doing good, though it be in the lowest sphere of usefulness, as those who know and consider the day of our service is hastening off, and the day of our account is hastening on. Let us follow our work with vigour and resolution, that at length we may finish our course with joy and honour; in a believing expectation, that these earthen vessels, though sown, as you have seen, in weakness, dishonour, and corruption, shall shortly be raised in power, and glory, and incorruption; these *vile bodies*, made like Christ's glorious one, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, that in glory, as well as grace, the excellency of the power may be of him.

(2.) This doctrine may be of use to you all. Are your ministers earthen vessels?

[1.] Thank God for the gospel treasure, though it be put into earthen vessels; nay, thank God that it is in such vessels, that it may be the nearer to you, and the more within your reach; and give all diligence to make sure your interest in this treasure. What will it avail us, that we have the gospel in our land, if we have it not in our hearts, that we have the sound of it about us, if we have not the savour of it within us? that we have Bibles in abundance in our houses, and in our hands, if we have not a Bible religion reigning in our souls?

You are laying up treasures of this world's wealth, it may be; O that you would be so wise for your souls and eternity, as to lay up for yourselves that treasure, which will make you rich towards God! which will send you rich out of this world, when death will have stripped you of all your possessions and enjoyments here.

[2.] Esteem the earthen vessels for the treasure's sake that is put into them; esteem them highly in love, as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;^h and as such make use of them, and show respect to them. The greatest honour and pleasure you can do them, is to draw from the treasure that is put into them, in your profiting by their ministrations, and making your profiting to appear. As far as you find they deliver Christ's errand, receive it and them for his sake.

And since they are earthen vessels, do all you can to strengthen their hands in their work, to forward it, and to further the success of it; and take heed of doing any thing to discourage them. Throw not those vessels to the ground hastily, because in something or other they do not please you; for remember, they are earthen vessels, and they are your own. They who by their loose and irregular walking, or by their unruliness or peevish strifes, sadden the hearts

^a Rom. xiv. 6.

^e Rom. xiv. 17.

^b 1 Cor. xlii. 12.

^d Gal. v. 15.

^g 1 Cor. iv. 3.

^h John ix. 4.

^f Job vi. 11, 12.

^h 1 Cor. iv. 1.

of faithful ministers, do more than they think of toward the hindering of their work, and the shortening of their days, and perhaps will have a great deal to answer for shortly.

[3.] Bless God that the breaking of the earthen vessel is not the loss of the heavenly treasure. Ministers die, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and a seed of ministers shall be raised up to preach it, and a seed of Christians to profess it, both which shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation.ⁱ Ministers hold forth this light, but it shall not die in their hands; they hold this treasure, but it shall not be buried in their graves; for though we see the end of the conversation of those who have spoken to us the word of God, have seen their exit, and shall see them no more, yet we are sure that *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*^k

And therefore, since Christ has provided that there should be a succession of these earthen vessels, why should not you look out accordingly? Apply yourselves to him who has the residue of the Spirit, and who holds the stars in his right hand, and attend his conduct.

[4.] Let the glory of all the benefits you have, or may have, by the ministry of the gospel, be given to God, to him only, to him entirely; for from him the *excellency of the power is*. No praise is due to us, we have a great deal in ourselves to be ashamed of, and nothing to boast of, nothing to trust to; the more

we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for employing us in his service, and enabling us for it: and therefore let every crown be cast at the feet of free grace, and every song sung to the humble strain, (Ps. cxv. 1.) *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*

[5.] Let the consideration of the frailty and mortality of your ministers quicken you to make a diligent improvement of their labours, while they are continued with you. You have the treasure in earthen vessels, therefore delay not to make it yours, lest the vessels that are most likely to convey it to you, should break, and others such should not be raised up, and so you come short of it. *Behold, now is the accepted time*, therefore put not off the great work you were sent into the world about to a further time, but *to-day, while it is called to-day*, hear the voice of Christ, and heed it. *Yet a little while is the light with you*, therefore walk and work while you have the light. He who will not send to you by a messenger from heaven, will not send to you by a messenger from the grave: if you believe not Moses and the prophets, your ministers, when once laid in the dust, shall be no more reprovers to you; nor Samuel be raised from the dead to advise Saul, who would not be advised by him while he was with him. By these, therefore, be admonished now, at length in this your day, to know and understand the things that belong to your peace, lest you despair at the last when they are hid from your eyes.^m

ⁱ Ps. xxii. 30.

^k Heb. xlii. 7, 8.

^l John xii. 36.

^m Luke xix. 42.

A CONCISE ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE OF THE REV. DANIEL BURGESS.

HE was born about the year 1645, at Staines in Middlesex, where his father, Mr. Daniel Burgess, was at that time minister, but afterwards removed to Sutton, in Wiltshire, and then to Collinburn Ducis, in the same county, a very considerable living, I am told, of about 400*l.* per annum; and thence he was turned out by the *Act of Uniformity*, choosing rather to quit it on the fatal *Bartholomew Day*, 1662, than to wrong his conscience; and with what little he had of his own, by the blessing of God, made a shift to maintain and educate a numerous family.

This son of his being looked upon to be a child of extraordinary ability, he sent him, at nine years old, to Winchester school; and, after some time, he was chosen on the foundation, where, as is supposed, he

continued till he removed to the university. He was entered Commoner of Magdalen-Hall in Oxford, in *Mich.* term, 1660, when we take him to be but about fifteen years of age; so great was his proficiency. That house then flourished much under Dr. Henry Wilkinson, who was then principal of it, but was turned out by the *Act of Uniformity*. His tutor was one Mr. Northmore, a Devonshire man, of great note for piety and learning, and an acute disputant.

One who was his contemporary in Magdalen-Hall, gives us this account of him, that he was observed to be a very close hard student, and his demeanour in the house was, in all respects, very good.

He continued there till he was Bachelor's standing; but then he and some others his contemporaries