

This will be a guide and guard in every way that we may go, and our comfort in every condition we may be in. It is the presence of God that makes heaven to be heaven, and that will make this earth to be like to heaven. No matter where we are, if God be with us; nor who is absent, if God be present with us.

3. That the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be with them*. So this apostle concluded his first epistle to these Thessalonians; and it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may comfortably hope to have peace with God, and enjoy the presence of God, for he has made them *nigh, that were afar off*. It is this grace that is all in all to make us happy. This is what the apostle admired and magnified on all occasions, what he delighted

and trusted in; and by this salutation or benediction, *written with his own hand, as the token of every epistle*, (when the rest was written by an amanuensis,) he took care lest the churches he wrote to should be imposed on by counterfeit epistles, which he knew would be of dangerous consequence.

Let us be thankful that we have the canon of scripture complete, and by the wonderful and special care of Divine Providence preserved pure and uncorrupt through so many successive ages; and not dare to add to it, or diminish from it. Let us believe the divine original of the sacred scriptures, and conform our faith and practice to this our sufficient and only rule, *which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. Amen.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO TIMOTHY.

Completed by Mr. Atkinson.

HITHERTO Paul's Epistles were directed to churches; now follow some to particular persons: two to Timothy, one to Titus, and another to Philemon; all three ministers. Timothy and Titus were evangelists, an inferior order to the apostles, as appears by that, (Eph. 4. 11.) *Some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists*. Their commission and work was much the same with that of the apostles, to plant churches, and water the churches that were planted; and accordingly they were itinerants, as we find Timothy was. Timothy was first converted by Paul, and therefore he calls him his *own son in the faith*: we read of his conversion, Acts 16. 3.

The scope of these two Epistles, is, to direct Timothy how to discharge his office as an evangelist at Ephesus, where he now was, and where Paul ordered him for some time to reside, to perfect the good work which he had begun there. As for the ordinary pastoral charge of that church, he had very solemnly committed it to the Presbytery, as appears from Acts 20. 28. where he charges the presbyters *to feed the flock of God, which he had purchased with his own blood*.

I. TIMOTHY, I.

CHAP. I.

After the inscription (v. 1, 2.) we have, I. the charge given to Timothy, v. 3, 4. II. The true end of the law, (v. 5. 11.) where he shews it is entirely agreeable to the gospel. III. He mentions his own call to be an apostle; for which he expresses his thankfulness, v. 12. 16. IV. His doxology, v. 17. V. A renewal of the charge to Timothy, v. 18. And of Hymeneus and Alexander, v. 19, 20.

1. **P**AUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *who is our*

hope; 2. Unto Timothy, *my own son in the faith*: grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. 3. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4. Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do*.

Here is,

1. The inscription of the epistle; from whom it is sent—*Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ*, constituted an apostle by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ. His credentials were unquestionable; he had not only a commission, but a commandment, not only from God our Saviour, but from Jesus Christ: he was a preacher of the gospel of Christ, and a minister of the kingdom of Christ. Observe, God is our Saviour, *Jesus Christ, who is our Hope*. Observe, Jesus Christ is a Christian's hope; our hope is in him, all our hope of eternal life is built upon him; Christ is in us the Hope of glory, Col. 1. 27. He calls Timothy his *own son*, because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because he had been a son that served him; served with him in the gospel, Phil. 2. 22. Timothy had not been wanting in the duty and observance of a son to Paul, and Paul was not wanting in the care and tenderness of a father to him.

2. The benediction is, *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father*. Some have observed, that whereas in all the epistles to the churches, the apostolical benediction is *grace and peace*; in these two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, it is *grace, mercy, and peace*: as if ministers had more need of God's mercy than other men. Ministers need more grace than others, to discharge their duty faithfully; and they need more mercy than others, to pardon what is amiss in them: and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers, in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit!

3. Paul tells Timothy what was the end of his appointing him to this office; I besought thee to abide at Ephesus. Timothy had a mind to have gone with Paul, was loath to go from under his wing; but Paul would have it so, it was necessary for the public service; *I besought thee*, says he. Though he might assume an authority to command him, yet for love's sake he chose rather to beseech him. Now his business was, to take care to fix both the ministers and the people of that church; *Charge them that they teach no other doctrine* than what they have received; that they do not add to the Christian doctrine, under pretence of improving it, or making up the defects of it; that they do not alter it, but cleave to it as it was delivered to them. Observe,

(1.) Ministers must not only be charged to preach the true doctrine of the gospel, but charged to preach no other doctrine. *If an angel from heaven preached any other doctrine, he was an anathema*, Gal. 1. 8.

(2.) In the times of the apostles there were attempts made to corrupt Christianity; (*we are not as many, who corrupt the word*, 2 Cor. 2. 17.) otherwise this charge to Timothy might have been spared.

(3.) He must not only see to it, that he did not preach any other doctrine, but he must charge others that they might not add any thing of their own to the gospel, or take any thing from it, but that they preach it pure and uncorrupt. He must also take care to prevent their regarding *fables and endless genealogies* and strifes of words. This is often repeated in these two epistles, (as ch. 4. 7.—6. 4. 2 Tim. 2. 23.) as well as in the epistle to Titus. As among the Jews there were some who brought Judaism into Christianity; so among the Gentiles there were some who brought Paganism into Christianity. "Take heed of those," says he, "watch against them, it will be the corrupting and ruining of religion among you, for these minister questions rather than edifying." That which ministers questions, is not for edifying; that which gives occasion

for doubtful disputes, pulls down the church rather than builds it up. And I think, by a parity of reason, every thing else that ministers questions rather than godly edifying, should be disclaimed and disregarded by us, such as an uninterrupted succession in the ministry from the apostles down to these times, the absolute necessity of episcopal ordination, and the intention of the minister to the efficacy and validity of the sacraments he administers. These are as bad as Jewish fables and endless genealogies, for they involve us in inextricable difficulties, and tend only to shake the foundations of a Christian's hope, and to fill his mind with perplexing doubts and fears. Godly edifying is the end ministers should aim at in all their discourses, that Christians may be improving in godliness, and growing up to a greater likeness to the blessed God. Observe further, Godly edifying must be in faith: the gospel is the foundation on which we build; it is by faith that we come to God at first; (Heb. 11. 6.) and it must be in the same way, and by the same principle of faith, that we must be edified. Again, Ministers should avoid, as much as may be, what will occasion disputes; and would do well to insist on the great and practical points of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths draw off the mind from the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness, but may keep the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

5. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: 6. From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; 7. Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 8. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9. Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, 10. For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; 11. According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Here the apostle instructs Timothy how to guard against the judaizing teachers, or others who mingled fables and endless genealogies with the gospel. He shews the use of the law, and glory of the gospel.

1. He shews the end and uses of the law: it is intended to promote love, *for love is the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. 13. 10.

1. *The end of the commandment is charity*, or love, Rom. 13. 8. The main scope and drift of the divine law are to engage us to the love of God, and one another; and whatever tends to weaken either our love to God, or love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment: and surely the gospel, which obliges us to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, (Matt. 5. 44.) does not design to lay aside or supersede a commandment

the end whereof is love; so far from it, that, on the other hand, we are told, that though we had all advantages, and wanted charity, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, 1 Cor. 13. 1. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another*, John 13. 35. Those therefore who boasted of their knowledge of the law, but used it only as a colour for the disturbance that they gave to the preaching of the gospel, under pretence of zeal for the law, dividing the church, and distracting it; they defeated that which was the very end of the commandment, and that is love; *love out of a pure heart*, a heart purified by faith, purified from corrupt affections. In order to the keeping up of holy love, our hearts must be cleansed from all sinful love; our love must arise *out of a good conscience* kept without offence. Those who are careful to keep a good conscience, from a real belief of the truth of the word of God, which enjoins it, here called, *a faith unfeigned*; those answer the end of the commandment.

Here we have the concomitants of that excellent grace charity: they are three. (1.) A pure heart; there it must be seated, and from thence it must take its rise. (2.) A good conscience, which we must exercise ourselves daily in, that we may not only get it, but that we may keep it, Acts 24. 16. (3.) Faith unfeigned must also accompany it, for it is love without dissimulation: the faith that works by it, must be of the like nature, genuine and sincere. Now some who set up for teachers of the law, *swerved* from the very end of the commandment: they set up for disputers, but their disputes proved *vain jangling*; set up for *teachers*, but they pretended to teach others what they themselves did not understand. If the church be corrupted by such teachers, we must not think it strange, for we see from the beginning it was so. Observe,

[1.] When persons, especially ministers, swerve from the great law of charity—the end of the commandment, they will turn aside to vain jangling; when a man misses his end and scope, it is no wonder that every step he takes is out of the way.

[2.] Jangling, especially in religion, is vain; it is unprofitable and useless as to all that is good, and it is very pernicious and hurtful: and yet many people's religion consists of little else but vain jangling.

[3.] Those who deal much in vain jangling are fond and ambitious to be teachers of others; they desire, that is, they affect, the office of teaching.

[4.] It is too common for men to intrude into the office of the ministry, when they are very ignorant of those things about which they are to speak: they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm: and by such learned ignorance, no doubt, they edify their hearers very much!

2. *The use of the law*; (v. 8.) *The law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, a veil to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think to set it aside, but *use it lawfully*, for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law, does not take away the use of it; but when a divine appointment has been abused, call it back to its right use, and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is *not made for a righteous man*, it is not made for those who observe it: for if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law; (Gal. 3. 21.) but it is made for wicked persons, to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and profaneness. It is the grace of God that changes men's hearts; but the terrors of the law may be of use, to tie their

hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or lesser measure, v. 9, 10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table duties, which we owe to our neighbour; against the fifth and sixth commandments, murderers of fathers and mothers, and man-slayers; against the seventh, whoremongers, and them that defile themselves with mankind; against the eighth, men-stealers; against the ninth, liars and perjured persons; and then he closes his account with this, *and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine*. Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are specified, and to see those laws put in execution.

II. He shews the glory and grace of the gospel. Paul's epithets are expressive, significant: and frequently every one is a sentence; as here, (v. 11.) *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*. Let us learn from hence,

1. To call God *the blessed God*, infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself and his own perfections.

2. To call the gospel *the glorious gospel*, for so it is: much of the glory of God appears in the works of creation and providence, but much more in the gospel, where it *shines in the face of Jesus Christ*. Paul reckoned it a great honour put upon him, and a great favour done him, that this glorious gospel was committed to his trust; that is, the *preaching* of it; for the *framing* of it is not committed to any man or company of men in the world. The settling of the terms of salvation in the gospel of Christ, is God's own work; but the publishing of it to the world is committed to the apostles and ministers. Note here,

(1.) The ministry is a *trust*, for the gospel was committed unto this apostle; it is an office of trust as well as of power, and the former more than the latter; for this reason ministers are called *stewards*, 1 Cor. 4. 1.

(2.) It is a *glorious* trust, because the gospel committed to them is a glorious gospel; it is a trust of very great importance, God's glory is very much concerned in it. Lord! what a trust is committed to us! How much grace do we want to be found faithful in this great trust!

12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

14. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Here he returns thanks to Jesus Christ for putting him into the ministry. Observe,

I. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, Acts 26. 16, 17. God condemned the false prophets among the Jews in these words, *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*, Jer. 23. 21. Ministers, properly speaking, cannot make ministers; much less can persons make themselves ministers; for it is Christ's work, as King and Head, Prophet and Teacher of his church.

II. Those whom he puts into the ministry he enables for it; whom he calls he qualifies. Those ministers who are no way fit for their work, nor have ability for it, are not of Christ's putting into the ministry, though there are different qualifications as to gifts and graces.

III. Christ gives not only ability, but fidelity, to those whom he puts into the ministry; He counted me faithful: and none are counted faithful, but those whom he makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so, who have so great a trust committed to them.

IV. A call to the ministry is a great favour, for which those who are so called ought to give thanks to Jesus Christ; *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath put me into the ministry*. Now, the more to magnify the grace of Christ in putting him into the ministry, he gives an account of his conversion.

1. What he was before his conversion; a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, Acts 9. 1. He made havoc of the church, Acts 8. 3. He was a blasphemer of God, a persecutor of the saints, and injurious to both. Frequently those who are designed for great and eminent services, are left to themselves before their conversion, to fall into great wickedness; that the mercy of God may be the more glorified in their remission, and the grace of God in their regeneration. The greatness of sin is no bar to our acceptance with God, no, nor to our being employed for him, if it be truly repented of.

Observe here,

(1.) Blasphemy, persecution and injuriousness, are very great and heinous sins, and those who are guilty of them are sinners before God exceedingly; to blaspheme God is immediately and directly to strike at God; to persecute his people is to endeavour to wound him through their sides; and to be injurious, is to be like Ishmael, whose hand was against every one, and every one was against him: for such invade God's prerogative, and encroach upon the liberties of their fellow-creatures.

(2.) True penitents, to serve a good purpose, will not be backward to own their former condition before they were brought home to God: this good apostle often confessed what his former life had been, as Acts 22. 4.—26. 10, 11.

2. See the great favour of God to him; *But I obtained mercy*. This was a blessed but indeed, a great favour, that so notorious a rebel should find mercy with his Prince. If Paul had persecuted the Christians wilfully, knowing them to be the people of God, for ought I know, he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin; but because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief, he obtained mercy. Note,

(1.) What we do ignorantly is a less crime than what we do knowingly; yet a sin of ignorance is a sin, for he that knew not his Master's will, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes, Luke 12. 48. Ignorance in some cases will extenuate a crime, though it do not take it away. (2.) Unbelief is at the bottom of what sinners do ignorantly; they do not believe God's threatenings, otherwise they could not do as they do. (3.) For these reasons St. Paul obtained mercy;

But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief. (4.) Here was mercy for a blasphemer, a persecutor, and for an injurious person; "but I obtained mercy, I a blasphemer," &c.

Here he takes notice of the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, v. 14. The conversion and salvation of great sinners are owing to the grace of Christ, his exceeding abundant grace, even that grace of Christ which appears in his glorious gospel, v. 15. *This is a faithful saying*, &c. Here we have the sum of the whole gospel, *that Jesus Christ came into the world*. The Son of God took upon him our nature, was made flesh, and dwelt among us, John 1. 14. He came into the world, *not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matt. 9. 13. His errand into the world was to seek and find, and so save, them that were lost, Luke 19. 10. The ratification of this is, *that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance*. It is good news, *worthy of all acceptance*; and yet not too good to be true, for *it is a faithful saying*. It is a faithful saying, and therefore worthy to be embraced in the arms of faith: it is *worthy of all acceptance*, and therefore to be received with holy love, which refers to the foregoing verse, where the grace of Christ is said to abound in faith and love. In the close of the verse Paul applies it to himself; *Of whom, I am chief*. Paul was a sinner of the first rank; so he acknowledges himself to have been, for he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, &c. Acts 9. 1, 2. Persecutors are some of the worst of sinners: such a one as Paul had been; or, *of whom am I chief*, that is, of pardoned sinners *I am chief*. It is an expression of his great humility; he that elsewhere calls himself the *least of all saints*, (Ephes. 3. 8.) here calls himself the *chief of sinners*. Observe,

[1.] Christ Jesus is come into the world; the prophecies concerning his coming are now fulfilled. [2.] He came to save sinners, he came to save those who could not save and help themselves. [3.] Blasphemers and persecutors are the chief of sinners, so St. Paul reckoned them. [4.] The chief of sinners may become the chief of saints; so this apostle was, for he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles; (2. Cor. 11. 5.) for Christ came to save the chief of sinners. [5.] This is a very great truth, it is a faithful saying; these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on. [6.] It deserves to be received, to be believed by us all, for our comfort and encouragement.

The mercy which Paul found with God, notwithstanding his great wickedness before his conversion, he speaks of,

First, For the encouragement of others to repent and believe; (v. 16.) *For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe*. It was an instance of the long-suffering of Christ, that he would bear so much with one who had been so very provoking; and it was designed for a pattern to all others, that the greatest sinners might not despair of mercy with God.

Note here, 1. Our apostle was one of the first great sinners converted to Christianity. 2. He was converted, and obtained mercy, for the sake of others as well as of himself; he was a pattern to others. 3. The Lord Jesus Christ shews great long-suffering in the conversion of great sinners. 4. Those who obtain mercy, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; for without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11. 6. 5. Those who believe on Christ, believe on him to life everlasting; they believe to the saving of the soul, Heb. 10. 39.

Secondly, He mentions it to the glory of God: having spoken of the mercy he had found with God,

he could not go on with his letter, without inserting a thankful acknowledgment of God's goodness to him; *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* Observe,

1. That grace which we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. Those who are sensible of their obligations to the mercy and grace of God, will have their hearts enlarged in his praise. Here is praise ascribed to him, as *the King eternal, immortal, invisible.*

2. When we have found God good, we must not forget to pronounce him great; and his kind thoughts of us must not at all abate our high thoughts of him, but rather increase them. God had taken particular cognizance of Paul, and shewed him mercy, and taken him into communion with himself, and yet he calls him *the King eternal*, &c. God's gracious dealings with us should fill us with admiration of his glorious attributes. He is *eternal*, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. He is the Ancient of days, Dan. 7. 9. He is *immortal*, and the Original of immortality; he only has immortality, (1 Tim. 6. 16.) for he cannot die. He is *invisible*, for he cannot be seen with mortal eyes, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see. He is (1 Tim. 6. 16.) *the only wise God*; (Jude 25.) he only is infinitely wise, and the Fountain of all wisdom. "*To him be glory for ever and ever.*" Let me be for ever employed in giving honour and glory to him, as the thousands of thousands do, Rev. 5. 12, 13.

18. This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; 19. Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: 20. Of whom are Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

Here is the charge he gives to Timothy to proceed in his work with resolution, v. 18. Observe here, The gospel is a *charge committed* to the ministers of it; it is committed to their trust, to see that it be duly applied according to the intent and meaning of it, and the design of its great Author. It seems, there had been prophecies before, concerning Timothy, that he should be taken into the ministry, and should prove eminent in the work of the ministry; this encouraged Paul to commit this charge to him. Observe,

1. The ministry is a *warfare*, it is a good warfare against sin and Satan: and under the banner of the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our salvation, (Heb. 2. 10.) and in his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in a particular manner engaged.

2. Ministers must *war this good warfare*; must execute their office diligently and courageously, notwithstanding oppositions and discouragements.

3. The prophecies which went before concerning Timothy, are here mentioned as a motive to stir him up to a vigorous and conscientious discharge of his duty; so the good hopes that others have entertained concerning us, should excite us to our duty; *that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.*

V. 19. *Holding faith and a good conscience.* We must hold both faith and a good conscience; those that put away a good conscience, will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions
"a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep a con-

science void of offence, (Acts 24. 16.) a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and that will be means of preserving us sound in the faith; we must look to the one as well as the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, *ch. 3.* 9. As for those who had made shipwreck of the faith, he specifies two, *Hymeneus and Alexander*, who had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession: and Paul had *delivered them to Satan*, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, *that they might learn not to blaspheme*, not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ, and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was, to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner. In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 5. 5. Observe,

(1.) Those who love the service and work of Satan, are justly delivered over to the power of Satan; *whom I have delivered to Satan.* (2.) God can, if he pleases, work by contraries: Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn *not* to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme the more. (3.) Those who have put away a good conscience, and made a shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted. (4.) Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, St. Paul treats, I. Of prayer, with many reasons for it, v. 1. . . 8. II. Of women's apparel, v. 9, 10. III. Of their subjection, with the reasons of it, v. 11. . . 14. IV. A promise given for their encouragement in child-bearing, v. 15.

1. **I** EXHORT therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2. For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4. Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5. For *there* is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 8. I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

Here is,

I. A charge given to Christians, to pray for all men in general, and particularly for all in authority. Timothy must take care that this was done. Paul does not send him any prescribed form of prayer, as we have reason to think he would if he had intended that ministers should be tied to that way of praying; but in general, that they should make *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks: supplications*, for the averting of evil; *prayers*, for the obtaining of good; *intercessions* for others; and *thanksgivings* for mercies already received. Paul

thought it enough to give them general heads; they, having the scripture to direct them in prayer, and the Spirit of prayer poured out upon them, needed not any further directions. Observe, The design of the Christian religion was to promote prayer; and the disciples of Christ must be praying people. *Pray always with all prayer*, Ephes. 6. 18. There must be prayers for ourselves in the first place; this is implied here; we must also pray *for all men*, for the world of mankind in general, for particular persons who need or desire our prayers. See how far the Christian religion was from being a sect, when it taught men this diffusive charity; to pray, not only for those of their own way, but for all men. *Pray for kings*; (v. 2.) though the kings at this time were heathens, enemies to Christianity, and persecutors of Christians, yet they must pray for them, because it is for the public good that there should be civil government, and proper persons intrusted with the administration of it, whom therefore we ought to pray for, yea, though we ourselves suffer under them. *For kings; and all that are in authority*, that is, inferior magistrates: we must pray for them, and we must give thanks for them, pray for their welfare, and for the welfare of their kingdoms, and therefore must not plot against them, that in the peace thereof we may have peace, and give thanks for them and for the benefit we have under their government; that *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*. Here see what we must desire for kings—that God will so turn their hearts, and direct them, and make use of them, that we under them *may lead a quiet and peaceable life*. He does not say, “that we may get preferments under them, grow rich, and be in honour and power under them;” no, the top of the ambition of a good Christian, is, to lead a *quiet and peaceable life*, to get through the world unmolested in a low private station. We should desire that we and others may lead a *peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*; implying, that we cannot expect to be kept quiet and peaceable, unless we keep in *all godliness and honesty*. Let us mind our duty, and then we may expect to be taken under the protection both of God and the government. *In all godliness and honesty*. Here we have our duty as Christians summed up in two words; *godliness*, that is, the right worshipping of God; and *honesty*, that is, a good conduct toward all men. These two must go together; we are not truly honest, if we are not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly, if we are not honest, for God *hates robbery for burnt-offering*.

Here we observe, 1. Christians are to be much given to prayer; they ought to abound herein, and should use themselves to prayers, supplications, &c. 2. In our prayers we are to have a generous concern for others as well as for ourselves; we are to pray for all men, and to give thanks for all men; and must not confine our prayers or thanksgivings to our own persons or families. 3. Prayer consists of various parts, of supplications, intercessions, and thanksgivings; for we must pray for the mercies we want, as well as be thankful for mercies already received; and we are to deprecate the judgments which our own sins or the sins of others have deserved. 4. All men, yea kings themselves, and those who are in authority, are to be prayed for; they want our prayers, for they have many difficulties to encounter, many snares to which their exalted stations expose them. 5. In praying for our governors, we take the most likely course to lead a peaceable and quiet life. The Jews at Babylon were commanded to seek the peace of the city, whither the Lord had caused them to be carried captives, and to pray to the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof they should have peace, Jer. 29. 7. 6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we must live

in all godliness and honesty; we must do our duty to God and man. *He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it*, 1 Pet. 3. 10, 11.

Now the reason he gives for this, is, *because this is good in the sight of God our Saviour*; the gospel of Christ requires this. That which is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should do, and should abound in.

11. As a reason why we should in our prayers concern ourselves for all men, he shews God's love to mankind in general, v. 4.

1. One reason why all men are to be prayed for, is, because there is one God, and that God bears a good will to all mankind. There is *one God*, (v. 5.) and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite. This one God *will have all men to be saved*; he desires not the death and destruction of any, (Ezek. 33. 11.) but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that he has decreed the salvation of all, for then all men would be saved; but he has a good will to the salvation of all, and none perish but by their own fault, Matt. 23. 37. He will have all to be saved, and *to come to the knowledge of the truth*; to be saved in the way that he has appointed, and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; *Christ is the Way and the Truth, and so he is the Life*.

2. There is one Mediator, and that Mediator gave himself a Ransom for all. As the mercy of God extends itself to all his works, so the mediation of Christ extends itself thus far to all the children of men, that he paid a price sufficient for the salvation of all mankind; he brought mankind to stand upon new terms with God, so that they are not now under the law as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life; they are under grace; not under the covenant of innocence, but under a new covenant; *he gave himself a ransom*. Observe, The death of Christ was a ransom, a counter-price; we deserved to have died; Christ died for us, to save us from death and hell; he gave himself a Ransom voluntarily, a Ransom for all; so that all mankind are put in a better condition than that of devils. He died to work out a common salvation: in order hereunto, he put himself into the office of Mediator between God and man. A mediator supposes a controversy. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is a Mediator who undertakes to make peace, to bring God and man together, in the nature of an Umpire or Arbitrator, a Days-man who lays his hand upon us both, Job 9. 33. He is a Ransom that *was to be testified in due time*; that is, in the Old Testament-times, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times, 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. And they are accordingly revealed, Paul himself having been *ordained a preacher and an apostle*, to publish to the Gentiles the glad tidings of redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ. This doctrine of Christ's mediation Paul was intrusted to preach to every creature, Mark 16. 15. He was appointed to be a teacher of the Gentiles; beside his general call to the apostleship, he was commissioned particularly to preach to the Gentiles, *in faith and truth*, faithfully and truly. Note,

(1.) It is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, that we pray for kings and for all men, and also, that we lead a peaceable and quiet life; and this is a very good reason why we should do the one as well as the other. (2.) God has a good will to the salvation of all; so that it is not so much the want of a will in God to save them, as it is a want of will in themselves to be saved in God's way. Here

our blessed Lord charges the fault; *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life*, John 5. 40. *I would have gathered you, and ye would not.* (3.) Those who are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners; without knowledge the heart cannot be good; if we do not know the truth, we cannot be ruled by it. (4.) It is observable, that the unity of God is asserted, and joined with the unity of the Mediator; and the church of Rome might as well maintain a plurality of gods as a plurality of mediators. (5.) He that is a Mediator in the New Testament sense, gave himself a Ransom. Vain then is the pretence of the Romanists, that there is but one Mediator of satisfaction, but many of intercession; for, according to St. Paul, Christ's giving himself a Ransom, was a necessary part of the Mediator's office; and indeed this lays the foundation for his intercession. (6.) St. Paul was ordained a minister, to declare this to the Gentiles, that Christ is the one Mediator between God and men, who gave himself a Ransom for all. This is the substance of which all ministers are to preach, to the end of the world; and St. Paul magnified his office, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 13. *Lastly*, Ministers must preach the truth, what they apprehend to be so, and they must believe it themselves; they are, like our apostle, to preach in faith and verity, and they must also be faithful and trusty.

III. A direction how to pray, v. 8.

1. Now, under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where: no place is amiss for prayer, no one place more acceptable to God than another, John 4. 21. *Pray every where.* We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private.

2. It is the will of God, that in prayer we should lift up holy hands; *lifting up holy hands*, or pure hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; *I will wash my hands*, &c. Ps. 26. 6.

3. We must pray in charity; *without wrath*, or anger at any person.

4. We must pray in faith, *without doubting*, (Jam. 1. 6.) or, as some read it, *without disputing*; and then it falls under the head of charity.

9. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10. But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. 11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14. And Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. 15. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Here is a charge, that women who profess the Christian religion, should be modest, sober, silent, and submissive, as becomes their place.

1. They must be very modest in their apparel, not affecting gaudiness, gaiety, or costliness; (you may read the vanity of a person's mind in the gaiety and gaudiness of their habit;) because they have better ornaments with which they should adorn

themselves, as becomes women professing godliness, with good works. Note, Good works are the best ornament; these are, in the sight of God, of great price. *Those that profess godliness, should, in their dress, as well as other things, act as becomes their profession*; instead of laying out their money on fine clothes, they must lay it out in works of piety and charity, which are properly called *good works*.

2. Women must learn—learn the principles of their religion, learn Christ, learn the scriptures; they must not think that their sex excuses them from that learning which is necessary to salvation.

3. They must be *silent*, submissive, and subject, and *not usurp authority*. The reason given, is, because *Adam was first formed, then Eve* out of him, to denote her subordination to him, and dependence upon him; and that she was made for him, to be a *help-meet* for him. And as she was last in the creation, which is the one reason for her subjection; so she was first in the transgression, and that is another reason. *Adam was not deceived*, that is, not first; the serpent did not immediately set upon him, but the woman was first in the transgression; (2 Cor. 11. 3.) and it was part of the sentence, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*, Gen. 3. 16.

But it is a word of comfort, (v. 15.) that they who continue in sobriety, shall be *saved in child-bearing, or with child-bearing*. The Messiah, who was born of a woman, should break the serpent's head; (Gen. 3. 15.) or, the sentence which they are under for sin, shall be no bar to their acceptance with Christ, *if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety*.

Here we observe, (1.) The extensiveness of the rules of Christianity; they reach not only to men, but to women, not only to their persons, but also to their dress, which must be modest, like their sex; and to their outward deportment and behaviour, it must be in silence, with all subjection. (2.) Women are to profess godliness as well as men; for they are baptized, and thereby stand engaged to exercise themselves to godliness; and, to their honour be it spoken, many of them were eminent professors of Christianity in the days of the apostles, as the book of Acts will inform us. (3.) Women being more in danger of exceeding in their apparel, it was more necessary to caution them in this respect. (4.) The best ornaments for professors of godliness, are, good works. (5.) According to St. Paul, women must be learners, and are not allowed to be public teachers in the church; for teaching is an office of authority; whereas she must not usurp authority over the man, but is to be in silence. But, notwithstanding this prohibition, good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of religion. Timothy from a child had known the holy scriptures; and who should teach him but his mother and grandmother? 2 Tim. 3. 15. Aquila and his wife Priscilla expounded unto Apollos the way of God more perfectly; but then they did it privately, for *they took him unto them*, Acts 18. 26. (6.) Here are two very good reasons given for the man's authority over the woman, and her subjection to the man, v. 13, 14. Adam was first formed, then Eve; she was created for the man, and not the man for the woman; (1 Cor. 11. 9.) then she was deceived, and brought the man into the transgression. *Lastly*, Though the difficulties and dangers of child-bearing are many and great, as they are part of the punishment inflicted on the sex for Eve's transgression, yet here is much for her support and encouragement; *notwithstanding she shall be saved*, &c. Though in sorrow, yet she shall bring forth, and be a living mother of living children: with this proviso, that they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety: and women under the circumstance of child-

bearing should by faith lay hold on this promise for their support in the needful time.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, our apostle treats of church-officers. And, I. He gives us the qualifications of a person to be admitted to the office of a bishop, v. 1. 7. II. He gives us the qualifications of deacons; (v. 8. 10.) and of their wives: (v. 11.) again of the deacons, v. 12. 13. III. He gives us the reasons of his writing to Timothy, whereupon he speaks of the church and the foundation-truth professed therein, v. 14, to the end.

1. **THIS** is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6. Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7. Moreover, he must have a good report of them who are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, contain a scripture-plan of church-government, or a direction to ministers. Timothy, we suppose, was an evangelist who was left at Ephesus, to take care of those whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops there, that is, the presbyters, as appears by Acts 20. 28. where the care of the church was committed to the presbyters, and they were called *bishops*. It seems, they were very loath to part with Paul, especially because he told them, they should *see his face no more*, (Acts 20. 38.) for their church was but newly planted, they were afraid of undertaking the care of it, and therefore Paul left Timothy with them to set them in order.

And here we have the character of a gospel-minister, whose office it is, as a bishop, to preside in a particular congregation of Christians; *If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work*, v. 1. The ministry is a work. However the office of a bishop may be now thought a good preferment, then it was thought a good work. Observe,

(1.) The office of a scripture-bishop is an office of divine appointment, and not of human invention; the ministry is not a creature of the state, and it is pity that the minister should be at any time the tool of the state. The office of the ministry was in the church before the magistrate countenanced Christianity, for this office is one of the great gifts Christ has bestowed on the church, Ephes. 4. 8, 11. (2.) This office of a Christian-bishop is a work which requires diligence and application: the apostle represents it under the notion and character of a *work*; not of great honour and advantage, for ministers should always look more to their work than to the honour and advantage of their office. (3.) It is a good work, a work of the greatest importance, and designed for the greatest good: the ministry is conversant about no lower concerns than the life and happiness of immortal souls; it is a good work, because designed to illustrate the divine perfections in bringing many sons into glory; the ministry is appointed to open men's eyes, and to turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, &c. Acts 26. 18. (4.) There ought to be an earnest desire of the office, in those who would be put into it; if a man desire, he should earnestly desire it, for the prospect he has of bringing greater glory to God, and of doing the greatest good to the souls of men by this means. This is the question proposed to those who offer themselves to the ministry of the church of England; "Do you think you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?"

In order to the discharge of this office, the doing of this work, the workman must be duly qualified.

1. A minister must be *blameless*; he must not lie under any scandal; he must give as little occasion for blame as can be, because that will be a prejudice to his ministry, and will reflect reproach upon his office.

2. He must be *the husband of one wife*; not having given a bill of divorce to one, and then taking another, or not having many wives at once, as at that time was too common both among Jews and Gentiles, especially among the Gentiles.

3. He must be *vigilant* and watchful against Satan, that subtle enemy; he must watch over himself, and the souls of those who are committed to his charge, of whom having taken the *oversight*, he must improve all opportunities of doing them good. A minister ought to be vigilant, because our adversary the Devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

4. He must be *sober*, temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature-comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are often in scripture put together, because they mutually befriended one another; *Be sober, be vigilant*.

5. He must be of *good behaviour*, composed and solid, and not light, vain, and frothy.

6. He must be *given to hospitality*; open-handed to strangers, and ready to entertain them according to his ability, as one who does not set his heart upon the wealth of the world, and who is a true lover of his brethren.

7. *Apt to teach*. Therefore this is a preaching bishop whom Paul describes, one who is both able and willing to communicate to others the knowledge which God has given him; one who is fit to teach, and ready to take all opportunities of giving instruction; who is himself *well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven*, and is communicative of what he knows to others.

8. *No drunkard; not given to wine*. The priests were not to drink wine when they went in to minister, (Lev. 10. 8, 9.) *lest they drink and pervert the law*.

9. *No striker*; one who is not quarrelsome, or apt to use violence to any, but does every thing with mildness, love, and gentleness. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, &c. 2 Tim. 2. 24.

10. One who is *not greedy of filthy lucre*; who does not make his ministry to truckle to any secular design or interest; who uses no mean, base, sordid ways of getting money; who is dead to the wealth of this world, lives above it, and makes it appear he is so.

11. He must be *patient*, and *not a brawler*; of a mild disposition. Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, is so. Not apt to be angry or quarrelsome, as not a striker with his hands, so not a brawler with his tongue; for how shall men teach others to govern their tongues, who do not make conscience of keeping them under good government themselves?

12. *Not covetous*. Covetousness is bad in any, but it is worst in a minister, whose calling leads him to converse so much with another world.

13. He must be one who keeps his family in good order; *that rules well his own house*, that he may set a good example to other masters of families, to do so too; and that he may thereby give a proof of his ability to take care of the church of God; *For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God.* Observe, The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. Ministers must *have their children in subjection*; then it is the duty of ministers' children to submit to the instructions that are given them. *With all gravity.* The best way to keep inferiors in subjection, is, to be grave with them. Not having his children in subjection with all *austerity*, but with all *gravity*.

14. He must *not be a novice*; not one newly brought to the Christian religion; or not one who is but meanly instructed in it, who knows no more of religion than the surface of it, for such a one is apt to be *lifted up with pride*: the more ignorant men are, the more proud they are. *Test, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the Devil.* The devils fell through pride, which is a good reason why we should take heed of pride, because it is a sin that turned angels into devils.

15. He must be of good reputation among his neighbours, and under no reproach from former conversation; for the Devil will make use of that to ensnare others, and work in them an aversion to the doctrine of Christ, preached by those who have not had a good report.

Now upon the whole, having briefly gone through the qualifications of a gospel-bishop, we may, (1.) With great reason cry out, as St. Paul does, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. 2. 16. *Hic labor, hoc opus—This is a work indeed.* What piety, what prudence, what zeal, what courage, what faithfulness, what watchfulness over ourselves, our lusts, appetites, and passions, and over those under our charge; I say, what holy watchfulness is necessary in this work! (2.) Have not the best qualified and the most faithful and conscientious ministers just reason to complain against themselves, that so much is requisite by way of qualification, and so much work is necessary to be done? And, alas! how far short do the best come of what they should be, and what they should do! (3.) Yet let those bless God, and be thankful, whom the Lord has enabled, and counted faithful, putting them into the ministry: if God is pleased to make any, in some degree, able and faithful, let him have the praise and glory of it. (4.) For the encouragement of all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. 28. 20. And if he be with us, he will fit us for our work in some measure, and carry us through the difficulties of it with comfort, graciously pardon our imperfections, and reward our faithfulness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. 5. 4.

8. Likewise *must* the deacons *be grave*, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9. Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. 11. Even so *must* their wives *be grave*, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to them-

selves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

1. We have here the character of deacons: these had the care of the temporal concerns of the church, that is, the maintenance of the ministers and provision for the poor: they served tables, while the ministers or bishops gave themselves only to the ministry of the word and prayer, Acts 6. 2, 4. Of the institution of this office with that which gave occasion to it, you have an account in Acts 6. 1—7. Now it was requisite that the deacons should have a good character, because they were assistants to the ministers, appeared and acted publicly, and had a great trust reposed in them. They must *be grave*; gravity becomes all Christians, but especially those who are in office in the church. *Not double-tongued*; that will say one thing to one, and another thing to another, according as their interest leads them: a double tongue comes from a double heart; flatterers and slanderers are double-tongued. *Not given to much wine*; for that is a great disparagement to any man, especially to a Christian, and one in office, unfits men for business, opens the door to many temptations. *Not greedy of filthy lucre*: this would especially be bad in the deacons, who were intrusted with the church's money, and, if they were covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, would be tempted to embezzle it, and convert that to their own use which was intended for the public service. *Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience*, v. 9. Note, The mystery of faith is best held in a pure conscience. The practical love of truth is the most powerful preservative from error and delusion. If we keep a pure conscience, take heed of every thing that debauches conscience, and draws them away from God, that will preserve in our souls the mystery of faith. *Let these also first be proved*, v. 10. It is not fit that the public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are first proved, and found fit for the business they are to be intrusted with; the soundness of their judgments, their zeal for Christ, and the blamelessness of their conversation, must be proved.

2. Their wives likewise must have a good character; (v. 11.) they must be of a *grave* behaviour, not *slanderers*, tale-bearers, carrying stories to make mischief and sow discord; they must be *sober and faithful in all things*, not given to any excess, but trusty in all that is committed to them. All who are related to ministers, must double their care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, lest, if they in any thing walk disorderly, the ministry be blamed. As he said before of the bishops or ministers, so here of the deacons, they must be *the husband of one wife*, such as had not put away their wives, upon dislike, and married others; they must *rule their children and their own houses well*; families of ministers should be examples to other families. And the reason why the deacons must be thus qualified, is, (v. 13.) because, though the office of a deacon be of an inferior degree, yet it is a step toward the higher degree; and they who had served tables well the church might see cause afterward to discharge from that service, and prefer to serve in preaching the word and in prayer. Or it may be meant of the good reputation that a man would gain by his fidelity in this office; *they will purchase to themselves great boldness in the faith that is in Jesus Christ*.

Observe, (1.) In the primitive church there were but two orders of ministers or officers, *bishops and deacons*, Philip. 1. 1. After-ages have invented the rest. The office of the bishop, presbyter, pastor, or minister, was confined to prayer and to the ministry of the word; and the office of the deacon was confined to, or at least principally conversant about, serving tables. Clemens Romanus, in his epistle to

the Christians, (*chap.* 42, 44.) speaks very fully and plainly to this effect, that the apostles, foreknowing, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would arise in the Christian church a controversy about the name *Episcopacy*, appointed the forementioned orders, *bishops* and *deacons*. (2.) The scripture-deacon's main employment was, to serve tables, and not to preach or baptize. It is true, indeed, Philip did preach and baptize many in Samaria, (Acts 8.) but you read he was an *evangelist*, (Acts 21. 8.) and he might preach and baptize, and perform any other part of the ministerial office, under that character: but still the design of the deacon's office was, to mind the temporal concerns of the church, such as the salaries of the ministers, and providing for the poor. (3.) Several qualifications were very necessary, even for these inferior officers; *The deacons must be grave*, &c. (4.) Some trial should be made of person's qualifications before they are admitted into office in the church, or have any trust committed to them; *Let these also first be proved*. (5.) Integrity and uprightness in an inferior office, are the way to be preferred to a higher station in the church; *They purchase to themselves a good degree*. (6.) This will also give a man great boldness in the faith, whereas a want of integrity and uprightness will make a man timorous, and ready to tremble at his own shadow; *The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion*, Prov. 28. 1.

14. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

He concludes the chapter with a particular direction to Timothy.

I. He hoped shortly to come to him, to give him further directions and assistance in his work, and to see that Christianity was well planted, and took root well, at Ephesus; he therefore wrote the more briefly to him. But,

II. He wrote *lest he should tarry long, that he might know how to behave himself in the house of God*, how to conduct himself as became an evangelist, and the apostle's substitute. Observe, Those who are employed in the house of God, must see to it, that they behave themselves well, lest they bring reproach upon the house of God, and that worthy name by which they are called. Ministers ought to behave themselves well, and to look not only to their praying and preaching, but to their behaviour: their office binds them to their good behaviour, for any behaviour will not do in this case. Timothy must know how to behave himself, not only in the particular church where he was now appointed to reside for some time, but, being an evangelist, and the apostle's substitute, he must learn how to behave himself in other churches, where he should in like manner be appointed to reside for some time; and therefore it is not the church of Ephesus, but the Catholic church, which is here called *the house of God, which is the church of the living God*. Observe here,

1. God is the living God; he is the Fountain of life, he is Life in himself, and he gives life, breath, and all things, to his creatures; in him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts 17. 25, 28.

2. The church is the house of God, he dwells there; the Lord has chosen Zion, to dwell there; "This is my rest, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it;" there may we see God's power and glory, Ps. 63. 2.

It is the great support of the church, that it is the church of the *living God*, the true God in opposition to false gods, dumb and dead idols; *the pillar and ground of truth*; that is, either,

(1.) The church itself; that is, the pillar and ground of truth. Not that the authority of the scriptures depends upon that of the church, as the papists pretend, for truth is the pillar and ground of the church; but the church holds forth the scripture and the doctrine of Christ, as the pillar, to which a proclamation is affixed, holds forth the proclamation; *Even to the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. 3. 10.

(2.) Others understand it of Timothy. He, not he himself only, but he as an evangelist, and other faithful ministers, are the pillars and ground of truth; it is their business to maintain, hold up, and publish, the truths of Christ in the church. It is said of the apostles, that *they seemed to be pillars*, Gal. 2. 9.

[1.] Let us be diligent and impartial in our own inquiries after truth; let us buy the truth at any rate, and not think much of any pains to discover it. [2.] Let us be careful to keep and preserve it; *"Buy the truth, and sell it not"*, (Prov. 23. 23.) do not part with it on any consideration." [3.] Let us take care to publish it, and to transmit it safe and uncorrupted unto posterity. [4.] When the church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be greater than our regard to the church; we are no longer obliged to continue in the church than she continues to be the pillar and ground of truth.

Now what is the truth which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds of? He tells us, (*v.* 16.) that *without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*. The learned Camero joins this with what goes before, and then it runs thus, "The pillar and ground of the truth; and *without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*." He supposes this mystery to be the pillar, &c. Observe,

First, Christianity is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by reason or the light of nature, and cannot be comprehended by reason, because it is above reason, though not contrary thereto. It is a mystery, not of philosophy or speculation; but, *Secondly*, It is a mystery of godliness, designed to promote godliness; and herein it exceeds all the mysteries of the Gentiles. *Thirdly*, It is a revealed mystery, not shut up and sealed; and it does not cease to be a mystery, because now in part revealed.

Now what is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness.

1. That he is God manifest in the flesh; *God was manifest in the flesh*. This proves that he is God, the eternal Word, that was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man, he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son; *The word was made flesh*, John 1. 14.

2. He is justified in the Spirit. Whereas he was reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all calumnies with which he was loaded. *He was made Sin for us, and was delivered for our offences*; but, being raised again, he was justified in the Spirit; it was made to appear that his

sacrifice was accepted, and so he rose again for our justification, as he was delivered for our offences, Rom. 4. 25. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. 3. 18.

3. He was *seen of angels*. They worshipped him, (Heb. 1. 6.) they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; this is much to his honour, and shews what a mighty interest he has in the upper world, that angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels.

4. He is *preached unto the Gentiles*. This is a great part of the mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the Gentiles a Redeemer and Saviour; that whereas, before, salvation was of the Jews, the partition-wall was now taken down, and the Gentiles were taken in; *I have set thee to be a Light of the Gentiles*, Acts 13. 47.

5. That he was *believed on in the world*, so that he was not preached in vain. Many of the Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Who would have thought that the world, which lay in wickedness, should have believed in the Son of God, should have taken him to be their Saviour, who was himself crucified at Jerusalem. But, notwithstanding all the prejudices they laboured under, he was believed on, &c.

6. He was *received up into glory*: in his ascension. This indeed was before he was believed on in the world; but it is put last, because it was the crown of his exaltation, and because it is not only his ascension that is meant, but his sitting at the right-hand of God, where *he ever lives, making intercession*, and has all power, both in heaven and earth: and because in the apostasy, of which he treats in the following chapter, his remaining in heaven would be denied by those who pretend to bring him down on their altars in the consecrated wafers. Observe,

(1.) He who was manifest in flesh, was God, really and truly God; God by nature, and not only so by office, for this makes it to be a mystery. (2.) God was manifest in flesh, real flesh; forasmuch as children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, Heb. 2. 14. And what is more amazing, he was manifest in the flesh, after all flesh had corrupted his way, though he himself was holy from the womb. (3.) Godliness is a mystery in all its parts and branches, from the beginning to the end, from Christ's incarnation to his ascension. (4.) It being a great mystery, we should rather humbly adore it, and piously believe it, than curiously pry into it, or be too positive in our explications of it, and determinations about it, further than the holy scriptures have revealed it to us.

CHAP. IV.

St. Paul here foretells, I. A dreadful apostasy, v. 1. . 3. II. He treats of Christian liberty, v. 4, 5. III. He gives Timothy divers directions with respect to himself, his doctrine, and the people under his care, v. 6, to the end.

1. **N**OW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their consciences seared with a hot iron; 3. Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanks-

giving: 5. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

We have here a prophecy of the apostasy of the latter times, which he had spoken of as a thing expected and taken for granted among Christians, 2 Thess. 2. In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had the mystery of godliness summed up; and therefore very fitly, in the beginning of this chapter, we have the mystery of iniquity summed up. *The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith*; whether he means the Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Spirit in the prophets of the New Testament, or both. The prophecies concerning antichrist, as well as the prophecies concerning Christ, came from the Spirit. The Spirit in both spake expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ, and the pure worship of God. This should come in the *latter times*, during the Christian dispensation, for those are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. *Some shall depart from the faith*, or there shall be an apostasy from the faith. *Some*, not all; for in the worst of times *God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace*. *They shall depart from the faith*, the faith delivered to the saints (Jude 3.) which was delivered at once, the sound doctrine of the gospel. *Giving heed to seducing spirits*; men who pretended to the Spirit, but were not really guided by the Spirit, 1 John 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit*; every one who pretends to the Spirit. Now here observe,

I. One of the great instances of that apostasy, and that is, giving heed to doctrines of demons, or concerning demons; those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathen called *demons*, and worshipped under that notion. Now this plainly agrees to the church of Rome, and it was one of the first steps toward that great apostasy, the insinuating of the relics of martyrs, paying divine honours to them, erecting altars, burning incense, consecrating images and temples, and making prayers and praises to the honour of saints departed. This demon-worship is paganism revived, the image of the first beast.

II. The instruments of promoting and propagating this apostasy and delusion. It will be done by *hypocrisy* of those that *speak lies*, (v. 2.) *speaking lies in hypocrisy*; the agents and emissaries of Satan, who promote these delusions by lies and forgeries and pretended miracles. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, and yet at the same time fighting against all his anointed offices, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. This respects also the hypocrisy of those who have *their consciences seared with a red hot iron*, who are perfectly lost to the first principles of virtue and moral honesty. If men had not their consciences seared as with a hot iron, they could never maintain a power to dispense with oaths for the good of the Catholic cause, could never maintain that no faith is to be kept with heretics, could never divest themselves of all remains of humanity and compassion, and clothe themselves with the most barbarous cruelty, under pretence of promoting the interest of the church.

Another part of their character is, that they *forbid to marry*, forbid their clergy to marry, and speak very reproachfully of marriage, though an ordinance of God; and that they command to *abstain from meats*, and place religion in that at certain times and seasons, only to exercise a tyranny over the consciences of men.

1. The apostasy of the latter times should not surprise us, because it was expressly foretold by the

Spirit. 2. The Spirit is God, otherwise he could not certainly foresee such distant events, which as to us are uncertain and contingent, depending on the tempers, humours, and lusts of men. 3. The difference between the predictions of the Spirit and the oracles of the heathen is remarkable; the Spirit speaks expressly, but the oracles of the heathen were always doubtful and uncertain. 4. It is comfortable to think that in such general apostasies all are not carried away, but only some. 5. It is common for seducers and deceivers to pretend to the Spirit, which is a strong presumption that all are convinced that this is the most likely to work in us an approbation of what pretends to come from the Spirit. 6. Men must be hardened, and their consciences seared, before they can depart from the faith, and draw in others to side with them. 7. It is a sign that men have departed from the faith, when they will command what God has forbidden, such as saint and angel or demon-worship; and forbid what God has allowed or commanded, such as marriage and meats.

Upon occasion of the mentioning of their hypocritical fastings, the apostle lays down the doctrine of the Christian liberty which we enjoy under the gospel, of using God's good creatures; that, whereas under the law there was a distinction of meats between clean and unclean, (such sort of flesh they might eat, and such they might not eat,) *all that is now taken away; and we are to call nothing common or unclean*, Acts 10. 15.

(1.) We are to look upon our food as that which *God has created*; we have it from him, and therefore must use it for him.

(2.) God, in making those things, had a special regard to *them who believe and know the truth*; good Christians, who have a covenant right to the creatures; whereas others have only a common right.

(3.) What God has created, is to be *received with thanksgiving*. We must not refuse the gifts of God's bounty, or be scrupulous in making differences where God has made none; but take it, and be thankful, acknowledging the power of God the Maker of them, and the bounty of God the Giver of them.

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, v. 4. This plainly sets us at liberty from all the distinctions of meats appointed by the ceremonial law, as particularly that of swine's flesh, which the Jews were forbidden to eat, but which is allowed to us Christians, by this rule, *Every creature of God is good*, &c. Observe, God's good creatures are *then good*, and doubly sweet to us, when they are received with thanksgiving.

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, v. 5. It is a desirable thing to have a sanctified use of our creature-comforts. Now they are sanctified to us,

[1.] By the word of God; not only his permission, allowing us the liberty of the use of these things, but his promise to feed us *with food convenient for us*. This gives us a sanctified use of our creature-comforts.

[2.] By prayer, which blesses our meat to us. The word of God and prayer must be brought to our common actions and affairs, and then we do all in faith. Observe,

First, Every creature is God's, for he made all. *Every beast in the forest is mine*, (says God,) *and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine*, Ps. 50. 10, 11. *Secondly*, Every creature of God is good: when the blessed God took a survey of all his works, God saw all that was made, and, behold, it was very good, Gen. 1. 31. *Thirdly*, The blessing of God makes every creature nourishing to us; man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, (Matt. 4. 4.) and therefore nothing ought to be refused. *Fourthly*,

We ought therefore to ask his blessing by prayer, and so to sanctify the creatures we receive by prayer.

6. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. 8. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. 10. For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. 11. These things command and teach. 12. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. 16. Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance, &c. He would have Timothy to instil such notions as these into the minds of Christians, which might prevent their being seduced by the judaizing teachers. Observe, Those are good ministers of Jesus Christ, who are diligent in their work; not that study to advance new notions, but that *put the brethren in remembrance of those things which they have received and heard*. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you *always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them*, 2 Pet. 1. 12. And elsewhere, *I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance*, 2 Pet. 3. 1. And, says the apostle Jude, *I will therefore put you in remembrance*, Jude 5. You see that the apostles and apostolical men reckoned it a main part of their work, to put their hearers in remembrance; for we are apt to forget, and slow to learn and remember, the things of God.

Nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. Observe, 1. Even ministers themselves have need to be growing and increasing in the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine: they must be nourished up in the words of faith. 2. The best way for ministers to grow in knowledge and faith, is, to put the brethren in remembrance; while we teach others, we teach ourselves. 3. They whom ministers teach, are brethren, and are to be treated like brethren; for ministers are not lords of God's heritage.

1. Godliness is here pressed upon him and others; *Refuse profane and old wives' sayings*, v. 7, 8. The Jewish traditions which some people fill their heads with, have nothing to do with them. "*But exercise thyself rather unto godliness*; mind practical reli-

gion." Those who would be godly, must exercise themselves unto godliness; it requires a constant exercise. The reason is taken from the gain of godliness; *bodily exercise profits little*, or for a little time. Abstinence from meats and marriage, and the like, though they pass for acts of mortification and self-denial, yet they profit little, they turn to little account. What will it avail us, to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin? Observe,

There is a great deal to be got by godliness; it will be of use to us in the whole of our life; *for it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*. Observe, The gain of godliness lies much in the *promise*; and the promises made to godly people relate to the *life that now is*; but especially they relate to the *life which is to come*. Under the Old Testament the promises were mostly of temporal blessings, but under the New Testament of spiritual and eternal blessings. If godly people have but little of the good things of the *life that now is*, yet it shall be made up to them in the good things of the *life that is to come*. Observe further, There were profane and old wives' fables in the days of the apostles; and Timothy, though an excellent man, was not above such a word of advice, *Refuse profane, &c.* Again, It is not enough that we refuse profane and old wives' fables, but we must exercise ourselves to godliness; we must not only cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well, (Isa. 1. 16, 17.) and we must make a practice of exercising ourselves to godliness. And, *lastly*, Those who are truly godly, shall not be losers at last, whatever becomes of those who content themselves with bodily exercise, for godliness has the promise, &c.

II. The encouragement which we have to proceed in the ways of godliness, and to exercise ourselves to it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements that we meet with in it. He had said, (v. 8.) that it is *profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is*. But the question is, "Will the profit balance the loss?" For if it will not, it is not profit. Yes, we are sure it will. Here is another of *Paul's faithful sayings, worthy of all acceptance*—that all our labours and losses in the service of God and work of religion, will be abundantly recompensed: so that though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him; *Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God*, v. 10. Observe,

1. Godly people must labour and expect reproach; they must do well, and yet expect at the same time to suffer ill: toil and trouble are to be expected by us in this world, not only as men, but as saints.

2. Those who labour and suffer reproach in the service of God and the work of religion, may depend upon the living God, that they shall not lose by it. Let this encourage them, *We trust in the living God*. The consideration of this, that that God who has undertaken to be our Pay-master, is the living God, who does himself live for ever, and is the fountain of life to all who serve him, should encourage us in all our services and in all our sufferings for him, especially considering that he is *the Saviour of all men*.

(1.) By his providences he protects the persons, and prolongs the lives, of the children of men.

(2.) He has a general good-will to the eternal salvation of all men thus far, that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He desires not the death of sinners; he is thus far the Saviour of all men, that none are left in the same desperate condition that fallen angels are in. Now if he be thus the Saviour of all men, we may hence infer, that much more he will be the Rewarder of those who seek and serve him; if he has such a good-will for all his creatures, much more will he provide well for those who are new creatures,

who are born again. He is the Saviour of all men, but *especially of those that believe*; and the salvation he has in store for those that believe, is sufficient to recompense them for all their services and sufferings.

Here we see, [1.] The life of a Christian is a life of labour and suffering; *we labour and suffer*. [2.] The best we can expect to suffer in the present life, is, reproach for our well-doing, for our work of faith and labour of love. [3.] True Christians trust in the living God; for cursed is the man that trusts in man, or in any but the living God; and they that trust in him, shall never be ashamed. *Trust in him at all times*. [4.] God is the general Saviour of all men, as he has put them into a salvable state; but he is in a peculiar manner the Saviour of true believers; there is then a general and a special redemption.

III. He concludes the chapter with an exhortation to Timothy;

1. To *command and teach these things* that he had now been teaching him. "Command them to exercise themselves unto godliness, teach them the profit of it, and that if they serve God, they serve one who will be sure to bear them out."

2. He charges him to conduct himself with that gravity and prudence that might gain him respect, notwithstanding his youth; "*Let no man despise thy youth*"; give no man an occasion to despise thy youth." Men's youth will not be despised, if they do not by youthful vanities and follies make themselves despicable; and that men may do, who are old, who may therefore thank themselves if they be despised.

3. He charges him to confirm his doctrine by a good example; *Be thou an example of the believers, &c.* Observe, Those who teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life, else they pull down with one hand what they build up with the other: they must be examples both in *word and conversation*. Their discourse must be edifying, and that will be a good example: their conversation must be strict, and that will be a good example: they must be examples in *charity*, or love to God and all good men: examples in *spirit*, that is, in spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual worship: *in faith*, that is, in the profession of Christian faith: and in *purity* or chastity.

4. He charges him to study hard; *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, to meditation upon these things*, v. 13. Though Timothy had extraordinary gifts, yet he must use ordinary means. Or, it may be meant of the public reading of the scriptures; he must *read and exhort*, that is, read and expound, read, and press what he read upon them; he must expound it both by way of exhortation, and by way of doctrine; he must teach them both what to do, and what to believe.

Observe, (1.) Ministers must teach and command the things that they are taught and commanded themselves to do; they must teach people to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, Matt. 28. 20. (2.) The best way for ministers to prevent themselves from being despised, is, to teach and practise the things that are given them in charge. No wonder if ministers are despised, who do not teach these things; or, instead of being examples of good to believers, act directly contrary to the doctrines they preach; for ministers are to be ensamples of their flock. (3.) Those ministers that are the best accomplished for their work, must yet mind their studies, that they may be improving in knowledge; and they must mind also their work; they are to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, v. 14. The gifts of God will wither, if they be neglected. It may be understood either of the office to which he was advanced, or of his qualifications for that office; if of the former, it was ordination in an ordinary

way; if of the latter, it was extraordinary. It seems to be the former, for it was by *laying on of hands*, &c. Here see the scripture-way of ordination, it was by the laying on of hands, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Observe, Timothy was ordained by men in office. It was an extraordinary gift that we read of elsewhere as being conferred on him by the laying on of Paul's hands, but he was invested in the office of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

[1.] We may note, the office of the ministry is a gift, it is the gift of Christ; when he ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, and he gave some apostles, and some pastors and teachers; (Eph. 4. 8, 11.) and this was a very kind gift to his church. [2.] Ministers ought not to neglect the gift bestowed upon them, whether by gift we are here to understand the office of the ministry, or qualifications for that office; neither the one nor the other must be neglected. [3.] Though there was prophecy in the case of Timothy, (the gift was given by prophecy,) yet this was accompanied with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, that is, a number of presbyters; the office was conveyed to him this way; and I should think here is a sufficient warrant for ordination by presbyters, since it does not appear that St. Paul was concerned in Timothy's ordination. It is true, extraordinary gifts were conferred on him by the laying on of the apostle's hands; (2 Tim. 1. 6.) but if he was concerned in his ordination, the presbytery was not excluded, for that is particularly mentioned; whence it seems pretty evident, that the presbytery have the inherent power of ordination.

Having this work committed to him, he must *give himself wholly* to it; "Be wholly in those things, *that thy profiting may appear*." He was a wise knowing man, and yet he must still be profiting, and make it appear that he improved in knowledge.

First, Ministers are to be much in meditation; they are to consider beforehand how and what they must speak; they are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, on the worth and value of immortal souls, and on the account they must give at the last. Secondly, Ministers must be wholly in these things, they must mind these things as their principal work and business; *Give thyself wholly to them*. Thirdly, By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way for them to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others.

5. He presses it upon him to be very cautious; "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine, consider what thou preachest: *continue in them*, in the truths that thou hast received: and this will be the way to *save thyself, and those that hear thee*." Observe, (1.) Ministers are engaged in saving work, which makes it a good work. (2.) The care of ministers should be in the first place to save themselves; "Save thyself in the first place, so shalt thou be instrumental to save them that hear thee." Observe, (3.) Ministers in preaching should aim at the salvation of those that hear them, next to the salvation of their own souls. (4.) The best way to answer both these ends, is, to take heed to ourselves, &c.

CHAP. V.

Here the apostle, I. Directs Timothy how to reprove, v. 1, 2.

II. Adverts to widows, both elder and younger, v. 3. 16.

III. To elders, v. 17. 19. IV. Treats of public reproof,

v. 20. V. Gives a solemn charge of ordination, v. 21, 22.

VI. Refers to his health, (v. 23.) and states men's sins to be very different in their effects, v. 24, 25.

1. **R**EBUKE not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; 2. The elder women as

mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.

Here the apostle gives rules to Timothy, and in him to other ministers, in reproof. Ministers are reprovers by office. Now the rule is,

1. To be very tender in rebuking elders; elders in age, elders by office. Respect must be had to the dignity of their years and place, and therefore they must not be rebuked sharply or magisterially; but Timothy himself, though an evangelist, must entreat them as fathers, for that would be the likeliest way to work upon them, and to win upon them.

2. The younger must be rebuked as brethren, with love and tenderness; not as desirous to spy faults, or pick quarrels, but as those who are willing to make the best of them. There is need of a great deal of meekness in reproof those who deserve reproof.

3. The elder women must be reprov'd, when there is occasion; they must be reprov'd as mothers, Hos. 2. 2. *Plead with your mother, plead*.

4. The younger women must be reprov'd, but reprov'd as *sisters, with all purity*. If Timothy, so mortified a man to this world and to the flesh and the lusts of it, had need of such a caution as this, much more have we. Observe,

(1.) Ministers are reprovers by office; it is a part, though the least pleasing part, of their office; they are to preach the word, to reprove and rebuke, 2 Tim. 4. 2.

(2.) A great difference is to be made in our reproofs, according to the age, quality, and other circumstances, of the persons rebuked; thus, an elder in age or office must be entreated as a father; *some have compassion, making a difference*, Jude 22.

3. Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6. But she that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth. 7. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8. But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12. Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13. And whilst they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women

marry, bear children, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15. For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16. If any man or woman that believeth, have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Directions are here given concerning the taking of widows into the number of those who were employed by the church, and had maintenance from the church; *Honour widows that are widows indeed.* Honour them, maintain them, admit them into office. There was in those times an office in the church in which widows were employed, and that was, to tend the sick, the aged, to look to them by the direction of the deacons. We read of the care taken of widows, immediately upon the first forming of the Christian church, (Acts 6. 1.) where the Grecians *thought their widows were neglected in the daily ministration* and provision made for poor widows. The general rule is, to *honour widows that are widows indeed*, to maintain them, to relieve them with respect and tenderness.

1. It is appointed that those widows only should be relieved by the charity of the church, who were pious and devout, and not wanton widows that *lived in pleasure*, v. 5, 6. She is to be reckoned a widow indeed, and fit to be maintained at the church's charge, who, being *desolate, trusteth in God*. Observe, It is the duty and comfort of those who are desolate, to trust in God. *Therefore* God sometimes brings his people into such straits, that they have nothing else to trust to, that they may with more confidence trust in him. Widowhood is a desolate estate; but *let the widows trust in me*, (Jer. 49. 11.) and rejoice that they have a God to trust to. Again, They who trust in God, *must continue in prayer*. If by faith we confide in God, by prayer we must give glory to God, and commit ourselves to his guidance. Anna was a widow indeed, who *departed not from the temple*, (Luke 2. 37.) *but served God with fasting and prayer night and day*. But she is not a widow indeed, *that lives in pleasure*, (v. 6.) or who lives licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. *She that lives in pleasure, is dead while she lives*, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally; those who live in pleasure, are dead while they live, spiritually dead, *dead in trespasses and sins*; they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

2. Another rule he gives, is, that the church should not be charged with the maintenance of those widows who had relations of their own, who were able to maintain them. This is mentioned several times; (v. 4.) *If any widows have children or nephews*, grand-children, or near relations, let them maintain them, and let not the church be burthened. So, v. 16. This is called shewing *piety at home*, (v. 4.) or shewing piety toward their own families. Observe, The respect of children to their parents, and their care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiting their parents. Children can never sufficiently requite their parents for the care they have taken of them, and the pains they have taken with them; but, however, they must endeavour to do it. It is the indispensable duty of children, if their parents be in necessity, and they in ability to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, *for that is good and acceptable before God*. The Pharisees taught that a gift to the altar was more

acceptable to God than relieving a poor parent, Matt. 15. 5. But here we are told that this is *better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices; this is good and acceptable*, &c. He speaks of this again; (v. 8.) *If any provide not for his own*, &c. If any man or woman do not maintain their own poor relations who belong to them, they do in effect *deny the faith*; for the design of Christ was to confirm the law of Moses, and particularly the law of the fifth commandment, which is, *Honour thy father and mother*; so that they deny the faith, who disobey that law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, which are parts of themselves; if they spend that upon their lusts, which should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, *and are worse than infidels*.

One reason why this care must be taken, that those who were rich, should maintain their poor relations, and not burthen the church with them, is, (v. 16.) *that it may relieve them that are widows indeed*. Observe, Charity misplaced, is a great hinderance to true charity; *therefore* there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those who are not properly so, that there may be the more for those who are real objects of charity.

3. He gives directions concerning the characters of the widows, that were to be taken into the number to receive the church's charity: not under sixty years old, or any who have divorced their husbands, or been divorced from them, and have married again; she must have been *the wife of one man*, such as had been a house-keeper, had a good name for hospitality and charity, *well reported of for good works*. Observe, Particular care ought to be taken to relieve those, when they fall into decay, who, when they had wherewithal, were ready to every good work.

Here are instances of such good works as are proper to be done by good wives; *If she have brought up children*: he does not say, *If she have borne children*, (*children are a heritage of the Lord*), that depends on the will of God; but if she had not children of her own, yet, if she had brought up children. *If she have lodged strangers*, and *washed the saints' feet*; if she have been ready to give entertainment to good Christians and good ministers, when they were in their travels for the spreading of the gospel—washing of the feet of their friends was a part of their entertainments. *If she have relieved the afflicted* when she had ability, let her be relieved now. Observe, Those who would find mercy when they are in distress, must shew mercy when they are in prosperity.

4. He cautions them to take heed of admitting into the number those who are likely to be no credit to them, v. 11. *The younger widows refuse*; they will be weary of their employments in the church, and of living by rule, as they must do; so they *will marry, and cast off their first faith*. You read of a *first love*, (Rev. 2. 4.) and here of a first faith, that is, the engagements they gave to the church to behave well, and as became the trust reposed in them: it does not appear that by their *first faith* is meant their vow not to marry, for the scripture is very silent on that head; besides, the apostle here advises the younger widows to marry, (v. 14.) which he would not if hereby they must have broken their vows. Dr. Whitby well observes, "If this faith referred to a promise made to the church not to marry, it could not be called *their first faith*," v. 13. *Withal they learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers*, &c. Observe, It is seldom that those who are idle, are only idle, they learn *to be tattlers and busy-bodies*, and to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. Those who had not attained to such a gravity of mind as

was fit for the deaconesses, (or the widows who were taken among the church's poor,) let them *marry, bear children, &c.* v. 14. Observe, If house-keepers do not mind their business, but are tattlers, they give occasion to the adversaries of Christianity to reproach the Christian name, which, it seems, there were some instances of, v. 15.

We learn hence, (1.) In the primitive church there was care taken of poor widows, and provision made for them; the churches of Christ in these days should follow so good an example, as far as they are able. (2.) In the distribution of the church's charity, or alms, great care is to be taken, that those share in the bounty, who most want it, and best deserve it; a widow was not to be taken into the primitive church, that had relations who were able to maintain her, or who was not well reported of for good works, but lived in pleasure; *but the younger widows refuse, for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry.* (3.) The credit of religion, and the reputation of Christian churches, are very much concerned in the character and behaviour of those that are taken into any employment in the church, though of a lower nature, (such as the business of deaconesses,) or that receive alms of the church; if they do not behave well, but are tattlers and busy-bodies, they will give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. (4.) Christianity obliges its professors to relieve their indigent friends, particularly poor widows, that the church may not be charged with them, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed: rich people should be ashamed to burthen the church with their poor relations, when it is with difficulty that those are supplied, who have no children or nephews, that is, grand-children, who are in a capacity to relieve them.

17. Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18. For the scripture saith, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.* And, *The labourer is worthy of his reward.* 19. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 21. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. 22. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. 23. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. 24. Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. 25. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise, cannot be hid.

Here are directions concerning ministers.

1. Care must be taken that they be honourably maintained; (v. 17.) *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour,* of double maintenance, double to what they have had, or to what others have; *especially they who labour in the word and doctrine,* those who are more laborious than

others. Observe, The presbytery ruled, and the same that ruled were those *who laboured in the word and doctrine*: they had not one to preach to them, and another to rule them, but the work was done by one and the same person.

Some have imagined that by the *elders that rule well*, the apostle means lay-elders, who were employed in ruling, but not in teaching; they were concerned in church-government, but did not meddle with the administration of the word and sacraments; and I confess this is the plainest text of scripture that can be found to countenance such an opinion; but it seems a little strange, that mere ruling elders should be accounted worthy of double honour, when the apostle preferred preaching to baptizing, and much more would he prefer it to ruling the church; and it is more strange that the apostle should take no notice of them when he treats of church-officers; but, as it is hinted before, they had not, in the primitive church, one to preach to them, and another to rule them, but ruling and teaching were performed by the same persons, only some might labour more in the word and doctrine than others. Here we have, 1. The work of ministers; it consists principally in two things, ruling well, and labouring in the word and doctrine; this was the main business of elders or presbyters in the days of the apostles. 2. The honour due to them who were not idle, but laborious in this work; they were worthy of double honour, esteem, and maintenance. He quotes a scripture to confirm this command concerning the maintenance of ministers, that we would think foreign; but it intimates what a significance there was in many of the laws of Moses, and particularly in that, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn,* Deut. 25. 4. The beasts that were employed in treading out the corn, (for that way they took instead of threshing it,) were allowed to feed while they did work, so that the more work they did, the more food they had; therefore let the elders that labour in the word and doctrine, be well provided for; *for the labourer is worthy of his reward,* (Matt. 10. 10.) and there is all the reason in the world that he should have it.

We hence learn, (1.) God, both under the law, and now under the gospel, has taken care that his ministers be well provided for. Does God take care for oxen, and will he not take care of his own servants? The ox only treads out the corn, of which they make the bread that perishes; but ministers break the bread of life which endures for ever. (2.) The comfortable subsistence of ministers, as it is God's appointment that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, (1 Cor. 9. 14.) so it is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer; and those who would have ministers starved, or not comfortably provided for, God will require it of them another day.

II. Concerning the accusation of ministers; (v. 19.) *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses*: here is the scripture-method of proceeding against an elder, when accused of any crime. Observe, 1. There must be an accusation, it must not be a flying uncertain report; but an accusation, containing a certain charge, must be drawn up. Further, He is not to be proceeded against by way of inquiry; this is according to the modern practice of the Inquisition, which draws up articles for men to purge themselves of such crimes, or else to accuse themselves; but, according to the advice of St. Paul, there must be an accusation brought against an elder. 2. This accusation is not to be received, unless supported by two or three credible witnesses; and the accusation must be received before them, that is, the accused must have the accusers face to face, because the reputation of a minister is, in a particular man-

ner, a tender thing; and therefore, before any thing be done in the least to blemish that reputation, great care must be taken that the thing alleged against him be well proved, that he be not reproached upon an uncertain surmise; "but, (v. 20.) *them that sin, rebuke before all*; thou needest not be so tender of other people, but rebuke them publicly." Or, "them that sin before all, rebuke before all, that the plaster may be as wide as the wound, and that those who are in danger of sinning by the example of their fall, may take warning by the rebuke given them for it, that others also may fear."

(1.) Public scandalous sinners must be rebuked publicly; as their sin has been public, and committed before many, or at least come to the hearing of all, so their reproof must be public, and before all. (2.) Public rebuke is designed for the good of others, that they may fear, as well as for the good of the party rebuked; as it was ordered under the law, that public offenders should receive public punishment; and all Israel shall hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly.

III. Concerning the ordination of ministers; (v. 22.) *Lay hands suddenly on no man*; it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it.

Some understand it of absolution; "Be not too hasty in laying hands on any, remit not the censure of the church to any, till first time be taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, *neither be partakers of other men's sins*; implying, that those who are too easy in remitting the censures of the church, encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty. Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. "Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessory to it in others."

Here is, 1. A caution against rash ordination of ministers, or absolution of those who have been under church-censures; "Lay hands suddenly on no man." 2. Those who are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other men's sins. 3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

The 24th and 25th verses seem to refer to absolution; *Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some follow after*, &c. Observe, Ministers have need of a great deal of wisdom, to know how to accommodate themselves to the variety of offences and offenders, that they have occasion to deal with.

(1.) Some men's sins are so plain and obvious, and not found by secret search, that there is no dispute concerning the bringing of them under the censures of the church; they *go before to judgment*, to lead them to censure.

(2.) *Others, they follow after*; their wickedness does not presently appear, nor till after a due search has been made concerning it. Or, as some understand it, some men's sins continue after they are censured; they are not reformed by the censure, and in that case there must be no absolution.

(3.) As to the evidences of repentance; *The good works of some are manifest beforehand. And they that are otherwise*, whose good works do not appear, their wickedness *cannot be hid*, and so it will be easy to discern who are to be absolved, and who are not.

[1.] There are secret, and there are open sins; some men's sins are open beforehand, and going before unto judgment, and some they follow after.

[2.] Sinners must be differently dealt with by the church. [3.] The effects of church-censures are very different; some are thereby humbled and brought to repentance, so that their good works are manifest beforehand, while it is quite otherwise with others. [4.] The incorrigible cannot be hid; for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of all hearts.

Lastly, As to Timothy himself.

1. Here is a charge to him to be careful of his office: and a solemn charge it is; *I charge thee before God, as thou wilt answer it to God before the holy and elect angels; observe these things without partiality*, v. 21. Observe, It ill becomes ministers to be partial, and to have respect of persons, and to prefer one before another upon any secular account. He charges him, by all that is dear, *before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*, to guard against partiality.

2. Ministers must give an account to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whether, and how, they have observed all things given them in charge: and woe to them if they have been partial in their ministrations, out of any worldly politic view.

3. He charges him to take care of his health; *Drink no longer water*, &c. It seems, Timothy was a mortified man to the pleasures of sense; he drank water, and he was a man of no strong constitution of body, and for that reason Paul advises him to use wine for the helping of his stomach, and the recruiting of his nature. Observe, It is a *little wine*, for ministers must not be given to much wine; so much as may be for the health of the body, not so as to distemper it; for God has made wine, to rejoice man's heart. (1.) It is the will of God, that people should take all due care of their bodies. As we are not to make them our masters, so neither our slaves; but to use them so as they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God. Observe, (2.) Wine is most proper for sickly and weak people, whose stomachs are often out of order, and who labour under infirmities. *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are of heavy hearts*, Prov. 31. 6. (3.) Wine should be used as a help, and not a hinderance, to our work and usefulness.

CHAP. VI.

I. He treats of the duty of servants, v. 1, 2. II. Of false teachers, v. 3, 5. III. Of godliness and covetousness, v. 6, 10. IV. What Timothy was to flee, and what to follow, v. 11, 12. V. A solemn charge, v. 13, 16. VI. A charge for the rich, v. 17, 19. And lastly, A charge to Timothy, v. 20, 21.

1. **L**ET as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. 3. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, 4. He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth,

supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Here is,

I. The duty of servants. He had spoken before of church-relations, here of our family-relations. Servants are here said to be *under the yoke*, which denotes both subjection and labour; they are yoked to work, not to be idle. If Christianity finds servants under the yoke, it continues them under it; for the gospel does not cancel the obligations any lie under, either by the law of nature, or by mutual consent. They must respect their masters, *count them worthy of all honour*, (because they are *their masters*,) of all the respect, observance, compliance, and obedience, that are justly expected from servants to their masters. Not that they were to think that of them which they were not; but as their masters they must count them worthy of all that honour which was fit for them to receive, *that the name of God be not blasphemed*. If servants that embraced the Christian religion, should grow insolent and disobedient to their masters, the doctrine of Christ would be reflected on for their sakes, as if it had made men worse livers than they had been before they had received the gospel. Observe, If the professors of religion misbehave themselves, *the name of God and his doctrine* are in danger of being *blasphemed* by those who seek occasions to *speak evil of that worthy name by which we are called*. And this is a good reason why we should all conduct ourselves well, that we may prevent the occasion which many seek, and will be very apt to lay hold of, to speak ill of religion for our sakes.

Or suppose the master were a Christian, and a believer, and the servant a believer too, would not that excuse him, because in *Christ there is neither bond nor free*? No, by no means, for Jesus Christ did not come to dissolve the bond of civil relation, but to strengthen it; *They that have believing masters, let not them despise them, because they are brethren*; for that brotherhood relates only to spiritual privileges, not to any outward dignity or advantage; (those misunderstand and abuse their religion, who make it a pretence for denying the duties that they owe to their relations;) nay, *rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved*. They must think themselves the more obliged to serve them, because the faith and love that bespeak men Christians, oblige them to do good; and that is all wherein their service consists. Observe, It is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to our relations, if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, *and partakers of the benefit*, that is, of the benefit of Christianity. Again, Believing masters and servants are brethren, and partakers of the benefit; for in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. 3. 28. Timothy is appointed to *teach and exhort these things*. Ministers must preach not only the general duties of all, but the duties of particular relations.

II. Paul here warns Timothy to withdraw from those who corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject of strife, debate, and controversy; *If any man teach otherwise*, (v. 3—5.) do not preach practically; do not teach and exhort that which is for the promoting of serious godliness; if he will not consent to wholesome words, words that have a direct tendency to heal the soul, if he will not consent to these, even the *words of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Observe, We are not required to consent to any words as wholesome words, except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but those we must give our unfeigned assent and consent to, and to the *doctrine which is according to godliness*. Observe, The doctrine of our Lord Jesus is a doctrine according to godliness; it has a direct tendency to make

people godly; but he that does not act agreeably, is *proud*, (v. 4.) and contentious, ignorant, and does a great deal of mischief to the church, knowing *nothing*. Observe, Commonly those are most proud, who know least; for with all their knowledge they do not know themselves, *but dote about questions*. Those who fall off from the plain practical doctrines of Christianity, fall in with controversies, which eat out the life and power of religion; they dote about questions and *strifes of words*, which do a great deal of mischief in the church, are the occasion of *envy, strife, railings, and evil surmising*. When men are not content with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, but will frame notions of their own, and impose them, and that too in their own words, which man's wisdom teaches, and not in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, (1 Cor. 2. 13.) they sow the seeds of all mischief in the church. Hence come *perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds*, (v. 5.) disputes that are all subtlety, and no solidity. Observe, Men of corrupt minds are *destitute of the truth*. The reason why men's minds are corrupt, is, because they do not stick to the *truth as it is in Jesus: supposing that gain is godliness*, making religion truckle to their secular interest. From such as these Timothy is warned to withdraw himself.

We observe, (1.) The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are wholesome words, they are the fittest to prevent or heal the church's wounds, as well as to heal a wounded conscience; for Christ has the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary, Isa. 50. 4. The words of Christ are the best to prevent ruptures in the church; for none who profess faith in him, will dispute the aptness or authority of his words, who is their Lord and Teacher: and it has never gone well with the church, since the words of men have claimed a regard equal to his words, and in some cases a much greater. (2.) Whoever teaches otherwise, and does not consent to these wholesome words, he is proud, knowing nothing; for pride and ignorance commonly go together. (3.) St. Paul sets a brand only on those who consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness; they are proud, knowing nothing: other words more wholesome he knew not. (4.) We learn the sad effects of doting about questions and strifes of words; of such doting about questions comes envy, strife, evil surmising, and perverse disputings; when men leave the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, they will never agree in other words, either of their own or other men's inventions, but will perpetually wrangle and quarrel about them; and this will produce envy, when they see the words of others preferred to those they have adopted for their own; and this will be attended with jealousies and suspicions of one another, called here *evil surmising*; then they will proceed to perverse disputings. (5.) Such persons as are given to perverse disputings, appear to be men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth; especially such as act in this manner for the sake of gain, which is all their godliness, supposing gain to be godliness, contrary to the apostle's judgment, who reckoned godliness great gain. (6.) Good ministers and Christians will withdraw themselves from such; "Come out from among them, my people, and be ye separate," says the Lord: from such withdraw thyself.

6. But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. 9. But they that will be rich fall into temp-

tation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

From the mention of the abuse which some put upon religion, (making it to serve their secular advantages,) the apostle takes occasion to shew the excellency of contentment, and the evil of covetousness.

I. The excellency of contentment, v. 6—8. Some account Christianity an advantageous profession for this world; in the sense they mean, it is false; yet it is undoubtedly true, that though Christianity is the worst *trade*, it is the best *calling*, in the world. Those that make a trade of it, merely to serve their turn for this world, will be disappointed, and find it a sorry trade; but they that mind it as their calling, and make a business of it, will find it a gainful calling, for it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. The truth he lays down, is, that *godliness with contentment is great gain*. Some read it, *godliness with a competency*; that is, if a man have but a little in this world, yet if he have but enough to carry him through it, he needs desire no more, his godliness with that will be his great gain; *for a little which a righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked*, Ps. 37. 16. We read it, *godliness with contentment*; godliness is itself great gain, it is profitable to all things; and wherever there is true godliness, there will be contentment; but those that are arrived at the highest pitch of contentment with their godliness, are certainly the easiest, happiest people in this world. *Godliness with contentment*, that is, Christian contentment, (content must come from principles of godliness,) is great gain; it is all the wealth in the world. He that is godly, is sure to be happy in another world; and if withal he do by contentment accommodate himself to his condition in this world, he has enough.

Here we have, 1. A Christian's gain, it is godliness with contentment, this is the true way to gain, yea, it is gain itself. 2. A Christian's gain is great, it is not like the little gain of worldlings, who are so fond of a little worldly advantage. 3. Godliness is ever accompanied with contentment in a greater or lesser degree; all truly godly people have learned with St. Paul, in whatever state they are, to be therewith content, Phil. 4. 11. They are content with what God allots for them, well knowing that is best for them. Let us all then endeavour after godliness with contentment.

The reason he gives for it, is, *For we brought nothing with us into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*, v. 7. This is a reason why we should be content with a little.

(1.) Because we can challenge nothing as a debt that is due to us, *for we came naked into the world*; whatever we have had since, we are obliged to the providence of God for it; but he that gave, may take what and when he pleases. We had our beings, our bodies, our lives, (which are more than meat, which are more than raiment,) when we came into the world, though we came naked, and

brought nothing with us; may we not then be content while our beings and lives are continued to us, though we have not every thing we would have? We brought nothing with us into this world, and yet God provided for us, care was taken of us, we have been fed all our lives long unto this day; and therefore, when we are reduced to the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world, and yet then we were provided for; therefore let us trust in God for the remaining part of our pilgrimage.

(2.) *We shall carry nothing with us out of this world*; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from his thousands. Therefore why should we covet much? Why should we not be content with a little, because, how much soever we have, we must leave it behind us! Eccl. v. 15, 16.

From hence he infers, (v. 8.) *Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*. Food and a covering including habitation as well as raiment. Observe, If God give us the necessary supports of life, we ought to be content therewith, though we have not the ornaments and delights of it. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less; though we have not dainty food, though we have not costly raiment, if we have but food and raiment convenient for us, we ought to be content: this was Agur's prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me*, Prov. 30. 8.

Here we see, [1.] The folly of placing our happiness in these things, when we did not bring any thing into this world with us, and we can carry nothing out. What will these do when death shall strip them of their happiness and portion? And they must take an everlasting farewell of all these things on which they have so much doted. They may say with poor Micah, *Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?* Judges 18. 24. [2.] The necessities of life are the bounds of a true Christian's desire, and with these he will endeavour to be content; his desires are not insatiable; no, a little, a few comforts of this life, will serve him, and these he may hope to enjoy, having food and raiment.

II. The evil of covetousness; (v. 9.) *They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare*, that is, that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, and are resolved, right or wrong, they will have it. It is not said, they that *are* rich, but they that *will be* rich, that is, that place their happiness in worldly wealth, that covet it inordinately, and are eager and violent in the pursuit of it. They that are such, *fall into temptation and a snare*, unavoidably; for when the Devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly. He knew how fond Achan would be of a wedge of gold, and therefore laid that before him. They fall into *many foolish and hurtful lusts*.

The apostle supposes, 1. Some will be rich; they are resolved upon it, nothing short of a great abundance will satisfy. 2. Such will not be safe or innocent, for they will be in danger of ruining themselves for ever; they fall into temptation, and a snare, &c. 3. Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition. 4. It is good for us to consider the mischievousness of worldly fleshly lusts. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them; *hurtful*, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what degree they are *hurtful*, for they *drown men in destruction and perdition*.

The love of money is the root of all evil, v. 10. What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money? Particularly this was at the bottom of the apostasy of many from the faith of Christ; while

they *coveted* money, they *erred from the faith*, they *quitted their Christianity*, and *pierced themselves through with many sorrows*.

(1.) Observe what is the root of all evil; the love of money: people may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil. (2.) Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money, *which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith*. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, 2 Tim. 4. 10. For the world was dearer to him than Christianity.

Observe, Those that err from the faith, pierce themselves with many sorrows; those that depart from God, do but treasure up sorrows for themselves.

III. Hence he takes occasion both to caution Timothy against their lusts, and to counsel him to keep in the way of God and his duty, and particularly to fulfil the trust reposed in him as a minister. He addresses himself to him as a *man of God*. Ministers are men of God, and ought to conduct themselves accordingly in every thing; they are men employed for God, devoted to his honour more immediately. The prophets under the Old Testament were called *men of God*.

1. He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many; *Flee these things*. It is ill becoming any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God.

2. To arm him against the love of the world, he directs him to follow that which is good; *Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*: righteousness in his conversation toward men, godliness toward God, faith and love as living principles, to support him and carry him on in the practice both of righteousness and godliness. They that follow after righteousness and godliness, from a principle of faith and love, have need to put on patience and meekness: patience to bear both the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of men, and meekness wherewith to instruct gainsayers, and pass by the affronts and injuries that are done us.

Observe, It is not enough that men of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary thereto. Further, what excellent persons men of God are, who follow after righteousness! They are the excellent of the earth, and, being acceptable to God, they should be approved of men.

3. He exhorts him to do the part of a soldier; *Fight the good fight of faith*. Note, Those who will get to heaven, must fight their way thither. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Again, It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue; further, it is the fight of faith; we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4.

4. He exhorts him to lay hold on eternal life. Observe, (1.) Eternal life is the crown proposed to us, for our encouragement to war, and to fight the good fight of faith, the good warfare. (2.) This we must lay hold on, as those that are afraid of coming short of it, and losing it. Lay hold, and take heed of losing your hold. *Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*, Rev. 3. 11. (3.) We are called to the fight, and to lay hold on eternal life. (4.) The profession Timothy and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them unto this.

13. I give thee charge in the sight of

God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14. That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15. Which in his times he shall shew, *who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords*; 16. Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 17. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. 20. O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21. Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen.

He charges him to keep *this* commandment without spot; that is, the whole work of his ministry, all the trust reposed in him, all the service expected from him, he must keep it without spot, *unrebukable*; he must conduct himself so in his ministry, that he might not lay himself open to any blame, or incur any blemish.

What are the motives to move him to this?

I. He gives him a solemn charge; *I give thee a charge in the sight of God, that thou do this*. He charges him, as he will answer it at the great day to that God whose eyes are upon us all, who sees what we are, and what we do. *God, who quickens all things*, who has life in himself, and is the Fountain of life. *This* should quicken us to the service of God, that we serve a God who quickens all things. He charges him before Christ Jesus, to whom in a peculiar manner he stood related as a minister of his gospel; *who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*.

Observe, Christ died not only as a Sacrifice, but as a Martyr; and he witnessed a good confession when he was arraigned before Pilate, saying, (John 18. 36, 37.) *My kingdom is not of this world: I am come to bear witness unto the truth*. That good confession of his before Pilate, *My kingdom is not of this world*, should be effectual to draw off all his followers, both ministers and people, from the love of this world.

II. He reminds him of the confession that he himself had made; *Thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*; (v. 12.) when he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The obligation of that was still upon him, and he must live up to that, and be quickened by that, to do the work of his ministry.

III. He reminds him of Christ's second coming; *Keep this commandment, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*; keep it as long as thou

livest, till Christ come at death to give thee a discharge. Keep it with an eye to his second coming, when we must all give an account of the talents we have been intrusted with," Luke 16. 2.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will appear, and it will be a glorious appearing, not like his first appearing in the days of his humiliation. 2. Ministers should have an eye to this appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ in all their ministrations. 3. Till his appearing they are to keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable.

Mentioning the appearing of Christ as one that loved it, he loves to speak of it, and loves to speak of him who shall then appear. The appearing of Christ is certain; (*he shall shew it*;) but it is not for us to know the time and season of it, for the Father has kept that in his own power: let this suffice us, that in time he shall shew it, in the time that he thinks fit for it.

Concerning Christ and God the Father he here speaks great things.

(1.) That God is the *only Potentate*; the powers of earthly princes are all derived from him, and depend upon him. The powers that are, are ordained of God, Rom. 13. 1. He is the only Potentate that is absolute and sovereign, and perfectly independent.

(2.) He is the *blessed* and only Potentate, infinitely happy, and nothing can in the least impair his happiness.

(3.) He is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*. All the kings of the earth derive their power from him; he gave them their crowns, they hold them under him, and he has a sovereign dominion over them. This is Christ's title, (Rev. 19. 16.) *upon his vesture and his thigh*; for he has a name higher than the kings of the earth.

(4.) He only has immortality; he only is immortal in himself, and has immortality as he is the Fountain of it, for the immortality of angels and spirits is derived from him.

(5.) He dwells in inaccessible light; *light which no man can approach unto*: no man can get to heaven, but those whom he is pleased to bring thither, and admit into his kingdom.

(6.) He is invisible; *whom no man hath seen, nor can see*. It is impossible that mortal eyes should bear the brightness of the divine glory. No man can see God, and live.

Having mentioned these glorious attributes, he concludes with a doxology; *To him be honour and power everlasting. Amen*. God having all power and honour to himself, it is our duty to ascribe all power and honour to him.

[1.] What an evil is sin, when committed against such a God, the blessed and only Potentate! The evil of it rises in proportion to the dignity of him against whom it is committed. [2.] Great is his condescension, to take notice of such mean and vile creatures as we are. What are we then, that the blessed God, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, should seek after us? [3.] Blessed are they who are admitted to dwell with this great and blessed Potentate; *Hapſy are thy men*, (says the queen of Sheba to king Solomon,) *hapſy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee*, 1 Kings 10. 8. Much more happy are they who are allowed to stand before the King of kings. [4.] Let us love, adore, and praise, the great God; for who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy, Rev. 15. 4.

The apostle adds, by way of postscript, a lesson for rich people, v. 17—19. Timothy must charge them that are rich to take care of the temptations, and improve the opportunities, of their prosperous estate.

First, Caution them to take heed of pride. That

is a sin that easily besets rich people, whom the world smiles upon. Charge them *that they be not high-minded*, or think of themselves above what is meet, or be puffed up with their wealth.

Secondly, Caution them against vain confidence in their wealth; Charge them that they *trust not in uncertain riches*. Nothing is more uncertain than the wealth of this world; many have had much of it one day, and been stripped of all the next. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle, &c. Prov. 23. 5.

Thirdly, He must charge them to *trust in God, the living God*; to make him their Hope, *who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*. They who are rich, must see God giving them their riches, and giving them to *enjoy them richly*; for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them.

Fourthly, He must charge them to do good with what they have; (for what is the best estate worth, any more than as it gives a man an opportunity of doing so much the more good?) *that they be rich in good works*. Those are truly rich, who are rich in good works. That they be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*: not only to do it, but to do it willingly, for *God loves a cheerful giver*.

Fifthly, He must charge them to think of another world, and prepare for that which is to come by works of charity—*laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come*, that they may take hold on eternal life.

1. Ministers must not be afraid of the rich; be they ever so rich, they must speak to them, and charge them. 2. They must caution them against pride, and vain confidence in their riches, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches. Stir them up to works of piety and charity, *that they do good*, &c. 3. This is the way for the rich to lay up in store for themselves for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life; in the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, *and eternal life will be the end of all*, Rom. 2. 7. 4. Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy; *Keep that which is committed to thy trust*. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he has to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, *avoiding profane and vain babblings*; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls *vain babblings*, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, their *science, which is falsely so called*, have by that been debauched in their principles, and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that.

Observe, (1.) Ministers cannot be too earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them; *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust!* as if he had said, "I cannot conclude without charging thee again; whatever thou doest, be sure to keep this trust, for it is too great a trust to be betrayed."

(2.) Ministers are to avoid babblings, if they would keep what is committed to them, because they are vain and profane. (3.) That science which opposes the truth of the gospel, is falsely so called; it is not true science, for if it was, it would approve of the gospel, and consent to it. (4.) Those who are so fond of such science, are in great danger of erring concerning the faith; they who are for advancing reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith.

Lastly, Our apostle concludes with a solemn prayer and benediction; *Grace be with thee. Amen*. Observe, This is a short, yet comprehensive prayer for

our friends. Grace be with them, for grace comprehends in it all that is good, and grace is an earnest, yea a beginning, of glory ; for wherever God

gives grace, he will give glory, and will not withhold any good thing from him who walketh uprightly. Grace be with you all. Amen.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OF THE

SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO TIMOTHY.

Completed by Mr. Atkinson.

THIS second epistle Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, when he was a prisoner there, and in danger of his life ; this is evident from these words, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, ch. 4. v. 6.* It appears that his removal out of this world, in his own apprehension, was not far off, especially considering the rage and malice of his persecutors ; and that he had been brought before the emperor Nero, which he calls *his first answer, when no man stood with him, but all men forsook him, ch. 4. v. 16.* And interpreters agree that this was the last epistle he wrote. Where Timothy now was, is not certain. The scope of this epistle somewhat differs from that of the former, not so much relating to his office as an evangelist, as to his personal conduct and behaviour.

II. TIMOTHY, I.

CHAP. I.

After this introduction, (v. 1, 2.) we have, I. Paul's sincere love to Timothy, v. 3..5. II. Divers exhortations given to him, v. 6..14. III. He speaks of Phygellus and Hermonogenes, with others, and closes with Onesiphorus, v. 15, to the end.

1. **P**AUL an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2. To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son : Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3. I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day ; 4. Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy ; 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice ; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Here is,

1. The inscription of the epistle ; Paul calls him-

self an *apostle by the will of God*, merely by the good pleasure of God, and by his grace, which he professes himself unworthy of, *according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus*, according to the gospel. The gospel is the promise of life in Christ Jesus ; life the end, and Christ the Way, John 14. 6. The life is put into the promise, and both are sure in Christ Jesus the faithful Witness ; *for all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and all amen*, 2 Cor. 1. 20. He calls Timothy his *beloved son* ; Paul felt the warmest affection for him, both because he had been an instrument of his conversion, and because as a son with his father he had served with him in the gospel.

We here learn, (1.) St. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God ; as he did not receive the gospel of man, nor was taught it, but had it by the revelation of Jesus Christ, (Gal. 1. 12.) so his commission to be an apostle was not by the will of man, but of God : in the former epistle he says it was *by the commandment of God our Saviour*, and here *by the will of God* ; God called him to be an apostle. (2.) We have the promise of life, blessed be God for it, *in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began*, Tit. 1. 2. It is a promise to discover the freeness and certainty of it. (3.) This, as well as all other promises, is in and through Jesus Christ ; they all take their rise from the mercy of God in Christ,