

AN
E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. LUKE.

We are now entering into the labours of another evangelist ; his name *Luke*, which some take to be a contraction of *Lucilius* ; born at Antioch, so St. Jerom. Some think that he was the only one of all the penmen of the scripture, that was not of the seed of Israel. He was a Jewish proselyte, and, as some conjecture, converted to christianity by the ministry of St. Paul at Antioch ; and after his coming into Macedonia, (Acts 16. 10.) he was his constant companion. He had employed himself in the study and practice of physic ; hence Paul calls him *Luke the beloved Physician*, Col. 4. 14. Some of the pretended ancients tell you that he was a painter, and drew a picture of the Virgin Mary. But Dr. Whitby thinks that there is nothing certain to the contrary ; and that therefore it is probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and a follower of Christ when he was here upon earth ; and if so, he was a native Israelite. I see not what can be objected against this, except some uncertain traditions of the ancients, which we can build nothing upon, and against which may be opposed the testimonies of Origen and Epiphanius, who both say that he was one of the seventy disciples. He is supposed to have written this gospel when he was associated with St. Paul in his travels, and by direction from him : and some think that this is *the brother* whom Paul speaks of, (2 Cor. 8. 18.) *whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches of Christ* ; as if the meaning of it were, that he was celebrated in *all the churches* for writing *this gospel* ; and that St. Paul means this when he speaks sometimes of *his* gospel, as Rom. 2. 16. But there is no ground at all for that. Dr. Cave observes that his way and manner of writing are accurate and exact, his style polite and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet perspicuous ; and that he expresses himself in a vein of purer Greek than is to be found in the other writers of the holy story. Thus he relates divers things more copiously than the other evangelists ; and thus he especially treats of those things which relate to the priestly office of Christ. It is uncertain when, or about what time, this gospel was written. Some think that it was written in Achaia, during his travels with Paul, seventy years (twenty-two years, say others) after Christ's ascension ; others, that it was written at Rome, a little before he wrote his history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, (which is a continuation of this,) when he was there with Paul, while he was a prisoner, and preaching in *his own hired house*, with which the history of the Acts concludes ; and then Paul saith that *only Luke was with him*, 2 Tim. 4. 11. When he was under that voluntary confinement with Paul, he had leisure to compile these two histories ; (and many excellent writings the church has been indebted to a prison for ;) if so, it was written about twenty-seven years after Christ's ascension, and about the fourth year of Nero. Jerom saith, He died when he was eighty-four years of age, and was never married. Some write, that he suffered martyrdom ; but if he did, where and when is uncertain. Nor indeed is there much more credit to be given to the Christian traditions concerning the writers of the New Testament, than to the Jewish traditions concerning those of the Old Testament.

ST. LUKE, I.

CHAP. I.

The narrative which this evangelist gives us (or rather God by him) of the life of Christ, begins earlier than either Matthew or Mark ; we have reason to thank God for them all, as we have for all the gifts and graces of Christ's ministers, which in one make up what is wanting in the other, while all put together make a harmony. In this chapter, we have, I. Luke's preface to his gospel, or his epistle dedicatory to his friend, Theophilus, v. 1. . 4. II. The prophecy and history of the conception of John Baptist, who was Christ's forerunner, v. 5. . 25. III. The annunciation of the Virgin Mary, or the notice given to her that

she should be the mother of the Messiah, v. 26. . 38. IV. The interview between Mary the mother of Jesus and Elisabeth the mother of John, when they were both with child of those pregnant births, and the prophecies they both uttered upon that occasion, v. 39. . 56. V. The birth and circumcision of John Baptist, six months before the birth of Christ, v. 57. . 66. VI. Zacharias's song of praise, in thankfulness for the birth of John, and in prospect of the birth of Jesus, v. 67. . 79. VII. A short account of John Baptist's infancy, v. 80. And these do more than give us an entertaining narrative ; they will lead us into the understanding of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

1. **F**ORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word: 3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

Complimental prefaces and dedications, the language of flattery, and the food and fuel of pride, are justly condemned by the wise and good: but it doth not therefore follow, that such as are useful and instructive are to be put down; such is this, in which St. Luke dedicates his gospel to his friend Theophilus, not as to his *patron*, though he was a man of honour, to protect it, but as to his *pupil*, to learn it, and hold it fast. It is not certain who this Theophilus was; the name signifies a *friend of God*; some think that it does not mean any particular person, but every one that is a *lover of God*; Dr. Hammond quotes some of the ancients understanding it so; and then it teaches us, that those who are truly lovers of God, will heartily welcome the gospel of Christ, the design and tendency of which are, to bring us to God. But it is rather to be understood of some particular person, probably a magistrate; because Luke gives him here the same title of respect which St. Paul gave to Festus the governor, *κρίστης*, (Acts 26. 25.) which we there translate *most noble Festus*, and here *most excellent Theophilus*. Note, Religion does not destroy civility and good manners, but teaches us, according to the usages of our country, to *give honour to them to whom honour is due*.

Now observe here,

1. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel; it is certain that he was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine; and he was made to consider,

1. That the things he wrote of, were things that were *most surely believed among all Christians*, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe; and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity, (who are as much concerned in them as we are,) and, in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the ages to come. He will not write about things of *doubtful disputations*, things about which Christians may safely differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be, *most surely believed*, *σάραματα πιστὰ κληρονομήντα*—*the things which were performed*, (so some,) which Christ and his apostles did, and did with such circumstances as gave a full assurance that they were really done, so that they have gained an established, lasting credit. Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long *most surely believed*. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have *ventured their souls upon* with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

2. That it was requisite there should be a *declaration made in order* of those things; that the history of the life of Christ should be *methodized*, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of

the conveyance. When things are *put in order*, we know the better where to *find them* for our own use, and how to *keep them* for the benefit of others.

3. That there were many who had undertaken to *publish narratives of the life of Christ*; many well-meaning people, who *designed well*, and *did well*, and what they published had *done good*, though not done by divine inspiration, nor so well done as might be, nor intended for perpetuity. Note, (1.) The labours of others in the gospel of Christ, if faithful and honest, we ought to *commend and encourage*, and not to *despise*, though chargeable with many deficiencies. (2.) Others' services to Christ must not be reckoned to supersede our's, but rather to quicken them.

4. That the truth of the things he had to write, was *confirmed by the concurring testimony* of those who were competent and unexceptionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was now about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were *eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word*, v. 2. Note, (1.) The apostles were *ministers of the word of Christ*, who is the *Word*, (so some understand it,) or of the doctrine of Christ; they, having received it themselves, ministered it to others, 1 John 1. 1. They had not a gospel to make as masters, but a gospel to preach as ministers. (2.) The *ministers of the word* were *eye-witnesses* of the things which they preached, and, which is also included, *ear-witnesses*. They did themselves *hear* the doctrine of Christ, and *see* his miracles, and had them not by report, at second hand; and therefore they could not but speak, with the greatest assurance, the things they had *seen and heard*, Acts 4. 20.

(3.) They were so *from the beginning* of Christ's ministry, v. 2. He had his disciples with him, when he wrought his *first miracle*, John 2. 11. They *companied with him all the time that he went in and out among them*, (Acts 1. 21.) so that they not only heard and saw all that which was sufficient to confirm their faith, but, if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it. (4.) The *written gospel*, which we have to *this day*, exactly agrees with the gospel which was *preached in the first days* of the church. (5.) That he himself had a *perfect understanding of the things* he wrote of, *from the first*, v. 3. Some think that here is a tacit reflection upon those who had written before him, that they had not a *perfect understanding* of what they wrote, and therefore, *Here am I, send me;—(facit indignatio versum—my wrath impels my pen;)* or rather without reflecting on them, he asserts his own ability for this undertaking; "It seemed good to me, having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, *ἀνωθεν*—*from above*;" so I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same *from the beginning*, (v. 2.) as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word. [1.] He had diligently *searched* into these things, had *followed* after them; (so the word is;) as the Old-Testament prophets are said to have *inquired and searched diligently*, 1 Pet. 1. 10. He had not taken things so easily and superficially as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars. [2.] He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it *from above*, (so the word intimates,) and from thence he had it; thus, like Elisha, he *fetches his knowledge* *from afar*. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, *of things reported* by tradition, but *ratified* by inspiration. [3.] He could therefore say, that he had a *perfect understanding* of these things. He *knew* them

ἀκριβῶς—*accurately*, exactly. "Now, having received this *from above*, it seemed good to me to communicate it;" for such a talent as this ought not to be buried.

II. Observe why he sent it to *Theophilus*; "I wrote unto thee these things *in order*, not that thou mayest give reputation to the work, but that thou mayest be edified by it; (v. 4.) *that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed*. 1. It is implied, that he had been instructed in these things either before his baptism, or since, or both, according to the rule, Matth. 28. 19, 20. Probably, Luke had baptized him, and knew how well instructed he was; *περί ὧν κατηχήθης*—*concerning which thou hast been catechized*; so the word is; the most knowing christians began with being catechized. Theophilus was a person of quality, perhaps of noble birth: and so much the more pains should be taken with such when they are young, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God, that they may be fortified against the temptations, and furnished for the opportunities, of a high condition in the world. 2. It was intended that he should *know the certainty of those things*, should understand them more clearly, and believe them more firmly. There is a *certainty* in the gospel of Christ, there is that therein which we may build upon; and those who have been well instructed in the things of God when they were young, should afterward give diligence to *know the certainty* of those things; to know not only what we believe, but why we believe it, that we may be able to give a *reason of the hope that is in us*.

5. **T**HERE was, in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. 6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years. 8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16. And many of the

children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. 20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.

The two preceding evangelists had agreed to begin the gospel with the baptism of John, and his ministry, which commenced about six months before our Saviour's public ministry; (and now, things being near a crisis, six months was a *deal* of time, which before was but a *little*;) and therefore, this evangelist, designing to give a more particular account than had been given of our Saviour's conception and birth, determines to do so of John Baptist, who in both was his harbinger and forerunner, the morning-star to the Sun of righteousness. The evangelist determines thus, not only because it is commonly reckoned a satisfaction and entertainment to know something of the original extraction and early days of those who afterward prove great men, but because in the beginning of these there were many things miraculous, and presages of what they afterward proved; in these verses our inspired historian begins as early as the conception of John Baptist. Now observe here,

1. The account given of *his parents*; (v. 5.) They lived in the *days of Herod the king*, who was a foreigner, and a deputy for the Romans, who had lately made Judea a province of the empire. This is taken notice of, to show that the sceptre was quite departed from Judah, and therefore that now was the time for Shiloh to come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 10. The family of David was now sunk, when it was to rise, and flourish again, in the Messiah. Note, None ought to despair of the reviving and flourishing of religion, even then when civil liberties are lost. Israel is enslaved, yet then comes the Glory of Israel.

Now the father of John Baptist was a priest, a son

of Aaron; his name *Zacharias*. No families in the world were ever so honoured of God as those of Aaron and David; with one was made the covenant of priesthood, with the other that of royalty; they had both forfeited their honour, yet the gospel again puts honour upon both in their latter days, on that of Aaron in John Baptist, on that of David in Christ, and then they were both extinguished and lost. Christ was of David's house, his forerunner of Aaron's, for his priestly agency and influence opened the way to his kingly authority and dignity. This *Zacharias* was of the course of *Abia*; when in David's time the family of Aaron was multiplied, he divided them into twenty-four courses, for the more regular performance of their office, that it might never be either neglected for want of hands, or engrossed by a few. The eighth of those was that of *Abia*, (1 Chron. 24. 10.) who was descended from Eleazer, Aaron's eldest son: but Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that many of the families of the priests were lost in the captivity, so that after their return they took in those of other families, retaining the names of the heads of the respective courses. The wife of this *Zacharias* was of the daughters of Aaron too, and her name was *Elisabeth*, the very same name with *Elisheba* the wife of Aaron, Exod. 6. 23. The priests (Josephus saith) were very careful to marry within their own family, that they might maintain the dignity of the priesthood, and keep it without mixture.

Now that which is observed concerning *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth*, is,

1. That they were a very religious couple; (*v. 6.*) *They were both righteous before God*; they were so in his sight, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed, that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, Gen. 7. 1. *They approved themselves to him*, and he was graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy thing when those that are joined to each other in marriage, are both joined to the Lord: and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be *righteous before God*, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. *They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* (1.) Their being *righteous before God* was evidenced by the course and tenor of their conversation; they showed it, not by their talk, but by their works; by the way they walked in, and the rule they walked by. (2.) They were of a piece with themselves; for their devotions and their conversations agreed. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord, which have reference to all the instances of a good conversation, and must be regarded. (3.) They were universal in their obedience; not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavour to come up to it. (4.) Herein, though they were not *sinless*, yet they were *blameless*; nobody could charge them with any open, scandalous sin; they lived *honestly and inoffensively*, as ministers and their families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame.

2. That they had been long *childless*, *v. 7.* Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable, desirable blessings; yet many there are, who are *righteous before God*, and, if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, who yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are full of children, (Ps. 17. 14.) and send forth their little ones like a flock, John 21. 11. *Elisabeth* was barren, and they

began to despair of ever having children, for they were both now *well stricken in years*, when the women that have been most fruitful, leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been long childless, as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and so here John Baptist—to make their birth the more remarkable, and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents; and to show that when God keeps his people long waiting for mercy, he sometimes is pleased to recompense them for their patience, by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

II. The appearing of an angel to his father *Zacharias*, as he was ministering in the temple, *v. 8, 11.* *Zacharias* the prophet was the last of the Old Testament that was conversant with angels; and *Zacharias* the priest the first in the New Testament. Observe,

1. How *Zacharias* was employed in the service of God; (*v. 8.*) *He executed the priest's office, before God, in the order of his course*; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now it fell to *Zacharias's* lot to burn incense morning and evening for that week of his waiting, as other services fell to other priests by lot likewise. The services were directed by lot, that some might not decline them, and others engross them; and that, the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the High Priest's burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, who have thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour's birth; but it is plain that it was the burning of the daily incense at the altar of incense, (*v. 11.*) which was in the temple, (*v. 9.*) not in the most holy place, into which the High Priest entered. The Jews say that one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days, (there were such a multitude of them,) at least never more than one week. It is very probable that this was upon the sabbath-day, because there was a multitude of people attending, (*v. 10.*) which ordinarily was not on a week day; and thus God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then if Dr. Lightfoot reckon, with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of *Abia* fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month *Sivan*, answering to part of May and part of June, it is worth observing, that the portions of the law and the prophets, which were read this day in the synagogues, were very agreeable to that which was doing in the temple; namely, the law of the Nazarites, (Numb. 6.) and the conception of Samson, Judg. 13.

While *Zacharias* was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, *v. 10.* Dr. Lightfoot says that there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of that course that then served, and if it were the sabbath-day, those of that course also that had been in waiting the week before, and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbins call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion left their employments, for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast-days: now these all addressed themselves to their devotions, (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard,) when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was

gone in to burn incense. Now observe here, (1.) That the true Israel of God always were a *praying* people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of service by which we give honour to God, fetch in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him. (2.) That *then*, when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of *burning incense*, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar, his prayer might be heard *without incense*, for it might be directed before God *as incense*, Ps. 141. 2. But when he was *compassing the altar*, the incense could not be accepted *without prayer*, any more than the shell without the kernel. (3.) That it is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister, in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well in the most pertinent, judicious, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time *praying* in concurrence with him, what will it avail us? (4.) All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts, are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple-service there seems to be an allusion, (Rev. 8. 1, 3, 4.) where we find that *there was silence in heaven*, as there was in the temple, *for half an hour*, while the people were *silently* lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an *angel*, the angel of the covenant, who offered up *much incense with the prayers of all saints before the throne*. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession, if we do not *pray*, and *pray with our spirits*, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayer should gain acceptance, and bring in an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who *ever lives, making intercession*.

2. How, when he was thus employed, he was *honoured* with a messenger, a special messenger sent from heaven to him; (v. 11.) *There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord*. Some observe, that we never read of an angel appearing in the temple, with a message from God, but only this one to Zacharias, because *there* God had other ways of making known his mind, as the Urim and Thummim, and by a still small voice from between the cherubims; but the ark and the oracle were wanting in the second temple, and therefore when an express is to be sent to a priest in the temple, an angel was to be employed in it, and thereby the gospel was to be introduced, for *that*, as the *law*, was given at first very much by the *ministry of angels*, the appearance of which we often read of in the Gospels and the Acts; though the design both of the law and of the gospel, when brought to perfection, was to settle another way of correspondence, more spiritual, between God and man. This angel stood on the *right side of the altar of incense*, the north side of it, saith Dr. Lightfoot, on Zacharias's right hand; compare this with Zech. 3. 1. where Satan stands at the *right hand* of Joshua the priest, to *resist him*; but Zacharias had a good angel standing at his *right hand*, to encourage him. Some think that this angel appeared coming *out of the most holy place*, which led him to stand at the right side of the altar.

3. What impression this made upon Zacharias; (v. 12.) *When Zacharias saw him*, it was a surprise upon him, even to a degree of terror, for he was *troubled*, and *fear fell upon him*, v. 12. Though he was *righteous before God*, and *blameless* in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre bespoke him more than *human*. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations, and his conscience

afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, Dan. 10. 8. And for this reason God chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, whose *terror shall not make us afraid*.

III. The message which the angel had to deliver to him, v. 13. He began his message, as angels generally did, with, *Fear not*. Perhaps it had never been Zacharias's lot to *burn incense* before; and, being a very serious conscientious man, we may suppose him full of care to do it *well*, and perhaps when he saw the angel, he was afraid lest he came to rebuke him for some mistake or miscarriage; "No," saith the angel, "*fear not*; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. *Fear not*, but compose thyself, that thou mayst with a sedate and even spirit receive the message I have to deliver to thee."

Let us see what that is.

1. The *prayers* he has often made, shall now receive an *answer of peace*; *Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard*. (1.) If he means his particular prayer for a son to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children; but we may suppose, now that he and his wife were both *well-stricken in years*, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it; like Moses, it *sufficeth them*, and they *speak no more to God of that matter*, Deut. 3. 26. But God will now, in giving this mercy, look a great way back to the prayers that he had made long since for and with his wife, as Isaac for and with his, Gen. 25. 21. Note, Prayers of faith are *filed* in heaven, and are not *forgotten*, though the thing prayed for is not presently given in. Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world, may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. But, (2.) If he means the prayers he was *now making*, and offering up with his incense, we may suppose that those were according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah and the coming of his kingdom; "This prayer of thine is now *heard*; for thy wife shall now shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's forerunner." Some of the Jewish writers themselves say that the priest, when he burnt incense, prayed for the *salvation of the whole world*; and now that prayer shall be heard. Or, (3.) In general, "The prayers thou *now* makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and *come up for a memorial* before him;" (as the angel said to Cornelius, when he visited him at prayer, Acts 10. 30, 31.) "and this shall be the sign that thou art accepted of God, Elisabeth shall *bear thee a son*." Note, It is very comfortable to praying people, to know that their *prayers* are *heard*; and those mercies are doubly sweet, that are given in answer to prayer.

2. He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by his birth, which was *next* to miraculous, people might be prepared to receive and believe a virgin's bringing forth of a son, which was *perfectly* miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son; *Call him John*; in Hebrew *Johanan*, a name we often meet with in the Old Testament; it signifies, *gracious*. The priests must *beseech God that he will be gracious* (Mal. 1. 9.) and must *so bless the people*, Numb. 6. 23. Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him that his prayer is heard, and he shall have a son, whom, in token of an answer to his prayer, he shall call, *Gracious*, or, *The Lord will be gracious*, Isa. 30. 18, 19.

3. This son shall be the joy of his family and of all his relations; (v. 14.) He shall be another Isaac, thy laughter; and some think that is partly intended in his name, *John*; He shall be a *welcome child*. Thou for thy part shalt have joy and gladness

Note, Mercies that have been long *waited for*, when they *come at last*, are the more acceptable. "He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of *rejoicing* at their birth, would wish they had *never been*; but I will tell thee what thy son will be; and then thou wilt not need to *rejoice with trembling* at his birth, as the best must do, but mayst rejoice with triumph at it. Nay, and *many shall rejoice at his birth*; all the relations of the family will rejoice in it, and all its well-wishers, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family," v. 58. All good people will rejoice that such a religious couple as Zachary and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as, it may be hoped, will make him a public blessing to his generation. Yea, and perhaps many shall rejoice by an *unaccountable instinct*, as a presage of the joyous days the gospel will introduce.

This son shall be a distinguished *favourite of Heaven*, and a distinguished *blessing to the earth*. The honour of having a son is nothing to the honour of having *such a son*.

(1.) He shall be *great in the sight of the Lord*; those are great indeed, that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eye of a vain and carnal world. God will *set him before his face* continually, will employ him in his work, and send him on his errands; and that shall make him truly *great* and honourable. He shall be a *prophet*, yea *more than a prophet*, and upon that account as great as any that ever were *born of women*, Matth. 11. 11. He shall live very much *retired* from the world, out of men's sight, and when he makes a public appearance, it will be very *mean*; but he shall be *much*, he shall be *great, in the sight of the Lord*.

(2.) He shall be a Nazarite, set apart to God from every thing that is *polluting*; in token of that, according to the law of Nazariteship, he *shall drink neither wine nor strong drink*, or rather, neither *old wine* nor *new*; for most think that the word here translated *strong drink*, signifies some sort of wine; perhaps those that we call *made wines*, or any thing that is *intoxicating*. He shall be, as Samson was by the divine precept, (Judg. 13. 7.) and Samuel by his mother's vow, (1 Sam. 1. 11.) a Nazarite for life. It is spoken of as a great instance of God's favour to his people, that he *raised up of their sons for prophets*, and their *young men for Nazarites*, (Amos 2. 11.) as if those that were designed for prophets, were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that would be *eminent servants of God*, and employed in *eminent services*, must learn to live a life of self denial and mortification, must be dead to the pleasure of sense, and keep their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

(3.) He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services to which in due time he shall be called; *He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*, and as soon as it is possible he shall appear to have been so. Observe, [1.] Those that would be filled with the Holy Ghost, must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that is it that fits him for this. *Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit*, with which that is not consistent, Eph. 5. 18. [2.] It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the *Holy Ghost*, even from their *mother's womb*; for John Baptist even then was *filled with the Holy Ghost*, who took possession of his heart betimes; and an early specimen was given of it, when he *leaped in his mother's womb for joy*, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was *sanctified*. God has promised to *pour out his Spirit*

upon the *seed of believers*, (Isa. 44. 3.) and their first *springing up* in a dedication of themselves betimes to God is the fruit of it, v. 4, 5. Who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized, who for aught we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and have the *seeds of grace* sown in their hearts? Acts 10. 47.

(4.) He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, v. 16, 17.

[1.] He shall be sent to the *children of Israel*, to the nation of the Jews, to whom the Messiah also was *first sent*, and not to the Gentiles; to the *whole nation*, and not to the family of the *priests only*, with which, though he was himself of that family, we do not find he had any particular intimacy or influence.

[2.] He shall go before *the Lord their God*, that is, before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be, not *their King*, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a *temporal prince* to their nation, but *their Lord and their God*, to rule and defend, and serve them in a *spiritual* way by his influence on their hearts. Thomas knew this, when he said to Christ, *my Lord and my God*, better than Nathaniel did, when he said, *Rabbi, thou art the King of Israel*. John shall go *before him*, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

[3.] He shall go *in the spirit and power of Elias*. That is, *First*, He shall be such a man as Elias was, and do such works as Elias did; shall, like him, wear a hairy garment and a leathern girdle, and live retired from the world; shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance and reformation to a very corrupt and degenerate age; shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproving sin, and witnessing against it even in the greatest; and be hated and persecuted for it by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elijah was by an Ahab and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work, as Elijah was, by a divine *spirit* and *power*, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went *before the writing* prophets of the Old Testament, and did as it were *usher* in that *signal* period of the Old-Testament dispensation by a little *writing* of his own, (2 Chron. 21. 12.) so John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel-dispensation by preaching the substance of the gospel-doctrine and duty, *Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven*. *Secondly*, He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi under the name of Elijah, (Mal. 4. 5.) who should be sent *before the coming of the day of the Lord*. Behold! I send you a *prophet, even Elias*; not Elias the Tishbite, (as the LXX have corruptly read it, to favour the Jews' traditions,) but a prophet *in the spirit and power of Elias*, as the angel here expounds it.

[4.] He shall *turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God*, shall incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin and a desire of righteousness. Whatever has a tendency to *turn us from iniquity*, as John's preaching and baptism had, will turn us to Christ as *our Lord and our God*: for those who through grace are wrought upon to shake off the yoke of sin, that is, the dominion of the world and the flesh, will soon be persuaded to take upon them the yoke of the *Lord Jesus*.

[5.] Hereby he shall *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed, and was begun to be done by John Baptist, who came *for a witness*,

that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews who gloried in their having Abraham to their father, and told them that God would out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, (Matth. 3. 9.) which would tend to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, It is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children to the Jewish church, Isa. 54. 5, 6, 13.—60. 4, 9.—62. 5.—66. 12. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ, were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that is, he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles, who are now disobedient, shall be turned, not so much to their fathers the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young; shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion, which they had rested in, and to bring them up to substantial serious godliness: and the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain, and discord made to cease; and they that are at variance, being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. This agrees with the account Josephus gives of John Baptist, *Antiq. lib. 18. cap. 7.* "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety toward God, and righteousness towards one another, and that they should convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God and one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, First, True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of this world. It is both our wisdom and our duty to be religious, there is both equity and prudence in it. Secondly, It is not impossible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient, may be turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorance and prejudice. Thirdly, The great design of the gospel is to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and on this errand John Baptist is sent. In the mention that is twice made of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which, some think, does not denote the country or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore they render it Elijah the converter; one that was much employed, and very successful, in conversion-work. The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to turn or convert many to the Lord their God.

[6.] Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord; shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that hereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, First, All that are to be devoted to the Lord and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace in this world for glory in the other; by the terrors of the law for the comforts of the gospel; by the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of adoption. Secondly, Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted to. When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious.

IV. Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief.

He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, *Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken*; but it was not so. We are here told,

1. What his unbelief spake, v. 18. He said to the angel, *Whereby shall I know this?* This was not a humble petition for the confirming of his faith, but a peevish objection against what was said to him as altogether incredible; as if he should say, "I can never be made to believe this." He could not but perceive that it was an angel that spake to him; the message delivered, having reference to the Old Testament prophecies, carried much of its own evidence along with it. There are many instances in the Old Testament of those that had children when they were old, yet he cannot believe that he shall have this child of promise; "*For I am an old man, and my wife hath not only been all her days barren, but is now well stricken in years, and not likely ever to have children;*" wherefore he must have a sign given him, or he will not believe. Though the appearance of an angel, which had been long disused in the church, was sign enough; though he had this notice given him in the temple, the place of God's oracles, where he had reason to think no evil angel would be permitted to come; though it was given him when he was praying, and burning incense; and though a firm belief of that great principle of religion, that God has an almighty power, and with him nothing is impossible, which we ought not only to know, but to teach others, was enough to silence all objections; yet, considering his own body and his wife's too much, unlike a son of Abraham, he staggered at the promise, Rom. 4. 19, 20.

2. How his unbelief was silenced, and he silenced for it.

(1.) The angel stops his mouth by asserting his authority. Doth he ask, *Whereby shall I know this?* Let him know it by this, *I am Gabriel*, v. 19. He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, *teste meipso—take my word for it.* Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manoah and his wife, but this angel readily saith, *I am Gabriel*, which signifies the power of God, or, the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bid him say this, was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name, to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming, sent to Daniel by the man Gabriel, Dan. 8. 16.—9. 21. "*I am the same that was sent then, and am sent now in pursuance of the same intention.*" He is Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, an immediate attendant upon the throne of God. The prime ministers of state in the Persian court are described by this, that they saw the king's face, Esth. 1. 14. "*Though I am now talking with thee here, yet I stand in the presence of God.*" I know his eye is upon me, and I dare not say any more than I have warrant to say. But I declare *I am sent to speak to thee*, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which, being so well worthy of all acceptance, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully.

(2.) The angel stops his mouth indeed, by exerting his power; "*That thou mayest object no more, behold, thou shalt be dumb*," v. 20. If thou wilt have a sign for the support of thy faith, it shall be such a one as shall be also the punishment of thine unbelief; thou shalt not be able to speak till the day that these things shall be performed," v. 20. Thou shalt be both dumb and deaf; the same word signifies both; and it is plain that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends made signs to him, (v. 62.) as well as he to them, v. 22. Now, in striking him dumb, [1.] God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word. Hence we may take occasion to admire the patience of God and his

forbearance towards us, that we, who have so often spoken to his dishonour, have not been struck dumb, as Zacharias was, and as we had been, if God had dealt with us according to our sins. [2.] God dealt kindly with him, and very tenderly and graciously. For, *First*, Thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful, unbelieving words. If he have *thought evil*, and will not himself *lay his hands upon his mouth*, nor keep it as with a bridle, God will. It is better not to speak at all than to *speak wickedly*. *Secondly*, Thus he *confirmed* his faith; and by his being disabled to *speak*, he is enabled to *think* the better. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin we be brought to give more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain of them. *Thirdly*, Thus he was kept from divulging the vision, and boasting of it, which otherwise he would have been apt to do, whereas it was designed for the present to be lodged as a secret with him. *Fourthly*, It was a great mercy that God's words should be fulfilled in their season, notwithstanding his sinful distrust. The *unbelief of man shall not make the promises of God of no effect*, they shall be *fulfilled in their season*, and he shall not be for ever *dumb*, but only *till the day that these things shall be performed*, and then *thy lips shall be opened*, that *thy mouth may show forth God's praise*. Thus, though God *chastens* the iniquity of his people *with the rod*, yet his *loving kindness* he will not *take away*.

V. The return of Zacharias to the people, and at length to his family, and the conception of this child of promise, the son of his old age.

1. The people staid, expecting Zacharias to come out of the temple, because he was to pronounce the blessing upon them in the name of the Lord; and though he stayed beyond the usual time, yet they did not, as is too common in christian congregations, hurry away without the blessing, but waited for him, marvelling that he *tarried so long in the temple*, and afraid lest something was amiss, *v. 21*.

2. When he came out, he was *speechless*, *v. 22*. He was now to have dismissed the congregation with a blessing, but is dumb, and not able to do it; that the people may be minded to expect the Messiah, who can *command* the blessing, who *blesseth indeed*, and in whom all *the nations of the earth are blessed*. Aaron's priesthood is now shortly to be *silenced and set aside*, to make way for the *bringing in of a better hope*.

3. He made a shift to give them to understand that he had *seen a vision*, by some awful signs he made, for he *beckoned to them*, and *remained speechless*, *v. 22*. This represents to us the weakness and deficiency of the Levitical priesthood, in comparison with Christ's priesthood, and the dispensation of the gospel. The Old Testament speaks by signs, gives us some intimations of divine and heavenly things, but *imperfect* and uncertain; it *beckons to us*, but *remains speechless*; it is the gospel that speaks to us articulately, and gives us a clear view of that which in the Old Testament was seen *through a glass darkly*.

4. He stayed out the *days of his ministration*; for his lot being to *burn incense*, he could do that, though he was *dumb and deaf*. When we cannot perform the service of God so well as we would, yet, if we perform it so well as we can, God will accept of us in it.

5. He then returned to his family, and his *wife conceived*, *v. 23, 24*. She conceived by virtue of the promise, and, being sensible of it, *she hid herself five months*, she kept house, and kept it private, and did not go abroad so much as she used to do, (1.) Lest she should do herself any prejudice, so as might occasion her miscarrying, or any hurt to the conception. (2.) Lest she should contract any ceremonial pollution which might intrench upon the Naza-

riteship of her child, remembering the command given to Samson's mother in a like case, and applying it to herself; she must not *touch any unclean thing* while she is with child of a Nazarite, *Judg 13. 14*. And though *five months* are mentioned, because of what follows in the *sixth month*, yet we may suppose that she did in like manner take care of herself during the whole time of her being with child. (3.) Some think it was in an excess of modesty that she *hid herself*, ashamed it should be said that one of her age should be with child. *Shall she have pleasure, being old, her lord being old also?* *Gen. 18. 12*. Or, it was in token of her humility, that she might not seem to boast of the honour God had put upon her. (4.) She *hid herself* for devotion, that she might spend her time in prayer and praise. The saints are God's *hidden ones*; she gives this reason for her retirement, "*For thus hath the Lord dealt with me*; not only thus *graciously* in giving me a child, but thus *honourably* in giving me such a child as is to be a Nazarite;" (for so her husband might by writing signify to her;) "*he hath taken away my reproach among men*." Fruitfulness was looked upon to be so great a blessing among the Jews, because of the promises of the increase of their nation, and the rising of the Messiah among them, that it was a great reproach to be barren; and those who were so, though ever so *blameless*, were concluded to be guilty of some great sin *unknown*, for which they were so punished. Now Elisabeth triumphs, that not only this reproach is taken away, but great glory is put upon her instead of it; *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me*, beyond any thought or expectation of mine in the *days wherein he looked on me*. Note, In God's gracious dealings with us we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has *looked on us* with compassion and favour, and therefore has thus *dealt with us*.

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36. And, behold, thy cousin Eli-

sabeth, she hath also conceived a Son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

We have here notice given us of all it was fit that we should know concerning the incarnation and conception of our blessed Saviour, six months after the conception of John. The same angel Gabriel, that was employed in making known to Zacharias God's purpose concerning *his son*, is employed in this also; for in this, the same glorious work of redemption, which was *begun* in that, is *carried on*. As bad angels are none of the redeemed, so good angels are none of the redeemers; yet they are employed by the Redeemer as his messengers, and they go cheerfully on his errands, because they are his Father's humble servants, and his children's hearty friends and well-wishers.

I. We have here an account given of the mother of our Lord, of whom he was to be born, whom, though we are not to pray to, yet we ought to praise God for.

1. Her name was *Mary*, the same name with *Miriam*, the sister of Moses and Aaron; the name signifies *exalted*, and a great elevation it was to her indeed, to be thus *favoured* above all the daughters of the house of David.

2. She was a daughter of the royal family, lineally descended from David, and she herself and all her friends knew it, for she went under the title and character of the *house of David*, though she was poor and low in the world; and she was enabled by God's providence, and the care of the Jews to preserve their genealogies, to *make it out*, and as long as the promise of the Messiah was to be fulfilled, it was *worth keeping*; but for those now, who are brought low in the world, to have descended from persons of honour, is not worth mentioning.

3. She was a *virgin*, a pure, unspotted one, but espoused to one of the same royal stock, like her however, of low estate; so that upon both accounts there was (as it was fit there should be) an equality between them; his name was Joseph; he also was *of the house of David*, Matth. 1. 20. Christ's mother was a *virgin*, because he was not to be born by ordinary generation, but miraculously; it was necessary that he should be so, that, though he must partake of the nature of man, yet not of the corruption of that nature; but he was born of a *virgin espoused*, made up to be married, and contracted, to put honour upon the married state, that that might not be brought into contempt (which was an ordinance in innocence) by the Redeemer's being born of a virgin.

4. She lived in Nazareth, a *city of Galilee*, a remote corner of the country, and in no reputation for religion or learning, but which bordered upon the heathen, and therefore was called *Galilee of the Gentiles*. Christ's having his relations resident there, intimates favour in reserve for the Gentile world. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Jonah was by birth a Galilean, and Elijah and Elisha very much conversant in Galilee, who were all famous *prophets of the Gentiles*. The angel was sent to her from Nazareth. Note, No distance or disadvantage of place shall be a prejudice to those whom God has favours in store for. The angel Gabriel carries his message as cheerfully to Mary at Nazareth in Galilee as to Zacharias in the temple at Jerusalem.

II. The address of the angel to her, v. 28. We are not told what she was doing, or how employed,

when the angel came *unto her*; but he surprised her with this salutation, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured*. This was intended to raise in her, 1. A value for herself; and though it is very rare that any need to have any sparks struck into their breast with such design, yet in some, who, like Mary, pore only on their *low estate*, there is occasion for it. 2. An expectation of great news, not from abroad, but from above. Heaven designs, no doubt, uncommon favours for one whom an angel makes court to with such respect. *Hail thou, χαίρεις—rejoice thou*; it was the usual form of salutation; it expresses an esteem of her, and good-will to her and her prosperity.

(1.) She is dignified; "Thou art *highly favoured*. God, in his choice of thee to be the mother of the Messiah, has put an honour upon thee peculiar to thyself, above that of Eve, who was the mother of *all living*." The vulgar Latin translates this *gratia plena—full of grace*, and thence gathers, that she had more of the inherent graces of the Spirit than ever any had, whereas it is certain that this bespeaks no other than the singular favour done her, in preferring her to conceive and bear our blessed Lord; an honour, which, since he was to be the *seed of the woman*, some woman must have, not for *personal merit*, but purely for the sake of *free grace*, and she is pitched upon; *even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee*.

(2.) She has the presence of God with her; "*The Lord is with thee*, though poor and mean, and perhaps now forecasting how to get a livelihood, and maintain a family in the married state." The angel with this word raised the faith of Gideon; (Judg. 6. 12.) *The Lord is with thee*. Nothing is to be despaired of, not the performance of any service, not the obtaining of any favour, though ever so great, if we have *God with us*. This word might put her in mind of the Immanuel, *God with us*, which a virgin shall *conceive and bear*; (Isa. 7. 14.) and why not she?

(3.) She has the blessing of God upon her; "*Blessed art thou among women*; not only thou shalt be accounted so by men, but thou shalt be so. Thou that art so *highly favoured* in this instance, mayst expect in other things to be *blessed*." She explains this herself, (v. 48.) *All generations shall call me blessed*. Compare it with that which Deborah saith of Jael, another that was the glory of her sex; (Judg. 5. 24.) *Blessed shall she be above the women in the tent*.

III. The consternation she was in, upon this address, (v. 29.) *When she saw him*, and the glories with which he was surrounded, she was *troubled* at the sight of him, and much more *at his saying*. Had she been a proud, ambitious young woman, that aimed high, and flattered herself with the expectation of great things in the world, she would have been *pleased* at his saying, would have been puffed up with it, and (as we have reason to think she was a young woman of very good sense) would have had an answer ready, signifying so much: but, instead of that, she is *confounded* at it, as not conscious to herself of any thing that either *merited* or *promised* such great things; and she *cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be*; Was it from heaven or of men? Was it to amuse her, was it to ensnare her, was it to banter her, or was there something substantial and weighty in it? But of all the thoughts she had as to *what manner of salutation it should be*, I believe she had not the least idea of its being ever intended or used for a prayer, as it is, and has been, for many ages, by the corrupt, degenerate, and anti-christian ages of the church, and to be ten times repeated for the Lord's prayer once; so it is in the church of Rome. But her thoughtfulness upon this occasion gives a very useful intimation to young people of her sex, when addresses are made

to them, to consider and *cast in their minds* what manner of *salutations* they are, whence they come, and what their tendency is, that they may receive them accordingly, and may always *stand on their guard*.

IV. The message itself which the angel had to deliver to her. Some time the angel gives her to *pause*; but, observing that that did but increase her perplexity, he went on with his errand, *v. 30.* To what he had said she made no reply; he therefore confirms it. "*Fear not, Mary, I have no other design than to assure thee that thou hast found favour with God more than thou thinkest of, as there are many who think they are more favoured of God than really they are.*" Note, Those that have *found favour with God*, should not give way to disquieting, distrustful fears. Doth God favour thee? Fear not, though the world frown upon thee. Is he for thee? No matter who is against thee.

1. Though she is a *virgin*, she shall have the honour of being a *mother*: "*Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and thou shalt have the naming of him; thou shalt call his name Jesus.*" *v. 31.* It was the sentence upon Eve, that, though she should have the honour to be the *mother of all living*, yet this mortification shall be an allay to that honour, that *her desire shall be to her husband*, and he shall *rule over her*, Gen. 3. 16. But Mary has the honour without the allay.

2. Though she lives in *poverty and obscurity*, yet she shall have the honour to be the mother of the Messiah; her Son shall be named *Jesus—a Saviour*, such a one as the world *needs*, rather than such a one as the Jews *expect*.

(1.) He will be very *nearly allied to the upper world*. He shall be *great*, truly great, incontestably great, for he shall be called the *Son of the Highest*, the son of God, who is the *Highest*; of the same nature, as the son is of the same nature with the father; and very dear to him, as the son is to the father. He shall be *called*, and not *mis-called*, the *Son of the Highest*, for he is himself *God over all, blessed for evermore*, Rom. 9. 5. Note, Those who are the children of God, though but by adoption and regeneration, are *truly great*, and therefore are concerned to be *very good*, 1 John 3. 1, 2.

(2.) He will be very *highly preferred in the lower world*; for, though born under the most disadvantageous circumstances possible, and appearing in the form of a servant, yet the *Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David*, *v. 32.* He puts her in mind that she was of the *house of David*; and that therefore since neither the *Salique Law*, nor the right of promigeneriture, took place in the entail of his throne, it was not impossible but that she might bring forth an *heir* to it, and therefore might the more easily *believe* it, when she was told by an angel from heaven that she *should* do so, that after the sceptre had been long *departed* from that ancient and honourable family, it should now at length return to it again, to remain in it, not by succession, but in the same hand to eternity. His people will not *give him that throne*, will not acknowledge his right to *rule them*; but the *Lord God* shall give him a right to *rule them*, and set him as his *King* upon the *holy hill of Zion*. He assures her, [1.] That his kingdom shall be *spiritual*; he shall *reign over the house of Jacob, not Israel according to the flesh*, for they neither came into his interests nor did they continue long a people; it must therefore be a *spiritual kingdom*, the house of Israel *according to promise*, that he must *rule over*. [2.] That it shall be eternal; he shall *reign for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end*, as there had been long since of the temporal reign of David's house, and would shortly be of the state of Israel: other crowns *endure not to every generation*, but Christ's doth,

Prov. 27. 24. The gospel is the *last dispensation*, we are to look for no other.

V. The further information given her, upon her inquiry concerning the birth of this Prince.

1. It is a just inquiry which she makes; "*How shall this be?*" *v. 34.* "How can I now presently conceive a child," (for so the angel meant,) "*when I know not a man*; must it therefore be otherwise than by ordinary generation? If so, let me know *how?*" She knew that the Messiah must be born of a *virgin*; and if she must be his mother, she desires to know how. This was not the language of her distrust, or any doubt of what the angel said, but of a desire to be further instructed.

2. It is a satisfactory answer that is given to it, *v. 35.* (1.) She shall conceive by the *power of the Holy Ghost*, whose proper work and office it is to *sanctify*; and therefore to sanctify the virgin for this purpose, the Holy Ghost is called the *power of the Highest*. Doth she ask how this shall be? This is enough to help her over all the difficulty there appears in it; a divine power will undertake it, not the power of an angel employed in it, as in other works of wonder, but the power of the *Holy Ghost* himself.

(2.) She must *ask no questions* concerning the way and manner how it shall be wrought; for the Holy Ghost, as the *power of the Highest*, shall *overshadow* her, as the *cloud* covered the tabernacle when the glory of God took possession of it, to conceal it from those that would too curiously observe the motions of it, and pry into the mystery of it. The formation of every babe in the womb, and the entrance of the spirit of life into it, is a mystery in nature; none *knows the way of the spirit, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child*, Eccl. 11. 5. We were *made in secret*, Ps. 139. 15, 16. Much more was the formation of the child *Jesus a mystery*; without controversy, *great was the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. 3. 16. It is a *new thing created in the earth*, (Jer. 31. 22.) concerning which we must not covet to be *wise above what is written*.

(3.) The child she shall conceive, is a *holy thing*, and therefore must not be conceived by *ordinary generation*, because he must not share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature; he is spoken of emphatically, *That Holy Thing*, such as never was; and he shall be called the *Son of God*, as the Son of the Father by eternal generation, as an indication of which, he shall now be formed by the Holy Ghost in the present conception. His human nature must be so produced, as it was fit that it should be, which was to be taken into union with the divine nature.

3. It was a further encouragement to her faith, to be told that *her cousin Elisabeth*, though stricken in years, was *with child*, *v. 36.* Here is an age of wonders beginning, and therefore he not surprised; here is one among thy own relations truly great, though not altogether so great as this; it is usual with God to advance in working wonders. *Greater works than these shall he do*. Though Elisabeth was, on the father's side, of the *daughters of Aaron*, (*v. 5.*) yet on the mother's side she might be of the house of David, for those two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty and the priesthood in the Messiah. This is the *sixth month with her that was called barren*. This intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that all the instances in the Old Testament, of those having children that had been long barren, which was above nature, were designed to prepare the world for the belief of a virgin's bearing a son, which was against nature. And therefore, even in the birth of Isaac, Abraham saw Christ's day, foresaw such a miracle in the birth of Christ. The angel assures Mary of

this, to encourage her faith, and concludes with that great truth, of undoubted certainty and universal use, *For with God nothing shall be impossible*; (v. 37.) and if nothing, then not this. Abraham therefore staggered not at the belief of the divine promise, because he was strong in his belief of the divine power, Rom. 4, 20, 21. No word of God must be *incredible to us*, as long as no work of God is *impossible to him*.

VI. Her acquiescence in the will of God concerning her, v. 38. She owns herself, 1. A believing subject to the divine authority; "*Behold, the hand-maid of the Lord*. Lord, I am at thy service, at thy disposal, to do what thou commandest me." She objects not the danger of spoiling her marriage, and blemishing her reputation, but leaves the issue with God, and submits entirely to his will. 2. A believing expectant of the divine favour. She is not only content that it should be so, but humbly desires that it may be so; *Be it unto me according to thy word*. Such a favour as this, it was not for her to slight, or be indifferent to; and for what God has *promised* he will be *sought unto*; by prayer we must put our *amen*, or *so be it*, to the promise. *Remember*, and perform *thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope*. We must, as Mary here, *guide our desires by the word of God, and ground our hopes upon it*. Be it unto me *according to thy word*; just so, and no otherwise.

Hereupon, the angel departed from her; having completed the errand he was sent upon, he returned, to give account of it, and receive new instructions. Converse with angels was always a transient thing, and soon over; it will be constant and permanent in the future state. It is generally supposed that just at this instant the virgin *conceived*, by the *overshadowing power* of the Holy Ghost; but the scripture being decently silent concerning that, it doth not become us to be *inquisitive*, much less *positive*.

33. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda, 40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 32. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 41. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 43. For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. 51. He hath show-

ed strength with his arm, he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. 56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

We have here an interview between the two happy mothers, Elisabeth and Mary: the angel, by intimating to Mary the favour bestowed on her cousin Elisabeth, (v. 36.) gave occasion for it; and sometimes it may prove a better piece of service than we think, to bring good people together, to compare notes. Here is,

1. The visit which Mary made to Elisabeth. Mary was the *younger*, and younger with child; and therefore, if they must come together, it was fittest that Mary should take the journey, not insisting on the preference which the greater dignity of her conception gave her, v. 39. She *arose*, and left her affairs, to attend this greater matter; *in those days at that time*, (as it is commonly explained, Jer. 33. 15. —50. 4.) in a day or two after the angel had visited her, taking some time first as it is supposed, for her devotion, or rather hastening away to her cousin's, where she would have more leisure, and better help, in the family of a priest. She went, *μετὰ σπουδῆς* — *with care, diligence, and expedition*; not as young people commonly go abroad and visit their friends, to *divert* herself, but to *inform* herself: she went to a city of Judah in the hill-country; it is not named, but by comparing the description of it here with Josh. 21, 10, 11. it appears to be *Hebron*, for that is there said to be *in the hill-country of Judah*, and to belong to the priests the sons of Aaron; thither Mary hastened, though it was a long journey, some scores of miles.

1. Dr. Lightfoot offers a conjecture that she was to *conceive* our Saviour there at Hebron, and perhaps had so much intimated to her by the angel, or some other way; and therefore she made such haste thither. He thinks it probable that Shiloh, of the tribe of Judah, and the seed of David, should be *conceived* in a city of Judah and of David, as he was to be born in Bethlehem, another city which belonged to them both. In Hebron the promise was given of Isaac; circumcision was instituted. Here (saith he) Abraham had his first land, and David his first crown: here lay interred the three couple, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, and, as antiquity has held, Adam and Eve. He therefore thinks that it suits singularly with the harmony and consent which God uses in his works, that the promise should begin to take place by the conception of the Messias, even among those patriarchs to whom it was given. I see no improbability in the conjecture, but add this for the support of it, that Elisabeth said, (v. 45.) *There shall be a performance*; as if it were not performed yet, but was to be performed there.

2. It is generally supposed that she went thither for the confirming of her faith by the sign which the angel had given her, her cousin's being with child, and to rejoice with her sister-favourite. And besides, she went thither, perhaps, that she might be more retired from company, or else might have more agreeable company than she could have in Nazareth. We may suppose that she did not ac-

quant any of her neighbours in Nazareth with the message she had received from heaven, yet longed to *talk over* a thing she had a thousand times *thought over*, and knew no person in the world with whom she could *freely* converse concerning it but her cousin Elisabeth, and therefore she hastened to her. Note, It is very beneficial and comfortable for those that have a good work of grace begun in their souls, and Christ in the *forming* there, to consult those who are in the same case, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of christian to christian.

II. The meeting between Mary and Elisabeth. Mary entered into the house of Zacharias; but he, being *dumb* and *deaf*, kept his chamber, it is probable, and saw no company; and therefore she *saluted Elisabeth*. (v. 40.) told her that she was come to make her a visit, to know her state, and *rejoice with her* in her joy.

Now, at their first coming together, for the confirmation of the faith of both of them, there was something very extraordinary. Mary knew that Elisabeth was with child, but it does not appear that Elisabeth had been told any thing of her cousin Mary's being designed for the mother of the Messiah; and therefore what knowledge she appears to have had of it, must have come by a *revelation*, which would be a great encouragement to Mary.

1. The babe *leaped in her womb*. It is very probable that she had been several weeks *quick*, (for she was six months gone,) and that she had often felt the child stir; but this was a more than ordinary motion of the child, and which alarmed her to expect something very extraordinary, *ἐκκίνησε*. It is the same word that is used by the LXX (Gen. 25. 22.) for the *struggling* of Jacob and Esau in Rebecca's womb, and the mountains *skipping*, Ps. 114. 4. The *babe leaped* as it were to give a signal to his mother that he was now at hand, whose forerunner he was to be, about six months in ministry, as he was in being; or, it was the effect of some strong impression made upon the mother. Now began to be fulfilled what the angel said to his father, (v. 15.) that he should be *filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*; and perhaps he himself had some reference to this, when he said, (John 3. 29.) *The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice*, heard, though not by him, yet by his mother.

Elisabeth was herself *filled with the Holy Ghost*, or a Spirit of prophecy; by which, as well as by the particular suggestions of the Holy Ghost she was filled with, she was given to understand that the Messiah was at hand, in whom prophecy should revive, and by whom the Holy Ghost should be more plentifully poured out than ever, according to the expectations of those who *waited for the consolation of Israel*. The uncommon motion of the babe in her womb, was a token of the extraordinary emotion of her spirit under a divine impulse. Note, Those whom Christ graciously visits, may know it by their being *filled with the Holy Ghost*; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

III. The welcome which Elisabeth, by the Spirit of prophecy, gave to Mary, the mother of our Lord; not as to a common friend making a common visit, but as to one of whom the Messiah was to be born.

1. She congratulates her on her honour, and though perhaps she knew not of it till *just now*, she acknowledges it with the greatest assurance and satisfaction. She *shake with a loud voice*; this does not at all intimate (as some think) that there was a floor or a wall between them, but that she was in a transport or exultation of joy, and said what she cared not who knew. She said, *Blessed art thou among women*, the same word that the angel had

said; (v. 28.) for thus this will of God, concerning honouring the Son, should be done *on earth* as it is *done in heaven*. But Elisabeth adds a reason, *Therefore blessed art thou, because blessed is the fruit of thy womb*; thence it was that she derived this excellent dignity. Elisabeth was the wife of a priest, and in years, yet she *grudges* not, that her kinswoman, who was many years younger than she, and every way her inferior, should have the honour of conceiving in her virginity, and being the mother of the Messiah, whereas the honour put upon her was *much less*; she *rejoices* in it, and is well pleased, as her son was afterward, that she who *cometh after her, is preferred before her*, John 1. 27. Note, While we cannot but own that we are more *favoured* of God than we deserve, let us by no means envy, that others are *more highly* favoured than we are.

2. She acknowledges her condescension, in making her this visit; (v. 43.) *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* Observe, (1.) She calls the Virgin Mary *the mother of her Lord*, (as David, in spirit, called the Messiah, *Lord, his Lord*.) for she knew he was to be *Lord of all*. (2.) She not only bids her welcome to her house, though perhaps she came but in mean circumstances, but reckons this visit a great favour, which she thought herself unworthy of; *Whence is this to me?* It is in reality, and not in compliment, that she saith, "This was a greater favour than I could have expected." Note, Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost, have *low thoughts* of their own merits, and high thoughts of God's favours. Her son the Baptist spake to the same purport with this, when he said, *Comest thou to me?* Matth. 3. 14.

3. She acquaints her with the concurrence of the babe in her womb, in this welcome to her; (v. 44.) "Thou certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessing, with thee, for *as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears*, not only my heart *leaped for joy*, though I knew not immediately why or wherefore, but the *babe in my womb*, who was not capable of knowing it, *did so too*." He *leaped* as it were *for joy* that the Messiah, whose harbinger he was to be, would himself come so soon after him. This would serve very much to strengthen the faith of the virgin, that there were such assurances as these given to others; and it would be in part the accomplishment of what had been so often foretold, that there should be *universal joy before the Lord, when he cometh*, Ps. 98. 8, 9.

4. She commends her faith, and encourages it; (v. 45.) *Blessed is she that believed*. Believing souls are blessed souls, and will be found so at last; this blessedness cometh *through faith*, even the blessedness of being related to Christ, and having him *formed in the soul*. They are *blessed*, who *believe* the word of God, for that word will not fail them; *there shall*, without doubt, *be a performance of those things which are told her from the Lord*. Note, The inviolable certainty of the promise is the undoubted felicity of those that build upon it, and expect their all from it. The faithfulness of God is the blessedness of the faith of the saints. Those that have experienced the performance of God's promises themselves, should encourage others to hope that he will be as good as his word to them also; *I will tell you what God has done for my soul*.

IV. Mary's song of praise, upon this occasion. Elisabeth's prophecy was an echo to the virgin Mary's salutation, and this song is yet a stronger *echo* to that prophecy, and shows her to be no less filled with the Holy Ghost than Elisabeth was. We may suppose the blessed Virgin to come in, very much *fatigued* with her journey; yet she forgets that, and is inspired with new life, and vigour, and joy, upon the confirmation she here meets with of her

faith; and since, by this sudden inspiration and transport, she finds that this was designed to be her errand hither, weary as she is, like Abraham's servant, she would *neither eat nor drink till she had told her errand*.

1. Here are the expressions of joy and praise, and God alone the Object of the praise and Centre of the joy. Some compare this song with that which her name-sake Miriam, the sister of Moses, sung, upon the triumphant departure of Israel out of Egypt, and their triumphant passage through the Red sea; others think it better compared with the song of Hannah, upon the birth of Samuel, which, like this, passes from a family-mercy to a public and general one. *This begins, like that, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*, 1 Sam. 2. 1. Observe how Mary here speaks of God.

(1.) With great reverence of him, as *the Lord*; "*My soul doth magnify the Lord*; I never saw him so great as now I find him so good." Note, Those, and those only, are advanced in mercy, who are thereby brought to think the more *highly and honourably* of God; whereas there are those whose prosperity and preferment make them say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* The more honour God has any way put upon us, the more honour we must study to give to him: and then only we are accepted in magnifying the Lord, when our souls magnify him, and all that is within us. Praising-work must be soul-work.

(2.) With great complacency in him as *her Saviour*; *My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour*. This seems to have reference to the Messiah, whom she was to be the mother of. She calls him *God her Saviour*, for the angel had told her that he should be the *Son of the Highest*, and that his name should be *Jesus, a Saviour*; this she fastened upon, with application to herself; *He is God my Saviour*. Even the mother of our Lord had need of an interest in him as her Saviour, and would have been undone without it: and she glories more in that happiness which she had in common with all believers than in being his mother, which was an honour peculiar to herself; and this agrees with the preference Christ gave to obedient believers above his mother and brethren; see Matth. 12. 50. Luke 11. 27, 28. Note, Those that have Christ for their God and Saviour, have a great deal of reason to rejoice, to *rejoice in spirit*, that is, rejoicing as Christ did, (Luke 10. 21.) with spiritual joy.

2. Here are just causes assigned for this joy and praise.

(1.) Upon *her own account*, v. 48, 49. [1.] *Her spirit rejoiced in the Lord*, because of the *kind things* he had done for her; his *condescension and compassion* to her; *He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden*; he has looked upon her with *pity*, for so the word is commonly used. "He has chosen me to this honour, notwithstanding my great meanness, poverty, and obscurity." Nay, the expression seems to intimate, not only (to allude to that of Gideon, Judg. 6. 15.) that her family was poor in Judah, but that she was the *least in her father's house*, as if she were under some particular contempt and disgrace among her relations, was unjustly neglected, and the outcast of the family, and God put this honour upon her, to balance abundantly that contempt. I rather suggest this, for we find something toward such honour as this put upon others, on the like consideration. Because God saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, Gen. 29. 31. Because Hannah was provoked, and made to fret, and insulted over, by Peninnah, therefore God gave her a son, 1 Sam. 1. 19. Whom men wrongfully depress and despise, God sometimes, in compassion to them, especially if they have borne it patiently, doth prefer and advance; see Judg. 11. 7. So in

Mary's case. And if God regard her low estate, he not only thereby gives a specimen of his favour to the whole race of mankind, whom he remembers in their low estate, as the psalmist speaks, (Ps. 136. 23.) but secures a lasting honour to her; (for such the honour is that God bestows, honour that fades not away;) "*From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed*, shall think me a happy woman, and highly advanced." All that embrace Christ and his gospel, will say, *Blessed was the womb that bore him, and the breasts which he sucked*, Luke 11. 27. Elisabeth had once and again called her *blessed*: "But that is not all," saith she, "all generations of Gentiles as well as Jews shall call me so." [2.] *Her soul magnifies the Lord*, because of the wonderful things he has done for her; (v. 49.) *He that is mighty, has done to me great things*. A great thing indeed, that a virgin should conceive. A great thing indeed, that Messiah, who had been so long ago promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born. It is the power of the Highest that appears in this. She adds, *and holy is his name*; for so Hannah saith in her song, *There is none holy as the Lord*, which she explains in the next words, *for there is none beside thee*, 1 Sam. 2. 2. God is a being by himself, and he manifests himself to be so, especially in the work of our redemption. He that is mighty, even he whose name is holy, has done to me great things. Glorious things may be expected from him that is both mighty and holy; who can do every thing, and will do every thing well and for the best.

(2.) Upon the account of others. The Virgin Mary, as the mother of the Messiah, is become a kind of public person, wears a public character, and is therefore immediately endued with another spirit, a more public spirit than before she had, and therefore looks abroad, looks about her, looks before her, and takes notice of God's various dealings with the children of men, (v. 50, &c.) as Hannah; (1 Sam. 2. 3.) in this she has especially an eye to the coming of the Redeemer, and God's manifesting himself therein.

[1.] It is a certain truth, that *God has mercy in store*, mercy in reserve, for all that have a reverence for his majesty, and a due regard to his sovereignty and authority. But never did this appear so, as in sending his Son into the world to save us; (v. 50.) *His mercy is on them that fear him*; it has always been so; he has ever looked upon them with an eye of peculiar favour, who have looked up to him with an eye of filial fear. But he hath manifested this mercy, so as never before, in sending his Son to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and work out an everlasting salvation, for them that fear him; and this from generation to generation, for there are gospel-privileges transmitted by entail, and intended for perpetuity. Those that fear God, as their Creator and Judge, are encouraged to hope for mercy in him, through their Mediator and Advocate; and in him mercy is settled upon all that fear God, pardoning mercy, healing mercy, accepting mercy, crowning mercy, from generation to generation, while the world stands. In Christ he keepeth mercy for thousands.

[2.] It has been a common observation, that God in his providence puts contempt upon the haughty, and honour upon the humble; and this he has done remarkably in the whole economy of the work of man's redemption. As God had, with his mercy to her, showed himself mighty also, (v. 48, 49.) so he had, with his mercy on them that fear him, showed strength likewise with his arm. First, In the course of his providence, it is his usual method to cross the expectations of men, and proceed quite otherwise than they promise themselves. Proud men expect to carry all before them, to have their way and

their will ; but he *scatters them in the imagination of their hearts*, breaks their measures, blasts their projects, nay, and brings them low, and brings them down, by those very counsels with which they thought to advance and establish themselves. The mighty think to secure themselves by might in their seats, but he *puts them down*, and overturns their seats ; while, on the other hand, those of *low degree*, who despaired of ever advancing themselves, and thought of no other than of being *ever low*, are wonderfully *exalted*. This observation concerning *honour*, holds likewise concerning *riches* ; many who were so poor, that they had not bread for themselves and their families, by some surprising turn of Providence in favour of them, come to be *filled with good things* ; while, on the other hand, those who were rich, and thought no other than that to-morrow should be, as this day, that their mountain stood strong, and should never be moved, are strangely impoverished, and *sent away empty*. Now this is the same observation that Hannah had made, and enlarged upon, in her song, with application to the case of herself and her adversary, (1 Sam. 2. 4—7.) which very much illustrates this here. And compare also Ps. 107. 33—41. Ps. 113. 7—9. and Eccl. 9. 11. God takes a pleasure in *disappointing* their expectations, who promise themselves *great things* in the world, and in *out-doing* the expectations of those who promise themselves but a *little* ; as a *righteous* God, it is his glory to *abuse* those who *exalt* themselves, and strike terror on the secure ; and as a *good* God, it is his glory to exalt those who humble themselves, and to speak comfort to those who fear before him. *Secondly*, This doth especially appear in the methods of gospel-grace.

1. In the *spiritual honours* it dispenses. When the proud Pharisees were rejected, and Publicans and sinners went *into the kingdom of heaven* before them ; when the Jews, who *followed after the law of righteousness*, did not attain it, and the Gentiles, who never thought of it, attained to righteousness ; (Rom. 9. 30. 31.) when God chose not the *wise men after the flesh*, not the *mighty*, or the *noble*, to preach the gospel, and plant christianity in the world, but the *foolish and weak things* of the world, and things that were despised, (1 Cor. 1. 26. 27.) then he *scattered the proud*, and *put down the mighty*, but *exalted them of low degree*. When the tyranny of the chief priests and elders was brought down, who had long *lorded it over God's heritage*, and hoped *always* to do so ; and Christ's disciples, a company of poor despised fishermen, by the power they were clothed with, were made to *sit on thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel ; when the power of the four monarchies was broken, and the kingdom of the Messiah, that *Stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, is made to *fill the earth* ; then are the *proud scattered*, and those of *low degree exalted*.

2. In the *spiritual riches* it dispenses. v. 53. (1.) Those who see their need of Christ, and are importunately desirous of righteousness and life in him, he *fills with good things*, with the *best things* ; he gives liberally to them, and they are *abundantly satisfied* with the blessings he gives. Those who are weary and heavy-laden, shall find rest with Christ, and those who thirst, are called to *come to him, and drink* ; for they only know how to value his gifts ; *to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, manna is angels' food ; and to the *thirsty* fair water is *honey out of the rock*. (2.) Those who are rich, who are not *hungry*, who, like Laodicea, think they have *need of nothing*, are full of themselves and their own righteousness, and think they have a sufficiency in themselves, those he *sends away* from his door, they are not welcome to him, he sends them *empty away*, they come *full of self*, and are sent away *empty of Christ*. He sends them to the *gods whom they*

served, to their own righteousness and strength which they trusted to.

[3.] It was always expected that the Messiah should be, in a special manner, the Strength and Glory of his people Israel, and so he is in a peculiar manner ; (v. 54.) *He hath holpen his servant Israel*, *OUTRAGED*. He hath taken them by the hand, and *helped them up* that were fallen, and could not help themselves. Those that were sunk under the burdens of a broken covenant of innocency, are *helped up* by the blessings of a renewed covenant of grace. The sending of the Messiah, on whom *help* was laid for poor sinners, was the greatest kindness that could be done, the greatest help that could be provided for his people Israel, and that which magnifies it is,

First, That it is in remembrance of his mercy ; the mercifulness of his nature, the mercy he has in store for his *servant Israel*. While this blessing was deferred, his people, who waited for it, were often ready to ask, *Has God forgotten to be gracious ?* But now he made it appear that he had not forgotten, but *remembered, his mercy*. He remembered his former mercy, and repeated that to them in *spiritual* blessings, which he had done formerly to them in *temporal* favours. *He remembered the days of old ; Where is he that brought them out of the sea ; out of Egypt ?* Isa. 63. 11. He will do the like again ; which that was a type of.

Secondly, That it is in performance of his promise ; it is a mercy not only designed, but declared, (v. 55.) it was *what he spake to our fathers*, that the seed of the woman should break the head of the serpent ; that God should dwell in the tents of Shem ; and particularly to Abraham, that *in his Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed*, with the best of blessings, with the blessings that are *for ever*, and to the seed that shall be for ever ; that is, his *spiritual* seed, for his carnal seed were *cut off* a little after this. Note, What God hath spoken he will perform ; what he hath spoken to the fathers, will be performed to their seed ; to their seed's seed, in blessings that shall last for ever.

Lastly, Mary's return to Nazareth, (v. 56.) after she had continued with Elisabeth about *three months*, so long as to be fully satisfied concerning herself, that she was *with child*, and to be confirmed therein by her cousin Elisabeth. Some think, though her return is here mentioned, before Elisabeth's being delivered, because the evangelist would finish this passage concerning Mary, before he proceeded with the story of Elisabeth, yet that Mary stayed till her cousin was (as we say) *down and up again* ; that she might attend on her, and be with her in her living in, and have her own faith confirmed by the full accomplishment of the promise of God concerning Elisabeth. But most bind themselves to the order of the story as it lies, and think she returned again when Elisabeth was near her time ; because she still affected retirement, and therefore would not be there, when the birth of this child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. Those in whose hearts Christ is formed, take more delight than they used to do, in *sitting alone and keeping silence*.

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered ; and she brought forth a son. 58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her ; and they rejoiced with her. 59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child ; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60. And his

mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea: 66. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

In these verses, we have,

I. The birth of John Baptist, v. 57. Though he was conceived in the womb by miracle, he continued in the womb according to the ordinary course of nature; (so did our Saviour;) *Elisabeth's full time came, that she should be delivered*, and then *she brought forth a son*. Promised mercies are to be expected when the *full time* for them is come, and not before.

II. The great joy that was among all the relations of the family, upon this extraordinary occasion; (v. 58.) *Her neighbours and her cousins heard of it*; for it would be in every body's mouth, as next to miraculous. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Hebron was inhabited by priests of the family of Aaron, and that those were the cousins here spoken of; but the fields and villages about, by the children of Judah, and that those were the *neighbours*. Now these here discovered, 1. A *pious* regard to God; they acknowledged that *the Lord had magnified his mercy to her*; so the word is. It was a mercy to have her reproach taken away, a mercy to have her family built up, and the more, being a family of *priests*, devoted to God, and employed for him. Many things concurred to make the mercy *great*—that she had been long barren, was now old, but especially that the child should be *great in the sight of the Lord*. 2. A *friendly* regard to Elisabeth; when she rejoiced, they rejoiced with her. We ought to take *pleasure* in the prosperity of our neighbours and friends, and to be thankful to God for *their* comforts as for our own.

III. The dispute that was among them, concerning the naming him; (v. 59.) *On the eighth day*, as God had appointed, they *came together, to circumcise the child*; it was here, in Hebron, that *circumcision* was first instituted; and Isaac, who, like John Baptist, was born *by promise*, was one of the first that was submitted to it, at least, the chief eyed in the institution of it. They that rejoiced in the birth of the child, came together to the circumcising of him. Note, The greatest comfort we can take in our children, is, in *giving them up to God*, and recognizing their covenant relation to him. The Baptism of our children should be more our joy than their birth.

Now it was the custom, when they circumcised their children, to *name them*, because, when *Abram* was circumcised, God gave him a new name, and called him *Abraham*; and it is not unfit that they should be left *nameless* till they are by name *given up to God*. Now,

1. Some proposed that he should be called by his

father's name, *Zacharias*; we have not any instance in scripture, that the child should bear the father's name; but perhaps it was of late come into use among the Jews, as it is with us, and they intended hereby to do honour to the father, who was not likely to have another child.

2. The mother *opposed* it, and would have him called *John*; having learned, either by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, (as is most probable,) or by information in writing from her husband, that God appointed this to be his name; (v. 60.) *He shall be called Johanan—Gracious*; because he shall introduce the gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines more bright than ever.

3. The relations objected against that; (v. 61.) *"There is none of thy kindred, none of the relations of thy family, that is called by that name"*; and therefore, if he may not have his father's name, yet let him have the name of some of his kindred, who will take it as a piece of respect to have such a *child of wonders* as this named from them." Note, As those that have friends must show themselves *friendly*, so those that have relations, must be *obedient* to them in all the usual regards that are paid to kindred.

4. They appealed to the *father*, and would try if they could possibly get to know his mind, for it was his office to *name the child*, v. 62. They made signs to him, by which it appears that he was *deaf* as well as *dumb*; nay, it should seem, *mindless* of any thing, else one would think they should at first have desired him to write down his child's name, if he had ever yet communicated any thing by writing since he was *struck*. However, they would carry the matter as far as they could, and give him to understand what the dispute was, which he only could determine; whereupon he made signs to them to give him a *table-book*, such as they then used; and with the pencil he wrote these words, *His name is John*, v. 63. Not, "It shall be so," or, "I would have it so," but, "It is so." The matter is determined already; the *angel* had given him that name. Observe, When *Zacharias* could not *speak*, he wrote. When ministers have their mouths stopped, that they cannot preach, yet they may be doing good as long as they have not their hands tied, that they cannot write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use; blessed Paul himself did so. *Zacharias's* pitching upon the same name that Elisabeth had chosen, was a great surprise to the company; *They marvelled all*; for they knew not that, though by reason of his deafness and dumbness they could not converse together, yet they were both guided by *one and the same Spirit*; or, perhaps they *marvelled* that he wrote so distinctly and intelligently, which (the stroke he was under, being somewhat like that of a palsy) he had not done before.

5. He thereupon recovered the use of his speech; (v. 64.) *His mouth was opened immediately*. The time prefixed for his being silenced, was, *till the day that these things should be fulfilled*, (v. 20.) *not all the things* going before concerning John's ministry, but those which relate to his birth and name; (v. 13.) that time was now expired, whereupon the restraint was taken off, and God gave him the *opening of the mouth again*, as he did to Ezekiel, ch. 3. 27. Dr. Lightfoot compares this case of *Zacharias* with that of Moses. Exod. 4. 24, 26. Moses, for distrust, is in danger of his life, as *Zacharias*, for the same fault, is *struck dumb*; but, upon the circumcising of his child, and recovery of his faith, there, as here, the danger is removed. Infidelity closed his mouth, and now believing opens it again; *he believes, therefore he speaks*. David lay under guilt from the conception of his child till a few days after its birth; then *the Lord takes away his sin*; upon his

repentance, he shall not die, so here he shall be no longer dumb: *his mouth was opened, and he spake, and praised God.* Note, When God opens our lips, our mouths must *show forth his praise*; as good be without our speech as not use it in *praising God*; for then our tongue is *not our glory*, when it is employed for *God's glory*.

6. These things were told all the country over, to the great amazement of all that heard them, *v. 65, 66.* The sentiments of the people are not to be slighted, but taken notice of. We are here told, (1.) That *these sayings were discoursed of*, and were the common talk all about the *hill-country of Judea*; it was pity but a narrative of them had been drawn up, and published in the world, immediately. (2.) That most people who heard of these things, were put into consternation by them: *Fear came on all them that dwelt round about there.* If we have not a *good hope*, as we ought to have, built upon the gospel, we may expect that the tidings of it will fill us with *fear*. They believed and trembled, whereas they should have believed and triumphed. (3.) It raised the expectations of people concerning this child, and obliged them to have their eye upon him, to see what he would come to. *They laid up these presages in their hearts*, treasured them up in mind and memory, as foreseeing they should hereafter have occasion to *recollect* them. Note, What we hear, that may be of use to us, we should *treasure up*, that we may be able to bring forth, for the benefit of others, things new and old, and, when things come to perfection, may be able to look back upon the presages thereof, and to say, "It was what we might expect." They said *within themselves*, and said *among themselves*, "*What manner of child shall this be?*" What will be the fruit when these are the buds, or rather, when the *root* is out of such a *dry ground?*" Note, When children are born into the world, it is very uncertain what they will prove; yet sometimes there have been early indications of something great, as in the birth of Moses, Samson, Samuel, and here of John. And we have reason to think that there were some of those living at the time when John began his public ministry, who could, and did, remember these things, and relate them to others, which contributed as much as any thing to the great flocking there was after him.

Lastly, It is said, *The hand of the Lord was with him*; that is, he was taken under the especial protection of the Almighty, from his birth, as one designed for something great and considerable, and there were many instances of it. It appeared likewise that the Spirit was at work upon his soul very early. As soon as he began to speak or go, you might perceive something in him very extraordinary. Note, God has ways of operating upon children in their infancy, which we cannot account for. God never made a soul but he knew how to sanctify it.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72. To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, 73.

The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76. And thou, child, shalt be called The Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, 79. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

We have here the song wherewith Zacharias *praised God* when his *mouth was opened*; in it he is said to *prophesy*, (*v. 67.*) and so he did in the strictest sense of *prophesying*, for he foretold things to come concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, to which all the prophets bear witness. Observe,

I. How he was qualified for this; *He was filled with the Holy Ghost*, was endued with more than ordinary measures and degrees of it, for this purpose; he was divinely inspired. God not only *forgave* him his unbelief and distrust, (which was signified by discharging of him from the punishment of it,) but as a *specimen of the abounding of grace* toward believers, he *filled him* with the *Holy Ghost*, and put this honour upon him, to employ him for his honour.

II. What the matter of his song was. Here is nothing said of the private concerns of his own family, the rolling away of the reproach from it, and putting of a reputation upon it, by the birth of this child, though, no doubt, he found a time to give thanks to God for this, with his family; but in this song he is wholly taken up with the kingdom of the Messiah, and the public blessings to be introduced by it. He could have little pleasure in this *fruitfulness of his vine*, and the *hopefulness of his olive-plant*, if herein he had not foreseen the *good of Jerusalem, peace upon Israel*, and *blessings on both out of Zion*, Ps. 128. 3, 5, 6. The Old-Testament prophecies are often expressed in *praises and new songs*, so is this beginning of New-Testament prophecy; *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.* The *God of the whole earth shall be called*; yet Zacharias, speaking of the work of redemption, called him the *Lord God of Israel*, because to Israel the prophecies, promises, and types of the redemption had hitherto been given, and to them the first proffers and proposals of it were now to be made. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the *elect of God* out of all nations, whom God had a particular eye to, in sending the Saviour; and therefore he is therein called the *Lord God of Israel*.

Now Zacharias here blesses God,

1. For the work of *salvation* that was to be wrought out by the Messiah himself, *v. 68—75.* This it is that *fills him*, when he is *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and it is that which all who have the *Spirit of Christ*, are *full of*.

(1.) In sending the Messiah, God has *made a gracious visit* to his people, who for many ages he had seemed to neglect, and to be estranged from; he

hath *visited* them as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have *visited* his people in bondage when he *delivered* them, (Exod. 3. 16.—4. 31.) to have *visited* his people in famine, when he *gave them bread*, Ruth 1. 6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them; but now he himself made them a *visit*.

(2.) He has *wrought out redemption* for them; *He has redeemed his people*. This was the errand on which Christ *came into the world*—to redeem those that were sold for sin, and sold under sin; even God's own people, his Israel, his son, his *first-born*, his *free-born*, need to be *redeemed*, and are undone if they be not. Christ redeems them by *price* out of the hands of God's justice, and redeems them by *power* out of the hands of Satan's tyranny, as Israel out of Egypt.

(3.) He has fulfilled the *covenant of royalty* made with the most famous *Old-Testament prince*, that is, David. Glorious things had been said of his family, that on him, as a *mighty one*, *help* should be *laid*, that *his horn should be exalted*, and his *seed* perpetuated, Ps. 89. 19, 20, 24, 29. But that family had been long in a manner *cast off* and *abhorred*, Ps. 89. 38. Now here it is gloried in, that, according to the promise, the *horn* of David should again be *made to bud*, for, (Ps. 132. 17.) *He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*, (v. 69.) there, where it was promised and expected to arise. David is called God's *servant*, not only as a good man, but as a king that *ruled for God*; and he was an instrument of the *salvation* of Israel, by being employed in the *government* of Israel; so Christ is the *Author of eternal redemption*, to those only that *obey him*. There is in Christ, and in him only, *salvation for us*, and it is a *horn of salvation*; for, [1.] It is an *honourable salvation*, it is *raised up* above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it; in it the glory both of the Redeemer and of the redeemed are advanced, and their *horn exalted with honour*. [2.] It is a *plentiful salvation*; it is a *cornucopia*—a *horn of plenty*, a *salvation* in which we are blessed with *spiritual blessings*, in *heavenly things*, abundantly. [3.] It is a *powerful salvation*; the strength of the beast is in *his horn*; he has raised up such a *salvation* as shall *pull down* our spiritual enemies, and *protect* us from them. In the *chariots* of this *salvation* the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on, *conquering and to conquer*.

(4.) He has fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous *Old-Testament prophets*; (v. 70.) *As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets*. His doctrine of *salvation* by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that *salvation* thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same that they spake of, which therefore ought to be expected and welcomed; it is what they *enquired and searched diligently after*, (1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.) which therefore ought not to be slighted, or thought meanly of. God is now *doing* that which he has long *ago spoken of*; and therefore *be silent, O all flesh, before him*, and attend to him. See, [1.] How *sacred* the prophecies of this *salvation* were: the prophets who delivered them, were *holy prophets*, who durst not deceive, and who aimed at promoting holiness among men; and it was the *holy God* himself that *spoke by them*. [2.] How *ancient* they were; ever *since the world began*. God having promised, when the world began, that the *Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*, that promise was echoed to, when Adam called his wife's name *Eve—Life*, for the sake of that Seed of hers; when Eve called her first son *Cain*, saying, *I have gotten a man from the Lord*, and another son *Seth*,

settled; when Noah was called *rest*, and foretold that God should dwell in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world began in Noah, that the promise was made to Abraham, that in his *Seed the nations of the earth should be blessed*. [3.] What a wonderful *harmony and concert* we perceive among them; God spake the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be *δια στόματος*, not by the *mouths*, but by the *mouth*, of the prophets, for they all speak of Christ as it were with *one mouth*.

Now what was this *salvation* which was prophesied of?

First, It is a *rescue* from the malice of *our enemies*; it is *σωτηριαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν*—a *salvation out of our enemies*, from among them, and out of the *power of them that hate us*; (v. 71.) it is a *salvation* from sin, and the dominion of Satan over us, both by corruptions within and temptations without. The carnal Jews expected to be delivered from under the Roman yoke, but intimation was betimes given that it should be a redemption of another nature. He shall *save his people from their sins*, that they may not have dominion over them, Matth. 1. 21.

Secondly, It is a *restoration to the favour of God*; it is to *perform the mercy promised to our forefathers*, v. 72. The Redeemer shall not only break the serpent's head, that was the author of our ruin, but he shall *reinstat*e us in the *mercy of God*, and *re-establish* us in his *covenant*; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the *promises* made to the patriarchs, and the *holy covenant* made with them, the *oath which he swore to our father Abraham*, v. 73. Observe, 1. That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to us, is *mercy*, pure mercy; nothing in it is owing to our *merit*, (we deserve wrath and the curse,) but all to the *mercy of God*, which *designed* us *grace and life*: *ex mero motu—of his own good pleasure* he loved us, because he would love us. 2. God herein had an eye to *his covenant*, his *holy covenant*, that covenant with Abraham; *I will be a God to thee and thy seed*. This his seed had *really forfeited* by their transgressions, this he *seemed to have forgotten* in the calamities brought upon them; but he will now *remember* it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that are grounded all his returns of *mercy*; (Lev. 26. 42.) *Then will I remember my covenant*.

Thirdly, It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. Thus was the *oath he swore to our father Abraham*, That he would *give us power and grace to serve him*, in an acceptable manner to him, and a comfortable manner to ourselves, v. 74, 75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which, God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham, (Exod. 3. 6—8.) and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, *that they might serve God upon this mountain*, Exod. 3. 12. Note, The great design of gospel-grace is, not to discharge us from, but to engage us to, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us to it, and to quicken us in it. We are *therefore* delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the sweet and easy yoke of the Lord Jesus. *The very bonds which he has loosed, do bind us faster unto him*, Ps. 116. 16. We are hereby enabled, 1. To serve God *without fear—ἀσέβας*. We are *therefore* put into a state of *holy safety*, that we might serve God with a *holy security and serenity of mind*, as those that are *quiet from the fears of evil*. God must be served with a *filial fear*, a reverent, obedient fear, an awakening, quickening fear, but not with a *slavish fear*, like that of the slothful servant, who

represented him to himself as a *hard Master*, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has *torment and amazement* in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit, a *spirit of bondage*, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a *spirit of adoption*. 2. To serve him in *holiness and righteousness*, which includes the whole duty of man toward God and our neighbour. It is both the intention, and the direct tendency, of the gospel, to renew upon us that image of God, in which man was at first made, which consisted in *righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. 4. 24. Christ redeemed us, *that we might serve God*, not in the legal services of sacrifice and offerings, but in the *spiritual services of holiness and righteousness*, Ps. 50. 14. 3. To serve him, *before him*, in the duties of his *immediate worship*, wherein we present ourselves *before the Lord*, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, upon our inward man; that is serving him *before him*. 4. To serve him *all the days of our life*. The design of the gospel is to engage us to constancy and perseverance in the service of God, by showing us how much depends upon it, that we do not draw back; and by showing us how Christ *loved us to the end*, and thereby engaged us to *love him to the end*.

2. He *blessed God* for the work of *preparation* for this salvation, which was to be done by John Baptist; (v. 76.) *Thou child*, though now but a child of eight days old, shall be called the *prophet of the Highest*. Jesus Christ is the *Highest*, for he is *God over all, blessed for evermore*, (Rom. 9. 5.) equal with the Father. John Baptist was his *prophet*, as Aaron was Moses's prophet; (Exod. 7. 1.) what he said was as his mouth, what he did was as his harbinger. Prophecy had now long ceased, but in John it *revived*, as it had done in Samuel, who was born of an aged mother, as John was, after a long cessation. John's business was,

(1.) To prepare people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation as great gospel duties; *Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord*, and but a little before him, to *prepare his ways*, to call his people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to him, be taken away; see Isa. 40. 3, 4. Let *valleys be filled*, and *hills be brought low*.

(2.) To give people a general idea of the salvation, that they might know, not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was, that the *kingdom of heaven* is at hand. There are two things in which you must know that this salvation consists.

[1.] *The forgiveness of what we have done amiss*; it is salvation *by the remission of sins*, those sins which stand in the way of the salvation, and by which we are all become liable to ruin and condemnation, v. 77. John Baptist gave people to understand that, though their case was sad, by reason of sin, it was not desperate, for pardon might be obtained *through the tender mercy of our God*; the *bowels of mercy*, so the word is: there was nothing in us but a *piteous case* to recommend us to the divine compassion.

[2.] *Direction to do better*, for the time to come. The gospel-salvation not only encourages us to hope that the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it the *day-spring hath visited us from on high*; (v. 78.) and this also is owing to the *tender mercy of our God*. Christ is *ἀνατολή—the Morning Light, the rising Sun*, Mal. 4. 2. The gospel brings *light* with it, (John 3. 19.) leaves us not to wander in the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the Old-Testament types or figures, but in it the day dawns; in John Baptist it

began to break, but increased apace, and *shone more and more to the perfect day*. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel-day, who enjoy it, as those have to welcome the morning, who had long waited for it. *First*, The gospel is *discovering*; it shows us that which before we were utterly in the dark about; (v. 79.) it is to *give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*; the day-spring visited this dark world, to *lighten the Gentiles*, Acts 26. 18. *Secondly*, It is *reviving*; it brings light to them that sit in the *shadow of death*, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of a *pardon*, at least of a *reprieve*, and opportunity of procuring a pardon; it proclaims the *opening of the prison*, (Isa. 61. 1.) brings the *light of life*. How pleasant is that light! *Thirdly*, It is *directing*; it is to *guide our feet in the way of peace*, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a *light to our eyes*, but a *light to our feet*; (Ps. 119. 105.) it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion; that *way of peace*, which as sinners we have wandered from, and *have not known*, (Rom. 3. 17.) nor could ever have known of ourselves.

In the last verse, we have a short account of the younger years of John Baptist. Though he was the son of a priest, he did not, like Samuel, go up, when he was a child, to minister before the Lord, for he was to prepare the way for a better priesthood. But we are here told,

1. Of his *eminence* as to the *inward man*: The *child grew* in the capacities of his mind, much more than other children; so that he *waxed strong in spirit*, had a strong judgment and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him, that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this it appeared that he was betimes *filled with the Holy Ghost*; for those that are strong in the Lord, are *strong in spirit*.

2. Of his *obscurity* as to the *outward man*: *He was in the deserts*; not that he lived a hermit, cut off from the society of men; no, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the *feasts*, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zuph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbins. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are long so buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his *showing to Israel*, when he was in the thirtieth year of his age. Note, There is a time fixed for the *showing* of those favours to Israel, which are reserved; *the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie*.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have an account of the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus; having had notice of his conception, and of the birth and infancy of his forerunner in the former chapter. The first-born is here brought into the world; let us go meet him with our hosannas, blessed is he that cometh. Here is, I. The place and other circumstances of his birth, which proved him to be the true Messiah, and such a one as we needed, but not such a one as the Jews expected, v. 1. . 7. II. The notifying of his birth to the shepherds in that neighbourhood by an angel, the song of praise which the angels sung upon that occasion, and the spreading of the report of it by the shepherds, v. 8. . 20. III. The circumcision of Christ, and the naming of him, v. 21. IV. The presenting of him in the temple, v. 22. . 24. V. The testimonies of Simeon, and Anna the

prophetess, concerning him, v. 25. . 39. VI. Christ's growth and capacity, v. 40. . 52. VII. His observing of the passover at twelve years old, and his disputing with the doctors in the temple, v. 41. . 51. And this, with what we have met with, (Matth. 1. and 2.) is all we have concerning our Lord Jesus, till he entered upon his public work, in the thirtieth year of his age.

1. **AND** it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) 5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The *fulness of time* was now come, when God would send forth his Son *made of a woman*, and *made under the law*; and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner, of it.

1. The time when our Lord Jesus was born. Several things may be gathered out of these verses, which intimate to us that it was the *proper time*.

1. He was born at the time when the *fourth monarchy* was in its height, just when it was become more than any of the three before it, a *universal monarchy*. He was born in the *days of Augustus Cæsar*, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called *Terrarum orbis imperium*—*The empire of the whole earth*; and here that empire is called *all the world*, (v. 1.) for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy, (Dan. 2. 44.) *In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that, when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the state; by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius, the Roman governor of Syria; (v. 2.) the Roman writers call him *Sulpitius Quirinus*. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, That Shiloh should come when the *sceptre was departed from Judah*, and the *lawgiver from between his feet*, Gen. 49. 10. This was the *first taring* that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now univer-

sal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut; which never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of Peace to be born, in whose days *swords should be beaten into plough-shares*.

II. The place where our Lord Jesus was born, is very observable, he was born at *Bethlehem*; so it was foretold, (Mic. 5. 2.) the scribes so understood it, (Matth. 2. 5, 6.) so did the common people, John 7. 42. The name of the place was significant; Bethlehem signifies *the house of bread*; a proper place for him to be born in, who is the Bread of life, the Bread that *came down from heaven*. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there *he* must be born, who was the *Son of David*. Zion was also called the *city of David*, (2 Sam. 5. 7.) yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David, where he was born in meanness, to be a *Shepherd*; and that our Saviour, when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, *that Mount Zion*. Now when the Virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, Providence so ordered it, that, by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the *Roman empire* were to be *taxed*; that is, they were to *give in their names* to the proper officers, and they were to be *registered and enrolled*, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used; their being *taxed* was but secondary. It is supposed that they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's *turning* tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

According to this *decree*, the Jews (who were now nice in distinguishing their tribes and families) provided that in their enrollments particular care should be had to preserve the memory of them. Thus foolishly are they solicitous to save the *shadow*, when they had lost the *substance*.

That which Augustus designed, was, either to gratify his *pride*, in knowing the numbers of his people, and proclaiming it to the world, or he did it in *policy*, to strengthen his interest, and make his government appear the more formidable; but Providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being *enrolled*, only that Joseph and Mary may; this brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were of the *stock and lineage of David*; (v. 4, 5.) and perhaps, being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather a burden and expense to them than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes, as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture, that this great exactness was used only with the *family of David*, concerning which, it is probable, the emperor gave particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. Divers ends of Providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the Virgin Mary was brought, *great with child*, to Bethlehem, to be *delivered* there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie in at Nazareth. See how *man purpases* and *God disposes*; and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture, and makes use of the projects men have for the serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brings his mother to Beth-

lehem now, but because she *was of the stock and lineage of David*? This was a material thing to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the most early advocates for the christian religion, appeal to these *rolls or records of the Roman empire*, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was *made under the law*; for he became a Subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a *Servant of rulers*, Isa. 49. 7. Many suppose that, being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he *made himself of no reputation*, and *took upon him the form of a servant*; instead of having kings tributaries to him; when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

III. The circumstances of his birth, which were very mean, and under all possible marks of contempt. He was indeed a *First-born Son*; but it was poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as First-born, but what was in *nativity*.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, as other children are when they are new-born, as if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. He that makes darkness a *swaddling band for the sea*, was himself wrapped in *swaddling bands*, Job 38. 9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said of him, whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, *We know this man, whence he is*, John 7. 27. The Ancient of days became an Infant of a span long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself.

(1.) He was born *at an inn*. That Son of David that was the Glory of his father's house, had no inheritance that he could command, no, not in the city of David, no, nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born *in an inn*, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for a while, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. An inn receives all comers, and so does Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his sign, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only, unlike other inns, he welcomes those that come *without money and without price*. All is on free cost.

(2.) He was born *in a stable*; so some think the word signifies, which we translate a *manger*, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in; because there was *no room in the inn*, and for want of conveniences, nay for want of necessaries, he was laid *in the manger*, instead of a cradle. The word which we render *swaddling clothes*, some derive from a word that signifies to *rend*, or *tear*, and thence infer that he was so far from having a good suit of childbed-linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable and laid in a manger, was an instance, [1.] Of the poverty of his parents. Had they been rich, room would have been made for them; but, being poor, they must *shift* as they could. [2.] Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour, should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them, they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable. [3.] It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses the great prophet and lawgiver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ *in a manger*. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and

teach us to slight it. Since *his own received him not*, let us not think it strange if they *receive us not*.

3. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. 10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12. And this *shall be a sign unto you*; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17. And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18. And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart. 20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory, to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself, God did in some measure exalt him, and give him earnestness of his future exaltation. When we saw him *wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger*, we were tempted to say, "Surely this cannot be the *Son of God*." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely it can be no other than the *Son of God*," concerning whom it was said, when he was *brought into the world*, *Let all the angels of God worship him*," Heb. 1. 6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this Ambassador, this Prince from heaven, to the wise men, who were Gentiles, by a star; here we are told of the notice given of it to the shepherds, who were Jews, by an angel; to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with.

1. See here how the shepherds were employed, they were *abiding in the fields* adjoining to Bethlehem, and *keeping watch over their flocks by night*. 2. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders, (they were not prepared to receive these tidings,) but to a company of poor shepherds, who were, like Jacob, *plain men dwelling in tents*, not

like Esau, *cunning hunters*. The patriarchs were shepherds, Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would show that he had still a favour for those of that innocent employment. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout, pious men, the tidings were brought of a *greater salvation*. Observe, 1. They were not *sleeping* in their beds, when this news was brought them, (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in *slumbering upon the bed*;) but *abiding in the fields, and watching*. Those that would hear from God, must *stir up themselves*. They were broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so as those may be, who are half asleep. 2. They were employed now, not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were *keeping watch over their flock*, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it, probably, being in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not nouse them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits, when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

II. How they were surprised with the appearance of an angel; (v. 9.) *Behold, an angel of the Lord came upon them*, of a sudden *stood over them*; most probably, in the air over their heads, as coming immediately from heaven. We read it, *the angel*, as if it were the same that appeared once and again in the chapter before, *the angel Gabriel*, that was caused to fly swiftly: but that is not certain. The angel's *coming upon them* intimates that they little thought of such a thing, or expected it; for it is in a *preventing* way that gracious visits are made us from heaven, *or ever we are aware*. That they might be sure it was an angel from heaven, they saw and heard *the glory of the Lord round about them*; such as made the night as bright as day, such a glory as used to attend God's appearance, a *heavenly* glory, or an *exceeding great glory*, such as they could not bear the dazzling lustre of. This made them *sore afraid*, put them into a consternation, as fearing some evil tidings: while we are conscious to ourselves of so much guilt, we have reason to fear, lest every express from heaven be a messenger of wrath.

III. What the message was, which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, v. 10—12. 1. He gives a *supersedeas* to their fears; "*Fear not*, for we have nothing to say to you, that needs be a terror to you; you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear your friends." 2. He furnished them with abundant matter for joy; "*Behold, I evangelize to you great joy*; I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring *joy to all people*, and not to the people of the Jews only; that *unto you is born this day*, at this time, a *Saviour*, the Saviour that has been so long expected, *which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David*," v. 11. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed; he is *the Lord*, Lord of all; he is a sovereign Prince; nay, he is God, for *the Lord*, in the Old Testament, answers to *Jehovah*. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those that only accept of him for their Lord. "*The Saviour is born*, he is born *this day*; and since it is matter of *great joy to all people*, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born in the place where it was foretold he should be born, in the *city of David*; and he is born to you, to you Jews he is sent in the first place, to *bless you*, to you *shepherds*, though poor and mean in the world." This refers to Isa. 9. 6. *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given*. To you men, not to us angels, he took not on him our nature. This is matter

of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Long-looked for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, *for he cometh*. 3. He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. "*How shall we find out this Child in Bethlehem, which is now full of the descendants from David?*" "*You will find him by this token*; he is lying in a *manger*, where surely never any new-born infant was laid before." They expected to be told, "*You shall find him, though a Babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich liveries*." "*No, you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger*." When Christ was here upon earth, he distinguished himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his *humiliation*.

IV. The angel's *doxology* to God, and *congratulations* of men, upon this solemn occasion, v. 13, 14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel, (that was sufficient to go express,) than suddenly there was with that angel a *multitude of the heavenly hosts*; sufficient, we may be sure, to make a *chorus*, that were heard by the shepherds, *praising God*; and certainly their song was not like that (Rev. 14. 3.) which *no man could learn*, for it was designed that we should all learn it. 1. Let God have the honour of this work; *Glory to God in the highest*. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds very much to his praise; and angels in the highest heavens, though not immediately interested in it themselves, will celebrate it to his honour, Rev. 5. 11, 12. *Glory to God*, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it in such a way, as that one divine attribute should not be glorified at the expense of another, but the honour of all effectually secured and advanced. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his *glory in the highest*. 2. Let men have the joy of it; *On earth peace, good-will toward men*. God's good-will in sending the Messiah, introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resettled a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from thence; peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile: peace is here put for *all good*, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. All the *good* we have, or hope, is owing to God's *good-will*; and if we have it comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any *peace*, any *good*, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a *Mediator*. Here was the *peace proclaimed* with great solemnity; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. It is on earth peace, to men of *good-will*, (so some copies read it,) *in ἀγαθῶν ὁδοῦντων*; to men who have a *good-will to God*, and are willing to be reconciled; or to men whom God has a *good-will to*, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a *faithful saying*, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptance—*That the good-will of God toward men, is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth*.

V. The visit which the shepherds made to the new-born Saviour. 1. They consulted about it, v. 15. While the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only; but *when they were gone away from them into heaven*, (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had despatched their business,) *the shepherds said one to another, Let us go*

to *Bethlehem*. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must see ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. But observe, These shepherds do not speak doubtfully, "Let us go see whether it be so or no;" but with assurance, *Let us go see this thing which is come to pass*; for what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? The word spoken by angels was steadfast and unquestionably true. 2. They immediately made the visit, v. 16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to more particularly than is recorded; ("Go to the stable of such an inn?") and there they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. The poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord, were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angels they had seen, and the singing of the angels they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

VI. The care which the shepherds took to spread the report of this; (v. 17.) *When they had seen it*, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued, (2 Kings 7. 9. This being a day of good tidings, we dare not hold our peace,) so they made known abroad the whole story of what was told them, both by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary, concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. This they told every body, and agreed in their testimony concerning it. And now, if when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own fault, for they have sufficient notice given them. What impression did it make upon people? Why truly, *All they that heard it, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds*, v. 18. The shepherds were plain downright honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them, what they had said therefore, was likely to be true; and if it were true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable, and not in a palace; that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds, and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never inquired any further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a nine days' wonder. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace, hid from their eyes, when they thus wilfully shut their eyes against them.

VII. The use which those made of these things, who did believe them, and receive the impression of them.

1. The Virgin Mary made them the matter of her private meditation; she said little, but kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, v. 19. She laid the evidences together, and kept them in re-

serve, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterward be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find that if no one else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do. Note, The truths of Christ are worth keeping; and the way to keep them safe, is to ponder them. Meditation is the best help to memory.

2. The shepherds made them the matter of their more public praises. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were; (v. 20.) They returned, glorifying and praising God, in concurrence with the holy angels. If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what they had heard from the angel, and for what they had seen, the babe in the manger, and just then in the swaddling, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God that they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation; as afterward the cross of Christ, so now his manger, though to some it was foolishness and a stumbling-block, others saw in it, and admired, and praised, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

21. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 22. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; 23. (As it is written in the law of the Lord; Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) 24. And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.

Our Lord Jesus, being made of a woman, and made under the law, Gal. 4. 4. He was not only the Son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but, as the Son of a daughter of Abraham, he was made under the law of Moses; he puts his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a shadow of good things to come. And though its institutions were beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us.

Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it.

1. He was circumcised on the very day that the law appointed; (v. 21.) *When eight days were accomplished*, that day seven-night that he was born, they circumcised him. 1. Though it was a painful operation, (*Surely a bloody husband thou hast been*, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Exod. 4. 25.) yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterward he poured out in purple streams. 2. Though it supposed him a Stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son; nay though it supposed him a Sinner, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he sub-

mitted to it ; nay, *therefore* he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of *flesh*, but of *sinful flesh*, Rom. 8. 3. 3. Though thereby he made himself a *Debtor to the whole law*, (Gal. 5. 8.) yet he submitted to it ; nay, *therefore* he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the form of a servant, though he was free-born. Christ was circumcised, (1.) That he might own himself of the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of *whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, and who was to *take on him the seed of Abraham*, Heb. 2. 16. (2.) That he might own himself a Surety for our sins, and an Undertaker for our safety. Circumcision (saith Dr. Goodwin) was our *bond*, whereby we acknowledged ourselves *debtors to the law* ; and Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being *made Sin for us*. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices ; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before, could oblige themselves to. (3.) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church of God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was, (Rom. 4. 11.) and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old, doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy, than his being baptized at thirty years old doth, for the deferring of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him ; he was called *Jesus* or *Joshua*, for he was *so named of the angel* to his mother Mary, *before he was conceived in the womb*, (Luke 1. 31.) and to his supposed father Joseph after, Matth. 1. 21. [1.] It was a *common name* among the Jews, as John was ; (Col. 4. 11.) and in this he would be made like unto his brethren. [2.] It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament ; Joshua, the successor of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan ; and Joshua, the High Priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a *Priest upon his throne*, Zech. 6. 11, 13. [3.] It was very significant of his undertaking. *Jesus* signifies a *Saviour*. He would be denominated, not from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as a Mediator : he *brings salvation*.

II. He was *presented* in the temple. This was done with an eye to the law, and at the time appointed by the law, when he was forty days old, *when the days of her purification were accomplished*, v. 22. Many copies, and authentic ones, read *ἡμέραι* for *ἡμέρας*, the days of their purification, the purification both of the mother and of the child, for so it was intended to be by the law ; and our Lord Jesus, though he had no impurity to be cleansed from, yet submitted to it, as he did to circumcision, because he was *made Sin for us* ; and that, as by the *circumcision of Christ* we might be *circumcised*, in the virtue of our union and communion with him, with a spiritual circumcision *made without hands*, (Col. 2. 11.) so in the *purification of Christ* we might be *spiritually purified* from the filthiness and corruption which we brought into the world with us. Now, according to the law,

1. The Child Jesus, being a First-born Son, was *presented to the Lord*, in one of the courts of the temple. The law is here recited, (v. 23.) *Every male that opens the womb, shall be called holy to the Lord*, because by a special writ of protection the first-born of Israel were preserved, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel ; so that Christ, as First-born, was a Priest by a title surer than that of Aaron's house. Christ was

the *First-born* among many brethren, and was called *holy to the Lord*, so as never any other was ; yet he was *presented to the Lord*, as other first-born were, and no otherwise. Though he was newly come out of the bosom of the Father, yet he was *presented* to him by the hands of a priest, as if he had been a stranger, that needed one to introduce him. His being *presented to the Lord*, now signified his *presenting himself* to the Lord as Mediator, when he was caused to *draw near and approach unto him*, Jer. 30. 31. But, according to the law, he was *redeemed*, Numb. 18. 15. *The first-born of man shall thou redeem, and five shekels* was the value, Lev. 27. 6. Numb. 18. 16. But probably in case of poverty the priest was allowed to take less, or perhaps nothing, for no mention is made of it here. Christ was *presented to the Lord*, not to be brought back, for his ear was *bored to God's door-post* to serve him for ever ; and though he is not left in the temple as Samuel was, to minister there, yet like him he is given to the Lord *as long as he lives*, and ministers to him in the true temple *not made with hands*.

2. The mother brought her offering, v. 24. When she had presented that son of hers unto the Lord, who was to be the great Sacrifice, she might have been excused from offering any other ; but so it is said in the law of the Lord, that law which was yet in force, and therefore so it must be done, she must offer a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons ; had she been of ability, she must have brought a lamb for a burnt-offering and a dove for a sin-offering ; but, being poor, and not able to reach the price of a lamb, she brings two doves, one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering ; (see Lev. 12. 7, 8.) to teach us in every address to God, and particularly in those upon special occasions, both to give thanks to God for his mercies to us, and to acknowledge with sorrow and shame our sins against him ; in both we must give glory to him, nor do we ever want matter for both. Christ was not *conceived* and *born* in sin, as others are, so that there was not that occasion in his case, that is in others ; yet, because he was made under the law, he complied with it ; *Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Much more doth it become the best of men to join in confession of sin ; for who can say, *I have made my heart clean* ?

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel : and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple : and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word ; 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and

rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against: 35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. 36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity: 37. And she *was* a widow of about four-score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayer night and day. 39. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Still Christ has honour done him, then when he humbles himself, to balance the offence of it; that we might not be stumbled at the *meanness of his birth*, angels then did him honour; and now, that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him, but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

1. A very honourable testimony is borne to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the Child, and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introducing of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those *watchmen* had not been *blind*. Now observe here,

1. The account that is given us concerning this Simeon, or Simon. He dwelt now in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his piety, and communion with God. Some learned men, who have been conversant with the Jewish writers, find that there was at this time one Simeon, a man of great note in Jerusalem, the son of Hillel, and the first to whom they gave the title of *Rabban*, the highest title that they gave to their doctors, and which was never given but to seven of them. He succeeded his father Hillel, as president of the college which his father founded, and of the great Sanhedrim. The Jews say that he was endued with a *prophetic* spirit, and that he was turned out of his place, because he witnessed against the common opinion of the Jews concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; and they likewise observe, that there is no mention of him in their Mishna, or book of traditions; which intimates that he was no patron of those fooleries. One thing objected against this conjecture, is, that at this time his father Hillel was living, and that he himself lived many years after this, as appears by the Jewish histories; but as to that, he is not here said to be old; and his saying, *Now let thy servant depart*, intimates that he was willing to die *now*, but doth not conclude that therefore, he did die quickly. St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as *near*, Acts 20. 25. Another thing objected is, that the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to christianity; but as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ to have a son a bigoted Pharisee.

The account given of him here, is, (1.) That he was *just and devout*, *just* toward men, and *devout* toward God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will atone for the defect of the other. (2.) That he *waited for the consolation of Israel*, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harrassed and oppressed, would find *consolation*. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the Matter and Ground of it, the *Consolation of Israel*. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come, continued *waiting*; *desiring* his coming, and *hoping* for it with *patience*; I had almost said, with some degree of *impatience* waiting till it came. He *understood by books*, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, *As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel*, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be welcome to those who have *waited* for it, and continue waiting. (3.) The *Holy Ghost* was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and enabled to speak things above himself. (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, v. 26. He was searching *what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he received *this oracle*, (for so the word signifies,) *that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed*. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage *see death*, and look it in the face without terror, that have had by faith a sight of Christ.

2. The seasonable coming of Simeon into the temple, at the time when Christ was presented there, v. 27. Just then, when Joseph and Mary brought in the child, to be registered as it were in the church-book, among the first-born, Simeon came, by direction of the *Spirit*, into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the support of his hope, now provided for the transport of his joy. It was whispered in his ear, "Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see." Note, Those that would see Christ, must go to his temple; for there the *Lord whom ye seek*, shall suddenly come to *meet you*, and there you must be ready to *meet him*.

3. The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight; *He took him up in his arms*, (v. 28.) he *embraced* him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which was as full of joy as it could hold. *He took him up in his arms*, to present him to the Lord, (so some think,) to do either the parent's part, or the priest's part; for divers of the ancients say that he was himself a priest. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ, with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then we *take Christ in our arms*. It was promised him that he should have a sight of Christ; but more is *performed* than was *promised*, he has him in his arms.

4. The solemn declaration he made hereupon: *He blessed God*, and said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*, v. 29—32.

(1.) He has a pleasant prospect *concerning himself*, and (which is a great attainment) is got quite above the love of life, and fear of death; nay, he is arrived at a holy contempt of life, and desire of death; "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart*", for mine eyes have seen the Salvation I was promised a sight of before I died." Here is, [1.] An acknowledgment that God had been as good as his

word; there has not failed one tittle of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1 Kings 8. 56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word, were made ashamed of their hope. [2.] A thanksgiving for it; *He blessed God* that he saw that Salvation in his arms, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. [3.] A confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the *Saviour*, the *Salvation* itself: *thy Salvation*, the Salvation of thine appointing, the *Salvation which thou hast prepared* with a great deal of contrivance. And while it has been thus long in the coming, it hath still been in the *preparing*. [4.] It is a farewell to this world; "*Now let thy servant depart*; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, (Eccl. 1. 8.) till it hath *seen Christ*, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms, and salvation in his eye! Now adieu to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself. [5.] It is a welcome to death; "*Now let thy servant depart*. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God gives us our discharge, for we are his *servants*, and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our time. Moses was promised that he should see Canaan, and then *die*; but he prayed that that word might be altered, Deut. 3. 24, 25. Simeon is promised that he should not *see death*, till he had *seen Christ*; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die; *Lord, be it so*, saith he, *now let me depart*. See here, *First*, How *comfortable* the death of a good man is; he departs as *God's servant* from the place of his toil to that of his rest. He departs in *peace*, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in *peace* with death, well reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs according to *God's word*, as Moses at the mouth of the *Lord*; (Deut. 34. 5.) the word of precept, *Go up, and die*; the word of promise, *I will come again, and receive you to myself*. *Secondly*, What is the ground of this comfort? *For mine eyes have seen thy Salvation*. This bespeaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob, (Gen. 46. 30.) *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face*. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it *gain*, Phil. 1. 21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death.

(2.) He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This Salvation shall be,

[1.] A Blessing to the world. It is *prepared before the face of all people*, not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known; to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, that now sit in darkness: they shall have the knowledge of him, and of God, and another world through him. This has reference to Isa. 49. 6. *I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles*; for Christ came to be the Light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the *Sun of righteousness*.

[2.] A Blessing to the church; *the Glory of thy people Israel*. It was an honour to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed, of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed *the Glory*, and will be so to eternity, Isa. 60. 19. They shall *glory* in him. *In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*, Isa. 45. 25. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all na-

tions, therein he made himself a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*; and when he added, *beginning at Jerusalem*, he made himself *the Glory of his people Israel*.

5. The prediction concerning this Child, which he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They *marvelled at these things* which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this Child, v. 33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

(1.) Simeon shews them what reason they had to *rejoice*; for he *blessed them*, (v. 34.) he pronounced them blessed, who had the honour to be related to this Child, and were intrusted with the bringing him up. He *prayed* for them, that God would *bless* them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this Child should be not only a Comfort and Honour to them, but a public Blessing. He is set *for the rising again of many in Israel*, for the conversion of many to God, that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God, that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he is set *for the fall of* may be the same with those whom he is set for the *rising again of*. He is set *εἰς πτασιν καὶ ἀναστάνειν*—*for their fall, in order to their rising again*; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ; he wounds and then heals. *Paul falls*, and rises again.

(2.) He shews them likewise what reason they had to *rejoice with trembling*, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, Ps. 2. 11. Lest Joseph, and Mary especially, should be *lifted up* with the abundance of the revelations, here is a *thorn in the flesh* for them, an allay to their joy; and it is what we sometimes need.

[1.] It is true, Christ shall be a Blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel, whom he is set *for the fall of*, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of Salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a *stone of stumbling*. This refers to that prophecy, (Isa. 8. 14, 15.) He shall be *for a Sanctuary* to some, and yet for a *Snares* to others, 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are, to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are, to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set *for a Sign*, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had *many eyes upon him*, during the time of his public ministry; he was a *Sign*, but he had *many tongues against him*, the contradiction and reproach of sinners; he was continually cavilled at and abused: and the effects of this will be, that the *thoughts of many hearts will be revealed*, (v. 35.) that is, upon this occasion, men will *show themselves*, will discover, and so distinguish, themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing of Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ, and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they *for him*, or are they *for his adversaries*? The word of God is a discernor of the *thoughts and intents of the heart*, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

[2.] It is true, Christ shall be a Comfort to his mother; but be not thou too proud of it, for a *sword shall pass through thine own soul also*. He shall be

a suffering Jesus; and, *First*, "Thou shalt suffer with him, by sympathy, more than any other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection, to him." When he was abused, it was *a sword in her bones*. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think her inward grief was such, that it might truly be said, *A sword pierced through her soul*, it cut her to the heart. *Secondly*, Thou shalt suffer for him. Many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In the midst of our greatest delights and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that bonds and afflictions abide us.

II. He is taken notice of by one *Anna*, or *Ann*, a *prophetess*, that one of each sex might bear witness to him in whom both *men* and *women* are invited to believe, that they may be saved. Observe,

1. The account here given of this *Anna*, who she was; she was, (1.) *A prophetess*; the Spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the *younger women* in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witnesses. (2.) She was the daughter of *Phanuel*; her father's name (saith Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's *Phanuel*, or *Penuel*, (Gen. 32. 30.) that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies *gracious*. (3.) She was of the tribe of *Asher*, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of, to relate those who said, *Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*, when no sooner did prophecy revive but it appeared from Galilee. (4.) She was of a *great age*, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow; and then she must be considerably above a hundred years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow, to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise. (5.) She was a constant resident in or at least attendant on the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an almshouse, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not *departing from the temple* means no more, but that she was constantly there at the time of divine service: when any good work was to be done, she was ready to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she served God with fastings and prayers night and day; having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only fasted twice in the week, but always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in religious exercises, which others spent in eating and drinking and sleeping; she not only observed the hours of prayer, but prayed night and day; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in those she served God; that was it that put a value upon them, and an excellency into them. The Pharisees fasted often, and made long

prayers, but they served themselves, and their own pride and covetousness, in their fastings and prayers; but this good woman not only did that which was good, but did it from a good principle; and with a good end she served God, and aimed at his honour, in fasting and prayers. Note, [1.] Devotion is a thing we ought to be constant in; other duties are in season now and then, but we must pray always [2.] It is a pleasant sight to see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, as those that are not weary of well-doing, that do not think themselves above these exercises, or past them, but that take more and more pleasure in them, and see more and more need of them, till they come to heaven. [3.] Those that are diligent and faithful in improving the light and means they have, shall have further discoveries made them. Anna is now at length abundantly recompensed for her attendance so many years in the temple.

2. The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus; (v. 38.) She came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him; she, who was so constant to the temple, could not miss the opportunity.

Now, (1.) She gave thanks likewise to the Lord, just as Simeon; perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is made known, have reason enough to give thanks to the Lord for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should not we give thanks likewise, as well as they? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She confessed unto the Lord; (so it may be read;) she made an open profession of her faith concerning this Child.

(2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him; She spoke of him to all them that believed the Messiah would come, and with him looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemption in Jerusalem, for from thence the word of the Lord was to go forth, Isa. 2. 3. Some there were in Jerusalem, that looked for redemption; yet but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with them all that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterward that of his resurrection. Note, Those that have got an acquaintance with Christ themselves, should do all they can, to bring others acquainted with him.

Lastly, Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus.

1. Where he spent it, v. 39. When the ceremony of presenting the Child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they returned into Galilee. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were returned into Galilee; but it appears by St. Matthew's gospel, (ch. 2.) that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and returning from thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters in Nazareth, whence they had been perhaps some years absent. It is here called *their own city*, because there they had lived a great while, and their relations were there. He was ordered further from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself, and make himself of no reputation.

2. How he spent it, v. 40. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore

re passed through infancy and childhood as other children did, yet without sin; nay, with manifest indications of a divine nature in him. As other children, he *grew* in stature of body, and the improvement of understanding in his human soul, that his *natural* body might be a figure of his *mystical* body, which, though animated by a perfect spirit, yet *maketh increase of itself* till it comes to the *perfect man*, Eph. 4. 13, 16. But, (1.) Whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was *strong in spirit*. By the Spirit of God his human soul was endued with extraordinary vigour, and all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating. (2.) Whereas other children have *foolishness bound in their hearts*, which appears in what they say or do, he was *filled with wisdom*, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did, was wisely said, and wisely done, above his years. (3.) Whereas other children show that the corruption of nature is in them, and *the tares of sin* grow up with the *wheat of reason*, he made it appear that nothing but *the grace of God was upon him*, (the wheat sprang up without tares,) and that, whereas other children are by nature children of wrath, he was *greatly beloved*, and high in the favour of God; that God loved him, and cherished him, and took a particular care of him.

41. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. 42. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. 43. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. 44. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. 45. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. 46. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. 47. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. 48. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. 49. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? 50. And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. 52. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to

the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are concerned to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is,

I. Christ's *going up with his parents* to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, v. 41, 42.

1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expenses of it. Note, Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must *not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a Son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbins at Jerusalem; yet they *went up thither, after the custom of the feast*. *The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, and so should we. We have reason to suppose that Joseph went up likewise at the feast of *pentecost and tabernacles*, for all the males were to appear there *thrice a year*, but Mary only at the *passover*, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2. The child Jesus, at *twelve years old*, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say, that at twelve years old, children must begin to fast from time to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement; and that at thirteen years old, a child begins to be a *son of the commandment*, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a *son of the covenant*. It is not said that this was the *first time* that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his years; and all should attend on public worship, that can *hear with understanding*, Neh. 8. 2. Those children that are forward in other things, should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ, that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas: and those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God, should be called upon, when they are grown up, to come to the *gospel-passover*, to the Lord's supper, that they may make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

II. Christ's *tarrying behind his parents at Jerusalem*, unknown to them, in which he designed to give an early specimen of what he was reserved for.

1. His parents did not return till they had *fulfilled the days*; they had stayed there all the seven days at the feast, though it was not absolutely necessary that they should stay longer than the two first days, after which many went home. Note, It is good to stay to the conclusion of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, *It is good to be here*, and not to hasten away, as if we were like Doeg, *detained before the Lord*.

2. The child *tarried behind in Jerusalem*, not because he was loath to go home, or shy of his parents' company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know that he had a *Father in heaven*, whom he was to be *obscrvant* of more than of *them*; and respect to *him* must not be construed disrespect to *them*. Some conjecture that he tarried behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, on the morning that they were to go home, to go first to the temple, to worship God; there he *stayed behind*, and found entertainment there till they found him again. Or, perhaps, he staid at the house where they lodged, or some other friend's house, (and such a child as he was, could not but be the Darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company,) and went up to the temple only at church time; but so

it was, that he stayed behind. It is good to see young people willing to dwell in the house of the Lord; they are then like Christ.

3. His parents went the *first day's journey*, without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, v. 44. On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, that were upon the road, going down; Pray did you see our Son? or Did you see him? Like the spouse's inquiry, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* This was a Jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolk and acquaintance, but among them they found him not, v. 45. There are many, too many, who are our kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Job 23. 8, 9.

4. When they found him not at their quarters at night, they turned back again, next morning, to Jerusalem, seeking him. Note, Those that would find Christ, must seek till they find, for he will at length be found of those that seek him, and will be found their bountiful Rewarder. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must bethink themselves where, and when, and how, they lost them, and must turn back again to the place where they last had them; must remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, and return to their first love, Rev. 2. 4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ, must go to Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; must attend upon him in his ordinances, in the gospel-pasover, there they may hope to meet him.

5. The third day, they found him in the temple, in some of the apartments belonging to the temple, where the doctors of the law kept, not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him sitting in the midst of them, (v. 46.) not standing as a catechumen to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom, that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom, (v. 40.) but that he had both a desire to increase it, and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an Example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ, to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to sit in the midst of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to inquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presage in youth, to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now, would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple. (1.) He heard them. Those that would learn, must be swift to hear. (2.) He asked them questions; whether, as a Teacher, (he had authority so to ask,) or as a Learner, (he had humility so to ask,) I know not, or whether as an Associate, or Joint-searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions. (3.) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, v. 47. And his wisdom and under-

standing appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him were astonished; they never heard one so young, nor indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients, Ps. 119. 99, 100. Now Christ showed forth some rays of his glory which were presently drawn in again. He gave them a taste (saith Calvin) of his divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks, this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a Teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood, by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Acts 7. 24, 25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they here might have had Christ (for aught I know) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

6. His mother talked with him privately about it; when the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, v. 48. Joseph and Mary were both amazed to find him there, and to find that he had so much respect showed him as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But, (1.) His mother told him how ill they took it; "*Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?*" Why didst thou put us into such a fright?" They were ready to say, as Jacob of Joseph, "*A wild beast has devoured him;*" or, he is fallen into the hands of some more cruel enemy, who at length found out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago." A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another. "Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee along with us." Note, Those may have leave to complain of their losses, that think they have lost Christ; but their weeping did not hinder sowing; they did not sorrow, and sit down in despair, but sorrowed, and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow, shall find him, at length, with so much the greater joy. (2.) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him; (v. 49.) "*How is it that ye sought me? Ye might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I have to do here, I could not be lost in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be, in τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου—in my Father's house;*" (so some read it;) "*where else should the son be, who abideth in the house for ever? I ought to be,*" [1.] "*Under my Father's care and protection;*" and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it." Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa. 49. 2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let not us ever despair of its safety. [2.] "*At my Father's work;*" (so we take it;) "*I must be about my Father's business,*" and therefore could not go home so soon as you might. Wist ye not? Have you not already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it?" Herein he hath left us an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend

their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done, and said; it was his errand into the world and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father's will, and finish his work; and yet at that time his parents *understood not this saying*, v. 50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple of his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They *understood not* his prophetic office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short; it was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle him there, (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom,) but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was, as it were, buried alive. Doubtless, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feasts, three times a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told: it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was *subject to his parents*; though once, to show that he was *more than a man*, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business, yet he did not, as yet, make that his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was *subject to them*, observed their orders, and went and came as they directed; and, as it should seem, worked with his father, at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being *made of a woman*, he was under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the *seed* of the faithful, thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his *supposed* father, yet he was *subject to them*; though he was *strong in spirit*, and *filled with wisdom*, nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will *they* answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her Son's sayings, yet *kept them in her heart*, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men's sayings, because they are obscure, (*Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi*—If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable,) yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, so that we know not what to make of it, may afterward become plain and easy; we should therefore *lay it up* for hereafter; see John 2. 22. We may find use for that, another time, which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar-rules in memory, which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be of use to him; so we must do by Christ's sayings.

3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration; (v. 52.) *He increased in wisdom and stature*. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in *stature* and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in *wisdom*, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the Divinity that dwelt in him, manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, *ad modum recipientis*—in proportion to his capacity; as the fa-

culties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in *favour with God and man*, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an Infant, a Child, a Youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a Youth, than it did, or could, while he was an *Infant* and a *Child*. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in *favour with God and man*.

CHAP. III.

Nothing is related concerning our Lord Jesus from his twelfth year to his entrance on his thirtieth year; we often think it would have been a pleasure and advantage to us, if we had journals, or at least annals, of occurrences concerning him; but we have as much as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to communicate to us, and if we improve not that, neither should we have improved more, if we had had it. The great intention of the evangelists, was to give us an account of the gospel of Christ, which we are to believe, and by which we hope for salvation: now that began in the ministry and baptism of John, and therefore they hasten to give us an account of that. We could wish, perhaps, that Luke had wholly passed by what was related by Matthew and Mark, and had written only what was new, as he had done in his two first chapters. But it was the will of the Spirit, that some things should be established out of the mouth, not only of two, but of three witnesses; and we must not reckon it a needless repetition, nor shall we do so, if we renew our meditations upon these things, with suitable affections. In this chapter, we have, I. The beginning of John's baptism, and the scope and intention of it, v. 1. . 6. His exhortation to the multitude; (v. 7. . 9.) and the particular instructions he gave to those who desired to be told their duty, v. 10. . 14. II. The notice he gave them of the approach of the Messiah, (v. 15. . 18.) to which is added, (though it happened after what follows,) the mention of his improvement, v. 19, 20. III. Christ coming to be baptized of John, and his entrance therein upon the execution of his prophetic office, v. 21, 22. IV. His pedigree and genealogy recorded up to Adam, v. 23. . 38.

1. **N**OW in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2. Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zecharias in the wilderness. 3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth: 6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 3. Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance; and begin not to say within yourselves, We have

Abraham to *our* father; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11. He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. 14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.

John's baptism introducing a new dispensation, it was requisite that we should have a particular account of it. Glorious things were said of John, what a distinguished favourite of heaven he should be, and what a great blessing to this earth; (*ch.* 1. 15, 17.) but we lost him in the deserts, and there he remains until the day of his showing unto Israel, *ch.* 1. 80. And now at last that day dawns, and a welcome day it was to them that waited for it more than they that waited for the morning. Observe here,

1. The date of the beginning of John's baptism, when it was that he appeared; this is here taken notice of, which was not by the other evangelists, that the truth of the thing might be confirmed by the exact fixing of the time. And it is dated,

1. By the government of the heathen, which the Jews were under, to show that they were a conquered people, and therefore it was time for the Messiah to come to set up a spiritual kingdom, and an eternal one, upon the ruins of all the temporal dignity and dominion of David and Judah.

(1.) It is dated by the reign of the Roman emperor; it was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the third of the twelve Cæsars, a very bad man, given to covetousness, drunkenness, and cruelty; such a man is mentioned first, (saith Dr. Lightfoot,) as it were, to teach us what to look for from that cruel and abominable city wherein Satan reigned in all ages and successions. The people of the Jews, after a long struggle, were of late made a province of the empire, and were under the dominion of this Tiberius; and that country which once had made so great a figure, and had many nations tributaries to it, in the reigns of David and Solomon, is now itself an inconsiderable, despicable part of the Roman empire, and rather trampled upon than triumphed in.

—En quo discordia cives

Perdixit miseros. —

What dire effects from civil discord flow!

The lawgiver was now departed from between Judah's feet; and as an evidence of that, their public acts are dated by the reign of the Roman emperor, and therefore now Shiloh must come.

(2.) It is dated by the governments of the vice-roy's that ruled in the several parts of the Holy Land under the Roman emperor, which was another badge of their servitude, for they were all foreigners, which bespeaks a sad change with that people whose governors used to be of themselves, (*Jer.* 30. 21.) and

it was their glory. *How is the gold become dim!*

[1.] Pilate is here said to be the governor, president, or procurator, of Judea; this character is given of him by some other writers, that he was a wicked man, and one that made no conscience of a lie. He reigned ill, and at last was displaced by Vitellius, president of Syria, and sent to Rome, to answer for his mal-administrations. [2.] The other three are called *tetrarchs*, some think from the countries which they had the command of, each of them being over a fourth part of that which had been entirely under the government of Herod the Great. Others think that they are so called, from the post of honour they were in, in the government, they had the fourth place, or were fourth-rate governors: the emperor was the first; the *proconsul*, who governed a province the second; a king the third; and a *tetrarch* the fourth. So Dr. Lightfoot.

2. By the government of the Jews among themselves, to show that they were a corrupt people, and that therefore it was time that the Messiah should come, to reform them, *v.* 2. Annas and Caiaphas were the High Priests. God had appointed that there should be but one High Priest at a time, but here were two, to serve some ill turn or other, one served one year, and the other the other year; so some. One was the High Priest, and the other the *Sagan*, as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was High Priest, and represented Aaron, and that was *Caiaphas*; Annas, the other, was *Masi*, or head of the Sanhedrim, and represented Moses. But to us there is but one High Priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

II. The original and tendency of John's baptism.

1. The original of it was *from heaven*; *The word of the Lord came unto John*, *v.* 2. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did; it is the same expression that is used concerning the Old-Testament prophets; (*Jer.* 1. 2.) for John was a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended. We are not told how the word of the Lord came to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice, but it was to his satisfaction, and ought to be to ours. John is here called the *son of Zacharias*, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him that he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness; for those whom God fits he will find out, wherever they are. As the word of the Lord is not bound in a prison, so it is not lost in a wilderness. The word of the Lord made its way to Ezekiel among the captives by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle Patmos. John was the *son of a priest*, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple, he was now to be admitted into the temple service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before; but God had called him to a more honourable ministry, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrolls him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple; *John the son of Zacharias began his ministration such a time*.

2. The scope and design of it were, to bring all the people of his country off from their sins, and home to their God, *v.* 3. *He came first into all the country about Jordan*, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise under Joshua's conduct; there was the banner of the Gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country; but, when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are *best pleased* in their retirements, must cheerfully exchange them, when God calls them into

places of concourse. *He came out of the wilderness into all the country*, with some marks of distinction, *preaching a new baptism*; not a sect, or party, but a *profession*, or distinguishing badge; the sign or ceremony, such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, *washing with water*, by which proselytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, *repentance for the remission of sins*; that is, all that submitted to his baptism,

(1.) Were thereby obliged to *repent of their sins*, to be sorry for what they had done amiss, and to do so no more; the former they *professed*, and were concerned to be *sincere* in their professions; the latter they *promised*, and were concerned to *make good* what they promised. He bound them, not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to *cast away from them all their transgressions*, and to *make them new hearts*, and to live new lives. The design of the gospel, which now began, was, to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to *repent*.

(2.) They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered, bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleasurable discharge from the guilt of sin. *Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin*; agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old-Testament prophets, Ezek. 18. 30.

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esaias, ch. 40. 3. It is *written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet*, which he heard from God, which he spake for God, those words of his which were *written* for the generations to come. Among them it is found, that there should be the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight*. John's business is to *make way* for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper, as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry, (v. 5, 6.) *Every valley shall be filled*. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity: the land should be made plain by the pioneers for the Roman army, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side and the receivers of the gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the immediate tendency of John's ministry, and of the gospel of Christ, which that was the introduction of. 1. The humble shall by it be *enriched* with grace; for *every valley that lies low and moist*, shall be *filled and be exalted*. 2. The proud shall by it be humbled; the *self-confident* that stand upon *their own bottom*, and the *self-conceited* that lift up *their own top*, shall have contempt put upon them; for, *Every mountain and hill shall be brought low*; if they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell. 3. Sinners shall be converted to God; *The crooked ways and the crooked spirits shall be made straight*; for though *none can make that straight which God hath made crooked*, (Eccl. 7. 13.) yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked. 4. Difficulties that

were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven, shall be removed; *The rough ways shall be made smooth*; and they that love God's law, shall have *great peace*, and *nothing shall offend them*. The gospel has made the way to heaven plain, and easy to be found, smooth, and easy to be walked in. 5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further: (v. 6.) *All flesh shall see the salvation of God*; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it, they shall have it set before them, and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by the captivating of high thoughts, and bringing of them into obedience to Christ, by the levelling of the soul, and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

IV. The general warnings and exhortations which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, v. 7—9. In Matthew he is said to have preached these same things to *many of the Pharisees and Sadducees*, that came to his baptism; (Matth. 3. 7—10.) but here he is said to have spoken them to the *multitude*, that came forth to be baptized of him, v. 7. This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it, in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came, but dealt as plainly with them, as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the great, so neither did he compliment the *many*, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin and warnings of wrath to the *multitude*, that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here,

1. That the guilty, corrupted race of mankind is become a *generation of vipers*; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that *nest of vipers*. He did it once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to *flee from the wrath to come*, which is certainly before them if they continue such; and their being a *multitude* will not be at all their security, for it will be neither *reproach* nor *less* to God, to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of *fleeing from the wrath to come*, but by *repentance*. They that submitted to the baptism of repentance, thereby evidenced that they were *warned* to flee from the wrath to come, and *took* the warning; and we by our baptism *profess* to have fled out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance, are highly concerned to live like penitents; (v. 8.) *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*; else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape *the wrath to come*. By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all; *Begin not now to frame excuses from this great duty of repentance, by saying within ourselves, We have Abraham to our father*. What will it avail us, to be the children of godly parents, if we be not godly, to be within the pale of the church, if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion

because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely; *children to Abraham even out of stones.*

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater assistances and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sorer will our destruction be, if we do not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.* Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, *now that the axe is laid to the root of the tree,* threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to the penitent are now more comfortable. "Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves."

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length, it is the fittest place for them; *Every tree* that doth not bring forth fruit, *good fruit,* is *hewn down,* and *cast into the fire.* If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.

V. The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that inquired of him concerning their duty; the *people, the publicans,* and the *soldiers.* Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but we do not find them asking, *What shall we do?* For they thought that they knew what they had to do as well as he could tell them; or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the *people, the publicans,* and the *soldiers,* who knew that they had done amiss, and that they ought to do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance and unacquaintedness with the divine law were particularly inquisitive; *What shall we do?* Note, 1. Those that are *baptized,* must be *taught,* and those that have baptized them, are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them, Matth. 28. 19, 20. 2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general, must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition are. 3. They that would do their duty, must desire to know their duty, and inquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* These here inquire not, *What shall this man do;* but, *What shall we do?* *What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth?* Now John gives answer to each, according to their place and station.

(1.) He tells the *people* their duty, and that is, to be charitable; (v. 11.) *He that has two coats, and, consequently, one to spare, let him give, or lend at least, to him that has none,* to keep him warm. Perhaps he saw among his hearers some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities, upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessities. The gospel requires *mercy,* and not sacrifice; and the design of it is, to engage us to do all the good we can. *Food and raiment* are the two supports of life; he that hath *meat* to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of *dailu food,* as well as he that has clothes to spare: what we have, we are but stewards of, and must use it accordingly, as our Master directs.

(2.) He tells the *publicans* their duty, the collectors of the emperor's revenue; (v. 13.) *Exact no more than that which is appointed you.* They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince, they might therefore, by the power they had, bear

hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power, are apt to abuse it; "No, keep to your *book of rates,* and reckon it enough that you collect for Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more." The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

(3.) He tells the *soldiers* their duty, v. 14. Some think that these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion; others think that they were Romans; for it was not likely either that the Jews would serve the Romans, or that the Romans would trust the Jews, in their garrisons in their own nation: and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel, and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion; yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the *word of command* from him; *What must we do?* Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths often, are concerned to enquire what they shall do, that they may be *found in peace.* In answer to this enquiry, John does not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service; but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to *keep ourselves from our iniquity.* [1.] They must not be injurious to the *people* among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set; "*Do violence to no man.* Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent men's doing violence to one another; but do not you *do violence* to any; *shake no man;*" (so the word signifies); "do not put people into fear; for the sword of war as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, but a protection to those that do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war in peace; offer no incivility either to man or woman, nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make." Nor must they *accuse any falsely* to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes. [2.] They must not be injurious to their *fellow-soldiers;* for some think that caution, not to *accuse falsely,* has special reference to them; "Be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be revenged on those whom you have a pique against, or undermine those above you, and get into their places." *Do not oppress any;* so some think that the word here signifies, as used by the LXX in several passages of the Old Testament. [3.] They must not be given to mutiny, or contend with their generals about their pay; "*Be content with your wages.* While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is no more." It is discontent with what they have, that makes men oppressive and injurious; they that never think they have enough themselves, will not scruple any the most irregular practices, to make it more, by defrauding others. It is a rule to all servants, that they *be content with their wages;* for they that indulge themselves in discontents, expose themselves to many temptations, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is,

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; 16. John answered, saying unto them all. I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of

whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. 17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. 18. And many other things, in *his* exhortation, preached he unto the people. 19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

We are now drawing near to the appearance of our Lord Jesus publicly; the Sun will not be long after the morning-star. We are here told,

I. How the people took occasion, from the ministry and baptism of John, to think of the Messiah, and to think of him as at the door, as now come. Thus the way of the Lord was *prepared*, and people were prepared to bid Christ welcome; for when men's expectations are raised, that which they are in expectation of, becomes doubly acceptable. Now when they observed what an excellent doctrine John Baptist preached, what a divine power went along with it, and what a tendency it had to reform the world,

1. They began presently to consider that now was the time for the Messiah to appear; the sceptre was departed from Judah, for they had no king but Cæsar; nay, and the lawgiver too was gone from between his feet, for Herod had lately slain the Sanhedrim; Daniel's seventy weeks were now expiring; and therefore it was but three or four years after this, that they looked that the kingdom of heaven should appear immediately, Luke 19. 11. Never did the corrupt state of the Jews more need a reformation, nor their distressed state more need a deliverance than now.

2. Their next thought was, "Is not this he that should come?" *All thinking men mused*, or reasoned, in their hearts, concerning John *whether he were the Christ or not*. He had indeed nothing of the external pomp and grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear; but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority, and therefore why may we not think him to be the Messiah, and that he will shortly throw off this disguise, and appear in more glory? Note, That which puts people upon considering, reasoning with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

II. How John disowned all pretensions to the honour of being himself the Messiah, but confirmed them in their expectations of him that really was the Messiah, v. 16, 17. John's office, as a crier or herald, was, to give notice that the *kingdom of God* and the King of that kingdom were *at hand*; and therefore, when he had told all manner of people severally what they must do, ("You must do this, and you must do that,") he tells them one thing more which they must all do—they must expect the Messiah now shortly to appear. And this serves as an answer to their musings and debates concerning himself. Though he knew not their thoughts, yet, in declaring this, he answered them.

1. He declares that the utmost he could do, was, to baptize them *with water*; he had no access to the Spirit, nor could command that or work upon that; he could only exhort them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, or confer remission on them.

2. He consigns them, and turns them over, as it were, to Jesus Christ, for whom he was sent to pre-

pare the way, and to whom he was ready to transfer all the interest he had in the affections of the people, and would have them no longer to doubt whether John was the Messiah or no, but to look for him that was really so.

(1.) John owns the Messiah to have a greater *excellency* than he had, and that he was in all things preferable to him; he is one the *latchet of whose shoe* he does not think himself *worthy to unloose*; he does not think himself worthy to be the meanest of his servants, to help him on and off with his shoes. John was a *prophet*, yea, *more than a prophet*, more so than any of the Old-Testament prophets; but Christ was a prophet more than John, for it was both by the *spirit of Christ*, and of the *grace of Christ*, that all the prophets prophesied, and John among the rest, 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. This was a great truth which John came to preach; but the manner of his expressing it bespeaks his humility, and in it he not only does justice to the Lord Jesus, but *does him honour* too; "He is one whom I am not worthy to approach, or draw nigh to, no, not as a servant." Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

(2.) He owns him to have a greater *energy* than he had; "He is *mightier than I*, and does that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful, and for the terror of hypocrites and dissemblers." They thought that a wonderful power went along with John; but what was that, compared with the power which Jesus would come clothed with? [1.] John can do no more than baptize with water, in token of this, that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will, baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire purges out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal, that it may be cast into a new mould. [2.] John can only preach a distinguishing doctrine, and by word and sign separate between the precious and the vile; but Christ hath his fan in his hand, with which he can, and will, perfectly part between the wheat and the chaff; he will thoroughly purge his floor, it is his own, and therefore he will purge it, and will cast out of his church the unbelieving impenitent Jews, and confirm in his church all that faithfully follow him. [3.] John can only speak comfort to those that receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, say to the righteous that it shall be well with them; but Jesus Christ will give them comfort. John can only promise them that they shall be safe; but Christ will make them so, he will gather the wheat into his garner; good, serious, solid people he will gather now into his church on earth, which shall be made up of such, and he will shortly gather them into his church in heaven, where they shall be for ever sheltered. [4.] John can only threaten hypocrites, and tell the barren trees that they shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire; but Christ can execute that threatening; those that are as chaff, light, and vain, and worthless, he will burn with fire unquenchable. John refers here to Mal. 3. 18.—4. 1, 2. Then when the floor is purged, ye shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, for the day comes, that shall burn as an oven.

The evangelist concludes his account of John's preaching, with an *et cætera*; (v. 18.) Many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people, which are not recorded. First, John was an affectionate preacher; he was *ἐπαγγελῶν*—exhorting, beseeching; he pressed things home upon his hearers, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. Secondly, He was a practical preacher; much of his preaching was exhortation, quickening them to their duty, directing them in it, and not amusing them with matters of nice speculation. Thirdly, He was

a popular preacher; though he had Scribes and Pharisees, men of polite learning, attending his ministry, and Sadducees, men of *free thought*, as they pretended, yet he addressed himself to the people, *πρὸς τοὺς λαοὺς*—to the laity, and accommodated himself to their capacity, as promising himself best success among them. *Fourthly*, He was an evangelical preacher, for so the word here used signifies; *εὐαγγελίζων*—he preached the gospel to the people; in all his exhortations, he directed people to Christ, and excited and encouraged their expectations of him. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for righteousness and strength. *Fifthly*, He was a *cofious* preacher; many other things he preached, *πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα*—many things, and different. He preached a great deal, shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God; and he varied in his preaching, that those who were not reached, and touched, and wrought upon, by one truth, might be by another.

III. How full a stop was put to John's preaching; when he was in the midst of his usefulness, going on thus successfully, he was imprisoned by the malice of Herod; (v. 19, 20.) *Herod the tetrarch being reproved by him* not only for living in incest with his brother Philip's wife, but for the many other evils which *Herod had done*, (for those that are wicked in one instance, are commonly so in many others,) he could not bear it, but contracted an antipathy to him for his plain dealing, and added this wickedness to all the rest, which was indeed above all, that he shut up John in prison, put that burning and shining light under a bushel. Because he could not bear his reproofs, others should be deprived of the benefit of his instructions and counsels. Some little good he might do to those who had access to him, when he was in prison; but nothing to what he might have done, if he had had liberty to go about all the country, as he had done. We cannot think of Herod's doing this, without the greatest compassion and lamentation; nor of God's permitting it, without admiring the depth of the divine counsels, which we cannot account for; must he be silenced, who is the voice of one crying in the wilderness? Must such a preacher be shut up in prison, who ought to have been set up in the courts of the temple? But thus the faith of his disciples must be tried; thus the unbelief of those who rejected him must be punished; thus he must be Christ's forerunner in suffering as well as preaching; and thus, having been for about a year and a half preparing people for Christ, he must now give way to him, and, the Sun being risen, the morning-star must of course disappear.

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened. 22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. 23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, 24. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph, 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esi, which was the son of Nagge, 26. Which

was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah, 27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri, 28. Which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er, 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, 30. Which was the son of Sincon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim, 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson, 33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda, 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nachor, 35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, 36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, 37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleleel, which was the son of Cainan, 33. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

The evangelist mentioned John's imprisonment before Christ's being baptized, though it was near a year after it, because he would finish the story of John's ministry, and then introduce that of Christ. Now here we have,

I. A short account of Christ's baptism, which had been more fully related by St. Matthew. Jesus came, to be baptized of John, and he was so, v. 21, 22.

1. It is here said, that *when all the people were baptized*, then Jesus was baptized; all that were then present. Christ would be baptized last, among the common people, and in the rear of them; thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, as one of the least, nay, as less than the least. He saw what multitudes were hereby prepared to receive him, and then he appeared.

2. Notice is here taken of Christ's praying when

he was *baptized*, which was not in Matthew; being baptized, and *praying*. He did not *confess sin*, as others did, for he had none to confess; but he *prayed*, as others did, for he would thus keep up communion with his Father. Note. The inward and spiritual grace which sacraments are the outward and visible signs of, must be fetched in by prayer; and therefore prayer must always accompany them. We have reason to think that Christ now prayed for this manifestation of God's favour to him, which immediately followed; he prayed for the discovery of his Father's favour to him, and the descent of the Spirit. What was promised to Christ he must obtain by prayer; *Ask of me and I will give thee*. Thus he would put an honour upon prayer, would tie us to it, and encourage us in it.

3. When he prayed, *the heaven was opened*. He that by his power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by his power parted the air, another fluid element, to open a correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was there opened to Christ, and by him to us, *a new and living way into the holiest*: sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again. Prayer is an ordinance that *opens heaven*; *Knock and it shall be opened unto you*.

4. *The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him*; our Lord Jesus was now to receive greater measures of the Spirit than before, to qualify him for his prophetic office, Isa. 61. 1. When he begins to preach, *the Spirit of the Lord is upon him*. Now this is here expressed by a sensible evidence for his encouragement in his work, and for the satisfaction of John the Baptist; for he was told before, that by this sign it should be notified to him, which was the Christ. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, that he might be revealed to be a personal Substance, and not merely an Operation of the Godhead; and thus (saith he) was made a full, clear, and sensible demonstration of the Trinity, at the beginning of the gospel; and very fitly is this done at Christ's baptism, who was to make the ordinance of baptism a badge of the profession of that faith, in the doctrine of the Trinity, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

5. There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the *excellent glory*; (so it is expressed, 2 Pet. 1. 17.) *Thou art my beloved Son*. Here, and in Mark, it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew, as spoken of him; *This is my beloved Son*; It comes all to one, it was intended to be a notification to John, and as such was properly expressed by, *This is my beloved Son*; and likewise an answer to his prayer, and so it is most fitly expressed by, *Thou art*. It was foretold concerning the Messiah, *I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son*, 2 Sam. 7. 14. *I will make him my first-born*, Ps. 89. 27. It was also foretold that he should be God's *Elect in whom his soul delighted*; (Isa. 42. 1.) and, accordingly, it is here declared, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.

II. A long account of Christ's pedigree, which had been more briefly related by St. Matthew. Here is,

1. His age; *He now began to be about thirty years of age*. So old Joseph was, when he stood before Pharaoh, (Gen. 41. 46.) David, when he began to reign; (2 Sam. 5. 4.) and at this age the priests were to enter upon the full execution of their office, Numb. 4. 3. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that it is plain, by the manner of expression here, that he was just twenty-nine years old complete, and entering upon his thirtieth year, in the month *Tisri*; that, after this, he lived three years and a half, and died when he was thirty-two years old and a half. *Three years and a half*, the time of Christ's ministry, is a period of time very remarkable in scripture; *three years and six months* the heavens were shut up in Elijah's

time, Luke 4. 25. Jam. 5. 17. This was the half week in which the Messiah was to confirm the covenant, Dan. 9. 27. This period is expressed in the prophetic writings by a time, times, and half a time, (Dan. 12. 7. Rev. 12. 14.) and by forty-two months, and a thousand two hundred and threescore days, Rev. 11. 2, 3. It is in the time fixed for the witnesses' prophesying in sackcloth, in conformity to Christ's preaching in his humiliation just so long.

2. His pedigree, v. 23, &c. Matthew had given us somewhat of this, (he goes no higher than Abraham,) but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Christ was the Son of Abraham, in whom *all the families of the earth are blessed*, and that he was Heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, an heir-male of the house of David; but Luke, designing to show that Christ was the *Seed of the woman*, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Eli, or Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the Virgin Mary. And some suggest, that the supply which our translators all along insert here, is not right, and that it should not be read *which*, that is, which Joseph was the son of Heli, but which Jesus; he was son of Joseph, of Eli, of Matthat, &c. and he, that is, Jesus, was the son of Seth, of Adam, of God, v. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ, has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word; but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the Church, and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from Solomon, whose natural line ending in Jeconias, the legal right was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of David, which line Luke here pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us, that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies, either of their own knowledge, or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds' books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down in Matthew; and the pedigree of Heli, the father of Mary, to be as it is set down here in Luke; and this is the meaning of *ἐκζητεῖτε*, (v. 23.) not, as it was supposed, referring only to Joseph, but *uti sancitum est lege*—as it is entered into the books, as we find it upon record; by which it appeared, that Jesus was both by father and mother's side the Son of David; witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time have liberty to compare with the original, and further the evangelist needed not to go; nay, had they varied from that, they had not gained their point. Its not being contradicted at that time, is satisfaction enough to us now, that it is a true copy, as it is further worthy of our observing, that, when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all lost and destroyed with the Jewish state and nation; for now there was no more occasion for them.

One difficulty occurs between Abraham and Noah, which gives us some perplexity, v. 35, 36. Sala is said to be the son of Cainan, and he the son of Arphaxad, whereas Sala was the son of Arphaxad, (Gen. 10. 24.—11. 12.) and there is no such man as Cainan found there. But as to that, it is sufficient

to say that the Seventy interpreters, who, before our Saviour's time, translated the Old Testament into Greek, for reasons best known to themselves inserted that Canan; and St. Luke, writing among the *Hellenist Jews*, was obliged to make use of that translation, and therefore to take it as he found it.

The genealogy concludes with this, *who was the son of Adam, the son of God*. (1.) Some refer it to Adam; he was in a peculiar manner, the *son of God*, being, more immediately than any of his offspring, the offspring of God by creation. (2.) Others refer it to Christ, and so make the last words of this genealogy to speak his divine and human nature. He was both the *Son of Adam* and the *Son of God*, that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, *the sons of God*.

CHAP. IV.

We left Christ newly baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. Now, in this chapter, we have, I. A further preparation of him for his public ministry, by his being tempted in the wilderness, of which we had the same account before in Matthew as we have here. II. His entrance upon his public work in Galilee, (v. 14, 15.) particularly, 1. At Nazareth, the city where he had been bred up, (v. 16.. 30.) of which we had no account before in Matthew. 2. At Capernaum, where, having preached to admiration, (v. 31, 32.) he cast the devil out of a man that was possessed, (v. 33.. 37.) cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, (v. 38, 39.) and many others that were sick and possessed; (v. 40, 41.) and then went, and did the same in other cities of Galilee, v. 42.. 44.

1. **AND** Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. 2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

The last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the *Son of Adam*, bespeak him to be the *Seed of the woman*; being so, we have him here, according to the promise, *breaking the serpent's head*, baffling and foiling the devil in all his temptations, who, by one temptation had baffled and foiled our first parents. Thus, in the beginning of the war, he made reprisals upon him, and conquered the conqueror.

In this story of Christ's temptation, observe,

I. How he was *prepared and fitted* for it. He that designed him the trial, furnished him accordingly; for though we know not what exercises may be before us, nor what encounters we may be reserved for, Christ did, and was provided accordingly; and God doth for us, and we hope will provide accordingly.

1. He was *full of the Holy Ghost*, who had descended on him *like a dove*; he had now greater measures of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Ghost than ever before. Note, Those are well armed against the strongest temptations, that are *full of the Holy Ghost*.

2. He was *newly returned from Jordan*, where he was baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God; and thus he was *prepared* for this combat. Note, When we have had the most comfortable communion with God, and the clearest discoveries of his favour to us, we may expect that Satan will set upon us, (the richest ship is the pirate's prize,) and that God will suffer him to do so, that the power of his grace may be manifested and magnified.

3. He was *led by the Spirit into the wilderness*, by the good Spirit, who led him as a Champion into the field, to fight the enemy that he was sure to conquer. His being *led into the wilderness*, (1.) Gave some advantage to the tempter; for there he had him alone, no friend with him, by whose prayers and advice he might be assisted in the hour of temptation. *Woe to him that is alone!* He might give Satan advantage, who knew his own strength; *we may not*, who know our own weakness. (2.) He gained some advantage to himself, during his forty days fasting in the wilderness; we may suppose that he was wholly taken up in proper meditation, and in consideration of his own undertaking, and the work he had before him, that he spent all his time in immediate, intimate converse with his Father, as Moses in the mount, without any diversion, distraction, or interruption. Of all the days of Christ's life in the flesh, these seem to come nearest to the angelic perfection and the heavenly life, and this prepared him for Satan's assaults, and hereby he was fortified against them.

4. He continued fasting; (v. 2.) *In those days he did eat nothing*. This fast was altogether miraculous, like those of Moses and Elijah, and shows him to be, like them, a Prophet sent of God. It is probable that it was in the wilderness of Horeb, the same wilderness in which Moses and Elijah fasted. As by retiring into the wilderness he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the world, so by his fasting he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the body; and Satan cannot easily take hold of those who are thus loosened from, and dead to, the world and the flesh. The more we keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, the less advantage Satan has against us.

II. How he was assaulted by one temptation after another, and how he defeated the design of the tempter in every assault, and became more than a conqueror. During the *forty days*, he was *tempted of the devil*; (v. 2.) not by any inward suggestions, for the prince of this world had nothing in Christ,

by which to inject any such, but by outward solicitations, perhaps in the likeness of a serpent, as he tempted our first parents. But at the end of the forty days he came nearer him, and did as it were close with him, when he perceived *that he was an hungered*, v. 2. Probably, our Lord Jesus then began to look about among the trees, to see if he could find any thing that was eatable, whence the devil took occasion to make the following proposal to him.

1. He tempted him to *distrust his Father's care of him*, and to *set up for himself*, and shift for provision for himself in such a way as his Father had not appointed for him; (v. 3.) *If thou be the Son of God*, as the voice from heaven declared, *command this stone to be made bread*. (1.) "I counsel thee to do it; for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long enough ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee." If we begin to think of being our own carvers, and of living by our own forecast, without depending upon Divine Providence, of getting wealth by *our might and the power of our hands*, we must look upon it as a temptation of Satan's, and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to think of an independence upon God. (2.) "I challenge thee to do it, if thou canst; if thou dost not do it, I will say thou art *not the Son of God*; for John Baptist said lately, *God is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, which is the greater; thou therefore hast not the power of the *Son of God*, if thou dost not of stones make bread for thyself, when thou needest it, which is the lesser." Thus was God himself tempted in the wilderness; *Can he furnish a table? Can he give bread?* Ps. 78. 19, 20.

Now, [1.] Christ yielded not to the temptation: he would not *turn that stone into bread*; no, though he was hungry; *First*, Because he would not do what Satan bid him do, for that would have looked as if there had been indeed a compact between him and the prince of the devils. Note, We must not do any thing that looks like *giving place to the devil*. Miracles were wrought for the confirming of faith, and the devil had no faith to be confirmed, and therefore he would not do it *for him*. He did his signs *in the presence of his disciples*, (John 20. 30.) and particularly the *beginning of his miracles*, turning water into wine, which he did, that his disciples might believe on him; (John 2. 11.) but here in the wilderness he had no disciples with him. *Secondly*, he wrought miracles for the ratification of his doctrine, and therefore till he began to *preach* he would not begin to work miracles. *Thirdly*, He would not work miracles *for himself* and his own supply, lest he should seem impatient of *hunger*, whereas he came not to *please himself*, but to *suffer grief*, and that grief among others; and because he would show that he *pleased not himself*; he would rather turn *water into wine*, for the credit and convenience of his friends, than *stones into bread*, for his own necessary supply. *Fourthly*, He would reserve the proof of his being the Son of God for hereafter, and would rather be upbraided by Satan with being weak, and not able to do it, than be persuaded by Satan to do that which it was not fit for him to do; thus he was upbraided by his enemies as if he could not *save himself*, and *come down from the cross*, when he could have come down, but would not, because it was not fit that he should. *Fifthly*, He would not do any thing that looked like distrust of his Father, or *acting separately* from him, or any thing disagreeable to his present state. Being in all things *made like unto his brethren*, he would, like the other children of God, live in a dependence upon the Divine Providence and promise, and trust him either to send him a supply into the wilderness, or to *lead him to a city of habitation* where there was

a supply, as he used to do, (P. 107. 5—7.) and in the mean time would *support* him, though he was hungry, as he had done, these forty days past.

[2.] He returned a scripture-answer to it; (v. 4.) *It is written*. This is the first word recorded as spoken by Christ after his instalment in his prophetic office; and it is a quotation out of the Old Testament, to show that he came to assert and maintain the authority of the scripture as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself. And though he had the Spirit without measure, and had a doctrine of his own to preach, and a religion to found, yet it agreed with Moses and the prophets, whose writings he therefore lays down as a rule to himself, and recommends to us as a reply to Satan and his temptations. The word of God is our *sword*, and faith in that word is our *shield*; we should therefore be *mighty in the scriptures*, and *go in that might*, go forth, and go on, in our spiritual warfare, know *what is written*, for it is *for our learning*, for our use. The text of scripture he made use of, is quoted from Deut. 8. 3. "*Man shall not live by bread alone*. I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send *manna* for my nourishment, as he did for Israel; man can live by *every word of God*, by whatever God will appoint that he shall live by." How had Christ lived, lived comfortably, these last forty days? Not *by bread*, but by the *word of God*, by meditation upon that word, and communion with it, and with God in and by it: and in like manner he could live yet, though now he began to be *an hungered*. God has many ways of providing for his people, without the ordinary means of subsistence; and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon, in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience as will enable a man even to *laugh at destruction and famine*, (Job 5. 22.) or make *pulse and water* more nourishing than *all the portion of the king's meat*, (Dan. 1. 12, 13.) and enable his people to *rejoice in the Lord*, when the *fig-tree doth not blossom*, Hab. 1. 12, 13. She was an active believer, who said that she had made many a meal's meat of the promises when she wanted bread.

2. He tempted him to *accept from him* the kingdom, which, as the *Son of God*, he expected to receive from *his Father*, and to do him *homage* for, v. 5—8. This evangelist put this temptation second, which Matthew had put last, and which, it should seem, was really the last; but Luke was full of it, as the blackest and most violent, and therefore hastened to it. In the devil's tempting of our first parents, he represented to them the forbidden fruit, first as *good for food*, and then as *pleasant to the eyes*; and they were overpowered by both these charms. Satan here first tempted Christ to turn the stones into bread, which would be good for food, and then showed him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, which was *pleasant to the eyes*; but in both these, he overpowered Satan, and perhaps, with an eye to that, Luke changes the order. Now observe,

(1.) How Satan *managed* this temptation, to prevail with Christ to become a Tributary to him, and to receive his kingdom by delegation from him.

[1.] He gave him a prospect of *all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time*, an airy representation of them, such as he thought most likely to strike the fancy, and seem a *real prospect*; to succeed the better, he *took him up* for this purpose *into a high mountain*; and because we next after the temptation find Christ on the other side Jordan, some think it probable that it was to the top of Pisgah that the devil took him, whence Moses had a sight of Canaan; that it was but a phantasm that the devil here presented our Saviour with, as the prince

of the power of the air, is confirmed by that circumstance which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done *in a moment of time*; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must turn himself round, and take a view first of one part and then of another. Thus the devil thought to impose upon our Saviour with a fallacy, *a—deceptio visus*; and by making him believe that he could *show him all the kingdoms of the world*, would draw him into an opinion that he could *give him all those kingdoms*.

[2.] He boldly alleged, that these kingdoms were *all delivered to him*, that he had power to dispose of them, and all their *glory*, and to give it to *whomsoever he would*, *v. 6.* Some think that herein he pretended to be an angel of light, and that, as one of the angels that was set over the kingdoms, he had out-bought, or out-fought, all the rest, and so was intrusted with the disposal of them all, and, in God's name, would give them him, knowing they were designed for him; but clogged with this condition, that he should *fall down and worship him*; which a good angel would have been so far from demanding, that he would not have admitted it, no, not upon showing much greater things than these, as appears, *Rev. 14. 10.—22. 9.* But I rather take it, that he claimed this power as Satan, and as *delivered to him*, not by the Lord, but by the kings and people of these kingdoms, who gave their power and honour to the devil, *Eph. 2. 2.* Hence he is called the *god of this world*, and the *prince of this world*. It was promised to the Son of God, that he should have the *heathen for his inheritance*, *Psa. 2. 8.* "Why," saith the devil, "the heathen are mine, are my subjects and votaries; but, however, they shall be thine, I will give them thee, upon condition that thou *worship me* for them, and say that they are the *rewards which I have given thee*, as others have done before thee, (*Hos. 2. 12.*) and consent to have and *hold them by, from, and under, me.*"

[3.] He demanded of him homage and adoration: *If thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine, v. 7.* First, He would have him worship him himself. Perhaps he does not mean so as never to worship God, but let him worship him in conjunction with God; for the devil knows, if he can but once come in a partner, he shall soon be sole proprietor. Secondly, He would indent with him, that, when, according to the promise made to him, he had got possession of the kingdoms of this world, he should make no alteration of religions in them, but permit and suffer the nations, as they had done hitherto, to *sacrifice to devils*, (*1 Cor. 10. 20.*) that he should still keep up *demon-worship* in the world, and then let him take all the power and glory of the kingdoms, if he pleased. Let who will take the wealth and grandeur of this earth, Satan has all he would have, if he can but have men's hearts, and affections, and adorations, can but *work in the children of disobedience*; for then he effectually *devours them*.

(2.) How our Lord Jesus triumphed over this temptation. He gave it a peremptory repulse, rejected it with abhorrence; (*v. 8.*) "*Get thee behind me, Satan,*" I cannot bear the mention of it. What! worship the enemy of God, whom I came to serve? and of man, whom I came to save? No, I will never do it." Such a temptation as this, was not to be *reasoned with*, but immediately refused; it was presently knocked on the head with one word, *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*; and not only so, but *him only*, him, and no other. And therefore Christ will not worship Satan, nor, when he has the *kingdoms of the world delivered to him* by his Father, as he expects shortly to have, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. No, it shall be perfectly rooted out and abolished, wherever his gospel comes. He will

make no composition with him. *Polytheism and idolatry* must go down, as Christ's kingdom gets up. Men must be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*, from the worship of devils to the worship of the only living and true God; this is the great divine law that Christ will re-establish among men, and by his holy religion reduce men to the obedience of, *That God only is to be served and worshipped*; and therefore whoever sets up any creature as the object of religious worship, though it were a saint, or an angel, or the Virgin Mary herself, they directly thwart Christ's design, and relapse into heathenism.

3. He tempted him to be his own Murderer, in a presumptuous confidence of his Father's protection, such as he had no warrant for. Observe,

(1.) What he designed in this temptation: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, v. 9.* [1.] He would have him seek for a new proof of his being the Son of God, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient, which would have been a dishonour to God, as if he had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it; and it would have argued a distrust of the Spirit's dwelling in him, which was the great and most convincing proof to himself of his being the Son of God, *Heb. 1. 8, 9.* [2.] He would have him seek a new method of proclaiming and publishing this to the world. The devil, in effect, suggests, that it was in an *obscure corner* that he was attested to be the Son of God, among a company of ordinary people who attended John's baptism, that his honours were proclaimed; but if he would now declare from the *pinnacle of the temple*, among all the great people who attend the temple-service, that he was the Son of God, and then, for proof of it, throw himself down unhurt, he would presently be received by every body as a Messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have him seek honours of his devising, (in contempt of those which God had put on him,) and manifest himself in the temple at Jerusalem; whereas God designed he should be more manifest among John's penitents, to whom his doctrine would be more welcome than to the priests. [3.] It is probable, that he had some hopes, that, though he could not throw him down, to do him the least mischief, yet, if he would but throw himself down, the fall might be his death, and then he should have got him finely out of the way.

(2.) How he backed and enforced this temptation. He suggested, *It is written, v. 10.* Christ had quoted scripture against him; and he thought he would be quits with him, and would show that he could quote scripture, as well as he. It has been usual with heretics and seducers, to pervert scripture, and to press the sacred writings into the service of the worst of wickedness. *He shall give his angels charge over thee*, if thou be his Son, and *in their hands they shall bear thee up*. And now that he was upon the pinnacle of the temple, he might especially expect this ministration of angels; for if he were the Son of God, the temple was the proper place for him to be in, (*ch. 2. 46.*) and if any place under the sun had a guard of angels constantly, it must needs be that, *Psa. 68. 17.* It is true, God has promised the protection of angels, to encourage us to trust him, not to tempt him: as far as the promise of God's presence with us, so far the promise of the angels' ministration goes, but no further; "They shall keep thee when thou goest on the ground, where thy way lies, but not if thou wilt presume to fly in the air."

(3.) How he was baffled and defeated in the temptation; *v. 12.* Christ quoted *Deut. 6. 16.* where it is said, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, by desiring a sign for the proof of divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient; for so Israel did, when they tempted God in the wil-

derness, saying, *He gave us water out of the rock ; but can he give flesh also?* This Christ would be guilty of, if he should say, "He did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the *greater*; but can he also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the *lesser*?"

III. What was the result and issue of this combat, v. 13. Our victorious Redeemer kept his ground, and came off a Conqueror, not for himself only, but for us also.

1. The devil emptied his quiver; *He ended all the temptation.* Christ gave him opportunity to say and do all he could against him; he let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. Did Christ suffer, being tempted, till all the temptation was ended? And must not we expect also to pass all our trials, to go through the *hour of temptation* assigned us?

2. He then quitted the field; he *departed from him*; he saw it was to no purpose to attack him; he had *nothing in him* for his fiery darts to fasten upon; he had no blind side, no weak or unguarded part in his wall, and therefore Satan gave up the cause. Note, If we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

3. Yet he continued his malice against him, and departed with a resolution to attack him again; he departed but *for a season*, ἀγχι καίρις—*till a season*, or till the season when he was again to be let loose upon him, not as a *tempter*, to draw him to *sin*, and so to strike at *his head*, which was what he now aimed at, and was wholly defeated in; but as a *persecutor*, to bring him to *suffer* by Judas, and the other wicked instruments whom he employed, and so to *bruise his heel*, which it was told him (Gen. 3. 15.) he should have to do, and would do, though it would be the breaking of *his own head*. He *deserted now* till that season came, which Christ calls the *power of darkness*, (ch. 22. 53.) and when the prince of this world would again *come*, John 14. 30.

14. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. 17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? 23. And he said unto them, Ye will surely say

unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25. But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: 26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian. 28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath. 29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the good Spirit; and having defended himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act *offensively*, and to make those attacks upon him by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe,

1. What is here said, in general, of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with *in Galilee*, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem: it was a part of Christ's humiliation, that he began his ministry there. But, 1. Thither he came *in the power of the Spirit*. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetic office, strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself. 2. There he *taught in their synagogues*, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of devotion, to read, expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequented since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring. 3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation; *A fame of him went through all that region*; (v. 14.) and it was a good fame; for (v. 15.) he *was glorified of all*. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all *glorified* him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

II. Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up; and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told, how he *preached there*, and how he was *persecuted*.

1. How he preached there. In that observe, (1.) The opportunity he had for it; *He came to Nazareth* when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him, might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach, [1.] In the *synagogue*, the proper place, where it had been *his custom* to attend when he was a private person, v. 16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But now that he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where

the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisherman would cast his net. [2.] On the sabbath-day, the proper time, which the pious Jews spent, not in a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets, on the *new moons*, and the *sabbaths*. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(2.) The call he had to it. [1.] He *stood up to read*. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ *preaching* in other synagogues, but never *reading*, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member; now he offered his service as he had perhaps often done; he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, Acts 13. 15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very proper work to be done in religious assemblies; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it. [2.] The *book of the prophet Esaias* was delivered to him, either by the ruler of the synagogue, or by the minister mentioned, (v. 20.) so that he was no intruder, but duly authorized *pro hac vice*—on this occasion. The second lesson for that day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

(3.) The text he preached upon; He *stood up to read*, to teach us reverence in *reading* and *hearing* of the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law *all the people stood up*; (Neh. 8. 5.) so did Christ here, when he read in the book of the prophets. Now the book being delivered to him, [1.] He *opened it*. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner *shut up* till Christ opened them, Isa. 29. 11. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to take the book and open the seals*; for he can open, not the book only, but the understanding. [2.] He *found the place* which was appointed to be read that day in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text; now his text was taken out of Isa. 61. 1, 2, which is here quoted at large, v. 18, 19. There was a providence in it, that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks sovery plainly of the Messiah, that they might be left inexcusable, who *knew him not*, though they heard the *voices of the prophets read every sabbath-day*, which bare witness of him, Acts 13. 27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe,

First, How he was qualified for the work; *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, John 3. 54. He now came in the *power of the Spirit*, v. 14.

Secondly, How he was commissioned; *Because he has anointed me, and sent me*. His extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission; his being *anointed*, signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking, and called to it. Those whom God *appoints* to any service he *anoints* for it; "Because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me."

Thirdly, What his work was; he was qualified and commissioned,

1. To be a great *Prophet*. He was *anointed to preach*; that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe, (1.) To *whom* he was to *preach*; to the *poor*; to those that were *poor in the world*, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to undertake the teaching of, and spake of with contempt; to those that were *poor in spirit*, to the meek and humble, and to those that are truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, Matth. 11. 5. (2.) *What* he was to *preach*; in

general, he must *preach the gospel*. He is sent *εὐαγγελίζεσθαι*—to *evangelize* them; not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; to bring it, not only to their ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it.

Three things he is to preach:

[1.] *Deliverance to the captives*. The gospel is a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. By the merit of Christ sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thralldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of, that are willing to make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

[2.] *Recovering of sight to the blind*. He came, not only by the word of his gospel to bring *light* to them that sat in the *dark*, but by the power of his grace to give sight to them that were *blind*; not only the Gentile world, but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in *bondage*, but in *blindness*, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came, to tell us that he has *eye-salve* for us, which we may have for the asking; that, if our prayer be, *Lora, that our eyes may be opened*, his answer shall be, *Receive your sight*.

[3.] *The acceptable year of the Lord*, v. 19. He came, to let the world know, that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to *accept* of them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him, that there is now a time of *good will toward men*. It alludes to the year of *release*, or that of *jubilee*, which was an *acceptable year* to servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped; and to those who had mortgaged their lands, for then they returned to them again. Christ came, to sound the *jubilee-trumpet*; and blessed are they that heard the *joyful sound*, Ps. 89. 15. It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation.

2. Christ came, to be a great *Physician*; for he was sent to *heal the broken-hearted*, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those that were troubled and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them, and to bring them to rest, who were weary, and heavy-laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great *Redeemer*. He not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon; (*Whoever will, may go up*;) but he sets at liberty them that are bruised; he doth by his Spirit *incline* and *enable* them to make use of the liberty granted, as then none did but those *whose spirit God stirred up*, Ezra 1. 5. He came, in God's name, to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could but *proclaim liberty*, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had *power on earth to forgive sins*, came to *set at liberty*; and therefore this clause is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according to a liberty the Jews allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture, in their reading, for the explication of the text, Christ added it from Isa. 58. 6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable year, to let the *oppressed go free*, where the phrase the LXX use, is the same with this here.

(4.) Here is Christ's *application* of this text to himself; (v. 21.) When he had read it, he *rolled up the book*, and gave it again to the minister, or clerk, that attended, and *sat down*, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers; he *sat down in the temple, teaching*. Matth. 26. 55. Now he began his discourse thus, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. *This which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history.*" It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry: *now*, in the report they

heard of his preaching and miracles in other places ; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the *kingdom of heaven at hand* ; that that was preaching liberty, and sight, and healing, and all the blessings of the *acceptable year of the Lord*. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the *beginning of* ; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal ; *This day is this scripture fulfilled*. Note, [1.] All the scriptures of the Old Testament, that were to be fulfilled in the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was *he that should come*. [2.] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the *fulfilling of the scriptures*. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed ; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God, to compare them one with another.

(5.) Here is the *attention and admiration* of the auditors.

[1.] Their *attention* ; (v. 20.) *The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue* (and, probably, there were a great many) *were fastened on him*, big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister by whom God is speaking to us ; for as the eye affects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering or fixed, as that is. Or, rather, let us learn hence to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. *What saith my Lord unto his servants?*

[2.] Their *admiration* ; (v. 22.) *They all bare him witness*, that he spake admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth* ; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not *believe in him*. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching, may yet be themselves no true christians. Observe, *First*, What it was they admired ; the *gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*.

The *words of grace* ; good words, and spoken in a winning, melting way. Note, Christ's words are *words of grace*, for, grace being *poured into his lips*, (Ps. 45. 2.) words of grace poured from them ; and these words of grace are to be *wondered at* ; Christ's name was, Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such *words of grace* to such graceless wretches as we are. *Secondly*, What it was that increased their wonder ; and that was, the consideration of his original ; *They said, Is not this Joseph's Son*, and therefore his extraction mean, and his education mean ? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his *gracious words*, concluding he must needs be *taught of God*, for they knew no one else had taught him ; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing *really* admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the *Son of Joseph*. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean ?

(6.) Christ's anticipating of an objection, which he knew to be in the mind of many of his hearers. Observe.

[1.] What the objection was : (v. 23.) "*Ye will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself*. Because ye know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neigh-

bour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places ; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity." Most of Christ's miracles were *cures* ; "Now why should not the sick in thine own city be *healed* as well as those in other cities ?" They were designed to cure people of their unbelief ; "Now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others ? *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum*, that has been so much talked of, *do here also in thine own country*." They were pleased with *Christ's gracious words*, only because they hoped they were but the introduction to some *wondrous works* of his ; they wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased ; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other : and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other ? And why should not his neighbours and acquaintance have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other ?

[2.] How he answers this objection against the course he took.

First, By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his head-quarters ; (v. 24.) because it generally holds true, *That no prophet is accepted in his own country*, at least not so well, nor with such probability of doing good, as in some other country ; experience seals this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own countrymen, that have known their extraction and education, have been fit to *receive* them. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt ; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to ; and they will scarcely be duly honoured as *prophets*, who were well known when they were in the rank of *private men*. That is most esteemed, that is *far-fetched and dear-bought*, above what is *home-bred*, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their *superior*, whom a while ago they took to be every way their *inferior*. For this reason, Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary, at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners rather than among their own countrymen, and that, no doubt, by divine direction.

1. Elijah maintained a *widow of Sarepta*, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a *famine in the land*, v. 25, 26. The story we have, 1 Kings 17. 9, &c. It is said there, that the heaven was shut up *three years and six months*, whereas it is said, 1 Kings 18. 1. that in the *third year* Elijah showed himself to Ahab, and there was *rain* ; but that was not the third year of the drought, but the third year of Elijah's sojourning with the widow at Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a *Father of the fatherless*, and a *Judge of the widows*, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel ; (v. 27.) *Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus*, four particularly, that brought the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the

plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elisha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accomplishment of his prophecy too; see 2 Kings 7. 1, 3, &c. And yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them, no, not for a reward of their service, and the good tidings they brought, but only this Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply himself to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Israel. And here he mentions both these instances, to show that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respect, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazarenes to Christ, *Physician, heal thyself*. Nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his townsmen, yet among Israelites, whereas these great prophets wrought theirs among the Gentiles. The examples of the saints, though they will not make a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptions people.

2. How he was persecuted at Nazareth.

(1.) That which provoked them was, his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha showed to the Gentiles; *When they heard these things they were filled with wrath.* (v. 28.) *they were all so;* a great change since v. 22. when they *wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth*; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with those gracious words of Christ, which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his, to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but those only *phrased the ear*, and went no further, and therefore these *grated on the ear*, and irritated their corruptions. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the Son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was, that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Acts 22. 21. Their pious ancestors pleased themselves with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church; (witness many of David's psalms and Isaiah's prophecies;) but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in.

(2.) They were provoked to that degree, that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the usage he met with, when he *came to his own*, and they *received him not*. [1.] They *rose up* in a tumultuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over. [2.] They *thrust him out of the city*, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the Offscouring of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them! But this was the day of his patience. [3.] They *led him to the brow of the hill*, with a purpose to *throw him down headlong*, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been, though they had heard such a fame of him, and had but just now themselves *admired his gracious words*, though in justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hearing, and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Sometimes they were ready to stone him for the *good*

works he did; (John 10. 32.) here, for not doing the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence sprung up.

(3.) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come; He *passed through the midst of them*, unhurt; either he blinded their eyes, as the Sodomites and Syrians were, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun, his hour was not yet come; when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They *drove him from them*, and he *went his way*. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they *would not*, and therefore their house is *left to them desolate*. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was such a wicked, rude place, and so *unkind* to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now, though they *received him not*, there were those that did.

31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. 32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33. And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art: the Holy One of God. 35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. 38. And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. 40. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. 42. And when it was day, he departed, and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43. And

he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. 44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

When Christ was expelled Nazareth, he came to Capernaum, another city of Galilee; the account we have in these verses of his preaching and miracles there, we had before, Mark 1. 21, &c. Observe,

I. His preaching; *He taught them on the sabbath-days*, v. 31. In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we *worship God*, and it is a proper work for *sabbath days*. Christ's preaching much affected the people; (v. 32.) they were *astonished at his doctrine*, there was weight in every word he said, and admirable discoveries were made to them by it. The doctrine itself was astonishing, and not only as it came from one that had not had a liberal education. *His word was with power*; there was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the consciences of men. The doctrine Paul preached, hereby proved itself to be of God, that it came in *demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*.

II. His miracles. Of these we have here,

1. Two particularly specified, showing Christ to be,

(1.) A *Controller and Conqueror of Satan*, in the world of mankind, and in the souls of people, by his power to cast them out of the bodies of those he had taken possession of; for *for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*.

Observe, [1.] The devil is an *unclean spirit*, his nature directly contrary to that of the pure and *holy* God, and degenerated from what it was at first. [2.] This unclean spirit works in the children of men; in the souls of many, as then in men's bodies. [3.] It is possible that those who are very much under the power and working of Satan, may yet be found in the *synagogue*, among the worshippers of God. [4.] Even the devils *know and believe* that *Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God*, is sent of God, and is a *Holy One*. [5.] They believe and tremble. This unclean spirit *cried out with a loud voice*, under a certain *fearful looking for of judgment*, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights. [6.] The devils have *nothing to do with Jesus Christ*, nor desire to have any thing to do with him; for he took not on him the nature of angels. [7.] Christ has the devil under check; *He rebuked him*, saying, *Hold thy peace*; and this word he spake with *power*; *σιμωβηται*—*Be muzzled*; Christ did not only enjoin him silence, but stopped his mouth, and forced him to be silent against his will. [8.] In the breaking of Satan's power, both the enemy that is conquered, shows his malice, and Christ, the Conqueror, shows his overruling grace. Here, *First*, The devil showed what he would have done, when he *threw the man in the midst*, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. But, *Secondly*, Christ showed what a power he had over him, in that he not only forced him to leave him, but to leave him without so much as *hurting* him, without giving him a parting blow, a parting gripe. Whom Satan cannot *destroy*, he will do all the *hurt* he can to; but this is a comfort, he can harm them no further than Christ permits: nay, he shall not do them any real harm. *He came out, and hurt him not*; that is, the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage, that all that were present thought he had torn him to pieces. [9.] Christ's power over devils was universally acknowledged and adored, v. 36. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle, it was evident beyond contradiction, nor was any thing suggested to diminish

the glory of it, for they were *all amazed, saying, What a word is this?* They that pretended to cast out devils, did it with abundance of charms and spells, to pacify the devil, and lull him asleep, as it were; but Christ commanded them *with authority and power*, which they could not gainsay or resist. Even the *prince of the power of the air* is his vassal, and trembles before him. [10.] This, as much as any thing, gained Christ a reputation, and spread his fame. This instance of his power, which many now-a-days make light of, was then, by them that were eye-witnesses of it, (and those no fools neither, but men of penetration,) magnified, and was looked upon as greatly magnifying him; (v. 37.) upon the account of this, *the fame of him went out*, more than ever, *into every place of the country round about*. Our Lord Jesus, when he set out at first in his public ministry, was greatly talked of, more than afterward, when people's admiration wore off with the novelty of the thing.

(2.) Christ showed himself to be a *Healer of diseases*. In the former, he struck at the root of man's misery, which was Satan's enmity, the origin of all the mischief: in this, he strikes at one of the most spreading branches of it, one of the most common calamities of human life, and that is, bodily diseases, which came in with sin, are the most common and sensible corrections for it in this life, and contribute as much as any thing toward the making of our few days *full of trouble*. These our Lord Jesus came to take away the sting of, and, as an indication of that intention, when he was on earth, chose to confirm his doctrine by such miracles, mostly, as took away the diseases themselves. Of all bodily diseases none are more common or fatal to grown people than *fevers*; these come suddenly, and suddenly cut off the number of men's months in the midst; are sometimes *epidemical*, and *slay their thousands* in a little time. Now here we have Christ's curing of a fever with a word's speaking; the place was in Simon's house, his patient was Simon's wife's mother, v. 38, 39. Observe, [1.] Christ is a Guest that will pay well for his entertainment; those that bid him welcome into their hearts and houses, shall be no losers by him; he comes with healing. [2.] Even families that Christ visits, may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his *distinguishing favours*, are liable to the common calamities of this life. Simon's wife's mother was *ill of a fever*. *Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick*. [3.] Even good people may sometimes be exercised with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others; She was *taken with a great fever*, very acute, and high, and threatening; perhaps it seized her head, and made her delirious. The most gentle fevers may by degrees prove dangerous; but this was at first a *great fever*. [4.] No age can exempt from diseases. It is probable that Peter's mother-in-law was *in years*, and yet in a *fever*. [5.] When our relations are sick, we ought to apply ourselves to Christ, by faith and prayer, on their account; *They besought him for her*; and there is a particular promise, that the prayer of faith shall benefit the sick. [6.] Christ has a tender concern for his people when they are in sickness and distress; *He stood over her*, as one concerned for her, and compassionating her case. [7.] Christ had, and still has, a sovereign power over bodily diseases; *He rebuked the fever*, and with a word's speaking commanded it away, and *it left her*. He saith to diseases, *Go*, and they go; *Come*, and they come; and can still *rebuke fevers*, even great fevers. [8.] This proves Christ's cures to be miraculous, that they were done in an instant; *Immediately she arose*. [9.] Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, he designs and expects that it should be a new life indeed, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. If dis-

temperers be rebuked, and we arise from a bed of sickness, we must set ourselves to minister to Jesus Christ. [10.] Those that minister to Christ, must be ready to minister to all that are his for his sake; She ministered to them, not only to him that had cured her, but to them that had besought him for her. We must study to be grateful to them that have prayed for us.

2. A general account given by wholesale, of many other miracles of the same kind, which Christ did.

(1.) He cured many that were diseased, even all without exception that made their application to him; (v. 40.) it was when the sun was setting, in the evening of that sabbath-day which he had spent in the synagogue. Note, It is good to do a full sabbath-day's work, to abound in the work of the day, in some good work or other, even till sun-set; as those that call the sabbath, and the business of it, a delight. Observe, He cured all that were sick, poor as well as rich, and though they were sick of divers diseases; so that there was no room to suspect that he had only a specific for some one disease; he had a remedy for every malady. The sign he used in healing was, laying his hands on the sick; not lifting up his hands for them, for he healed as having authority. He healed by his own power. And thus he would put honour upon that sign which was afterward used in conferring the Holy Ghost.

(2.) He cast the devil out of many that were possessed, v. 41. Confessions were extorted from the demonsiacs; they said, *Thou art Christ the Son of God*, but they said it, crying with rage and indignation, it was a confession upon the rack, and therefore was not admitted in evidence; Christ rebuked them, and did not suffer them to say that they knew him to be the Christ, that it might appear, beyond all contradiction, that he had obtained a conquest over them, and not a compact with them.

3. Here is his removal from Capernaum, v. 42, 43.

(1.) He retired for a while into a place of solitude; it was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; not only because a little served him, but because he was content with a little, and never indulged himself in ease; but when it was day, he went into a desert place, not to live constantly like a hermit, but to be sometimes alone with God, as even those should be, and contrive to be, that are most engaged in public work, or else their work will go on but poorly, and they will find themselves never less alone than when thus alone.

(2.) He returned again to the places of concourse, and to the work he had to do there. Though a desert place may be a convenient retreat, yet it is not a convenient residence; because we were not sent into this world, to live to ourselves, nor to the best part of ourselves only, but to glorify God, and do good in our generation.

[1.] He was earnestly solicited to stay at Capernaum. The people were exceedingly fond of him; I doubt, more because he had healed their sick than because he had preached repentance to them. They sought him, inquired which way he went; and, though it was in a desert place, they came unto him. A desert is no desert if we be with Christ there; and they stayed him that he should not depart from them, so that if he would go, it should not be for want of invitation. His old neighbours at Nazareth had driven him from them, but his new acquaintance at Capernaum were very importunate for his continuance with them. Note, It ought not to discourage the ministers of Christ, that some reject them, for they will meet with others that will welcome them and their message.

[2.] He chose rather to diffuse the light of his gospel to many places than to fix it to one, that no one might pretend to be a mother-church to the rest. Though he was welcome at Capernaum, and had

done abundance of good there, yet he is sent to preach the gospel to other cities also; and Capernaum must not insist upon his stay there. They that enjoy the benefit of the gospel, must be willing that others also should share in that benefit, and not covet the monopoly of it. And those ministers who are not driven from one place, may yet be drawn to another by a prospect of greater usefulness. Christ, though he preached not in vain in the synagogue at Capernaum, yet would not be tied to that, but preached in the synagogues of Galilee, v. 44. *Bonum est sui diffusivum—What is good is self-diffusive.* It is well for us, that our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them: and even in Galilee of the Gentiles, his special presence is in the christian synagogues.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's preaching to the people out of Peter's ship, for want of a better pulpit, v. 1, 3. II. The recompense he made to Peter for the loan of his boat, in a miraculous draught of fishes; by which he intimated to him and his partners his design to make them, as apostles, fishers of men, v. 4, 11. III. His cleansing of the leper, v. 12, 15. IV. A short account of his private devotion and public ministry, v. 16, 17. V. His cure of the man sick of the palsy, v. 18, 26. VI. His calling of Levi the publican, and conversing with publicans on that occasion, v. 27, 32. VII. His justifying of his disciples, in not fasting so frequently as the disciples of John and the Pharisees did, v. 33, ad finem.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesaret, 2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be *fishers of men*, Matth. 4. 18. and Mark 1. 16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of his disciples; but Luke gives us that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had *not been written* in the foregoing books. John 20. 30, 31. Observe here,

I. What vast *crowds* attended Christ's preaching; *The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God*, (v. 1.) inasmuch that no house would contain them, but he was forced to draw them out to the *strand*, that they might be reminded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be *as the sand upon the sea-shore*, (Gen. 22. 17.) and yet of them but *a remnant shall be saved*, Rom. 9. 27. The people *flocked about him*; (so the word signifies;) they showed respect to his preaching, though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable, for they *pressed upon him*. Some would reckon this a diminution to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the *rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him*; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the *grantees*; and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the *many sons* to God; and it was foretold concerning him, that *to him shall the gathering of the people be*. Christ was a popular Preacher; and though he was able, at *twelve*, to *dispute with the doctors*, yet he chose, at *thirty*, to preach to the capacity of the *vulgar*. See how the people relished *good preaching*, though under all external disadvantages; they pressed to *hear the word of God*; they could perceive it to be the *word of God*, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it.

II. What poor *conveniences* Christ had for preaching; *He stood by the lake of Genesareth*, (v. 1.) upon the level with the crowd, so that they could not see him, or hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but *there were two ships, or fisher-boats*, brought to shore, one belonged to Simon and Andrew, the other to *Zebedee and his sons*, v. 2. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance; (so Matthew tells us, *ch. 4. 18.*) but he waited till they came to land, and till the *fishermen*, that is, the servants, were *gone out of them*, having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time: so Christ *entered into that ship* that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend it him for a pulpit; and though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather *prayed him* that he would *thrust out a little from the land*, which would be the worse for his being *heard*, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be *seen*; and it is his being *lifted up*, that *draws men to him*. Wisdom cries *in the top of high places*; (Prov. 8. 2.) it intimates that Christ had a strong voice, strong indeed, for he made the *dead* to hear it, and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he *sat down*, and *taught the people* the good knowledge of the Lord.

III. What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism, (John 1. 40, 41.) they were with him at *Cana of Galilee*, (John 2. 2.) and in Judea; (John 4. 2.) but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have

them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again; *Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets*, v. 4. It was not the sabbath-day, and therefore as soon as the lecture was over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the public exercises of religion, may be but little hinderance to us in *time*, and a great furtherance to us in *temper of mind*, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been in the *mount* with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly employments, and thus have them sanctified to us by the word and prayer. It is our wisdom and duty so to manage our religious exercises, as that they may befrend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business, as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2. Peter having attended upon Christ in his *preaching*, Christ will *accompany him in his fishing*; he staid with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will *launch out with him into the deep*. Note, Those that will be constant followers of Christ, shall have him a constant Guide to them.

3. Christ orders Peter and his ship's crew to *cast their nets into the sea*, which they do, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had *caught nothing*, v. 4, 5.

We may observe here,

(1.) How melancholy their business had now been; "*Master, we have toiled all the night*, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have *taken nothing*, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that that should have excused them from hearing the sermon; and such a love had they to the word of God, that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again. Note, [1.] Some *callings* are much more *toilsome* than others are, and more perilous; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good, that there is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who cannot follow theirs but with a great fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have *rested all night*, let us not forget those who have *toiled all night*, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep. [2.] Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus *industrious*, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who had thus learned to *endure hardness*.

[3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business, often meet with disappointments; they who *toiled all night*, yet *caught nothing*; for the *race* is not always *to the swift*. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command, and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of worldly success. We must do our duty, and then leave the event to God. [4.] When we are tired with our worldly business, and crossed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

(2.) How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ; *Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net*. [1.] Though they had *toiled all night*, yet, if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who *wait on him*, shall *renew their strength*, as work is renewed upon their

hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of *grace sufficient*. [2.] Though they have taken nothing, yet, if Christ bid them *let down for a draught*, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not abruptly quit the callings wherewith we are called, because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to *let down that net*, though they have perhaps *toiled long, and caught nothing*; and this is thankworthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them. [3.] In this, they have an eye to the *word of Christ*, and a dependence upon that; "*At thy word, I will let down the net*, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are *then* likely to speed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

4. The draught of fish they caught, was so much beyond what was ever known, that it amounted to a miracle; (v. 6.) They *inclosed a great multitude of fishes*, so that *their net brake*, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught; it was so great a *draught*, that they had not hands sufficient to draw it up; but they were fain to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come, and help them, v. 7. But the greatest evidence of the vastness of the draught, was, that they filled both the ships with fish, to that degree, that they overloaded them, and they *began to sink*, so that the fish had like to have been lost again with their own weight; as many an overgrown estate, raised out of the water, returns to the place whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tons a piece; what a vast quantity of fish must there be to *load*, nay, to *overload* them both!

Now by this vast draught of fishes, (1.) Christ intended to show his *dominion in the seas* as well as on the *dry land*; over its *wealth* as over its *waves*. Thus he would show that he was that *Son of man*, under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the *fish of the sea*, and *whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea*, Ps. 8. 8. (2.) He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship. We may suppose that the people on shore who heard the sermon, having a notion that the Preacher was a Prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterward, and stayed halting about there, to see what he would do next; and this miracle, immediately following, would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a *Teacher come from God*. (3.) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loan of his boat; for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly in the house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall *shut a door or kindle a fire* in God's house *for nought*, Mal. 1. 10. Christ's recompenses for services done in his name, are abundant, they are superabundant. (4.) He intended hereby to give a specimen to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy, that, though they might for a time, and in one particular place, *toil and catch nothing*, yet they should be instrumental to bring in many to Christ, and inclose many in the gospel-net.

5. The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter, was very remarkable.

(1.) All concerned were *astonished*, and the more *astonished* for their being concerned. All the boat's crew were *astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken*, (v. 9.) they were all surprised; and the more they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were *wonder-struck*, I had almost said *thunder-struck*, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon, (v. 10.) and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they

were the more *affected* with it, [1.] Because they *understood* it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with the sea, and, it is probable, had plied upon it many years, had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that it was accidental at this *time*, and what might as well have happened at *any time*. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles, that those who were best acquainted with them, most *admired* them. [2.] Because they were most *interested* in it, and *benefited* by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes, it was a rich booty for them; and therefore it transported them, and their *joy* was a *helper* to their *faith*. Note, When Christ's works of wonder are to us in particular works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(2.) Peter, above all the rest, was so astonished, to such a degree, that he *fell down at Jesus's knees*, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was, or what he said, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*, v. 8. Not that he feared the weight of the fish would sink him, because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle with theirs who, under the Old Testament, so often said that they did *exceedingly fear and quake* at the extraordinary displays of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devils' dialect. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* [1.] His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make; *I am a sinful man, O Lord*. Note, Even the *best men* are *sinful men*, and should be ready on all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to *save sinners*, should *sinful men* apply themselves? [2.] His inference from it was what *might have been* just, though really it was not so; If I be a *sinful man*, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "*Come to me, O Lord*, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, *for ever undone*." But considering what reason *sinful men* have to tremble before the holy Lord God, and to dread his wrath, Peter may be well excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cried out on a sudden, *Depart from me*. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the *greatest distance* from him. We must all own ourselves *sinful men*, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly *depart from us*; but we must therefore *fall down at his knees*, to pray to him that he would not depart; *for wee unto us*, if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man.

6. The occasion which Christ took from hence to intimate to Peter, (v. 10.) and soon after to James and John, (Matth. 4. 21.) his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of his planting religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them, at this prodigious draught of fishes, "Thou shalt both see and do greater things than these; *fear not*; let not this astonish thee, be not afraid that, after having done thee this honour, it is so great, that I shall never do thee more; no, *from henceforth thou shalt catch men*, by inclosing them in the gospel-net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more *astonishing* miracle, and infinitely more *advantageous* than this." When by Peter's preaching

three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to their constant attendance on Christ; (v. 11.) *When they had brought their ships to land*, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they *forsook all, and followed him*, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable, that they *left all, to follow Christ*, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done, and they had had uncommon success in it. When *riches increase*, and we are therefore most in temptation to *set our hearts* upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is *thankworthy*.

12. And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus, fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13. And he put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Here is,

I. The cleansing of a leper, v. 12—14. This narrative we had, both in Matthew and Mark; it is here said to have been *in a certain city*, (v. 12.) it was in Capernaum; but the evangelist would not name it, perhaps because it was a reflection upon the government of the city, that a leper was suffered to be *in it*. This man is said to be *full of leprosy*, he had that distemper in a high degree, which doth the more fitly represent our natural pollution by sin; we are *full of that leprosy, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in us*. Now let us learn here,

1. What we must do in the sense of our spiritual leprosy. (1.) We must *see Jesus*, inquire after him, acquaint ourselves with him, and reckon the discoveries made us of Christ by the gospel, the most acceptable and welcome discoveries that could be made us. (2.) We must humble ourselves before him, as this leper, seeing Jesus, *fell on his face*. We must be *ashamed* of our pollution, and, in the sense of it, blush to lift up our faces before the *holy Jesus*. (3.) We must earnestly desire to be *cleansed* from the defilement, and cured of the disease of sin, which renders us unfit for communion with God. (4.) We must firmly believe in Christ's ability and sufficiency to cleanse us; Lord, *thou canst make me clean*, though I be *full of leprosy*; no doubt is to be made of the merit and grace of Christ. (5.) We must be importunate in prayer for pardoning mercy and renewing grace; *he fell on his face, and besought him*; they that would be cleansed, must reckon it a favour worth wrestling for. (6.) We must refer ourselves to the good will of Christ; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst*. This is not so much the language

of his *diffidence*, or *distrust* of the good will of Christ, as of his submission and reference of himself and his case to the will, to the good will, of Jesus Christ.

2. What we may expect from Christ, if we thus apply ourselves to him. (1.) We shall find him very *condescending*, and forward to take cognizance of our case; (v. 13.) *He put forth his hand, and touched him*. When Christ visited this leprous world, unasked, unsought unto, he showed how low he could stoop, to do good. His *touching* of the leper was wonderful condescension; but it is much greater to us, when he is himself *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*. (2.) We shall find him very *compassionate*, and ready to relieve us; he said, *"I will, never doubt of that; whosoever comes to me to be healed, I will in no wise cast him out."* He is as willing to cleanse leprous souls as they can be to be cleansed. (3.) We shall find him all-sufficient, and able to heal and cleanse us, though we be ever so full of this loathsome leprosy. One word, one touch, from Christ, did the business; *Immediately the leprosy departed from him*. If Christ saith, *"I will, be thou justified, be thou sanctified,"* it is done; for he has power on earth to *forgive sin*, and power to give the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 11.

3. What he requires from those that are cleansed, v. 14. Has Christ sent his word, and healed us? (1.) We must be very *humble*, v. 14. *He charged him to tell no man*. It should seem, this did not forbid him telling it to the honour of Christ, but he must not tell it to his own honour. Those whom Christ hath healed and cleansed, must know that he hath done it in such a way as doth for ever exclude boasting. (2.) We must be very *thankful*, and make a grateful acknowledgment of the divine grace; *Go, and offer for thy cleansing*. Christ did not require him to give him a fee, but to bring the sacrifice of praise to God; so far was he from using his power to the prejudice of the law of Moses. (3.) We must *keep close to our duty*; go to the priest, and those that attend him. The man whom Christ had made whole he *found in the temple*, John 5. 14. Those that by any affliction have been detained from public ordinances, when the affliction is removed, should attend on them the more diligently, and adhere to them the more constantly.

4. Christ's *public serviceableness* to men, and his *private communion* with God; these are put together here, to give lustre to each other.

(1.) Though never any had so much *pleasure* in his retirements, as Christ had, yet he was *much in a crowd*, to do good, v. 15. Though the leper should altogether hold his peace, yet the thing could not be hid, *so much the more went there a fame abroad of him*; the more he sought to conceal himself under a veil of humility, the more notice did people take of him; for honour is like a shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, (*for a man to seek his own glory, is not glory*;) but follows those that decline it, and draw from it. The less good men say of themselves, the more will others say of them. But Christ reckoned it a small honour to him, that his *fame went abroad*; it was much more so, that hereby multitudes were brought to receive benefit by him. [1.] By his preaching; they came together, to *hear* him, and to receive instruction from him concerning the kingdom of God. [2.] By his miracles; they came, to be *healed by him of their infirmities*; that invited them to come to hear him, confirmed his doctrine, and recommended it.

(2.) Though never any did so much *good in public*, yet he found time for *pious and devout retirements*; (v. 16.) *He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed*; not that he needed to avoid either distraction or ostentation, but he would set us an example, who need to order the circumstances

of our devotion so as to guard against both. It is likewise our wisdom so to order our affairs, as that our public work and our secret work may not in-trench upon, or interfere with, one another. Note, Secret prayer must be performed secretly; and those that have ever so much to do of the best business in this world, must keep up constant and stated times for it.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. 18. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with the palsy: and they sought *means* to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him. 19. And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with *his* couch, into the midst before Jesus. 20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. 21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? 22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? 23. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? 24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house. 25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

Here is,

I. A general account of Christ's preaching and miracles, v. 17. 1. He was *teaching on a certain day*, not on the sabbath-day, then he would have said so, but on a *week-day*; *six days shalt thou labour*, not only for the world, but for thy soul, and the welfare of that. Preaching and hearing the word of God are good works, if they be *done well*, any day in the week, as well as on sabbath-days. It was not in the synagogue, but in a *private house*; for even there where we ordinarily converse with our friends, it is not improper to give and receive good instruction. 2. There he *taught*, he *healed*; as before (v. 15.) and the power of the Lord was to heal them—*ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ἰσχυρὸν αὐτοῦ*. It was mighty to heal them, it was exerted and put forth, to heal them, to heal them whom he taught; we may understand it so; to heal their souls, to cure them of their spiritual diseases, and to give them a new life, a new nature. Note, Those who receive the word of Christ in faith, will find a divine power going along with that word, to heal them: for Christ came with his comforts to

heal the broken hearted, ch. 4. 18. The power of the Lord is *present* with the word, *present* to those that pray for it, and submit to it, *present* to heal them. Or it may be meant (and so it is generally taken) of the healing of those who were *discussed* in body, who came to him for cures. Whenever there was occasion, Christ was not to seek for his power, it was *present* to heal. 3. There were some grandees present in this assembly, and, as it should seem, more than usual; *There were Pharisees, and doctors of the law, sitting by*; not sitting at his feet, to learn of him; then I should have been willing to take the following clause as referring to them who are spoken of immediately before; (the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them;) and why might not the word of Christ reach their hearts? But by what follows, (v. 21.) it appears that they were *not healed*, but cavilled at Christ, which forces us to make that to refer to others, not to them; for they *sat by as persons unconcerned*, as if the word of Christ were nothing to them. They sat by as spectators, censors, and spies, to pick up something on which to ground a reproach or accusation. How many are there in the midst of our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, that do not sit under the word, but sit by! It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent them; they are willing that we should preach before them, not that we should preach to them. These Pharisees and scribes (or doctors of the law) came out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, they came from all parts of the nation; it is likely, they appointed to meet at this time and place, to see what remarks they could make upon Christ, and what he said and did. They were in a confederacy, as those that said, *Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah*, and agree to smite him with the tongue, Jer. 18. 18. *Report, and we will report it*, Jer. 20. 10. Observe, Christ went on with his work of preaching, and healing, though he saw these Pharisees, and doctors of the Jewish church, sitting by, who, he knew, despised him, and watched to insnare him.

II. A particular account of the cure of the man sick of the palsy, which was related much as it is here by both the foregoing evangelists: let us therefore only observe in short,

I. The doctrines that are taught us, and confirmed to us by the story of this cure. (1.) That sin is the fountain of all sickness, and the forgiveness of sin is the only foundation upon which a recovery from sickness can comfortably be built. They presented the sick man to Christ, and he said, "*Man, thy sins are forgiven thee*"; (v. 20.) that is the blessing thou art most to prize and seek; for if thy sins be forgiven thee, though the sickness be continued, it is in mercy; if they be not, though the sickness be removed, it is in wrath." The cords of our iniquity are the bands of our affliction. (2.) That Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and his healing of diseases was an incontestable proof of it. This was the thing intended to be proved, (v. 24.) *That ye may know* and believe, *that the Son of man, though now upon earth in his state of humiliation, hath power to forgive sins, and to release sinners, upon gospel-terms, from the eternal punishment of sin, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, and walk*; and he is cured immediately. Christ claims one of the prerogatives of the King of kings, when he undertakes to forgive sin, and it is justly expected that he should produce a good proof of it. "Well," saith he, "I will put it upon this issue; here is a man struck with a palsy, and for his sin; if I do not with a word's speaking cure his disease in an instant, which cannot be done by nature or art, but purely by the immediate power and efficacy of the God of nature, then say that I am not entitled to the prerogative of forgiving sin, am not the Messiah, am not the Son of

God, and King of Israel : but if I do, you must own that *I have power to forgive sins.*" Thus it was put upon a fair trial, and one word of Christ determined it. He did but say, *Arise, take up thy couch, and that chronicl disease had an instantaneous cure ; immediately he arose before them.* They must all own that there could be no cheat or fallacy in it ; they that brought him, could attest how perfectly *lame* he was before ; they that saw him, could attest how perfectly *well* he was now ; inasmuch that he had strength enough to take up and carry away the bed he lay upon. How well is it for us, that this most comfortable doctrine of the gospel, that *Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, has power to forgive sin,* has such a full attestation. (3.) That Jesus Christ is God. He appears to be so, [1.] By *knowing the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees,* (v. 22.) which it is God's prerogative to do ; though these scribes and Pharisees knew as well how to conceal their thoughts, and keep their countenances, as most men, and probably were industrious to do it at this time, for they *lay in wait secretly.* [2.] By doing that which their thoughts owned none could do but God only ; (v. 21.) *Who can forgive sins, say they, but only God ? "I will prove,"* saith Christ, "that I can forgive sins ;" and what follows then, but that *he is God ?* What horrid wickedness then were they guilty of, who charged him with speaking the *worst of blasphemies,* then when he spake the *best of blessings, Thy sins are forgiven thee ?*

2. The duties that are taught us, and recommended to us, by this story. (1.) In our applications to Christ, we must be very *pressing and urgent* : that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. They that were the friends of this sick man, *sought means to bring him in before Christ ;* (v. 18.) and when they were baffled in their endeavour, they did not give up their cause ; but, when they could not get in by the door, (it was so crowded,) they untiled the house, and let the poor patient down through the roof, *into the midst before Jesus,* v. 19. In this Jesus Christ *saw their faith,* v. 20. Now here he has taught us (and it were well if we could learn the lesson) *to put the best construction upon words and actions that they will bear.* When the centurion and the woman of Canaan were in no care at all to bring the patients they interceded for, into Christ's presence, but believed that he could cure them *at a distance,* he commended *their faith.* But though in *these* there seemed to be a *different* notion of the thing, and an apprehension that it was requisite the *patient* should be brought into his presence, yet he did not *censure and condemn* their weakness, did not ask them, "Why do you give this disturbance to the assembly ? Are you under such a degree of infidelity, as to think I could not have cured him, though he had been out of doors ?" But he made the best of it, and even in *this* he saw *their faith.* It is a comfort to us, that we serve a Master that is willing to *make the best of us.* (2.) When we are sick, we should be more in care to get our sins pardoned than to get our sickness removed. Christ, in what he said to this man, taught us, when we seek to God for health, to begin with seeking to him for pardon. (3.) The mercies which we have the comfort of, God must have the praise of. The man *departed to his own house, glorifying God,* v. 25. To him belong the escapes from death, and in them therefore he must be *glorified.* (4.) The miracles which Christ wrought, were *amazing* to them that saw them, and we ought to *glorify* God in them, v. 26. They said, "*We have seen strange things to-day,* such as we never saw before, nor our fathers before us ; they are altogether new." But they *glorified* God, who had sent into their country such a Benefactor to it ; and were *filled with fear,* with a reverence of God, with a jealous persuasion that this

was the Messiah, and that he was not treated by their nation as he ought to be, which might prove in the end the ruin of their state ; perhaps they were some such thoughts as these that *filled them with fear,* and a concern likewise for themselves.

27. And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom : and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house : and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners ? 31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician ; but they that are sick. 32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. 33. And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples of the Pharisees ;* but thine eat and drink ? 34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ? 35. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36. And he spake also a parable unto them : No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old ; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. 37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles ; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles ; and both are preserved. 39. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new : for he saith, The old is better.

All this, except the last verse, we had before in Matthew and Mark ; it is not the story of any *miracle in nature* wrought by our Lord Jesus, but it is an account of some of the *wonders of his grace,* which, to those who understand things aright, are no less cogent proofs of Christ's being sent of God than the other.

I. It was a *wonder of his grace,* that he would call a publican from the receipt of custom, to be his disciple and follower, v. 27. It was wonderful condescension that he would admit poor fishermen to that honour, men of the *lowest rank ;* but much more wonderful, that he would admit *publicans,* men of the worst reputation, men of *ill fame ;* in this, Christ *humbled himself,* and appeared in the likeness of *sinful flesh ;* by this he *exposed himself,* and got the invidious character of a *Friend of publicans and sinners.*

II. It was a *wonder of his grace,* that that call was made *effectual,* became immediately so, v. 28. This publican, though those of that employment commonly had little inclination to religion, for his reli-

gion's sake left a good place in the custom-house, (which is, probably, was his livelihood, and where he stood fair for better preferment,) and *rose up, and followed Christ*. There is no heart too hard for the Spirit and grace of Christ to work upon, nor any difficulties in the way of a sinner's conversion, insuperable to his power.

III. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he would not only admit a converted publican into his family, but would keep company with unconverted publicans, that he might have an opportunity of doing their souls good; he justified himself in it, as agreeing with the great design of his coming into the world. Here is a wonder of grace indeed, that Christ undertakes to be the Physician of souls *distempered* by sin, and ready to *die* of the distemper; (v. 31. He is a *Header by office*;) that he has a particular regard to the sick, to sinners as his patients, convinced, awakened sinners, that see their need of the Physician; that he came, to call *sinners*, the worst of sinners, to repentance, and to assure them of pardon, upon repentance, v. 32. This is glad tidings of great joy indeed.

IV. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he did so patiently bear the *contradiction of sinners against himself and his disciples*, v. 30. He did not express his resentments of the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, as he justly might have done, but answered them with reason and meekness; and, instead of taking that occasion to show his displeasure against the Pharisees, as afterward he did, or of recriminating upon them, he took that occasion to show his compassion to poor publicans, another sort of sinners, and to encourage them.

V. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that, in the discipline which he trained his disciples up under, he *considered their frame*, and proportioned their services to their strength and standing, and to the circumstances they were in. It was objected, as a blemish upon his conduct, that he did not make his *disciples to fast* so often as those of the *Pharisees*, and John Baptist did, v. 33. He insisted most upon that which is the *soul* of fasting, the mortification of sin, the crucifying of the flesh, and the living of a life of self-denial, which is as much better than fasting and corporal penances as *mercy* is than *sacrifice*.

VI. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that Christ reserved the trials of his disciples for their latter times, when by his grace they were in some good measure better prepared and fitted for them than they were at first. Now they were as the *children of the bride-chamber*, when the *Bridegroom is with them*, when they have plenty and joy, and every day is a festival. Christ was welcomed, wherever he came, and they for his sake, and as yet they met with little or no opposition; but this will not last always: *The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them*, v. 35. When Christ shall leave them with their hearts full of sorrow, their hands full of work, and the world full of enmity and rage against them, *then shall they fast*, shall not be so well fed as they are now. *We both hunger and thirst, and are naked*, 1 Cor. 4. 11. Then they shall keep many more *religious fasts* than they do now, for Providence will call them to it, they will then serve the Lord *with fastings*, Acts 13. 2.

VII. It was a *wonder of his grace*, that he proportioned their exercises to their strength. He would not *put new cloth upon an old garment*, (v. 36.) nor *new wine into old bottles*; (v. 37, 38.) he would not, as soon as ever he had called them out of the world, put them upon the strictness and austerities of discipleship, lest they should be tempted to *fly off*. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he would not bring them *by the way of the Philistines*, lest they should *repent*, when they saw war, and return into Egypt. Exod. 13. 17. So Christ

would train up his followers gradually to the discipline of his family; for no man, having *drank old wine*, will of a sudden straightway *desire new*, or relish it, but will say, *The old is better*, because he has been *used to it*, v. 39. The disciples will be tempted to think their old way of living better, till they are by degrees trained up to this way whereunto they are called. Or, turn it the other way; "Let them be *accustomed* a while to religious exercises, and then they will *abound* in them as much as you do; but we must not be too hasty with them." Calvin takes it as an admonition to the Pharisees, not to boast of their fasting, and the noise and show they made with it, nor to despise his disciples because they did not in like manner *signalize* themselves; for the profession the Pharisees made, was indeed *pompous and gay*, like *new wine* that is brisk and sparkling, whereas all wise men say, *The old is better*; which, though it doth not give its colour so well in the cup, yet is more warming in the stomach, and more wholesome. Christ's disciples, though they had not so much of the *form of godliness*, had more of the *power of it*.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, we have Christ's exposition of the moral law, which he came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and to fill up, by his gospel. I. Here is a proof of the lawfulness of works of necessity and mercy on the sabbath day; the former, in vindication of his disciples' plucking the ears of corn; the latter, in vindication of himself healing the withered hand on that day, v. 1. . . 11. II. His retirement for secret prayer, v. 12. III. His calling of his twelve apostles, v. 13. . . 16. IV. His curing of the multitudes of those under various diseases, who made their application to him, v. 17. . . 19. V. The sermon that he preached to his disciples and the multitude, instructing them in their duty both to God and man, v. 20. . . 49.

1. **AND** it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days? 3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him? 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone? 5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. 6. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him. 8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

These two passages of story we had both in Matthew and Mark, and they were there laid together; (Matth. 12. 1. Mark 2. 23.—3. 1.) because though happening at some distance of time from each other, both were designed to rectify the mistakes of the scribes and Pharisees concerning the sabbath-day, on the *bodily rest* of which they laid greater stress, and required greater strictness, than the Lawgiver intended. Here,

1. Christ justifies his disciples in a *work of necessity* for themselves on that day, and that was, *plucking the ears of corn*, when they were hungry on that day. This story here has a date, which we had not in the other evangelists, it was on the *second sabbath after the first*, (v. 1.) that is, as Dr. Whitby thinks pretty clear, the *first sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread*, from which day they reckoned the *seven weeks* to the feast of pentecost; the first of which they called *Σάββατον δευτεροπρατον*, the second *δευτεροδύτιον*, and so on. Blessed be God, we need not be critical in this matter. Whether this circumstance be mentioned to intimate that this sabbath was thought to have some peculiar honour upon it, which aggravated the offence of the disciples, or only to intimate that, being the first sabbath after the offering of the first fruits, it was the time of the year when the corn was near ripe, is not material. We may observe,

1. Christ's disciples ought not to be nice and curious in their diet, at any time, especially on sabbath-days, but take up with what is easiest got, and be thankful. These disciples *plucked the ears of corn, and did eat*; (v. 1.) a little served them, and that which had no delicacy in it.

2. Many that are themselves guilty of the *greatest crimes*, are forward to censure others for the most innocent and inoffensive actions, v. 2. The Pharisees quarrelled with them as doing that which was *not lawful to do on the sabbath-days*, when it was their own practice to feed deliciously on sabbath-days, more than on all other days.

3. Jesus Christ will justify his disciples when they are unjustly censured, and will own and accept of them in many a thing which men tell them *it is not lawful for them to do*. How well is it for us that men are not to be our judges, and that Christ will be our Advocate!

4. Ceremonial appointments may be dispensed with, in cases of necessity; as the appropriating of the shew-bread to the priests was dispensed with, when David was by Providence brought into such a strait, that he must have either that or none, v. 3. 4. And if God's own appointments might be thus set aside for a greater good, much more may the traditions of men.

5. Works of necessity are particularly allowable on the sabbath-day; but we must take heed that we turn not this liberty into licentiousness, and abuse God's favourable concessions and condescensions to the prejudice of the work of the day.

6. Jesus Christ, though he allowed works of necessity on the sabbath-day, will have us to know and remember that it is his day, and therefore is to be spent in his service, and to his honour; (v. 5.) *The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath*. In the kingdom of the Redeemer, the sabbath-day is to be turned into a *Lord's day*; the property of it is, in some respects, to be altered, and it is to be observed

chiefly in honour of the Redeemer, as it had been before in honour of the Creator; (Jer. 16. 14, 15.) in token of this, it shall not only have a new name, the *Lord's day*, (yet not forgetting the old, for it is a sabbath of rest still,) but shall be transferred to a new day, the first day of the week.

11. He justifies himself in doing *works of mercy* for others on the sabbath-day. Observe in this,

1. Christ on the sabbath day *entered into the synagogue*. Note, It is our duty, as we have opportunity, to sanctify sabbaths in religious assemblies. On the sabbath there ought to be a *holy convocation*; and our place must not be empty without very good reason.

2. In the synagogue, on the sabbath-day, he *taught*. Giving and receiving instruction from Christ is very proper work for a sabbath-day, and for a *synagogue*. Christ took all opportunities to teach, not only his disciples, but the multitude.

3. Christ's patient was one of his hearers; *A man whose right hand was withered*, came to learn from Christ; whether he had any expectation to be healed by him, does not appear. But those that would be *cured* by the grace of Christ, must be willing to *learn* the doctrine of Christ.

4. Among those who were the hearers of Christ's excellent doctrine, and the eye-witnesses of his glorious miracles, there were some who came with no other design than to pick quarrels with him, v. 7. The scribes and Pharisees would not, as became generous adversaries, give him fair warning, that, if he did *heal* on the sabbath-day, they would construe it into a violation of the fourth commandment, which they ought in honour and justice to have done, because it was a case *without precedent*, (none having ever cured as he did,) and therefore could not be an *adjudged* case; but they basely *watched him*, as the lion does his prey, whether he would *heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him*, and surprise him with a prosecution.

5. That Jesus Christ was neither *ashamed nor afraid* to own the purposes of his grace, in the face of those who, he knew, confronted them, v. 8. *He knew their thoughts, and what they designed, and he bid the man rise, and stand forth*, hereby to try the patient's faith and boldness.

6. He appealed to his adversaries themselves, and to the conviction of natural conscience, whether it was the design of the fourth commandment to restrain men from doing good on the sabbath-day, that good which their hand finds to do, which they have an opportunity for, and which cannot so well be put off to another time; (v. 9.) *Is it lawful to do good, or evil, on the sabbath-days?* No wicked men are such *absurd and unreasonable men as persecutors* are, who study to do *evil* to men for doing good.

7. He healed the poor man, and restored him to the present use of his right hand, with a word's speaking, though he knew that his enemies would not only take offence at it, but take advantage against him for it, v. 10. Let not us be drawn off, either from our duty or from our usefulness, by the oppression we meet with in it.

8. His adversaries were hereby enraged so much the more against him, v. 11. Instead of being convinced by this miracle, as they ought to have been, that he was a Teacher come from God; instead of being brought to be in love with him as a Benefactor to mankind, they were *filled with madness*, vexed that they could not frighten him from doing good, or hinder the growth of his interest in the affections of the people. They were *mad* at Christ, *mad* at the people, *mad* at themselves. Anger is a *short madness*, malice is a *long one*; *impotent malice*, especially, *disappointed malice*; such was theirs. When they could not prevent his working of this miracle, they *communed one with another what they might do to*

Jesus, what other way they might take to run him down. We may well stand amazed at it, that the sons of men should be so wicked as to do thus, and that the Son of God should be so patient as to suffer it.

12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14. Simon (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew. 15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes. 16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. 17. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

In these verses, we have our Lord Jesus in *secret*, in *his family*, and in *public*; and in all three acting like himself.

I. In *secret*, we have him *praying to God*, v. 12. This evangelist takes frequent notice of Christ's retirements, to give us an example of secret prayer, by which we must keep up our communion with God daily, and without which it is impossible that the soul should prosper. *In those days*, when his enemies were filled with madness against him, and were contriving what to do to him, he went out, to *pray*; that he might answer the type of David, (Ps. 109. 4.) *For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer*. Observe, 1. He was alone with God; he *went out into a mountain to pray*, where he might have no disturbance or interruption given him; we are never less alone than when we are *thus alone*. Whether there was any convenient place built upon this mountain, for devout people to retire to for their private devotions, as some think, and that that *oratory*, or *place of prayer*, is meant here by ἡ πρὸς τὸ ὄρος, to me seems very uncertain. He *went up a mountain*, for privacy, and therefore, probably, would not go to a place frequented by others. 2. He was *long alone with God*; *He continued all night in prayer*. We think one half hour a great deal to spend in the duties of the closet; but Christ continued a *whole night* in meditation and secret prayer. We have a great deal of *business* at the throne of grace, and we should take a great *delight* in communion with God, and by both these may be kept sometimes long at prayer.

II. In his *family*, we have him nominating his immediate attendants, that should be the constant auditors of his doctrine, and eye-witnesses of his miracles, that hereafter they might be sent forth as *apostles*, his *messengers* to the world, to preach his gospel to it, and plant his church in it, v. 13. After he had *continued all night in prayer*, one would have thought, that *when it was day*, he should have reposed himself, and got some sleep. No, as soon as

any body was stirring, he called unto him his *disciples*. In serving God, our great care should be, not to *lose time*, but to make the end of one good duty the beginning of another. Ministers are to be ordained with *prayer more than ordinarily solemn*. The number of the apostles was *twelve*; their names are here recorded; it is the *third time* that we have met with them, and in each of the *three places*, the order of them differs, to teach both ministers and christians not to be nice in precedency, not in *giving* it, much less in *taking* it, but looking upon it as a thing not worth taking notice of; let it be as it lights. He that in Mark was called *Thaddæus*, in Matthew, *Lebbeus*, whose surname was *Thaddæus*, is here called *Judas the brother of James*, the same that wrote the Epistle of Jude. Simon, who in Matthew and Mark was called the *Canaanite*, is here called *Simon Zelotes*, perhaps for his great zeal in religion. Concerning these twelve here named, we have reason to say, as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants, *Happily are thy men, and happily are these thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom*; never were men so privileged, and yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor; (v. 16.) yet Christ when he chose him, was not deceived in him.

III. In *public*, we have him *preaching and healing*, the two great works between which he divided his time, v. 17. He came down with the twelve from the mountain, and *stood in the plain*, ready to receive those that resorted to him; and there were presently gathered about him, not only the *company of his disciples*, who used to attend him, but also a *great multitude of people*, a mixed multitude out of all Judea and Jerusalem; though it was some scores of miles from Jerusalem to that place of Galilee where Christ now was; though at Jerusalem they had abundance of famous rabbins, that had great names, and bore a mighty sway, yet they came to hear Christ. They came also from the *sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon*; though they who lived there, were generally men of business, and though they bordered upon Canaanites, yet here were some well affected to Christ: such there were dispersed in all parts, here and there one.

1. They came to *hear him*; and he *preached* to them. Those that have not good preaching near them, had better travel far for it than be without it. It is worth while to go a great way, to hear the word of Christ, and to go out of the way of other business for it.

2. They came to be *cured* by him, and he *healed* them. Some were troubled in *body*, and some in *mind*; some had *diseases*, some had *devils*; but both the one and the other, upon their application to Christ, were *healed*, for he has power over *diseases* and *devils*, (v. 17, 18.) over the effects and over the causes. Nay, it should seem, those who had no *particular diseases* to complain of, yet found it a great confirmation and renovation to their bodily *health* and *vigour*, to partake of the *virtue that went out of him*; for, (v. 19.) *the whole multitude sought to touch him*, those that were in health as well as those that were sick, and they were all, one way or other, the better for him, he *healed them all*; and who is there that doth not need, upon some account or other, to be *healed*? Note, There is a *fulness of grace* in Christ, and healing virtue in him, and ready to go out from him, that is enough for all, enough for each.

20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for

ye shall laugh. 22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Here begins a practical discourse of Christ, which is continued to the end of the chapter, most of which is found in the *sermon upon the mount*, Matth. 5. and 7. Some think that this was preached at some other time and place, and there are other instances of Christ's preaching the same things, or to the same purport, at different times; but it is probable that this is only the evangelist's abridgment of that sermon, and perhaps that in Matthew too is but an abridgment; the beginning and conclusion are much the same; and the story of the cure of the centurion's servant follows presently upon it, both there and here, but it is not material.

In these verses, we have,

I. Blessings pronounced upon suffering saints, as happy people, though the world judges them; (v. 20.) He lifted up his eyes upon his disciples, not only the twelve, but the whole company of them, (v. 17.) and directed his discourse to them; for when he had healed the sick in the plain, he went up again to the mountain, to preach; there he sat, as one having authority, thither they came to him, (Matth. 5. 1.) and to them he directed his discourse, to them he applied it, and taught them to apply it to themselves. When he had laid it down for a truth, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, he added, *Blessed are ye poor*. All believers, that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. And the application as it is here, seems especially designed to encourage the disciples, with reference to the hardships and difficulties they were likely to meet with, in following Christ.

1. "You are poor, you have left all to follow me, are content to live upon alms with me, are never to expect any worldly preferment in my service; you must work hard, and fare hard, as poor people do; but you are blessed in your poverty, it shall be no prejudice at all to your happiness; nay, you are blessed for it, all your losses shall be abundantly made up to you, for yours is the kingdom of God; all the comforts and graces of his kingdom here, and all the glories and joys of his kingdom hereafter; yours it shall be, nay, yours it is." Christ's poor are rich in faith, Jam. 2. 5.

2. "You hunger now; (v. 21.) you are not fed to the full as others are, you often rise hungry, your commons are so short; or you are so intent upon your work, that you have no time to eat bread, you are glad of a few ears of corn, for a meal's meat; thus you hunger now in this world, but in the other world you shall be filled, shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more."

3. "You weep now, are often in tears, tears of repentance, tears of sympathy; you are of them that mourn in Zion. But blessed are you; your present

sorrows are no prejudices to, but preheratories for, your future joy; you shall laugh. You have triumphs in reserve; you are but sowing in tears, and shall shortly reap in joy," Ps. 126. 5, 6. They that now sorrow after a godly sort, are treasuring up comforts for themselves, or, rather, God is treasuring up comforts for them; and the day is coming, when their mouth shall be filled with laughing, and their lips with rejoicing, Job 8. 21.

4. "You now undergo the world's ill will; you must expect all the base treatment that a spiteful world can give you for Christ's sake, because you serve him and his interests; you must expect that wicked men will hate you, because your doctrine and life convict and condemn them; and those that have church-power in their hands will separate you, will force you to separate yourselves, and then excommunicate you for so doing, and lay you under the most ignominious censures, will pronounce anathemas against you, as scandalous and incorrigible offenders; they will do this with all possible gravity and solemnity, and the pomp and pageantry of appeals to Heaven, to make the world believe, and almost you yourselves too, that it is ratified in heaven; thus will they endeavour to make you odious to others, and a terror to yourselves." This is supposed to be the proper notion of ἀποσπασθῆναι ὑμᾶς—they shall cast you out of their synagogues. "And they that have not this power, will not fail to show their malice, to the utmost of their power; for they will reproach you, will charge you with the blackest crimes, which you are perfectly innocent of, will fasten upon you the blackest characters, which you do not deserve; they will cast out your name as evil, your name as christians, as apostles; they will do all they can, to render these names odious." This is the application of the eighth beatitude, Matth. 5. 10—12.

"Such usage as this seems hard; but blessed are you when you are so used; it is so far from depriving you of your happiness, that it will greatly add to it; it is an honour to you, as it is to a brave hero to be employed in the wars, in the service of his prince; and therefore rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy, v. 23. Do not only bear it, but triumph in it. For," (1.) "You are hereby highly dignified in the kingdom of grace, for you are treated as the prophets were before you, and therefore not only need not be ashamed of it, but may justly rejoice in it, for it will be an evidence for you that you walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps, are engaged in the same cause, and employed in the same service, with them." (2.) "You will for this be abundantly recompensed in the kingdom of glory; not only your services for Christ, but your sufferings will come into the account; Your reward is great in heaven. Venture upon your sufferings, in a full belief that the glory of heaven will abundantly countervail all these hardships; so that, though you may be losers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him in the end."

II. Woes denounced against prospering sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. These we had not in Matthew. It should seem, the best exposition of these woes, compared with the foregoing blessings, is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus had the blessedness of those that are poor and hunger, and weep now, for in Abraham's bosom all the promises made to them who did so, were made good to him; but the rich man had the woes that follow here, as he had the character of those on whom those woes are entailed.

1. Here is a woe to them that are rich, that is, that trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, and, instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it; woe to them, for they have received their consolation, that which they placed their happiness in; and were willing to take up with for a

portion, v. 24. They in their life-time received *their good things*, which, in their account were the *best things*, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. "You that are rich, are in temptation to set your hearts upon a *smiling world*, and to say, *Soul, take thine ease*, in the embraces of it, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell*; and then *wee into you*." (1.) It is the *folly* of carnal worldlings, that they make the things of this world *their consolation*, which were intended only for their *convenience*, they please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the *consolations of God* are small, and of no account. (2.) It is their misery, that they are *put off* with them as *their consolation*; let them know it, to their terror, when they are parted from these things, there is an end of all their comfort, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a *woe* to them that are *full*, (v. 25.) that are *fed to the full*, and have *more than heart could wish*, (Ps. 73. 7.) that have their bellies filled with the *hid treasures of this world*, (Ps. 17. 14.) that, when they have abundance of these, are *full*, and think they have *enough*, they need no more, they desire no more, Rev. 3. 17. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich*, 1 Cor. 4. 8. They are *full of themselves*, without God and Christ; woe to such, for they shall *hunger*, they shall shortly be *stripped and emptied* of all the things they are so proud of; and when they shall have *left behind them* in the world all those things which are their fullness, they shall *carry away with them* such appetites and desires as the world they remove to will afford them no gratifications of; for all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be *denied*, and in heaven *super-seded*.

3. Here is a *woe* to them that *laugh now*, that have always a *disposition to be merry*; and always *something to make merry with*: that know no other joy than that which is carnal and sensual, and know no other use of this world's good than purely to indulge that carnal, sensual joy, that banishes sorrow, even godly sorrow, from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool; *woe unto such*, for it is but *now*, for a little time, that they *laugh*, they shall *mourn and weep* shortly, shall *mourn and weep* eternally, in a world where there is nothing but *weeping and wailing*, endless, easeless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a *woe* to them *whom all men speak well of*, that is, who make it their great and only care, to get the praise and applause of men, who value the selves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance; (v. 26.) "*woe unto you*; it seems to intimate that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that nobody would be disgusted; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and if you do that as you ought, you will get that *ill will* which never speaks well." The false prophets indeed that flattered your fathers in their wicked ways, that *prophesied smooth things* to them, were caressed and spoken well of; and if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did." We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises, of the fools in Israel.

27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you: 28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the

one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32. For

if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye! For sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye! For sinners also do even the same.

34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye! For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

These verses agree with Matth. 5. 38. to the end of that chapter; *I say unto you that hear*, (v. 27.) to all you that hear, and not to disciples only, for these are lessons of universal concern; *He that has an ear, let him hear*. Those that diligently hearken to Christ, shall find he has something to say to them well worth their hearing. Now the lessons Christ here teacheth us, are,

I. That we must render to all their due, and be honest and just in all our dealings; (v. 31.) *As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise*, for this is *loving our neighbour as ourselves*. What we would expect, in reason, to be done to us, either in justice or charity, by others, if they were in our condition, and we in theirs, that, as the matter stands, we must do to them. We must *put our souls into their souls' stead*, and then pity and succour them, as we would desire and justly expect to be ourselves pitied and succoured.

II. That we must be free in giving to them that need; (v. 30.) "*Give to every man that asketh of thee*, to every one that is a proper object of charity, that wants necessities, which thou hast wherewithal to supply out of thy superfluities. Give to those that are not able to help themselves, to those that have not relations in a capacity to help them." Christ would have his disciples ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, *to their power*, in ordinary cases, and beyond their power in extraordinary.

III. That we must be generous in forgiving those that have been any way injurious to us.

1. We must not be *extreme* in demanding our right, when it is denied us: "*him that taketh away thy cloak*, either forcibly or fraudulently, *forbid him not* by any violent means to *take thy coat also*, v. 29. Let him have that too, rather than fight for it. And (v. 30.) *of him that taketh thy goods*," (so Dr. Hammond thinks it should be read,) "that borrows them, or that takes them up from thee upon trust, of such do not exact them; if Providence have made such insolvent, do not take the advantage of the law against them, but rather lose it than take them by the throat, Matth. 18. 28. If a man run away in thy debt, and take away thy goods with him, do not perplex thyself, nor be incensed against him."

2. We must not be rigorous in revenging a wrong, when it is done us: "*Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek*, instead of bringing an action against

him, or sending for a writ for him, or bringing him before a justice, *offer also the other* ;” that is, “pass it by, though thereby thou shouldst be in danger of bringing upon thyself another like indignity ; which is commonly pretended in excuse of taking the advantage of the law in such a case. If any one *smite thee on the cheek*, rather than give another blow to him, be ready to receive another from him ; that is, “leave it to God to plead thy cause, and do thou sit down silent under the affront.” When we do thus, God will *smite our enemies*, as far as they are his, *upon the cheek-bone*, so as to *break the teeth of the ungodly* ; (Ps. 3. 7.) for he hath said, *Vengeance is mine*, and he will make it appear that it is so when we leave it to him to take vengeance.

3. Nay, we must *do good to them that do evil to us*. This is that which our Saviour, in these verses, chiefly designs to teach us, as a law peculiar to his religion, and a branch of the perfection of it.

(1.) We must be kind to those from whom we have received injuries. We must not only *love our enemies*, and bear a good will to them, but we must *do good to them*, be as ready to do any good office to them as to any other person, if their case call for it, and it be in the power of our hands to do it. We must study to make it appear by positive facts, if there be an opportunity for them, that we bear them no malice, nor seek revenge. Do they *curse us*, speak ill of us, and wish ill to us ? Do they *despitefully use us*, in word or deed ? Do they endeavour to make us contemptible or odious ? Let us *bless them and pray for them*, speak well of them, the best we can, wish well to them, especially to their souls, and be intercessors with God for them. This is repeated, v. 35. *Love your enemies, and do them good*. To recommend this difficult duty to us, it is represented as a generous thing, and an attainment few arrive at. *To love those that love us*, has nothing *uncommon* in it, nothing peculiar to Christ’s disciples, for *sinners will love those that love them* ; there is nothing self-denying in that, it is but following nature, even in its corrupt state, and puts no force at all upon it ; (v. 32.) it is no thanks to us, to love those that say and do just as we would have them. “And, (v. 33.) *if you do good to them that do good to you*, and return their kindnesses, it is from a common principle of custom, honour, and gratitude ; and therefore *what thank have you ?* What credit are you to the name of Christ, or what reputation do you bring to it ; for *sinners also*, that know nothing of Christ and his doctrine, *do even the same*. But it becomes you to do something more excellent and eminent, herein to outdo your neighbours, to do that which sinners will not do, and which no principle of theirs can pretend to reach to, you must *render good for evil* ;” not that any thanks are due to us, but then we are to our God *for a name and a praise* : and he will have the thanks.

(2.) We must be kind to those from whom we expect no manner of advantage : (v. 35.) *Lend, hoping for nothing again*. It is meant of the rich lending to the poor a little money for their necessity, to buy daily bread for themselves and their families, or to keep them out of prison ; in such a case, we must *lend*, with a resolution not to demand interest for what we lend, as we may most justly from those that borrow money, to make purchases withal, or to trade with ; but that is not all, we must *lend*, though we have reason to suspect that what we *lend* we *lose* ; lend to those who are so poor, that it is not probable they will be able to pay us again. This precept will be best illustrated by that law of Moses, (Deut. 15. 7—10.) which obliges them to lend to a *poor brother* as much as he *needed*, though the year of release was at hand.

Here are two motives to this generous charity.

[1.] It will redound to our profit ; for our *reward*

shall be great, v. 35. What is given, or laid out, or lent and lost on earth, from a true principle of charity, will be made up to us in the other world, unspeakably to our advantage. “You shall not only be *repaid*, but *rewarded*, greatly rewarded ; it will be said to you, *Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom*.”

[2.] It will redound to our honour ; for herein we shall resemble God in his goodness, which is the greatest glory ; “*Ye shall be the children of the Highest* ; shall be owned by him as his children, being like him.” It is the glory of God, that he is *kind to the unthankful and to the evil* ; bestows the gifts of common providence even upon the worst of men, who are every day provoking him, and rebelling against him, and using those very gifts to his dishonour. Hence he infers, (v. 36.) *Be merciful as your Father is merciful* ; this explains Matth. 5. 48. “*Be perfect as your Father is perfect*. Imitate your Father in those things that are his brightest perfections.” Those that are *merciful*, as God is *merciful*, even to the evil and the unthankful, are *perfect*, as God is *perfect* ; so he is pleased graciously to accept it, though infinitely falling short. Charity is called the *bond of perfectness*, Col. 3. 14. This should strongly engage us to be merciful to our brethren, even such as have been injurious to us ; not only that God is so to others, but that he is so to us, though we have been, and are, evil and unthankful ; it is of his mercies that *we* are not consumed.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged : condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned : forgive, and ye shall be forgiven : 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you : good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. 39. And he spake a parable unto them : Can the blind lead the blind ? Shall they not both fall into the ditch ? 40. The disciple is not above his master : but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. 41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? 42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite ! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye. 43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit ; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44. For every tree is known by his own fruit : for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good : and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil : for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. 46. And why

call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ! 47. Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like : 48. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock ; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it : for it was founded upon a rock. 49. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth : against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell ; and the ruin of that house was great.

All these sayings of Christ we had before in Matthew ; some of them, *ch. 7.* others in other places. They were sayings that Christ often used ; they needed only to be mentioned, it was easy to apply them. Grotius thinks that we need not be critical here in seeking for the coherence : they are golden sentences, like Solomon's proverbs, or parables. Let us observe here,

1. We ought to be very candid in our censures of others, because we need grains of allowance ourselves : " Therefore judge not others, because then you yourselves shall not be judged ; therefore condemn not others, because then you yourselves shall not be condemned, *v. 37.* Exercise towards others the charity which thinks no evil, which bears all things, believes and hopes all things : and then others will exercise that charity toward you. God will not judge and condemn you, men will not." They that are merciful to other people's names, shall find others merciful to theirs.

2. If we are of a giving and a forgiving spirit, we shall ourselves reap the benefit of it ; *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.* They that forgive the injuries done to them by others, others will forgive them their inadvertencies. They that forgive others' trespasses against them, God will forgive them their trespasses against him. And he will be no less mindful of the liberal that devise liberal things ; (*v. 38.*) Give, and it shall be given to you. God, in his providence, will recompense it to you ; it is lent to him, and he is not unrighteous to forget it, (*Heb. 6. 10.*) but he will pay it again. Men shall return it into your own bosom ; for God often makes use of men as instruments, not only of his avenging, but of his rewarding, justice. If we in a right manner give to others, when they need, God will incline the hearts of others to give to us, when we need, and to give liberally, good measure pressed down and shaken together. They that sow plentifully, shall reap plentifully. Whom God recompenses he abundantly recompenses.

3. We must expect to be dealt with ourselves as we deal with others ; *With the same measure that ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.* Those that deal hardly with others, must acknowledge, as Adoni-bezek did, (*Judg. 1. 7.*) that God is righteous, if others deal hardly with them, and they may expect to be paid in their own coin ; but they that deal kindly with others, have reason to hope that, when they have occasion, God will raise them up friends who will deal kindly with them. Though Providence does not always go by this rule, because the full and exact retributions are reserved for another world, yet, ordinarily, it observes a proportion sufficient to deter us from all acts of rigour, and to encourage us in all acts of beneficence.

4. Those who put themselves under the guidance

of the ignorant and erroneous, are likely to perish with them ; (*v. 39.*) *Can the blind lead the blind ? Can the Pharisees who are blinded with pride, prejudice, and bigotry, lead the blind people into the right way ? Shall not both fall together into the ditch ? How can they expect any other ? Those that are led by the common opinion, course, and custom, of this world, are themselves blind, and are led by the blind, and will perish with the world that sits in darkness.* Those that ignorantly, and at a venture, follow the multitude to do evil, follow the blind in the broad way that leads the many to destruction.

5. Christ's followers cannot expect better treatment in the world than their Master had, *v. 40.* Let them not promise themselves more honour or pleasure in the world than Christ had, nor aim at the worldly pomp and grandeur which he never was ambitious of, but always declined ; nor affect that power in secular things, which he would not assume ; but every one that would show himself perfect, an established disciple, let him be as his Master, dead to the world, and every thing in it, as his Master is ; let him live a life of labour and self-denial, as his Master doth, and make himself a servant of all ; let him stoop, and let him toil, and do all the good he can, and then he will be a complete disciple.

6. Those who take upon them to rebuke and reform others, are concerned to look to it, that they be themselves blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke, *v. 41, 42.* (1.) Those with a very ill grace censure the faults of others, who are not aware of their own faults. It is very absurd for any to pretend to be so quick-sighted, as to spy small faults in others, like a mote in the eye, when they are themselves so perfectly past feeling, as not to perceive a beam in their own eye. (2.) Those are altogether unfit to help to reform others, whose reforming charity doth not begin at home. How canst thou offer thy service to thy brother, to pull out the mote from his eye, which requires a good eye as well as a good hand, when thou thyself hast a beam in thine own eye, and makest no complaint of it ? (3.) Those therefore who would be serviceable to the souls of others, must first make it appear that they are solicitous about their own souls. To help to pull the mote out of our brother's eye, is a good work, but then we must qualify ourselves for it by beginning with ourselves ; and our reforming of our own lives, may, by the influence of example, contribute to others reforming theirs.

7. We may expect that men's words and actions will be according as they are, according as their hearts are, and according as their principles are.

(1.) The heart is the tree, and the words and actions are fruit according to the nature of the tree, *v. 43, 44.* If a man be really a good man, if he have a principle of grace in his heart, and the prevailing bent and bias of the soul be toward God and heaven, though perhaps he may not abound in fruit, though some of his fruits be blasted, and though he may be sometimes like a tree in winter, yet he doth not bring forth corrupt fruit ; though he may not do you all the good he should, yet he will not in any material instance do you hurt. If he cannot reform ill manners, he will not corrupt good manners. If the fruit that a man brings forth be corrupt, if a man's devotion tend to debase the mind and conversation, if a man's conversation be vicious, if he be a drunkard or fornicator, if he be a swearer or liar, if he be in any instance unjust or unnatural, his fruit is corrupt, and you may be sure that he is not a good tree. On the other hand, a corrupt tree doth not bring forth good fruit, though it may bring forth green leaves ; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble do they gather grapes. You may, if you please, stick figs upon thorns, and hang a bunch of grapes upon a bramble, but they neither are, nor can be,

the natural product of the trees; so neither can you expect any *good conduct* from those who have justly a *bad character*. If the fruit be good, you may conclude that the tree is so; if the conversation be holy, heavenly, and regular, though you cannot infallibly know the heart, yet you may charitably hope that that is upright with God; for *every tree is known by its own fruit*. But the *vile person will speak villany*; (Isa. 52. 6.) and the experience of the moderns herein agrees with the *proverb of the ancients*, that *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, 1 Sam. 24. 13.

(2.) The heart is the *treasure*, and the words and actions are the expenses or produce from that treasure, v. 45. This we had, Matth. 12. 34, 35. The reigning love of God and Christ in the heart denominates a man a *good man*; and it is a *good treasure in the heart*, it enriches a man, it furnishes him with a good stock to spend upon, for the benefit of others; out of such a *good treasure* a man may bring forth that which is good; but where the love of the world and the flesh reign, there is an *evil treasure* in the heart, out of which an *evil man* is continually bringing forth that which is *evil*; and by what is brought forth, you may know what is in the heart, as you may know what is in the vessel, water or wine, by what is *drawn out from it*, John 2. 8. *Of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*; what the mouth ordinarily speaks, speaks with relish and delight, generally agrees with what is innermost and uppermost in the heart; *He that speaks of the earth, is earthly*, John 3. 31. Not but that a good man may possibly drop a bad word, and a wicked man make use of a good word to serve a bad turn: but, for the most part, the heart is as the words are, *vain or serious*; it therefore concerns us to get our hearts filled, not only with *good*, but with *abundance* of it.

8. It is not enough to *hear* the sayings of Christ, but we must *do* them; not enough to profess relation to him, as his servants, but we must make conscience of obeying him.

(1.) It is putting an *affront upon him*, to call him, *Lord, Lord*, as if we were wholly at his command, and had devoted ourselves to his service, if we do not make conscience of conforming to his will, and serving the interests of his kingdom. We do but mock Christ, as they that in scorn said, *Hail, King of the Jews*, if we call him ever so often, *Lord, Lord*, and yet walk in the way of our own hearts, and in the sight of our own eyes. Why do we call him *Lord, Lord*, in prayer, (compare Matth. 7. 21, 22.) if we do not obey his commands. He that *turns away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination*.

(2.) It is *putting a cheat upon ourselves*, if we think that a bare profession of religion will save us, that *hearing* the sayings of Christ will bring us to heaven, without *doing* them. This he illustrates by a similitude, (v. 47—49.) which shows,

[1.] Those only make sure work for their souls and eternity, and take the course that will stand them in stead in a trying time, who do not only come to Christ as his scholars, and *hear his sayings*, but do them; who think, and speak, and act, in every thing, according to the established rules of his holy religion. They are like a *house built on a rock*; these are they that *take pains* in religion, as they do, that *build on a rock*; that *begin low*, as they do, that *dig deep*; that found their hope upon Christ, who is the Rock of ages; (and other foundation can no man lay;) these are they who *provide for hereafter*, who get ready for the worst, who lay up in store a good foundation for the *time to come*, for the *eternity to come*, 1 Tim. 6. 19. They who do thus, do well for themselves; for, *First*, They shall keep their integrity, in times of temptation and persecution; when others fall from their own steadfastness, as the

seed on the stony ground, they shall *stand fast in the Lord*. *Secondly*, They shall keep their comfort, and peace, and hope, and joy, in the midst of the greatest distresses. The *storms and streams* of affliction shall not shock them, for their feet are *set upon a rock, a rock higher than they*. *Thirdly*, Their everlasting welfare is secured. In death and judgment they are safe. Obedient believers are *kept by the power of Christ, through faith, unto salvation*, and shall never perish.

[2.] Those who rest in a bare hearing of the sayings of Christ, and do not live up to them, are but preparing for a fatal disappointment; *he that heareth, and doeth not*, (that knows his duty, but lives in the neglect of it,) he is like a man that *built a house without a foundation*. He pleases himself with hopes that he has no ground for, and his hopes will fail him, when he most needs the *comfort* of them, and when he expects the *crowning* of them; when the *stream beats vehemently* upon his house, it is gone, the sand it is built upon is washed away, and *immediately it falls*. Such is the *hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul*; it is as the spider's web, and the giving up of the ghost.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ confirming of the doctrine he had preached in the former chapter, with two glorious miracles—the curing of one at a distance, and that was the centurion's servant, (v. 1. . 10.) and the raising of one to life, that was dead, the widow's son at Nain, v. 11. . 18. II. Christ confirming the faith of John who was now in prison, and of some of his disciples, by sending him a short account of the miracles he wrought, in answer to a question he received from him; (v. 19. . 23.) to which he adds an honourable testimony concerning John, and a just reproof to the men of that generation, for the contempt they put upon him and his doctrine, v. 24. . 35. III. Christ comforting a poor penitent that applied herself to him, all in tears of godly sorrow for sin; assuring her that her sins were pardoned, and justifying himself in the favour he showed her, against the cavils of a proud Pharisee, v. 36. . 50.

1. **N**OW when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. 6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: 7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto

the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Some difference there is between this story of the cure of the centurion's servant, as it is related here, and as we had it, Matth. 8. 5, &c. For there it was said, that the centurion came to Christ; here it is said, that he sent to him first some of the *elders of the Jews*, (v. 3.) and afterward some other *friends*, v. 6. But it is a rule, *That we are said to do that which we do by another—Quod facimus per alium, id ipsum facere judicamur.* The centurion might be said to do that which he did by his proxies; as a man takes possession by his attorney. But it is probable that the centurion himself came at last, when Christ said to him, (Matth. 8. 13.) *As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.*

This miracle is here said to have been wrought by our Lord Jesus, *when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people*, v. 1. What Christ said, he said *publicly*; whoever would, might come, and hear him; *In secret have I said nothing*, John 18. 20. Now to give an undeniable proof of the *authority* of his *preaching word*, he here gives an incontestable proof of the *power and efficacy* of his *healing word*. He that had such a commanding empire in the kingdom of nature, as that he could command away diseases, no doubt has such a sovereignty in the kingdom of grace, as to enjoin duties displeasing to flesh and blood, and bind, under the highest penalties, to the observance of them. This miracle was wrought in Capernaum, where most of Christ's mighty works were done, Matth. 11. 23. Now observe,

1. The centurion's servant that was sick, was *dear to his master*, v. 2. It was the praise of the servant, that by his diligence and faithfulness, and a manifest concern for his master and his interest, as for himself and for his own, he recommended himself to his master's esteem and love. Servants should study to *endear* themselves to their masters. It was likewise the praise of the master, that, when he had a good servant, he knew how to value him. Many masters, that are haughty and imperious, think it favour enough to the best servants they have, not to rate them, and beat them, and be cruel to them, whereas they ought to be kind to them, and tender of them, and solicitous for their welfare and comfort.

2. The master, *when he heard of Jesus*, was for making application to him, v. 3. Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are *sick*, and not to neglect them then. This centurion begged that *Christ would come, and heal his servant*. We may now, by faithful and fervent prayer, apply ourselves to Christ in heaven, and ought to do so, when sickness is in our families; for Christ is still the great Physician.

3. He sent some of the *elders of the Jews* to Christ, to represent the case, and solicit for him, thinking that a greater piece of respect to Christ, than if he had come himself, because he was an uncircumcised Gentile, whom he thought Christ, being a Prophet, would not care for conversing with. For that reason, he sent Jews, whom he acknowledged to be favourites of Heaven, and not ordinary Jews neither, but *elders of the Jews*, persons in authority, that the dignity of the messengers might give honour to him to whom they were sent; Balak sent princes to Balaam.

4. The elders of the Jews were hearty intercessors for the centurion; *they besought him instantly*, (v. 4.) were very urgent with him, pleading for the centurion, that which he would never have pleaded

for himself, *That he was worthy for whom he should do this.* If any Gentile was qualified to receive such a favour, surely he was. The centurion said, *I am not so much as worthy of a visit*; (Matth. 8. 8.) but the elders of the Jews thought him worthy of the cure; thus *honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth.* But that which they insisted upon in particular, was, that though he was a Gentile yet he was a hearty well-wisher to the Jewish nation and religion, v. 5. They thought there needed as much with Christ as there did with them, to remove the prejudices against him as a Gentile, a Roman, and an officer of the army, and therefore mention this; (1.) That he was well affected to the people of the Jews; *He loveth our nation*; which few of the Gentiles did. Probably, he had read the Old Testament, whence it was easy to advance to a very high esteem of the Jewish nation, as favoured by Heaven above all people. Note, Even conquerors, and those in power, ought to keep up an affection for the conquered, and those they have *power over*. (2.) That he was well affected to their worship; *He built them a new synagogue at Capernaum*, finding that what they had was either gone to decay, or not large enough to contain the people; and that the inhabitants were not of ability to build one for themselves. Hereby he testified his veneration for the God of Israel, his belief of his being the one only living and true God, and his desire, like that of Darius, to have an interest in the prayers of God's Israel, Ezra 6. 10. This centurion built a synagogue at his own proper costs and charges, and, probably, employed his soldiers that were in garrison there, in the building, to keep them from idleness. Note, Building places of meeting for religious worship, is a very *good work*, is an instance of love to God and his people; and those who do good works of that kind, are *worthy of double honour*.

5. Jesus Christ was very ready to show kindness to the centurion. He presently *went with them*, (v. 6.) though he was a Gentile; for, *is he the Saviour of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*, Rom. 5. 29. The centurion did not think himself worthy to visit Christ; (v. 7.) yet Christ thought him worthy to be visited by him: for those that *humble themselves shall be exalted*.

6. The centurion, when he heard that Christ was doing him the honour to come to his house, gave further proofs both of his humility and of his faith. Thus the graces of the saints are quickened by Christ's approaches toward them; *When he was now not far from the house*, and the centurion had notice of it, instead of setting his house in order for his reception, he *sends friends*, to meet him with fresh expressions, (1.) Of his *humility*; "*Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am unworthy of such an honour, because I am a Gentile.*" This bespeaks not only his low thoughts of himself, notwithstanding the greatness of his figure, but his high thoughts of Christ, notwithstanding the meanness of his figure in the world. He knew how to honour a Prophet of God, though he was despised and rejected of men. (2.) Of his *faith*; "*Lord, trouble not thyself, for I know there is no occasion, thou canst cure my servant without coming under my roof, by that almighty power from which no thought can be withheld. Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.*" So far was this centurion from Naaman's fancy, that he should come to him, and stand, and *strike his hand over the patient*, and so *recover* him, 2 Kings 5. 11. He illustrates this faith of his by a comparison taken from his own profession, and is confident that Christ can as easily command away the distemper as he can command any of his soldiers; can as easily send an angel with commission to cure this servant of his

as he can send a soldier on an errand, *v. 8.* Christ has a sovereign power over all the creatures and all their actions, and can change the course of nature as he pleases, can rectify its disorders, and repair its decays in human bodies, for *all power is given to him.*

7. Our Lord Jesus was wonderfully well pleased with the faith of the centurion, and the more surprised at it, because he was a Gentile; and the centurion's faith having thus honoured Christ, see how he honoured it; (*v. 9.*) *He turned him about, as one amazed, and said to the people that followed him, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* Note, Christ will have those that follow him, to observe and take notice of the great examples of faith, that are sometimes set before them, especially when any such are found among those that do not follow Christ so closely as they do, in profession; that we may be shamed by the strength of their faith out of the weaknesses and waverings of ours.

8. The cure was *presently and perfectly* wrought; (*v. 10.*) *They that were sent, knew they had their errand, and therefore went back, and found the servant well, and under no remains at all of his distemper.* Christ will take cognizance of the distressed case of poor servants, and be ready to relieve them, for there *is no respect of persons with him.* Nor are the Gentiles excluded from the benefit of his grace; nay, this was a specimen of that much greater faith which would be found among the Gentiles, when the gospel would be published, than among the Jews.

11. And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. 13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. 16. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. 17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. 18. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things.

We have here the story of Christ's raising to life a widow's son at Nain, that was dead, and in the carrying out to be buried; which Matthew and Mark had made no mention of; only in the general, Matthew had recorded it, in Christ's answer to the disciples of John, that *the dead were raised up,* Matth. 11. 5.

Observe,

I. Where, and when, this miracle was wrought. It was the *next day after* he had cured the centurion's servant, *v. 11.* Christ was doing good *every day*, and never had cause to complain that he had *lost a day.* It was done at the gate of a small city, or town, called *Nain*, not far from Capernaum; probably, the same with a city called *Nais*, which Jerome speaks of.

II. Who were the witnesses of it; it is as well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds that met in or near the gate of the city. There was a crowd of *disciples* and other *people* attending Christ; (*v. 11.*) and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man, *v. 12.* Thus there were a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, for it was a greater proof of Christ's divine authority than his healing of diseases, for by no power of nature, or any means, can the dead be raised.

III. How it was wrought by our Lord Jesus.

1. The person raised to life, was a *young man*, cut off by death in the beginning of his days; a common case; *Man comes forth like a flower, and is cut down.* That he was really dead, was universally agreed; there could be no collusion in the case, for Christ was *entering into the town*, and had not seen him till now that he met him upon the bier. He was *carried out of the city*, for the Jews' burying-places were without their cities, and at some distance from them. This young man was the *only son of his mother*, and *she a widow.* She depended upon him to be the staff of her old age, but he proves a broken reed; every man at his best estate is so. How numerous, how various, how very calamitous, are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! What a vale of tears is it! What a Bochim, a place of weepers! We may well think how deep the *sorrow* of this poor mother was for *her only son*; it is used, to express the greatest grief; (*Zech. 12. 10.*) it was the deeper in that she was a *widow*; broken with breach upon breach, and a *full end made of her comforts.* *Much people of the city was with her, by condoling with her loss, to comfort her.*

2. Christ showed both his *pity* and his *power*, in raising him to life, that he might give a specimen of both, which shines so bright in man's redemption.

(1.) See how *tender* his *compassions* are toward the afflicted; (*v. 13.*) *When the Lord saw* the poor widow following her son to the grave, *he had compassion on her.* Here was no application made to him for her, not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, but *ex mero motu—purely from the goodness of his nature*, he was troubled for her. The case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. His eye affected his heart; and he *said unto her, Weep not.* Note, Christ has a concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often *prevents them with the blessings of his goodness.* He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, *in his love and in his pity,* Isa. 63. 9. What a pleasing idea does this give us of the compassion of the Lord Jesus, and the multitude of his *tender mercies*, which may be very comfortable to us when at any time we are in sorrow! Let poor widows comfort themselves in their sorrows with this, that Christ *pities them*, and knows their souls and adversity; and if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ said, *Weep not*; and he could give her a reason for it, which no one else could; "*Weep not for a dead son, for he shall presently become a living one.*" This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against inordinate and excessive grief for their death—that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory; and therefore we must not sorrow, as those that have no hope, 1 Thess. 4. 13. Let Rachel, that *weeps for her children, refrain her eyes from tears*, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that *thy children shall come again to their own border,* Jer. 31. 17. And let our *passion* at such a time be checked and calmed by the consideration of Christ's compassion.

(2.) See how *triumphant* his *commands* are, over even death itself; (*v. 14.*) *He came and touched the*

bier, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay ; for to him it would be no pollution. Hereby he intimated to the bearers, that they should not proceed ; he had something to say to the dead young man ; *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*, Job 33. 24. Hereupon, *they that bare him stood still*, and, probably, let down the bier from their shoulders to the ground, and opened the coffin, if it were closed up ; and then with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues from death, he said, *Young man, I say unto thee, Arise*. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own ; (no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins :) yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him *arise*, when a power went along with that word, to *put life* into him. The gospel-call to all people, to young people particularly, is, “ *Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life*.” Christ’s dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word ; (v. 15.) *He that was dead, sat up*, without any help. When Christ put life into him, he made it to appear by his *sitting up*. Have we grace from Christ ? Let us show it. Another evidence of life, was, that he *began to speak* ; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he *opens the lips* in prayer and praise. And, *lastly*, he would not oblige this young man to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him, either as his disciple to minister to him, (though he owed him even his own self,) much less as a trophy or show to get honour by him, but *delivered him to his mother*, to attend her as became a dutiful son ; for Christ’s miracles were miracles of mercy ; and a great act of mercy this was to this widow ; now she was *comforted*, according to the time in which she had been afflicted, and much more ; for she could now look upon this son as a particular favourite of heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

IV. What influence it had upon the people ; (v. 16.) *There came a fear on all* ; it frightened them all, to see a dead man start up alive out of his coffin in the open street, at the command of a man ; they were all struck with wonder at this miracle, and *glorified God*. The Lord and his goodness, as well as the Lord and his greatness, are to be feared. The inference they drew from it, was, “ *A great Prophet is risen up among us*, the great Prophet that we have been long looking for ; doubtless, he is one divinely inspired, who can thus breathe life into the dead ; and in him *God hath visited his people*, to redeem them, as was expected,” Luke 1. 68. This would be *life from the dead* indeed to all them that waited for the Consolation of Israel. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life by a divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried, 1. In general, all the country over ; (v. 17.) *This rumour of him that he was the great Prophet, went forth upon the wings of fame through all Judea*, which lay a great way off, and throughout all Galilee, which was the *region round about*. Most got this notice of him, yet few believed in him, and gave up themselves to him. Many have the *rumour* of Christ’s gospel in their ears, that have not the *savour* and *relish* of it in their souls. 2. In particular, it was carefully brought to John Baptist, who was now in prison ; (v. 18.) *His disciples came*, and gave him an account of all things, that he might know that though he was bound, yet the *word of the Lord was not bound* ; God’s work was going on, though he was laid aside.

19. And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come ? or look we for

another ? 20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come ? or look we for another ? 21. And in that same hour he cured many of *their infirmities and plagues*, and of evil spits ; and unto many *that were blind* he gave sight. 22. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard ; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23. And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me. 24. And when the messengers of John were departed he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see ? A reed shaken with the wind ? 25. But what went ye out for to see ? A man clothed in soft raiment ? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king’s courts. 26. But what went ye out for to see ? A prophet ? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27. This is *he* of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist : but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. 29. And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. 31. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation ? and to what are they like ? 32. They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. 33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine ; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking ; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ! 35. But Wisdom is justified of all her children.

All this discourse concerning John Baptist, occasioned by his sending to ask whether he was the Messiah or no, we had, much as it is here related, Matth. 11. 2—19.

1. We have here the message John Baptist sent to Christ, and the return he made to it. Observe,

1. The great thing we are to inquire concerning, is, whether he be that should come to redeem and save sinners, or whether we are to look for another,

v. 19, 20. We are sure that God has promised that a Saviour shall come, an anointed Saviour; we are as sure that what he has promised he will perform in its season; if this Jesus be that promised Messiah, we will receive him, and will look for no other; but if not, we will continue our expectations, and though he tarry, will wait for him.

2. The faith of John Baptist himself, or at least of his disciples, wanted to be *confirmed* in this matter; for Christ had not yet publicly declared himself to be indeed the Christ, nay, he would not have his disciples, who knew him to be so, to speak of it, till the proofs of his being so were completed in his resurrection. The great men of the Jewish church had not owned him, nor had he gained any interest that was like to set him upon the throne of his father David. Nothing of that power and grandeur was to be seen about him, in which it was expected that the Messiah would appear. And therefore it is not strange that they should ask, *Art thou the Messiah?* not doubting but that if he were not, he would direct them what *other* to look for.

3. Christ left it to his own works to praise him in the gates, to tell what he was, and to prove it. While John's messengers were with him, he wrought many miraculous cures, *in that same hour*; which perhaps intimates, that they staid but *an hour* with him; and what a deal of work did Christ do in a little time! v. 21. *He cured many of their infirmities and plagues in body, and of evil spirits that affected the mind, either with frenzy or melancholy; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.* He multiplied the cures, that there might be no ground left to suspect a fraud. And then, (v. 22.) he bid them *go tell John what they had seen.* And he and they might easily argue, or even the common people did, (John 7. 31.) *When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man has done?* These cures which they saw him work, were not only confirmations of his commission, but explications of it. The Messiah must come to cure a diseased world, to give light and sight to them that sit in darkness, and to restrain and conquer evil spirits; you see that Jesus does this to the bodies of people, and therefore must conclude, This is he that should come to do it to the souls of people; and you are to look for no other. To his miracles in the kingdom of nature he adds this in the kingdom of grace, (v. 22.) *To the poor the gospel is preached*; which, they knew, was to be done by the Messiah, for he was anointed to *preach the gospel to the meek*, (Isa. 61. 1.) and to *save the souls of the poor and needy*, Ps. 72. 13. Judge, therefore, whether you can look for any other that will more fully answer the characters of the Messiah, and the great intentions of his coming.

4. He gave them an intimation of the danger people were in of being prejudiced against him, notwithstanding these evident proofs of his being the Messiah; (v. 23.) *Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, or scandalized at me.* We are here in a state of trial and probation; and it is agreeable to such a state, that, as there are sufficient arguments, to *confirm the truth* to those that are *honest and impartial* in searching after it, and have their minds prepared to receive it, so there should be also objections, to *cloud the truth* to those that are careless, worldly, and sensual; Christ's education at Nazareth, his residence at Galilee, the meanness of his family and relations, his poverty, and the despicableness of his followers—these and the like were stumbling-blocks to many, which all the miracles he wrought could not help them over. He is *blessed*, for he is wise, humble, and well disposed, that is not overcome by these prejudices. It is a sign that God has *blessed* him, for it is by his grace that he is helped over these stumbling stones; and he shall be *blessed* indeed, blessed in Christ.

II. We have here the high encomium which Christ gave of John Baptist; not while his messengers were present, (lest he should seem to flatter him,) but *when they were departed*, (v. 24.) to make the people sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed in John's ministry, and were deprived of by his imprisonment. Let them now consider, *what they went out into the wilderness to see*; who that was, about whom there had been so much talk, and such a great and general amazement. "Come," saith Christ, "I will tell you."

1. He was a man of *unshaken self-consistence*; a man of *steadiness and constancy*; he was not a *reed shaken with the wind*, first in one way, and then in another, shifting with every wind, he was *firm as a rock*, not *fickle as a reed*; if he could have bowed like a *reed* to Herod, and have complied with the court, he might have been a favourite there; but *none of these things moved him*.

2. He was a man of *unparalleled self-denial*; a great example of mortification and contempt of the world; he was not a *man clothed in soft raiment*, nor did he *live delicately*; (v. 25.) but, on the contrary, he lived in a wilderness, and was clad and fed accordingly; instead of adorning and pampering the body, he brought it under, and kept it in subjection.

3. He was a *prophet*, had his commission and instructions immediately from God, and not of man, or by man. He was by birth a *priest*, but that is never taken notice of; for his glory, as a prophet, eclipsed the honour of his priesthood; nay, he was *more*, he was *much more than a prophet*, (v. 26.) than any of the prophets of the Old Testament, for they spake of Christ as at a distance, he spake of him as at the door.

4. He was the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah, and he was himself prophesied of in the Old Testament; (v. 27.) *This is he of whom it is written*, (Mal. 3. 1.) *I send my messenger before thy face.* Before he sent the Master himself, he sent a messenger, to give notice of his coming, and prepare people to receive him. Had the Messiah been to appear as a *temporal Prince*, under which character the carnal Jews expected him, his messenger would have appeared, either in the *pomph* of a *general*, or the *gaiety* of a *herald at arms*; but it was a *previous* indication, plain enough, of the *spiritual* nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him to *prepare his way*, did it by preaching repentance, and reformation of men's hearts and lives; certainly that kingdom was not of this world, which was thus ushered in.

5. He was, upon this account, so great, that really there was not a *greater prophet* than he. *Prophets* were the *greatest* that were *born of women*, more honourable than kings and princes, and John was the *greatest* of all the *prophets*; the country was not sensible what a *valuable*, what an *invaluable*, man it had in it, when John Baptist went about preaching and baptizing. And yet he that is *least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he.* The least gospel-minister, that has obtained mercy of the Lord, to be *skilful* and *faithful* in his work; or the meanest of the *apostles*, and first preachers of the gospel, being *employed* under a more *excellent* dispensation, are in a more honourable office than John Baptist. The meanest of those that *follow the Lamb*, far excel the greatest of those that went before him. Those therefore who live under the gospel-dispensation, have so much the more to answer for.

III. We have here the just censure of the men of that generation, who were not wrought upon by the ministry either of John Baptist or of Jesus Christ himself.

1. Christ here shows what contempt was put upon John Baptist, while he was preaching and baptizing. (1.) Those who did show him any respect, were but

the common, ordinary sort of people; who, in the eye of the gay part of mankind, were rather a disgrace to him than any credit; (v. 29.) *the people* indeed, the vulgar herd, of whom it was said, *This people who knows not the law, are cursed*; (John 7. 49.) and the publicans, men of ill fame, as being generally men of bad morals, or taken to be so, these were *baptized with his baptism*, and became his disciples; and these, though glorious monuments of divine grace, yet did not *magnify John* in the eye of the world; but by their repentance and reformation they *justified God*, justified his conduct, and the wisdom of it in appointing such a one as John Baptist to be the forerunner of the Messiah; they hereby made it to appear that it was the best method that could be taken, for it was not in vain to *them*, whatever it was to others. (2.) The great men of their church and nation, the *polite* and the *politicians*, that would have done him some credit in the eye of the world, did him all the dishonour they could; they heard him indeed, but they were not *baptized of him*; (v. 30.) the Pharisees, who were most in reputation for religion and devotion, and the lawyers, who were celebrated for their learning, especially their knowledge of the scriptures, they *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, they *frustrated it*, they *received the grace of God*, by the baptism of John, *in vain*. God sending that messenger among them, had a kind purpose of good to them, *designed* their salvation by it, and if they had closed with the counsel of God, it had been *for themselves*, they had been made for ever; but they *rejected it*, would not comply with it, and it was *against themselves*, it was to their own ruin; they came short of the benefit intended them, and not only so, but forfeited the grace of God, put a bar in their own door, and by refusing that discipline which was to fit them for the kingdom of the Messiah, shut themselves out of it, and they not only excluded themselves, but hindered others, and stood in their way.

2. He here shows the strange perverseness of the men of that generation, in their cavils both against John and Christ, and the prejudices they conceived against them.

(1.) They made but a jesting matter of the methods God took to do them good; (v. 31.) "*Wherunto shall I liken the men of this generation? What can I think of, absurd enough to represent them by? They are, then, like children sitting in the market-place, that mind nothing that is serious, but are as full of play as they can hold; as if God were but in jest with them, in all the methods he takes to do them good, as children are with one another in the market-place; (v. 32.) they turn it all off with a banter, and are no more affected with it than with a piece of pageantry.*" This is the ruin of multitudes, they can never persuade themselves to be *serious* in the concerns of their souls; old men sitting in the sanhedrim, were but as *children sitting in the market-place*, and no more affected with the things that belonged to their everlasting peace than people are with children's play. O the amazing stupidity and vanity of the blind and ungodly world! The Lord awaken them out of their security.

(2.) They still found something or other to carp at.

[1.] John Baptist was a reserved, austere man, lived much in solitude, and ought to have been admired for being such a humble, sober, self-denying man, and hearkened to as a man of thought and contemplation; but this, which was his praise, was turned to his reproach; because he came *neither eating nor drinking*, so freely, plentifully, and cheerfully, as others did, *we say*, "*He has a devil*": he is a melancholy man, he is possessed as the demoniac whose dwelling was *among the tombs*, though he be not quite so wild."

[2.] Our Lord Jesus was of a more free and open conversation; he *came eating and drinking*; (v. 34.) he would go and dine with Pharisees, though he knew they did not care for him; and with publicans, though he knew they were no credit to him; yet, in hopes of doing good, both to the one and the other, he conversed familiarly with them. By this it appears that the ministers of Christ may be of very different tempers and dispositions, very different ways of preaching and living, and yet all good and useful; *diversity of gifts*, but each given to *profit* *what*; therefore none must make themselves a standard to all others, nor judge hardly of those that do not do just as they do. John Baptist bore witness to Christ, and Christ applauded John Baptist, though they were the reverse of each other in their way of living. But the common enemies of them both reproached them both. The very same men that had represented John as *crazed in his intellects*, because he came *neither eating nor drinking*, represented our Lord Jesus as *corrupt in his morals*, because he came *eating and drinking*; *he is a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber*. Ill-will never speaks well. See the malice of wicked people, and how they put the worst construction upon every thing they meet with in the gospel, and in the preachers and professors of it; and hereby they think to diminish *them*, but really destroy *themselves*.

Lastly, He shows that, notwithstanding this, God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant; (v. 35.) *Wisdom is justified of all her children*. There are those who are given to wisdom, *as her children*, and they shall be brought, by the grace of God, to submit to wisdom's conduct and government, and thereby to justify wisdom in the ways she takes for bringing them to that submission; for to them they are effectual, and thereby appear well chosen. Wisdom's children are herein unanimous, one and all, they have all a complacency in the methods of grace which divine wisdom takes, and think never the worse of them for their being ridiculed by some.

36. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. 38. And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. 39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. 40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: 42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? 43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most,

And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ! I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint ; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, *the same loveth little*. 48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? 50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.

When and where this passage of story happened, does not appear ; this evangelist does not observe order of time in his narratives, so much as the other evangelists do ; but it comes in here, upon occasion of Christ's being reproached as a *Friend of publicans and sinners*, to show that it was only for their good, and to bring them to repentance, that he conversed with them ; and that those whom he admitted near him, were reformed, or in a hopeful way to be so. Who this woman was, that here testified so great an affection to Christ, does not appear ; it is commonly said to be Mary Magdalene, but I find no ground in scripture for it ; she is described (*ch. 8. 2. and Mark 16. 9.*) to be one *out of whom Christ had cast seven devils* ; but that is not mentioned here ; and therefore it is probable that it was not she.

Now observe here,

I. The civil entertainment which a Pharisee gave to Christ, and his gracious acceptance of that entertainment ; (*v. 36.*) *One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him* ; either because he thought it would be a reputation to him to have such a guest at his table, or because his company would be an entertainment to him and his family and friends. It appears that this Pharisee did not believe in Christ, for he will not own him to be a *Prophet*, (*v. 39.*) and yet our Lord Jesus accepted his invitation, *went into his house, and sat down to meat* ; that they might see he took the same liberty with Pharisees that he did with publicans, in hopes of *doing them good*. And those may venture further into the society of such as are prejudiced against Christ, and his religion, who have wisdom and grace sufficient to instruct and argue with them, than others may.

II. The great respect which a poor penitent sinner showed him, when he was at meat in the Pharisee's house. It was a woman in the city, *that was a sinner*, a Gentile, a *harlot*, I doubt, known to be so, and infamous ; she *knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house*, and, having been converted from her wicked course of life by his preaching, she came to acknowledge her obligations to him, having no opportunity of doing it any other way, than by *washing* his feet, and anointing them with some sweet ointment that she brought with her for that purpose. The way of sitting at table then was such, that their feet were partly *behind them*. Now this woman did not look Christ in the face, but came *behind him*, and did the part of a *maid-servant*, whose

office it was to *wash the feet* of the guests, 1 Sam. 25. 41. and to prepare the ointments.

Now in what this good woman did, we may observe,

1. Her *deep humiliation* for sin ; she stood behind him *weeping* ; her eyes had been the inlets and outlets of sin, and now she makes them fountains of tears. Her face is now foul with weeping, which perhaps used to be covered with paints. Her hair now made a towel of, which before had been plaited and adorned. We have reason to think that she had before sorrowed for sin ; but now that she had an opportunity of coming into the presence of Christ, the wound bled afresh and her sorrow renewed. Note, It well becomes penitents, upon all their approaches to Christ, to renew their godly sorrow and shame for sin, *when he is pacified*, Ezek. 16. 63.

2. Her *strong affection* to the Lord Jesus ; this was it that our Lord Jesus took special notice of, that she *loved much* ; (*v. 42, 47.*) She *washed his feet*, in token of her ready submission to the meanest office in which she might *do him honour*. Nay, she washed them with *her tears*, tears of joy ; she was in a transport, to find herself so near her Saviour, whom her soul loved. She *kissed his feet*, as one unworthy of the kisses of his mouth, which the spouse coveted, Cant. 1. 2. It was a kiss of adoration as well as affection ; She *wiped them with her hair*, as one entirely devoted to his honour ; her eyes shall yield water to wash them, and her hair be a towel to wipe them ; and she *anointed his feet with the ointment* ; owning him hereby to be the Messiah, the *Anointed* ; she anointed his feet, in token of her consent to God's design in anointing his head with the *oil of gladness*. Note, All true penitents have a dear love to the Lord Jesus.

III. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, for admitting the respect which this poor penitent paid him ; (*v. 39.*) *He spake within himself*, (little thinking that Christ knew what he thought,) *This man, if he were a Prophet*, would then have so much *knowledge*, as to perceive that *this woman is a sinner*, is a Gentile, is a woman of ill fame ; and so much *sanctity* as therefore not to suffer her to come so near him ; for can one of such a character approach a *Prophet*, and his heart not rise at it ? See how apt proud and narrow souls are to think that others should be as haughty and censorious as themselves. Simon, if she had touched him, would have said, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou* ; (*Isa. 65. 5.*) and he thought Christ should say so too.

IV. Christ's justification of the woman in what she did to him, and of himself in admitting it. Christ knew what the Pharisee spake *within himself*, and made answer to it ; *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee, v. 40.* Though he was kindly entertained at his table, yet even there he reproved him for what he saw amiss in him, and would not *suffer sin upon him*. Those whom Christ hath *something against*, he hath something to *say to*, for his *Spirit* shall *reprove*. Simon is willing to give him the hearing ; *he saith, Master, say on.* Though he could not believe him to be a Prophet, (because he was not so nice and precise as he was,) yet he can compliment him with the title of *Master*, among those that cry, *Lord, Lord*, but *do not the things which he saith*. Now Christ, in his answer to the Pharisee, reasons thus ; "It is true, this woman has been a sinner, he knows it ; but she is a *pardoned* sinner, which supposes her to be a *penitent* sinner ; what she did to him was an expression of her *great love* to her Saviour, by whom her sins were forgiven ; if she was pardoned, who had been so *great a sinner*, it might reasonably be expected that she should love her Saviour more than others, and should give greater proofs of it than others ; and if this was the

fruit of her love, and flowing from a sense of the pardon of her sins, it became him to accept of it, and it ill became the Pharisee to be offended at it." Now Christ has a further reach in this; the Pharisee doubted whether he was a *Prophet* or no, may he did, in effect, deny it; but Christ shows that he was more than a prophet, for he is one that has *flower on earth to forgive sins*, and to whom are owing the affections and thankful acknowledgments of penitent, pardoned sinners.

Now, in his answer,

1. He doth by a parable force Simon to acknowledge that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to show to Jesus Christ when her *sins were pardoned*; (v. 41—43.) A man had *two debtors* that were both insolvent, but one of them owed him *ten times* more than the other; he very freely *forgave them both*, and did not take the advantage of the law against them, did not order them and their children to be sold, or *deliver them to the tormentors*: now they were both sensible of the great kindness they had received; but *which of them will love him most?* Certainly, saith the Pharisee, he to *whom he forgave most*; and herein he rightly judged. Now we, being obliged to *forgive*, as we are, and hope to be, *forgiven*, may from hence learn the duty between debtor and creditor. (1.) The debtor, if he have *any thing to pay*, ought to make satisfaction to his creditor. No man can reckon that *his own*, or have any comfortable enjoyment of it, but that which is so when *all his debts are paid*. (2.) If God in his providence hath disabled the debtor to pay his debt, the creditor ought not to be severe with him, nor to go to the utmost rigour of the law with him, but *freely to forgive him*. *Summum jus est summa injuria*—The law stretched into rigour becomes unjust. Let the unmerciful creditor read that parable, Matth. 18. 23, &c. and tremble; for *they* shall have judgment without mercy, that show no mercy. (3.) The debtor that has found his creditors merciful, ought to be very grateful to them; and if he cannot otherwise recompense them, ought to love them. Some insolvent debtors, instead of being *grateful*, are *spiteful*, to their creditors that lose by them, and cannot give them a good word, only because they complain, whereas losers may have leave to speak. But this parable speaks of God as the Creditor, (or rather of the Lord Jesus himself, for he it is that forgives, and is beloved by the debtor,) and sinners are the debtors; and so we may learn here,

[1.] That *sin is a debt*, and *sinners are debtors* to God Almighty. As creatures, we owe a debt, a debt of obedience to the precept of the law, and for non-payment of that, as sinners, we become liable to the penalty. We have not paid our rent, nay, we have wasted our Lord's goods, and so we become debtors. God has an action against us for the injury we have done him, and the omission of our duty to him.

[2.] That some are deeper in debt to God, by reason of sin, than others are; *One owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty*. The Pharisee was the less debtor, yet he a debtor too, which was more than he thought himself, but rather that God was his Debtor, Luke 18. 10, 11. This woman, that had been a scandalous, notorious sinner, was the *greater debtor*. Some sinners are in themselves greater debtors than others, and some sinners, by reason of divers aggravating circumstances, greater debtors; as those that have sinned most openly and scandalously, that have sinned against greater light and knowledge, more convictions and warnings, and more mercies and means.

[3.] That, whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay; *They had nothing to pay*, nothing at all to make a composition with; for

the debt is great, and we have nothing at all to pay it with; silver and gold will not pay our debt, nor will sacrifice and offering, no, not *thousands of rams*. No righteousness of our own will pay it, no, not our repentance and obedience for the future; for it is what we are already bound to, and it is God that works it within us.

[4.] That the God of heaven is *ready* to forgive, *frankly to forgive* poor sinners, upon gospel-terms, though their debt be ever so great. If we repent, and believe in Christ, our iniquity shall not be our ruin, it shall not be laid to our charge. God has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive sin; and his Son having purchased pardon for penitent believers, his gospel promises it to them, and his Spirit seals it, and gives them the comfort of it.

[5.] That those who have their sins *pardoned*, are obliged to *love him* that pardoned them; and the more is forgiven them, the more they should love him. The *greater sinners* any have been before their conversion, the *greater saints* they should be after; the more they should study to do for God, and the more their hearts should be enlarged in obedience. When a *persecuting Saul* became a preaching Paul, he *laboured more abundantly*.

2. He applies this parable to the different temper and conduct of the Pharisee and the sinner toward Christ. Though the Pharisee would not allow Christ to be a Prophet, Christ seems ready to allow him to be in a justified state, and that he was one *forgiven*, though to him *less was forgiven*. He did indeed show some love to Christ, in inviting him to his house, but nothing to what this poor woman showed. "Observe," saith Christ to him, "she is one that has much forgiven her, and therefore, according to thine own judgment, it might be expected that she should love much more than thou dost, and so it appears; (v. 44.) *seest thou this woman?* Thou lookest upon her with contempt, but consider how much kinder a friend she is to me than thou art; should I then accept thy kindness, and refuse hers?"

(1.) "Thou didst not so much as order a basin of water to be brought, to wash my feet in, when I came in, wearied and dirtied with my walk, which would have been some refreshment to me; but she has done much more, *she has washed my feet with tears*, tears of affection to me, tears of affliction for sin, and has *wiped them with the hairs of her head*, in token of her great love to me."

(2.) "Thou didst not so much as kiss my cheek;" (which was an usual expression of a hearty and affectionate welcome to a friend; "but *this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet*, (v. 45.) thereby expressing both a humble and an affectionate love."

(3.) "Thou didst not provide me a little common oil, as usual, to anoint my head with; but she has bestowed a box of *precious ointment upon my feet*; (v. 46.) so far has she outdone thee." The reason why some people blame the pains and expense of zealous christians in religion is, because they are not willing themselves to come up to it, but resolve to rest in a *cheap and easy* religion.

3. He silenced the Pharisee's cavil; (v. 47.) *I say unto thee, Simon, her sins, which are many, are forgiven*. He owns that she had been guilty of *many sins*; "But they are *forgiven* her, and therefore it is no way unbecoming me to accept her kindness. They are *forgiven*, for she *loved much*." It should be rendered, *therefore she loved much*; for it is plain, by the tenor of Christ's discourse, that her loving much was not the *cause* but the *effect* of her pardon, and of her comfortable sense of it; for *we love God because he first loved us*; he did not forgive us because we first loved him. "But to *whom little is forgiven*, as is to thee, the *same loveth little*, as thou dost." Hereby he intimates to the Phari-

sec, that his love to Christ was so little, that he had reason to question whether he loved him at all in sincerity; and, consequently, whether indeed his sins, though comparatively *little*, were forgiven him. Instead of grudging greater sinners the mercy they find with Christ, upon their repentance, we should be stirred up by their example to examine ourselves, whether we be indeed forgiven, and do love Christ.

4. He silenced her fears, who, probably, was discouraged by the Pharisee's offence, and yet would not so far yield to the discouragement as to fly off. (1.) Christ said unto her, *Thy sins are forgiven*, v. 48. Note, The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins; for it is by the experience of a *work of grace* wrought in us, that we obtain the assurance of an *act of grace*, wrought for us. How well was she paid for her pains and cost, when she was dismissed with this word from Christ, *Thy sins are forgiven*, and what an effectual prevention would this be of her return to sin again! (2.) Though there were those present, who quarrelled with Christ, in their own minds, for presuming to forgive sin, and pronounce sinners absolved, (v. 49.) as those had done, (Matth. 9. 3.) yet he stood to what he had said; for as he had there proved that he had *power to forgive sin*, by curing the man sick of the palsy, and therefore would not here take notice of the cavil, so he would now show that he had *pleasure in forgiving sin*, and it was his delight; he loves to speak pardon and peace to penitents; (v. 50.) *He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee*. This would confirm and double her comfort in the forgiveness of her sin, that she was *justified by her faith*. All these expressions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, were the effects and products of faith; and therefore as faith, of all graces, doth most honour God, so Christ doth, of all graces, put most honour upon faith. Note, They who know that their faith hath saved them, may go in peace, may go on their way rejoicing.

CHAP. VIII.

Most of this chapter is a repetition of divers passages of Christ's preaching and miracles which we had before in Matthew and Mark; they are all of such weight, that they are worth repeating, and therefore they are repeated, that out of the mouth not only of two, but of three, witnesses every word may be established. Here is, I. A general account of Christ's preaching, and how he had subsistence for himself and his numerous family, by the charitable contributions of good people, v. 1. . 3. II. The parable of the sower, and the four sorts of ground, with the exposition of it, and some inferences from it, v. 4. . 18. III. The preference which Christ gave to his obedient disciples, before his nearest relations according to the flesh, v. 19. . 21. IV. His stilling of a storm at sea, with a word's speaking, v. 22. . 25. V. His casting of a legion of devils out of a man that was possessed by them, v. 26. . 40. VI. His healing of the woman that had the bloody issue, and raising of Jairus's daughter to life, v. 41. . 56.

1. **AND** it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve *were* with him; 2. And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered unto him of their substance.

We are here told,

1. *What Christ made the constant business of his life*—it was *preaching*; in that work he was inde-

fatigable, and went about doing good; (v. 1. *afterward*—*ἔπειτα*—*ordine*, in the proper time or method. Christ took his work before him, and went about it regularly; he observed a *series*, or order of business, so as that the end of one good work was the beginning of another. Now observe here,

1. *Where he preached*; *He went about—διασσεύεραγρabat*. He was an *itinerant Preacher*, did not confine himself to one place, but diffused the beams of his light. *Circumbat*—*He went his circuit*, as a judge, having found his preaching perhaps most *acceptable* where it was *new*. He went about *through every city*, that none might plead ignorance. Hereby he set an example to his disciples; they must traverse the nations of the earth, as he did the cities of Israel. Nor did he confine himself to the cities, but went into the *villages*, among the plain country-people, to preach to the *inhabitants of the villages*, Judg. 5. 11.

2. *What he preached*; *He showed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God*, that it was now to be set up among them. *Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings*, and those Jesus Christ came to bring; to tell the children of men that God was willing to take all those *under his protection*, that were willing to return to their allegiance; it was *glad tidings* to the world, that there was hope of its being *reformed and reconciled*.

3. *Who were his attendants*; *The twelve were with him*, not to preach if he were present, but to learn from him what and how to preach hereafter, and, if occasion were, to be sent to places where he could not go. Happy were these his servants that heard his wisdom.

II. *Whence he had the necessary supports of life*; He lived upon the kindness of his friends; there were *certain women* who frequently attended his ministry, that *ministered to him of their substance*, v. 2. 3. Some of them are named; but there were *many others*, who were zealously affected to the doctrine of Christ, and thought themselves bound in *justice* to encourage it, having themselves found benefit, and in *charity*, hoping that many others might find benefit by it too.

1. They were such, for the most part, as had been *Christ's patients*, and were the monuments of his power and mercy; they had been *healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities*. Some of them had been troubled in mind, had been melancholy, others of them afflicted in body, and he had been to them a powerful Healer. He is the Physician both of body and soul, and those who have been *healed by him*, ought to study what they shall *render to him*. We are bound in *interest* to attend him, that we may be ready to apply ourselves to him for help in case of a relapse; and we are bound in *gratitude* to serve him and his gospel, who hath *saved us*, and saved us *by it*.

2. One of them was Mary Magdalene, out of whom had been *cast seven devils*; a certain number for an uncertain. Some think that she was one that had been *very wicked*, and then we may suppose her to be the woman that was a *sinner*, mentioned just before, ch. 7. Dr. Lightfoot, finding in some of the Talmudists' writings that Mary Magdalene signified *Mary the plaiter of hair*, thinks it applicable to her, she having been noted in the days of her iniquity and infamy, for that *plaiting of hair*, which is opposed to *modest apparel*, 1 Tim. 2. 9. But though she had been an immodest woman, upon her repentance and reformation she found mercy, and became a zealous disciple of Christ. Note, The greatest of sinners must not despair of pardon; and the worse any have been before their conversion, the more they should study to do for Christ after. Or rather, she was one that had been *very melancholy*, and then, probably, it was Mary the sister of Lazarus,

who was a woman of a *sorrowful spirit*; who might have been originally of Magdala, but removed to Bethany. This Mary Magdalene was attending on Christ's cross and his sepulchre, and if she was not Mary the sister of Lazarus, either that particular friend and favourite of Christ's did not attend them, or the evangelists did not take notice of her, neither of which we can suppose; thus Dr. Lightfoot argues. Yet there is this to be objected against it, that Mary Magdalene is reckoned *among the women that followed Jesus from Galilee*; (Matth. 27. 55, 56.) whereas Mary the sister of Lazarus had her residence in Bethany.

3. Another of them was *Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward*. She had been his wife, (so some,) but was now a widow, and left in good circumstances; if she was now his wife, we have reason to think that her *husband*, though preferred in Herod's court, had received the gospel, and was very willing that his wife should be both a hearer of Christ, and a contributor to him.

4. There were many of them that *ministered to Christ of their substance*. It was an instance of the meanness of that condition to which our Saviour humbled himself, that he needed it, and his great humility and condescension, that he accepted it. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes *he became poor*, and lived upon alms. Let none say that they scorn to be beholden to the charity of their neighbours, when Providence has brought them into straits; but let them ask, and be thankful for it as a favour. Christ would rather be beholden to his known friends for a maintenance for himself and his disciples, than be burdensome to strangers in the cities and villages whither he came to preach. Note, It is the duty of those who are taught in the word, to communicate to them who teach them in all good things; and those who are herein liberal and cheerful, honour the Lord with their substance, and bring a blessing upon it.

4. And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5. A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side: and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7. And some fell among thorns: and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. 11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word

with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. 16. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17. For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither *any thing* hid that shall not be known and come abroad. 18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. 19. Then came to him *his* mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20. And it was told him *by certain*, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

The former paragraph began with an account of Christ's industry in *preaching*; (v. 1.) this begins with an account of the people's industry in hearing, v. 4. He *went into every city*, to preach; so they, one would think, should have contented themselves to hear him when he came to their own city; (we know those that would;) but there were those here, that came to him *out of every city*, would not stay till he came to them, nor think that they had had enough when he left them, but *met him* when he was coming toward them, and *followed him* when he was going from them. Nor did he excuse himself from going *to the cities*, with this, that there were some *from the cities*, that came to him; for though there were, yet the most had not zeal enough to bring them to him, and therefore such is his wonderful condescension, that he will go to them; for *he is found of those that sought him not*; Isa. 65. 1.

Here was, it seems, a vast concourse, *much people were gathered together*, abundance of fish to cast the net among; and he was as ready and willing to teach as they were to be taught. Now in these verses, we have,

1. Necessary and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word, in the parable of *the sower*, and the explanation and application of it, all which we had twice before more largely. When Christ had put forth this parable, 1. The disciples were *inquisitive* concerning the meaning of it, v. 9. They asked him, *What might this parable be?* Note, We should covet earnestly to know the true intent, and full extent, of the word we hear, that we may be neither mistaken nor defective in our knowledge. 2. Christ made them sensible of what great advantage it was to them, that they had opportunity of acquainting themselves with the mystery and meaning of his word, which others had not; (v. 10.) *Unto you it is*

given. Note, Those who would receive instruction from Christ, must know and consider what a privilege it is to be instructed by him, what a distinguishing privilege to be led into the light, such a light, when others are left in darkness, such a darkness. Happy are we, and for ever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a *parable* to others, with which they are only *amused*, is a *plain truth* to us, by which we are *enlightened and governed*, and into the mould of which we are *delivered*.

Now from the parable itself, and the explication of it, observe,

(1.) The *heart of man* is as *soil* to the *seed of God's word*; it is capable of receiving it, and bringing forth the fruits of it; but unless that seed be sown in it, it will bring forth nothing valuable; our care therefore must be to bring the *seed and the soil* together. To what purpose have we the *seed* in the scripture, if it be not *sown*? And to what purpose have we the *soil* in our own hearts, if it be not sown with that seed?

(2.) The *success of the seedness* is very much according to the nature and temper of the *soil*, and as that is, or is not, disposed to receive the seed. The word of God is to us, as we are, a *savour of life unto life*, or of *death unto death*.

(3.) The devil is a subtle and spiteful enemy, that makes it his business to hinder our profiting by the word of God. He takes the word out of the hearts of *careless hearers*, (v. 12.) *lest they should believe and be saved*; that is added here, to teach us, [1.] That we cannot be *saved* unless we *believe*. The word of the gospel will not be a saving word to us, unless it be mixed with faith. [2.] That therefore the devil does all he can to keep us from *believing*, to make us not heed the word when we read and hear it; or, if we heed it for the present, to make us forget it again, and let it slip; (Heb. 2. 1.) or, if we remember it, to create prejudices in our minds against it, or *direct our minds* from it to something else; and all is, *lest we should believe and be saved*, lest we should believe and *rejoice*, while he believes and *trembles*.

(4.) Where the word of God is heard *carelessly*, there is commonly a *contempt* put upon it too. It is added here in the parable, that the seed which fell by the way-side, was *trodden down*, v. 5. They that willfully shut their ears against the word, do in effect trample it under their feet; they *despise the commandment of the Lord*.

(5.) Those on whom the word makes *some* impressions, but they are not *deep and durable* ones, will show their hypocrisy in a time of trial; as the seed sown upon the rock, where it gains no root, v. 13. These *for a while believe*, a little while; their profession promises something, but in *time of temptation they fall away* from their good beginnings; whether the temptation arise from the smiles, or from the frowns, of the world, they are easily overcome by it.

(6.) The *pleasures of this life* are as dangerous and mischievous thorns to choke the good seed of the word, as any other. That is added here, (v. 14.) which was not in the other evangelists. Those that are *not entangled in the cares of this life*, nor inveigled with the *deceitfulness of riches*, but boast that they are dead to them, may yet be kept from heaven by an affected indolence, and the love of ease and pleasure. The delights of sense may ruin the soul, even lawful delights, indulged, and too much delighted in.

(7.) It is not enough that the fruit be brought forth, but it must be *brought to perfection*, it must be fully ripened; if it be not, it is as if there was no fruit at all brought forth; for that which in Matthew and Mark is said to be *unfruitful*, is the same that here is said to *bring forth none to perfection*. For,

Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat—Perseverance is necessary to the perfection of a work.

(8.) The good ground, which brings forth good fruit, in an *honest and good heart*, well disposed to receive instruction and commandment; (v. 19.) a heart free from sinful pollutions, and firmly fixed for God and duty, an upright heart, a tender heart, and a heart that *trembles at the word*, is an honest and good heart; which, having heard the word, *understands* it, (so it is in Matthew,) *receives* it, (so it is in Mark,) and *keeps* it, (so it is here,) as the soil not only *receives*, but keeps, the seed; and the stomach not only receives, but keeps, the food or physick.

(9.) Where the word is well kept, there is fruit brought forth *with patience*; that also is added here; there must be both *bearing* patience, and *waiting* patience; patience, to suffer the *tribulation and persecution* which may arise *because of the word*; patience, to continue to the end in well-doing.

(10.) In consideration of all this, we ought to take heed *how we hear*; (v. 18.) take heed of those things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear, watch over our hearts in hearing, and take heed lest they betray us; take heed lest we hear carelessly and slightly, lest, upon any account, we entertain prejudices against the word we hear; and take heed to the frame of our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained.

II. Needful instructions given to those that are appointed to preach the word, and to those also that have heard it.

1. Those that have *received the gift*, must *minister the same*. Ministers that have the dispensing of the gospel committed to them, people that have profited by the word, and are thereby qualified to profit others, must look upon themselves as *lighted candles*: ministers must in solemn authoritative preaching, and people in brotherly familiar discourse, diffuse their light; for a *candle* must not be covered with a *vessel*, or put under a *bed*, v. 16. Ministers and christians are to be lights in the world, *holding forth the word of life*; their light must shine before men, they must not only be good, but do good.

2. We must expect that what is now done in *secret*, and from unseen springs, will shortly be *manifested* and *made known*, v. 17. What is committed to you in *secret*, should be made manifest *by you*; for your Master did not give you talents to be buried, but to be traded with. Let that which is now hid, be *made known*; for if it be not manifested *by you*, it will be manifested *against you*, will be produced in evidence of your treachery.

4. The gifts we have, will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not, make use of them for the glory of God, and the edification of our brethren: (v. 18.) *Whosoever hath, to him shall be given*; he that hath gifts, and doeth good with them, shall have more; he that *buries his talent*, shall lose it. From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that *which he hath*, so it is in Mark, that which he *seemeth to have*, so it is in Luke. Note, The grace that is lost, was *but seeming* grace, was never *true*. Men do but *seem* to have what they do not use, and shows of religion will be lost and forfeited; they *went out from us, because they were not of us*, 1 John 2. 19. Let us see to it that we have grace in sincerity, the *root of the matter* found in us; that is a good part, which shall never be taken away from those that have it.

III. Great encouragement given to those that prove themselves faithful *hearers of the word*, by being *doers of the work*, in a particular instance of Christ's respect to his disciples, in preferring them even before his nearest relations; (v. 19—21.) which passage of story we had twice before. Observe, 1. What crowding there was after Christ; there

was no coming near for the throng of people that attended him, who, though they were crowded ever so much, would not be crowded out from his congregation. 2. Some of his nearest kindred were least solicitous to hear him preach. Instead of getting *within*, as they might easily have done, if they had come in time, desiring to *hear him*, they stood without, desiring to *see him*; and, probably, out of a foolish fear, lest he should spend himself with too much speaking, designing nothing but to interrupt him, and oblige him to break off. 3. Jesus Christ would rather be busy at his work than conversing with his friends. He would not leave his preaching, to speak with his *mother* and *his brethren*, for it was his *meat* and *drink* to be so employed. 4. Christ is pleased to own those as his nearest and dearest relations, that *hear the word of God, and do it*; they are to him more than *his mother* and *brethren*.

22. Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled *with water*, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish! Then he rose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. 26. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them: and he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd

ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choaked. 34. When they that fed *them* saw what was done, they fled, and went and told *it* in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

We have here two illustrious proofs of the power of our Lord Jesus, which we had before—his power over the *winds*, and his power over the *devils*.

1. His power over the winds, those *powers of the air* that are so much a terror to men, especially upon sea, and occasion the death of such multitudes. Observe,

1. Christ ordered his disciples to put to sea, that he might show his glory upon the water, in stilling the waves, and might do an act of kindness to a poor possessed man on the other side the water; (*v.* 22.) *He went into a ship with his disciples*. They that observe Christ's orders, may assure themselves of his presence. If Christ sends his disciples, he goes *with them*. And those may safely and boldly venture any where, that have Christ accompanying them. *He said, Let us go over unto the other side*, for he had a piece of good work to do there. He might have gone by land, a little way about; but he chose to go by *water*, that he might show his *wonders in the deep*.

2. Those that put to sea in a calm, yea, and at Christ's word, must yet *prepare for a storm*, and for the utmost peril in that storm; (*v.* 23.) *There came down a storm of wind on the lake*, as if it were there, and no where else; and presently their ship was so tossed, that it was filled with water, and they were in jeopardy of their lives. Perhaps the devil, who is the *prince of the power of the air*, and who *raiseth winds* by the permission of God, had some suspicion, from some words which Christ might let fall, that he was coming over the lake now on purpose to cast that legion of devils out of the poor man, on the other side, and therefore poured this storm upon the ship he was in, designing, if possible, to have sunk him, and prevented that victory.

3. Christ was *asleep* in the storm, *v.* 23. Some bodily refreshment he must have, and he chose to take it then when it would be least a hinderance to him in his work. The disciples of Christ may really have his gracious presence with them at sea, and in a storm, and yet he may seem as if he were *asleep*; he may not immediately appear for their relief, no, not when things seem to be brought even to the last extremity. Thus he will try their faith

and patience, and quicken them by prayer to awake, and make their deliverance the more welcome when it comes at last.

4. A complaint to Christ of our danger, and the distress his church is in, is enough to engage him to awake, and appear for us, *v. 24.* They cried *Master, master, we perish!* The way to have our fears silenced, is to bring them to Christ, and lay them before him. Those that in sincerity call Christ *Master*, and with faith and fervency call upon him as their *Master*, may be sure that he will not let them *perish*. There is no relief for poor souls that are under sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, like this, to go to Christ, and call him *Master*, and say, "I am undone, if thou do not *help me*."

5. Christ's business is to *lay storms*, as it is Satan's business to *raise* them. He can do it, he has done it, he delights to do it; for he came to *proclaim peace on earth*. He *rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water*; (*v. 24.*) and immediately *they ceased*; not, as at other times, by degrees, but all of a sudden *there was a great calm*. Thus Christ showed that, though the devil pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, yet even there he has him in a chain.

6. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to ourselves the shame of our own fears, and to give to Christ the glory of his power. When Christ had turned the *storm* into a *calm*, *then were they glad because they were quiet*, Ps. 107. 30. And then, (1.) Christ gives them a rebuke for their inordinate fear; (*v. 25.*) *Where is your faith?* Note, Many that have *true faith*, have it to seek when they have occasion to use it; they tremble and are discouraged, if second causes frown upon them; a little thing disheartens them; and *where is their faith* then? (2.) They give him the glory of his power; *They, being afraid, wondered*. Those that had feared the storm, now that the danger was over, with good reason feared him that had stilled it; and *said one to another, What manner of man is this?* They might as well have said, *Who is a God like unto thee?* For it is God's prerogative, to *still the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves*, Ps. 65. 7.

II. His power over the devil, the prince of the power of the air. In the next passage of story he comes into a closer grapple with him than he did when he commanded the *winds*. Presently after the winds were stilled, they were brought to their desired haven, and *arrived at the country of the Gadarenes*, and there went ashore; (*v. 26, 27.*) and he soon met with that which was his business over, and which he thought it worth his while to go through a storm, to accomplish.

We may learn a great deal out of this story concerning this world of infernal, malignant spirits, which, though not working now ordinarily, in the same way as here, yet we are all concerned at all times to stand upon our guard against.

1. These malignant spirits are very numerous. They that had taken possession of this one man, called themselves *Legion*, (*v. 30.*) because *many devils were entered into him*: he had had devils a long time, *v. 27.* But perhaps those that had been long in possession of him, upon some foresight of our Saviour's coming to make an attack upon them, and finding they could not prevent it by the storm they had raised, sent for recruits, intending this to be a *decisive battle*, and hoping now to be too hard for him that had cast out so many unclean spirits, and to give him a defeat; and either were, or at least would be thought to be, a *legion* of them, formidable as an *army with banners*; and now, at least, to be, what the *twentieth legion* of the Roman army, which was long quartered at Chester, was styled, *legio victrix*—a *victorious legion*.

2. They have an *inveterate enmity* to man, and

all his conveniences and comforts. This man in whom the devils had got possession, and kept it long, being under their influence, *wore no clothes, neither abode in any house*, (*v. 27.*) though *clothing* and a *habitation*, are two of the necessary supports of this life. Nay, and because man has a natural dread of the habitations of the dead, they forced this man to *abide in the tombs*, to make him so much the more a terror to himself, and to all about him, so that his soul had as much cause as ever any man's had, to be weary of his life, and to *choose strangling and death rather*.

3. They are very *strong, fierce*, and unruly, and hate and scorn to be restrained; (*v. 29.*) *He was kept bound in chains and in fetters*, that he might not be mischievous either to others or to himself, but he *brake the bands*. Note, Those that are *un-governable* by any other, thereby show that they are under Satan's government: and this is the language of those that are so, even concerning God and Christ their best friends, that would not either bind them *from*, or bind them *to*, any thing but for their own good. *Let us break their bands in sunder*. *He was driven of the devil*; those that are under Christ's government, are *sweetly led* with the cords of a man, and the bands of love; those that are under the devil's government, are *furiously driven*.

4. They are much enraged against our Lord Jesus, and have a great dread and horror of him; *When the man whom they had possession of, and who spake as they would have him, saw Jesus, he roared out as one in an agony, and fell down before him*, to deprecate his wrath, and owned him to be the *Son of God, most high*, that was infinitely above him, and too hard for him; but protested against having any league or confederacy with him; (which might sufficiently have silenced the blasphemous cavils of the scribes and Pharisees;) *What have I to do with thee?* The devils have neither inclination to do service to Christ, nor expectation to receive benefit by him; *What have we to do with thee?* But they dreaded his power and wrath; *I beseech thee, torment me not*. They do not say, *I beseech thee, save me*, but only, *Torment me not*. See whose language they speak, that have only a dread of hell as a place of torment, but no desire of heaven as a place of holiness and love.

5. They are perfectly *at the command*, and under the power, of our Lord Jesus; and they knew it, for they besought him that he would not command them to *go ue τῶν ὑσσων*—into the deep, the place of their torment, which they acknowledge he could easily and justly do. O what a comfort is this to the Lord's people, that all the powers of darkness are under the check and control of the Lord Jesus? He has them all in a chain. He can send them to their *own place*, when he pleaseth.

6. They delight in *doing mischief*. When they found there was no remedy, but they must quit their hold of this poor man, they begged they might have leave to take possession of a *herd of swine*, *v. 32.* When the devil at first brought man into a miserable state, he brought a curse likewise upon the whole creation, and that became subject to enmity. And here, as an instance of that extensive enmity of his, when he could not destroy the man, he would destroy the swine. If he could not hurt them in their bodies, he would hurt them in their goods, which sometimes proves a great temptation to men, to draw them from Christ, as here. Christ *suffered them to enter into the swine*, to convince the country what mischief the devil could do in it, if he should suffer him. No sooner had the devils leave, but they entered into the *swine*; and no sooner had they entered into them, than the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. For it is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan pos

sesses, are not brought to destruction and perdition. This, and other instances, show that that roaring lion and red dragon seeks *what* and whom he may devour.

7. When the devil's power is broken in any soul, that soul recovers itself; and returns into a right frame; which supposes, that those whom Satan gets possession of, are put out of the possession of themselves; *The man out of whom the devils were departed, sat at the feet of Jesus, v. 35.* While he was under the devil's power, he was ready to *fly in the face* of Jesus; but now he *sits at his feet*, which is a sign that he is come to his *right mind*. If God have possession of us, he preserves to us the government and enjoyment of ourselves; but if Satan have possession of us, he robs us of both. Let his power therefore in our souls be overturned, and let *him* come, whose right our hearts are, and let us give them him; for we are never more our own, than when we are his.

Let us see now what was the effect of this miracle, of casting the legion of devils out of this man.

(1.) What effect it had upon the people of that country, who had lost their swine by it. *The swineherds went, and told it both in city and country, (v. 34.)* perhaps with a design to incense the people against Christ; they told by *what means* he that *was possessed of the devils, was healed, (v. 36.)* that it was by sending the devils into the swine, which was capable of an invidious representation, as if Christ could not have delivered the man out of their hands, but by delivering the swine into them. *The people came out, to see what was done, and to enquire into it; and they were afraid, (v. 35.)* they were *taken with great fear, (v. 37.)* they were surprised and amazed at it, and knew not what to say to it; they thought more of the destruction of the swine than of the deliverance of their poor afflicted neighbour, and of the country from the terror of his frenzy, which was become a public nuisance; and therefore *the whole multitude besought Christ to depart from them*, for fear he should bring some other judgment upon them; whereas indeed none need to be afraid of Christ, that are willing to forsake their sins, and give up themselves to him. But Christ took them at their word; *He went up into the ship, and returned back again.* Those lose their Saviour, and their hopes in him, that love their swine better.

(2.) What effect it had upon the poor man who had recovered himself by it. He desired Christ's company as much as others *dreaded* it: he besought Christ that *he might be with him*, as others were, *that had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities; (v. 2.)* that Christ might be to him a Protector and Teacher, and that he might be to Christ for a name and a praise. He was loath to stay among those rude and brutish Gadarenes, that desired Christ to depart from them. *O gather not my soul with these sinners!* But Christ would not take him along with him, but sent him home; to publish among those that knew him, the great things God had done for him, that so he might be a blessing to his country, as he had been a burden to it. We must sometimes deny ourselves the satisfaction even of spiritual benefits and comforts, to gain an opportunity of being serviceable to the souls of others. Perhaps Christ knew that, when the resentment of the loss of their swine was a little over, they would be better disposed to consider the miracle, and therefore left the man among them to be a standing monument, and a monitor to them of it.

40. And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people *gladly* received him: for they were all waiting for him. 41. And, behold, there came a man named Jai-

rus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the people thronged him. 43. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, 44. Came behind *him*, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. 45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and savest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace. 49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard *it*, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden, 52. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Christ was driven away by the *Gadarenes*, they were weary of him, and willing to be rid of him. But when he had crossed the water, and returned to the *Galileans*, they *gladly* received him, *wished* and *waited* for his return, and *welcomed* him with all their hearts when he did return, *v. 40.* If some *will* not accept the favours Christ offers them, others *will*. If the Gadarenes be not gathered, yet there are many, among whom *Christ shall be glorious*. When Christ had done his work on the other side the water, he returned, and found work to do in the place whence he came, fresh work. They that will lay out themselves to do good, shall never want occasion for it. The wanting you have always with you.

We have here two miracles interwoven, as they

were in Matthew and Mark—the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and the cure of the woman that had an issue of blood, as he was going in a crowd to Jairus's house. We have here,

I. A public address made to Christ, by a ruler of the synagogue, whose name was *Jairus*, on the behalf of a little daughter of his, that was very ill, and, in the apprehension of all about her, *lay a dying*. This address was very humble and reverent; *Jairus*, though a ruler, *fell down at Jesus' feet*, as owning him to be a Ruler above him. It was very important; he besought him that he would *come into his house*; not having the *faith*, at least not having the *thought*, of the centurion, who desired Christ only to *speak the healing word* at a distance. But Christ complied with his request; *he went along with him*; strong faith shall be applauded, and yet weak faith shall not be rejected. In the houses where sickness and death are, it is very desirable to have the presence of Christ. When Christ was going, *the people thronged him*; some out of curiosity to see him, others out of an affection to him. Let us not complain of a crowd, and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and *doing good*; but otherwise it is what every wise man will keep himself out of as much as he can.

II. Here is a secret application made to Christ by a woman ill of a bloody issue, which had been the consumption of her body, and the consumption of her purse too; for she had spent all her living upon physicians, and was never the better, *v. 43*. The nature of her disease was such, that she did not care to make a public complaint of it, (it was agreeable to the modesty of her sex to be very shy of speaking of it,) and therefore she took this opportunity of coming to Christ in a crowd; and the more people were present, the more likely she thought it was that she should be concealed. Her faith was very strong, for she doubted not but that by the touch of the hem of his garment she should derive from him healing virtue sufficient for her relief, looking upon him to be such a full Fountain of mercies that she should steal a cure, and he not miss it. Thus many a poor soul is healed, and helped, and saved, by Christ, that is lost in a crowd, and that nobody takes notice of. The woman found an immediate change for the better in herself, and that her disease was cured, *v. 44*. As believers have comfortable communion with Christ, so they have comfortable communications from him *incognito*—secretly meat to eat that the world knows not of, and joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

III. Here is a discovery of this secret cure, to the glory both of the Physician and the patient.

1. Christ takes notice that there is a cure wrought; *Virtue is gone out of me*, *v. 46*. Those that have been healed by virtue derived from Christ, must own it, for he knows it. He speaks of it here, not in a way of complaint, as if he were hereby either weakened or wronged, but in a way of complacency; it was his delight, that *virtue* was gone out of him to do any good, and he did not grudge it to the meanest, they were as welcome to it as to the light and heat of the sun; nor had he the less virtue in him for the going out of virtue from him, for he is an overflowing Fountain.

2. The poor patient owns her case, and the benefit she had received; (*v. 47*.) *When she saw that she was not hid, she came, and fell down before him*. Note, The consideration of this, that we cannot be hid from Christ, should engage us to pour out our hearts before him, and to show before him our sin, and all our trouble. *She came trembling*, and yet *her faith saved her*, *v. 48*. Note, There may be trembling, where yet there is saving faith. *She declared before all the people, for what cause she had touched him*, because she believed that a touch would

cure her, and it did so. Christ's patients should communicate their experiences to one another.

3. The great Physician confirms her cure, and sends her away with the comfort of it; (*v. 48*.) *Be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole*. Jacob got the blessing from Isaac clandestinely, and by a wife; but when the fraud was discovered, Isaac ratified it designedly; it was obtained surreptitiously and under-hand, but it was secured and seconded above-board; so was the cure here. He is blessed, and he shall be blessed; so here, *She is healed, and she shall be healed*.

IV. Here is an encouragement to *Jairus*, not to distrust the power of Christ, though his daughter was now dead, and they that brought him the tidings advised him not to give the Master any further trouble about her; *fear not*, saith Christ, *believe only*. Note, Our faith in Christ should be bold and daring, as well as our zeal for him. They that are willing to do any thing for him, may depend upon his doing great things for them, above what they are able to ask or think. When the patient is dead, there is no room for prayer, or the use of means; but here, though the child is dead, yet believe, and all shall be well. *Post mortem medicus*—To call in the physician after death, is an absurdity; but not *Post mortem Christus*—To call in Christ after death.

V. The preparatives for the raising of her to life again. 1. The choice Christ made of witnesses that should see the miracle wrought. A crowd followed him, but perhaps they were rude and noisy; however, it was not fit to let such a multitude come into a gentleman's house, especially now that the family was all in sorrow; therefore he sent them back, and not because he was afraid to let the miracle pass their scrutiny; for he raised Lazarus and the widow's son publicly. He took none with him but Peter, and James, and John, that triumvirate of his disciples that he was most intimate with, designing these three, with the parents, to be the only spectators of the miracle, they being a competent number to attest the truth of it. 2. The check he gave to the mourners; *They all wept, and bewailed her*; for, it seems, she was a very agreeable, hopeful child, and dear not only to the parents, but to all the neighbours. But Christ bid them *not weep*; *For she is not dead, but sleepeth*. He means, as to her peculiar case, that she was not dead for good and all, but that she should now shortly be raised to life, so that it would be to her friends, as if she had been but a few hours asleep. But it is applicable to all that die in the Lord; therefore we should not sorrow for them, as those that have no hope, because death is but a sleep to them, not only as it is a rest from all the toils of the days of time, but as there will be a resurrection, a waking and rising again to all the glories of the days of eternity. This was a comfortable word which Christ said to these mourners, yet they wickedly ridiculed it, and laughed him to scorn for it; here* was a pearl cast before swine. They were ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament, who bantered it as an absurd thing to call death a sleep; yet this good came out of that evil, that hereby the truth of the miracle was evinced, for they knew that she was dead, they were certain of it, and therefore nothing less than a divine power could restore her to life. We find not any answer that he made them; but he soon explained himself, I hope to their conviction, so that they would never again laugh at any word of his. But he put them all out; (*v. 54*.) they were unworthy to be the witnesses of this work of wonder; they who in the midst of their mourning were so merrily disposed, as to laugh at him for what he said, would, it may be, have found something to laugh at in what he did, and therefore are justly shut out.

VI. Her return to life, after a short visit to the

congregation of the dead; (v. 55.) *He took her by the hand*, (as we do by one that we would awake out of sleep, and help up,) and he called, saying, *Maid, arise.* Thus the *hand of Christ's grace* goes along with the *calls of his word*, to make them effectual. Here that is expressed, which was only implied in the other evangelists, *That her spirit came again*; her soul returned again, to animate her body. This plainly proves, that the soul exists and acts in a state of separation from the body, and therefore is immortal; that death does not extinguish this *candle of the Lord*, but takes it out of a *dark lanthorn*. It is not, as Grotius well observes, the *spirit*; or *temperament* of the body, or any thing that dies with it; but it is *αὐτοῦ πνεύματος τι*—something that subsists by itself, which, after death, is somewhere else than where the body is. Where the soul of this child was in this interval, we are not told; it was in the hand of the *Father of spirits*, to whom all souls at death return. When *her spirit came again*, she arose, and made it appear that she was alive, by her motion, as she did also by her appetite, for Christ *commanded to give her meat*. As babes new born, so those that are newly raised, desire spiritual food, that they may grow *thereby*. In the last verse, we need not wonder to find *her parents astonished*; but if that implies that *they only* were so, and not the other by-standers, who had laughed Christ to scorn, we may well wonder at their stupidity, which perhaps was the reason why Christ would not have it proclaimed, as well as to give an instance of his humility.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, we have, I. The commission Christ gave his twelve apostles, to go out for some time to preach the gospel, and confirm it by miracles, v. 1. . 6. II. Herod's terror at the growing greatness of our Lord Jesus, v. 7. . 9. III. The apostles' return to Christ, his retirement with them into a place of solitude; the great resort of people to them, notwithstanding, and his feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, v. 10. . 17. IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning himself, and his own sufferings for them, and theirs for him, v. 18. . 27. V. Christ's transfiguration, v. 28. . 36. VI. The cure of a lunatic child, v. 37. . 42. VII. The repeated notice Christ gave his disciples of his approaching sufferings, v. 43. . 45. VIII. His check to the ambition of his disciples, (v. 46. . 48.) and to their monopolizing of the power over devils to themselves, v. 49, 50. IX. The rebuke he gave them for an over-due resentment of an affront given him by a village of the Samaritans, v. 51. . 56. X. The answers he gave to several that were inclined to follow him, but not considerably, or not zealously and heartily so inclined, v. 57. . 62.

1. **THEN** he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for *your* journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet, for a testimony against them. 6. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him; and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some

that John was risen from the dead; 8. And of some, That Elias had appeared; and of others, That one of the old prophets was risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

We have here,

I. The method Christ took to spread his gospel; to diffuse and enforce the light of it. He had travelled about *himself*, preaching and healing; but he could be only in one place at a time, and therefore now he *sent* his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were pretty well instructed in the nature of the present dispensation, and able to instruct others, and to *deliver to them* what they had *received from the Lord*. Let them disperse themselves, some one way, and some another, to *preach the kingdom of God*, as it was now about to be set up by the Messiah; to bring people acquainted with the spiritual nature and tendency of it, and to persuade them to come into the interests and measures of it. For the confirming of their doctrine, because it was new and surprising, and very different from what they had been taught by the scribes and Pharisees, and because so much depended upon men's receiving or not receiving it, he empowered them to confirm it by miracles; (v. 1, 2.) *He gave them authority over all devils*, to dispossess them, and cast them out, though ever so numerous, so subtle, so fierce, so obstinate. Christ designed a total rout and ruin to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore gave them power over *all* devils. He authorized and appointed them likewise to *cure diseases*, and to *heal the sick*, which would make them welcome wherever they came, and not only convince people's judgments, but gain their affections.

This was their commission. Now observe,

1. What Christ directed them to do, in prosecution of this commission at this time, when they were not to *go far* or *be out long*.

(1.) They must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to people's esteem by their outward appearance. Now that they begin to set up for themselves, they must have no dress, nor study to make any other figure than what they made while they followed him; they must *go as they were*, and not change their clothes, or so much as put on a pair of new shoes.

(2.) They must depend upon Providence, and the kindness of their friends, to furnish them with what was convenient for them. They must not take with them *either bread or money*, and yet believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples *shy* of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to *expect* them. Yet St. Paul saw cause not to go by this rule, when he *laboured with his hands* rather than be burdensome.

(3.) They must not change their lodgings, as suspecting that those who entertained them were *weary* of them; they have no reason to be so, for the ark is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment; (v. 4.) "*Whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide*, that people may know where to find you; that your friends may know you are not backward to *serve* them, and your enemies may know you are not ashamed or afraid to *face* them; *there abide*, till you *depart* out of that city; stay with those you are used to."

(4.) They must put on authority, and speak *warning* to those who *refused* them, as well as comfort to those that *received* them; (v. 5.) "If there be any place that will not entertain you, if the magistrates deny you admission, and threaten to treat you as vagrants, leave them, do not force yourselves

upon them, nor run yourselves into danger among them, but at the same time bind them over to the judgment of God for it; *shake off the dust of your feet for a testimony against them*, that will, as it were, be produced in evidence against them, that the messengers of the gospel had been among them, to make them a fair offer of grace and peace, for this dust they left behind there; so that when they perish at last in their infidelity, this will lay and leave their blood upon their own heads. *Shake off the dust of your feet*, as much as to say, you abandon their city, and will have no more to do with them."

2. What they did, in prosecution of this commission; (*v. 6.*) *They departed* from their Master's presence; yet, having still his spiritual presence with them, his *eye* and his *arm* going along with them, and thus borne up in their work, they *went through the towns*, some or other of them, all the towns within the circuit appointed them, *preaching the gospel, and healing every where*. Their work was the same with their Master's, doing good both to souls and bodies.

II. We have here Herod's perplexity and vexation at this. The deriving of Christ's power to those who were sent forth in his name, and acted by authority from him, was an *amazing and convincing* proof of his being the Messiah, above any thing else; that he could not only work miracles *himself*, but empower others to work miracles too; this spread his fame more than any thing, and made the rays of this *Sun of righteousness* the stronger, by the *reflection* of them even from the *earth*; from such mean illiterate men as the apostles were, who had nothing else to recommend them, or to raise any expectations from them, but that *they had been with Jesus*, Acts 4. 13. When the country sees such as those *healing the sick* in the name of Jesus, it gives an alarm. Now observe,

1. The *various speculations* it raised among the *people*, who, though they thought not *rightly*, yet could not but think *honourably*, of our Lord Jesus, and that he was an extraordinary Person, one come from the other world; that either John Baptist, who was lately persecuted and slain for the cause of God, or *one of the old prophets*, that had been persecuted and slain long since in that cause, was *risen again*, to be recompensed for their sufferings by this honour put upon them; or that Elias, who was taken alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, *had appeared* as an express from heaven, *v. 7, 8.*

2. The *great perplexity* it created in the mind of Herod: *When he had heard of all that was done by Christ*, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he was ready to conclude with them that *John was risen from the dead*. He thought he had got clear of John, and should be never more troubled with him, but, it seems, he is mistaken; either John is come to life again, or here is another in his spirit and power, for God will never *leave himself without witness*. "What shall I do now?" saith Herod. "John have I beheaded, but *who is this?* Is he carrying on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not: *John did no miracle*, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John." Note, Those who oppose God, will find themselves more and more *embarrassed*. However, he *desired to see him*, whether he resembled John or no; but he might soon have been put out of his pain, if he would have but informed himself of that which thousands knew, that Jesus preached, and wrought miracles, a great while before John was beheaded, and therefore could not be John raised from the dead. He *desired to see him*; and why did he not go and see him? Probably because he thought it *below him*, either to go to him, or to send for him; he had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for

having to do with any more such reprovers of sin. He desired to see him, but we do not find that ever he did, till he saw him at his bar, and then *he and his men of war set him at nought*, Luke 23. 11. Had he prosecuted his convictions now, and gone to see him, who knows but a happy change might have been wrought in him? But, delaying it now, his heart was hardened, and when he did see him, he was as much prejudiced against him as any other.

10. And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done.

And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place.

13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14. (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15.

And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes; and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of the fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

We have here,

I. The account which the twelve gave their Master of the success of their ministry. They were not long out; but *when they returned, they told him all that they had done*, as became servants who were sent on an errand. They told him *what they had done*, that, if they had done any thing amiss, they might mend it next time.

II. Their retirement, for a little breathing; He *took them, and went aside privately into a desert place*, that they might have some relaxation from business, and not be always upon the stretch. Note, He that hath appointed our man-servant and maid-servant to rest, would have his servants to rest too. Those in the most public stations, and that are most publicly useful, must sometimes go aside privately, both for the repose of their bodies, to recruit them, and for the furnishing of their minds by meditation for further public work.

III. The resort of the people to him, and the kind reception he gave them. They *followed* him, though it was in a *desert place*; for that is no desert where Christ is. And though they hereby disturbed the repose he designed here for himself and his disciples, yet he *welcomed* them, *v. 11.* Note, Pious zeal may excuse a little rudeness; it did with Christ, and should with us. Though they came unseasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for. 1. He *spoke unto them of the kingdom of God*, the laws of that kingdom with which they must be bound,

and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed. 2. He *healed them that had need of healing*, and, in a sense of their need, made their application to him. Though the disease was ever so inveterate, and incurable by the physicians, though the patients were ever so poor and mean, yet Christ *healed them*. There is healing in Christ for all that need it, whether for soul or body. Christ hath still a power over bodily diseases, and heals his people that *need healing*. Sometimes he sees that we need the *sickness*, for the good of our souls, more than the *healing*, for the ease of our bodies, and then we must be *willing for a season*, because *there is need to be in heaviness*; but when he sees that we *need healing*, we shall have it. Death is his servant, to heal the saints of all diseases. He heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and has for each what their case calls for; relief for every exigence.

IV. The plentiful provision Christ made for the multitude that attended him; With *five loaves* of bread, and *two fishes*, he fed *five thousand men*. This narrative we had twice before, and shall meet with it again; it is the only miracle of our Saviour's, that is recorded by all the four evangelists.

Let us only observe out of it,

1. Those who diligently attend upon Christ in the way of duty, and therein deny, or expose themselves, or are made to forget themselves, and their outward conveniences, by their zeal for God's house, are taken under his particular care, and may depend upon *Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide*. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing.

2. Our Lord Jesus was of a free and generous spirit. His disciples said, *Send them away, that they may get victuals*; but Christ said, "*No, give ye them to eat*; let what we have go as far as it will reach, and they are welcome to it." Thus he has taught both ministers and christians to *use hospitality without grudging*, 1 Pet. 4. 9. Those that have but a little, let them do what they can with that little, and that is the way to make it more. There is that scatters, and yet increases.

3. Jesus Christ has not only physic, but food, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him; he not only *heals them that need healing*, cures the diseases of the soul, but feeds them too that need feeding, supports the spiritual life, relieves the necessities of it, and satisfies the desires of it. Christ has provided not only to save the soul from perishing by its diseases, but to nourish the soul unto life eternal, and strengthen it for all spiritual exercises.

4. All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular, orderly manner; *Make them sit down by fifties in a company*. The number of each company is taken notice of here, (v. 14.) which Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat, and the easier computation of the number of the guests.

5. When we are receiving our creature-comforts, we must *look up to heaven*; Christ did so, to teach us to do so. We must acknowledge that we receive them from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them; that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is removed, and the covenant of peace settled; that we depend upon God's blessing upon them, to make them serviceable to us, and desire that blessing.

6. The blessing of Christ will make a little to go a great way, and the *little that the righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked*, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox.

7. Those whom Christ *feeds*, he *fills*; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for all, so there is enough for each. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the

goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken up, to assure us that in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare. We are not straitened, or stinted, in him.

18. And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19. They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, That one of the old prophets is risen again. 20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. 21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. 23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27. But I tell you of a truth, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

In these verses, we have Christ discoursing with his disciples about the great things that *pertain to the kingdom of God*; and one circumstance of this discourse is taken notice of here, which we had not in the other evangelists—that Christ was *alone praying*, and his *disciples with him*, when he entered into this discourse, v. 18. Observe, 1. Though Christ had much public work to do, yet he found some time to be *alone* in private, for converse with himself, with his Father, and with his disciples. 2. When Christ was alone, he was *praying*. It is good for us to improve our solitude for devotion, that, *when we are alone*, we may *not be alone*, but may have *the Father with us*. 3. When Christ was alone praying, his *disciples were with him*, to join with him in his prayer; so that this was a family-prayer. Housekeepers ought to pray with their households, parents with their children, masters with their servants, teachers and tutors with their scholars and pupils. 4. Christ *prayed* with them before he *examined* them, that they might be directed and encouraged to answer him, by his prayers for them. Those we give instructions to, we should put up prayers for, and with. He discourses with them,

I. Concerning himself; and enquires,

1. What the people said of him; *Who say the people that I am?* Christ knew better than they did, but would have his disciples made sensible by the mistakes of others concerning him, how happy they were, that were led into the knowledge of him, and of the truth concerning him. We should take notice of the ignorance and errors of others, that we may be the more thankful to him who has *manifested*

himself to us, and not unto the world, and may pity them, and do what we can to help them, and to teach them better.

They tell him what conjectures concerning him they had heard in their converse with the common people. Ministers would know better how to suit their instructions, reproofs, and counsels, to the case of ordinary people, if they did but converse more frequently and familiarly with them; they would then be the better able to say what is proper to rectify their notions, correct their irregularities and remove their prejudices. The more conversant the physician is with his patient, the better he knows what to do for him. Some said that he was John Baptist, who was beheaded but the other day; others Elias, or one of the old prophets; any thing but what he was.

2. What they said of him. "Now see what an advantage you have by your discipleship; you know better." "So we do," saith Peter, "thanks be to our Master for it; we know that thou art the Christ of God, the Anointed of God, the Messiah promised." It is matter of unspeakable comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is God's anointed, for then he has unquestionable authority and ability for his undertaking; for his being Anointed signifies his being both appointed to it, and qualified for it.

Now one would have expected that Christ should have charged his disciples, who were so fully apprized and assured of this truth, to publish it to every one they met with; no, he straitly charged them to tell no man that thing as yet, because there is a time for all things. After his resurrection, which completed the proof of it, Peter made the temple ring of it, that God has made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ; (Acts 2. 36.) but as yet the evidence was not ready to be summed up, and therefore it must be concealed; while it was so, we may conclude that the believing of it was not necessary to salvation.

II. Concerning his own sufferings and death, of which he had yet said little. But now that his disciples were well established in the belief of his being the Christ, and able to bear it, he speaks of them expressly, and with great assurance, v. 22. It comes in as a reason why they must not yet preach that he was the Christ, because the wonders that would attend his death and resurrection, would be the most convincing proof of his being the Christ of God. It was by his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, that he was fully declared to be the Christ, and by the sending of the Spirit thereupon; (Acts 2. 33.) and therefore wait till that is done.

III. Concerning their sufferings for him. So far must they be from thinking how to prevent his sufferings, that they must rather prepare for their own.

1. We must accustom ourselves to all instances of self-denial and patience, v. 23. This is the best preparative for martyrdom. We must live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; we must not indulge our ease and appetite, for then it will be hard to bear toil, and weariness, and want, for Christ. We are daily subject to affliction, and we must accommodate ourselves to it, and acquiesce in the will of God in it, and must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them.

2. We must prefer the salvation and happiness of our souls before any secular concern whatsoever. Reckon upon it, (1.) That he, who, to preserve his liberty or estate, his power of preferment, nay, or to save his life, denies Christ and his truths, wilfully wrongs his conscience, and sins against God, will be, not only not a savor, but an unspeakable loser, in the

issue, when profit and loss come to be balanced; *He that will save his life upon these terms, will lose it*, will lose that which is of infinitely more value, his precious soul. (2.) We must firmly believe also that, if we lose our lives for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall save them to our unspeakable advantage; for it shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have it again a new and eternal life. (3.) That the gain of all the world, if we should forsake Christ and fall in with the interest of the world, would be so far from countervailing the eternal loss and ruin of the soul, that it would bear no manner of proportion to it, v. 25. If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in the world, by denying Christ, yet, when by so doing, we lose ourselves to all eternity, and are cast away at last, what good will our worldly gain do us? Observe, In Matthew and Mark the dreadful issue is a man's losing his own soul, here it is losing himself; which plainly intimates that our souls are ourselves. *Animus cujusque is est quisque—The soul is the man*; and it is well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain that we are undone; the body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world. If a man be himself cast away, *ἡ ψυχή αὐτοῦ—if he be damaged*; or if he be punished; *ἡ μολὴ αὐτοῦ—if he have a mulet put upon his soul* by the righteous sentence of Christ, whose cause and interest he has treacherously deserted; if it be adjudged a forfeiture of all his blessedness, and the forfeiture be taken, where is his gain? What is his hope?

3. We must therefore never be ashamed of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for our faithful adherence to him and it. For, (v. 26.) *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed and justly*. When the service and honour of Christ called for his testimony and agency, he denied them, because the interest of Christ was a despised interest, and every where spoken against; and therefore he can expect no other than that in the great day, when his case calls for Christ's appearance on his behalf, Christ will be ashamed to own such a cowardly, worldly, sneaking spirit, and will say, "He is none of mine, he belongs not to me." As Christ had, so his cause has, a state of humiliation and exaltation. They, and they only, that are willing to suffer with it, when it suffers, shall reign with it, when it reigns; but those that cannot find in their hearts to share with it in its disgrace, and to say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile*, shall certainly have no share with it in its triumphs. Observe here, how Christ, to support himself and his followers under present disgraces, speaks magnificently of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he endured the cross, despising the shame (1.) He shall come in his own glory. This was not mentioned in Matthew and Mark. He shall come in the glory of the Mediator, all that glory which the Father restored to him, which he had with God before the worlds were, which he had deposited and put in pledge, as it were, for the accomplishing of his undertaking, and demanded up again, when he had gone through it: *Now, O Father, glorify thou me*, John 17. 4, 5. He shall come in all that glory which the Father conferred upon him, when he set him at his own right hand, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church; in all the glory that is due to him, as the Asserter of the glory of God, and the Author of the glory of all the saints. This is his own glory. (2.) He shall come in his Father's glory. The Father will judge the world by him, having

committed all judgment to him; and therefore will publicly own him in the judgment, as the *Brightness of his glory*, and the *express Image* of his person. (3.) He shall come in the *glory of the holy angels*. They shall all *attend* him, and *minister* to him, and add every thing they can to the lustre of his appearance. What a figure will the blessed Jesus make in that day! Did we believe it, we should never be ashamed of him or his words now.

Lastly, To encourage them in suffering for him, he assures them that the *kingdom of God* would now *shortly be set up*, notwithstanding the great opposition that was made to it, v. 27. "Though the second coming of the Son of man is at a great distance, the kingdom of God shall come in its power in the present age, while some here present are alive." They saw the *kingdom of God*, when the Spirit was poured out, when the gospel was preached to all the world, and nations were brought to Christ by it; they saw the kingdom of God triumph over the Gentile nations in their *conversion*, and over the Jewish nation in its *destruction*.

28. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. 30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34. While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

We have here the narrative of Christ's transfiguration, which was designed for a specimen of that glory of his, in which he will come to judge the world, of which he had lately been speaking, and, consequently, an encouragement to his disciples, to suffer for him, and never to be ashamed of him. We had this account before, in Matthew and Mark, and it is well worthy to be repeated to us, and reconsidered by us, for the *confirmation of our faith* in the Lord Jesus, as the *Brightness of his Father's glory*, and the light of the world; for the *filling* of our minds with *high and honourable* thoughts of him, notwithstanding his being clothed with a body, and the *giving* of us *some idea of the glory* which he entered into at his *ascension*, and in which he now *appears* within the veil; and for the *raising and encouraging* of our *hopes and expectations* concerning

the glory reserved for all believers in the future state.

1. Here is one circumstance of the narrative that seems to differ from the other two evangelists that related it. They said that it was *six days* after the foregoing sayings, Luke saith that it was *about eight days after*, that is, it was that day sevenmnight; six whole days intervening, and it was the eighth day. Some think that it was in the *night* that Christ was transfigured, because the disciples were sleeping, as in his agony, and in the *night* his appearance in splendour would be the more illustrious; it in the night, the computation of the time would be the more doubtful and uncertain; probably, in the night, between the seventh and eighth day, and so about eight days.

II. Here are divers circumstances added and explained, which are very material.

1. We are *here* told that Christ had this honour put upon him when he was *praying*; He *went up into the mountain to pray*, as he frequently did; (v. 28.) and *as he prayed* he was *transfigured*; when Christ *humbled* himself to pray, he was thus *exalted*. He knew before, that this was designed for him at this time, and therefore seeks it by prayer. Christ himself must *see out* the favours that were purposed for him, and promised to him; *Ask of me and I will give thee*, Ps. 2. 8. And thus he intended to put an honour upon the duty of prayer, and to *recommend* it to us. It is a transfiguring, transforming duty; if our hearts be elevated and enlarged in it, so as in it to *behold the glory of the Lord*, we shall be changed into the *same image from glory to glory*, 2 Cor. 3. 18. By prayer, we fetch in the wisdom, grace, and joy, which *make the face to shine*.

2. Luke does not use the word *transfigured*—μετεμορφώθη, (which Matthew and Mark used,) perhaps because it had been used so much in the Pagan theology, but makes use of a phrase equivalent, το ἔδος τῆς τριβλῆς αὐτοῦ ἔτερεον—*The fashion of his countenance was another thing from what it had been*; his face shone far beyond what Moses's did when he came down from the mount; and his raiment was *white and glistering*; it was ἱεσπέραιον, a word used only here; *bright like lightning*; so that he seemed to be arrayed all with light, to *cover himself with light as with a garment*.

3. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that Moses and Elias *appeared to them*, here it is said they *appeared in glory*; to teach us, that saints departed are in *glory*, are in a *glorious* state; they shine in glory; he being in glory, they *appeared with him in glory*, as all the saints shall shortly do.

4. We are here told what was the subject of the discourse between Christ and the two great prophets of the Old Testament; *They spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*, ἐξόδου αὐτοῦ—his *exodus*, his *departure*; that is, his *death*. (1.) The death of Christ is here called his *exit*, his *going out*, his *leaving of the world*. Moses and Elias spake of it to him under that notion, to reconcile him to it, and to make the foresight of it the more easy to his human nature. The death of the saints is their *exodus*, their departure out of the Egypt of this world, their release out of a *house of bondage*. Some think that the ascension of Christ is included here in his departure, for the departure of Israel out of Egypt was a departure in *triumph*, so was *his* when he went from earth to heaven. (2.) This departure of his he *must accomplish*, for thus it was determined, the matter was immutably fixed in the counsel of God, and could not be altered. (3.) He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, though his residence was mostly in Galilee; for his most spiteful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the sanhedrim sat, that took upon them to judge of prophets. (4.) Moses and Elias spake of this, to intimate that the

sufferings of Christ, and his *entrance into his glory*, were what Moses and the *prophets* had *spoken of*; see Luke 24. 26, 27. 1 Pet. 1. 11. (5.) Our Lord Jesus, even in his transfiguration, was willing to enter into a discourse concerning his death and sufferings; to teach us, that meditations on death, as it is our departure out of this world to another, are never unseasonable, but in a special manner seasonable when at any time we are *advanced*, lest we should be *lifted up above measure*. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that here *we have no continuing city*.

5. We are here told, which we were not before, that the disciples were *heavy with sleep*; (v. 32.) when the vision first began, Peter and James and John were drowsy, and inclined to sleep: either it was late, or they were weary, or had been disturbed in their rest the night before; or perhaps a charming composing air, or some sweet and melodious sounds, which disposed them to soft and gentle slumbers, were a preface to the vision; or perhaps it was owing to a sinful carelessness; when Christ was at prayer with them, they did not regard his prayer as they should have done, and to punish them for that, they were left to *sleep on now*, when he began to be *transfigured*, and so slept an opportunity of seeing how that work of wonder was wrought. These three were now asleep, when Christ was in *his glory*, as afterwards they were, when he was in *his agony*; see the *weakness* and *frailty* of human nature, even in the best, and what need they have of the grace of God. Nothing could be more affecting to these disciples, one would think, than the *glories* and the *agonyes* of their Master, and both in the highest degree; and yet neither the one nor the other would serve to keep *them awake*. What need have we to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us not only *alive* but *lively*? Yet that they might be competent witnesses of *this sign from heaven*, to those that demanded one, after a while they *recovered themselves*, and became perfectly awake; and then they took an exact view of all those glories, so that they were able to give a particular account, as we find one of them doth, of all that passed when they were with Christ *in the holy mount*, 2 Pet. 1. 17.

6. It is here observed, it was when Moses and Elias were now about to *depart*, that Peter said, *Lord, it is good to be here, let us make three tabernacles*. Thus we are often not sensible of the worth of our mercies, till we are about to lose them; nor do we covet and court their continuance, till they are upon the departure. Peter said this, *not knowing what he said*. Those know not what they say, that talk of making tabernacles on earth for glorified saints in heaven, who have better mansions in the temple there, and long to return to them.

7. It is here added concerning the *cloud that overshadowed them* that they *feared as they entered into the cloud*. This cloud was a token of God's more peculiar presence; it was in a cloud that God of old took possession of the tabernacle and temple, and when the cloud *covered the tabernacle*, *Moses was not able to enter*, (Exod. 40. 34, 35.) and when it filled the temple, the *priests could not stand to minister by reason of it*; (2 Chron. 5. 14.) such a cloud was this, and then no wonder that the disciples were *afraid to enter into it*. But never let any be afraid to enter into a cloud with Jesus Christ, for he will be sure to bring them safe through it.

8. The *voice* which came from heaven, is here, and in Mark, related not so fully as in Matthew; *This is my Beloved Son, hear him*: though these words, in *whom I am well pleased*, which we have both in Matthew and Peter, are not expressed, they are implied in that, *This is my beloved Son*; for *whom he loves*, and in *whom he is well pleased*, *came* all to one; we are *accepted in the Beloved*.

Lastly, The apostles are here said to have kept this vision private; they *told no man in those days*, reserving the discovery of it for another opportunity, when the evidences of Christ's being the Son of God were completed in the pouring out of the Spirit, and that doctrine was to be published to all the world. As there is a time to *speak*, so there is a time to *keep silence*. Every thing is beautiful and useful in its season.

37. And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child: 39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and bruising him hardly, departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. 41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. 42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

This passage of story in Matthew and Mark follows immediately upon that of Christ's transfiguration, and his discourse with his disciples after it; but here it is said to be *on the next day*, as they were *coming down from the hill*; which confirms the conjecture, that Christ was transfigured *in the night*, and, it should seem, though they did not *make tabernacles*, as Peter proposed, yet they found some shelter to repose themselves in all night, for it was not till next day, that they *came down from the hill*; and then he found things in some disorder among his disciples, though not so bad as Moses did when he came down from the mount. When wise and good men are in their beloved retirements they would do well to consider whether they are not wanted in their *public stations*.

In this narrative here, observe,

1. How forward the people were to receive Christ at his return to them; though he had been but a little while absent, *much people met him*, as, at other times, much people *followed* him, for so it was foretold concerning him, that *to him should the gathering of the people be*.

2. How importunate the father of the lunatic child was with Christ for help for him; (v. 38.) *I beseech thee, look upon my son*; this is his request, and it is a very modest one; one compassionate look from Christ is enough to set every thing to rights. Let us bring ourselves and our children to Christ, to be *looked upon*. His plea is, *He is mine only child*. They that have many children, may balance their affliction in one with their comfort in the rest; yet if it be an only child that is a grief, the affliction in that may be balanced with the love of God in giving his only-begotten Son for us.

3. How *deplorable* the case of the *child* was, v. 39. He was under the power of an evil spirit, that *took him*; and diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes: when the fit seized him, without any warning given, he suddenly *cried out*, and many a time his shrieks had pierced the heart of his tender father. This

malicious spirit *tare him*, and *bruised him*, and *departed not from him*, but with great difficulty, and a deadly gripe at parting. O the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! And what mischief doth Satan do, where he gets possession! But happy they that have access to Christ!

4. How defective the disciples were in their faith. Though Christ had given them *power over unclean spirits*, yet they could not cast out this *evil spirit*, v. 40. Either they distrusted the power they were to fetch in strength from, or the commission given to them, or they did not exert themselves in prayer as they ought; for this Christ reproved them. *O faithless and perverse generation*. Dr. Clarke understands this as spoken to his disciples: "*Will ye be yet so faithless and full of distrust, that ye cannot execute the commission I have given you?*"

5. How effectual the cure was, which Christ wrought upon this child, v. 42. Christ can do that for us, which his disciples cannot; *Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit*, then when he raged most. The devil *threw the child down*, and *tare him*, distorted him, so as if he would have pulled him to pieces. But one word from Christ *healed the child*, and made good the damage the devil had done him. And it is here added, that he *delivered him again to his father*. Note, When our children are recovered from sickness, we must receive them as delivered to us again, receive them as life from the dead, and as when we first received them. It is comfortable to receive them from the hand of Christ, to see him delivering them to us again; "Here, take this child, and be thankful; take it, and bring it up for me, for thou hast it again from me." Take it, and do not set thy heart too much upon it." With such cautions as these, parents should receive their children *from Christ's hands*, and then with comfort put them again *into his hands*.

43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying. 46. Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great. 49. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

We may observe here,

1. The impression which Christ's miracles made upon all that beheld them; (v. 43.) *They were all amazed at the mighty power of God*, which they could not but see in all the miracles Christ wrought. Note, The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that are wrought by the hand of

the Lord Jesus; for he is the *power of God*, and his name is, *Wonderful*. Their wonder was universal; they wondered *every one*; the causes of it were universal; they wondered at *all things which Jesus did*; all his actions had something uncommon and surprising in them.

II. The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his approaching sufferings; *The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men*, wicked men, men of the worst character; they shall be permitted to abuse him at their pleasure. That is here implied, which is expressed by the other evangelists; *They shall kill him*. But that which is peculiar here, is,

1. The connexion of this with what goes next before, of the admiration with which the people were struck at beholding of Christ's miracles; (v. 43.) *While they all wondered at all things which Jesus did, he said this to his disciples*. They had a fond conceit of his temporal kingdom, and that he should reign, and they with him, in secular pomp and power; and now they thought that this *mighty power* of his would easily effect the thing, and his interest gained by his miracles in the people would contribute to it; and therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, takes this occasion to tell them again what he had told them before, that he was so far from having men *delivered into his hands*, that he must be *delivered into the hands of men*; so far from living in honour, that he must die in disgrace; and all his miracles, and the interest he has by them gained in the hearts of the people, will not be able to prevent it. 2. The solemn preface with which it is introduced; "*Let these sayings sink down into your ears*; take special notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; let not the notions you have of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, stop your ears against it, nor make you unwilling to believe it. Admit what I say, and submit to it." *Let it sink down into your hearts*; so the Syriac and Arabic read it. The word of Christ does us no good, unless we let it sink down into our heads and hearts. 3. The unaccountable stupidity of the disciples, with reference to this prediction of Christ's sufferings. It was said in Mark, *They understood not that saying*, it was plain enough; but they *would not* understand it in the literal sense, because it agreed not with their notions; and they *could not* understand it in any other, and *were afraid to ask him*, lest they should be undeceived, and awaked out of their pleasing dream; but it is here added, that *it was hid from them, that they perceived it not*, through the weakness of faith and the power of prejudice. We cannot think that it was in *mere* hid from them, lest they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow at the prospect of it; but that it was a paradox, because they *made it so* to themselves.

III. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for their disputing among themselves which should be greatest, v. 46—48. This passage we had before, and, the more is the pity, shall meet with the like again. Observe here,

1. Ambition of honour, and strife for superiority and precedency, are sins that most easily beset the disciples of our Lord Jesus, for which they deserve to be severely rebuked; they flow from corruptions, which they are highly concerned to subdue and mortify, v. 46. They that expect to be *great* in this world, commonly aim high, and nothing will serve them short of being *greatest*; this exposes them to a great deal of temptation and trouble, which they are safe from, that are content to be *little*, to be *least*, to be *less than the least*.

2. Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts; (v. 47.) *He perceived their thoughts*; they are *words* to him, and *whispers* are loud cries. It is a good reason why we should keep up a strict government of our thoughts, because Christ takes a strict cognizance of them.

3. Christ will have his disciples to aim at that honour which is to be obtained by a quiet and condescending humility, and not at that which is to be obtained by a restless and aspiring ambition. Christ *took a child, and set him by him*, (v. 47. for he always expressed a tenderness and kindness for little children,) and he proposed *this child* to them for an example (1.) Let them be of the *temper* of this child, *humble and quiet*, and *easy* to itself; let them not affect worldly pomp, or grandeur, or high titles, but be as dead to them as this child; let them bear no more malice to their rivals and competitors than this child did. Let them be willing to be the *least*, if that would contribute any thing to their usefulness, to stoop to the meanest office whereby they might *do good*. (2.) Let them assure themselves that this was the way to preferment; for this would recommend them to the esteem of their brethren: they that loved Christ, would *therefore receive* them *in his name*, because they did most resemble him; and they would likewise recommend themselves to his favour, for Christ would take the kindnesses done to them as done to himself; *Whosoever shall receive one such child, a preacher of the gospel that is of such a disposition as this, he placeth his respect aright, and receiveth me; and whosoever receiveth me in such a minister receiveth him that sent me*: and what greater honour can any man attain to in this world than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him? This honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great, that are least among them.

IV. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for discouraging one that honoured him and served, but was not of their communion, not only not one of the twelve, or one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associated with them, or attended on them, but upon occasional hearing of Christ, believed in him, and made use of his name with faith and prayer in a serious manner, for the casting out of devils. Now, 1. This man they *rebuked and restrained*; they would not let him pray and preach, though it was to the honour of Christ, though it did good to men and weakened Satan's kingdom, because he did not *follow Christ with them*; he separated from their church, was not ordained as they were, paid them no respect, nor gave them the right hand of fellowship. Now if ever any society of christians in this world had reason to silence those that were not of their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; and yet, 2. Jesus Christ chid them for what they did, and warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be the successors of the apostles; "*Forbid him not*, (v. 50.) but rather encourage him, for he is carrying on the same design that you are, though, for reasons best known to himself, he doth not follow *with you*; and he will meet you in the same end, though he do not accompany you in the same way. You do well, to do as you do, but it doth not therefore follow, that he doeth ill, to do as he doeth, and that you do well to put him under an interdict, for *he that is not against us, is for us*, and therefore ought to be countenanced by us." We need not lose any of our friends, while we have so few, and so many enemies. Those may be found faithful followers of Christ, and, as such, may be accepted of him, though they do not follow *with us*. See Mark 9. 38, 39. O what a great deal of mischief to the church, even from those that boast of relation to Christ, and pretend to *envy for his sake*, would be prevented, if this passage of story were but duly considered!

51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he

steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52. And sent messengers before his face and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54. And when his disciples, James and John, saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55. But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

This passage of history we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake; there, under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining separatists, here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death, and as for *that*, so for *this* also, Christ reprimanded them; for a spirit of bigotry and persecution is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and christianity.

Observe here,

I. The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, v. 51. *When the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*. Observe, 1. There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way, that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short. 2. When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them, and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be *received up into glory*, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spake of his death as his departure out of this world, which made it not *formidable*; but he went further, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very *desirable*. All good christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being *received up*, to be with Christ where he is; and when the time of their being *received up* is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*. 3. On this prospect of the joy set before him, he *steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*, the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went *directly* to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and courageously thither, though he knew the things which should befall him there. He did not fail, nor was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only *justified*, but glorified, (Isa. 50. 7.) not only not run down, but *received up*. How should this shame us *for*, and shame us *out of*, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ; we draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service, who steadfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.

II. The *rudeness* of the Samaritans in a certain village, (not named, nor deserving to be so,) who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bait in their town, though his way lay through it. Observe here, 1. How civil he was to them; *He sent messengers before his face*, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his company among them; for he would not come, to give offence, or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some, to make ready for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise. 2. How *uncivil* they were to him; (v. 53.) They did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have paid for all he *bespoke*, and been a generous Guest among them, would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, John 4. 41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest Blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the reason was, *because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*; they observed, by his motions, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship—whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see John 4. 20. And so hot was the controversy between them, that the *Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans*, nor they with them, John 4. 9. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no, not when they went up to the feasts, for if that had been their constant practice, Christ would not have attempted it; and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem, any other way than through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated Teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, they hoped, would have driven him to come and worship at *their* temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility, which, probably, they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

III. The *resentment* which James and John expressed of this affront, v. 54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village; "Lord," say they, "give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to frighten them only, but to consume them." Here indeed they showed, 1. A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned in their commission, yet they could with a word's speaking, fetch fire from heaven. *Θυμίζου—Wilt thou that we speak the word*, and the thing will be done. 2. A great zeal for the honour of their Master; they took it very ill, that he who did good wherever he came, and found hearty welcome, should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they could not think of it without indignation, that their Master should be thus slighted. 3. A submission, notwithstanding, to their Master's good-will and pleasure; they will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave; *Wilt thou that we do it?* 4. A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them; it is doing as *Elias did*; they would not have thought of such a thing, if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2 Kings

1. 10, 12. They thought that this *precedent* would be their warrant; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel.

But though there was something right in what they said, yet there was much more amiss. (1.) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been in the like manner affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury. (2.) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and perhaps they had heard that Christ had forbidden his disciples to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans, (Matth. 10. 5.) and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others, who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him. (3.) Perhaps it was only some few of the town, that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had heard of Christ's being so near them, would have gone to meet him, and welcomed him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked? (4.) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for fire from heaven, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any sign from heaven when they demanded it; (Matth. 16. 1, 2.) and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called *Boanerges—Sons of thunder*; (Mark 3. 17.) and will not that serve them, but they must be *sons of lightning* too? (5.) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to displace the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprover against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved; but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests, that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but though the place was the same, the times were altered.

IV. The *reproof* he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal; (v. 55.) *He turned with a just displeasure, and rebuked them*; for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shows them in particular their mistake; *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*; that is, (1.) "Ye are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition ye are of; how much there is of pride and passion, and personal revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master." Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it. (2.) "Ye do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, ye should be of." Surely ye are yet to learn, though ye have been so long learning, what the spirit of Christ and christianity is. Have you not been taught to love your enemies, and to bless them that curse you, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? Ye know not how contrary your disposition herein is, to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. Ye are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in

with a proclamation of *peace on earth, and good-will toward men*, to which you ought to accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose yourselves."

2. He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion; (*v. 56.*) *The Son of man* is not himself come, and therefore doth not send you abroad, *to destroy men's lives, but to save them*. He designed to propagate his holy religion by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues, and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to *slay all enmities*, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel, that are for anathematizing and rooting out by violence and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came not only to save men's *souls*, but to save their *lives too*; witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been *mortal*; by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples to do good to all, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none; to draw men into his church with the *cords of a man, and the bands of love*, but not think to drive men into it with a *rod of violence*, or the *scourge of the tongue*.

V. His *retreat* from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road, (which was as free to him as to others his neighbours,) would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably *went to another village*, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

57. And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

We have here an account of three several persons that offered themselves to follow Christ, and the answers that Christ gave to each of them. The two former we had an account of, *Matth. 19. 21.*

1. Here is one that is extremely forward to follow Christ immediately, but seems to have been too rash, hasty, and inconsiderate, and not to have sitten down, and counted the cost.

1. He makes Christ a very large promise; (*v. 57.*) *As they went in the way*, going up to Jerusalem, where it was expected Christ would first appear in his glory, one said to him, *Lord, I will follow thee*

whithersoever thou goest. This must be the resolution of all that will be found Christ's disciples indeed; they *follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes*, (*Rev. 14. 4.*) though it be through fire and water, to prisons and deaths.

2. Christ gives him a necessary caution, not to promise himself great things in the world, in following him, but, on the contrary, to count upon poverty and meanness; for *the Son of man has not where to lay his head*.

We may look upon this, (1.) As *setting forth* the *very low condition* that our Lord Jesus was in, in this world. He not only wanted the delights and ornaments that great princes have, but even such accommodations for mere necessity as the *foxes* have, and the *birds of the air*. See what a *depth of poverty* our Lord Jesus submitted to for us, to increase the worth and merit of his satisfaction, and to purchase for us a larger *allowance of grace*, that *we through his poverty might be rich*, 2 Cor. 8. 9. He that made all, did not make a dwelling-place for himself, not a house of his own to put his head in, but what he was beholden to others for. He here calls himself the *Son of man*, a Son of Adam, Partaker of flesh and blood. He glories in his condescension towards us, not only to the meanness of our nature, but to the meanest condition in that nature, to testify his love to us, and to teach us a holy contempt of the world, and of the great things in it, and a continual regard to another world. Christ was thus poor, to sanctify and sweeten poverty to his people; the apostles had no certain dwelling-place, (1 Cor. 4. 11.) which they might the better bear, when they knew their Master had not; see 2 Sam. 11. 11. We may well be content to fare as Christ did. (2.) As proposing this to the consideration of those who intend to be his disciples. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing *more than heaven* by our religion, as we must resolve not to take up with any thing *less*. Let us not go about to compound the profession of christianity with secular advantages; Christ has *put them asunder*, let us not think of *joining them together*; on the contrary, we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, must *deny ourselves*, and *take up our cross*. Christ tells this man what he must count upon if he followed him, to lie cold and uneasy, to fare hard, and live in contempt; if he could not submit to that, let him not pretend to follow Christ. This word sent him back, for aught that appears, but it will be no discouragement to any that know what there is in Christ and heaven to set in the scale against this.

11. Here is another, that seems *resolved* to follow Christ, but he *begs a day*, *v. 59.* To this man Christ first gave the call; he said to him, *Follow me*. He that proposed the thing of himself, fled off when he heard of the difficulties that attended it; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, yet, as it should seem, afterward yielded; so true was that of Christ, *You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*, John 15. 16. It is not of *him that willeth*, and of *him that runneth*, (as that forward spark in the foregoing verses,) but of God that sheweth mercy, that *giveth* the call, and *maketh it effectual*, as to this man here. Observe,

1. The excuse he made; "*Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father*." I have an aged father at home, who cannot live long, and will need me while he does live; let me go, and attend to him, until he is dead, and I have performed my last office of love to him, and then I will do any thing." We may here see three temptations, by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ,

which therefore we should guard against. (1.) We are tempted to *rest* in a *discipleship at large*, in which we may be *at a loose end*, and not to come *close*, and give up ourselves to be *strict and constant*. (2.) We are tempted to *defer* the doing of that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off to some other time. When we have got clear of such a care and difficulty, when we have despatched such a business, raised an estate to such a pitch, then we will begin to think of being religious; and so we are cozened of all our time, by being cozened of the present time. (3.) We are tempted to think that our duty to our relations will excuse us from our duty to Christ; it is a plausible excuse indeed, "*Let me go, and bury my father*; let me take care of my family, and provide for my children, and then I will think of serving Christ;" whereas the *kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof* must be sought and minded in the *first place*.

2. Christ's answer to it; (v. 60.) "*Let the dead bury their dead*." Suppose (which is not likely) that there were none but the dead to bury their dead, or none but those who are themselves aged and dying, who are *as good as dead*, and fit for no other service, yet thou hast other work to do; *go thou, and preach the kingdom of God*." Not that Christ would have his followers or his ministers to be *unnatural*, our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation, to *show piety at home*, and to *requite our parents*. But we must not make these offices an excuse from our duty to God. If the nearest and dearest relation we have in the world, stand in our way to keep us from Christ, it is necessary that we have a zeal that will make us forget *father and mother*, as Levi did, Deut. 33. 9. This disciple was called to be a minister, and therefore must not *entangle himself with the affairs of this world*, 2 Tim. 2. 4. And it is a rule, That, whenever Christ calls to any duty, we must not *consult with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1. 15, 16. No excuses must be admitted against a present obedience to the call of Christ.

III. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a *little time to talk with his friends* about it.

Observe,

1. His request for a dispensation; (v. 61.) He said, "*Lord, I will follow thee*; but I design no other, I am determined to do it; *let me first go bid them farewell, that are at home*." This seemed reasonable; it was what Elisha desired when Elijah called him, *Let me kiss my father and my mother*; and it was allowed him: but the ministry of the gospel is *preferable*, and the service of it more urgent than that of the prophets; and therefore here it would not be allowed. Suffer me *ἀνατάξωαι τοῖς ἐκ τῆς οἰκίας μου*—*Let me go, and set in order my household affairs*, and give direction concerning them; so some understand it. Now that which was amiss in this, is, (1.) That he looked upon the following of Christ as a melancholy, troublesome, dangerous thing; it was to him as if he were *going to die*; and therefore he must take *leave* of all his friends, never to *see them again*, or never *with any comfort*; whereas, in following Christ, he might be more a comfort and blessing to them than if he had continued with them. (2.) That he seemed to have his worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and than would consist with a close attendance to his duty as a follower of Christ. He seemed to hanker after his relations and family-concerns, and he could not part easily from them, but they stuck to him. It may be, he had bidden them *farewell* once, but *Loath to depart bids off farewell*, and therefore he must bid them *farewell* once more, For they are *at home at my house*. (3.) That he was willing to enter into a temptation from his purpose of following Christ. To go bid them

farewell that were *at home at his house*, would be to expose himself to the strongest solicitations imaginable to alter his resolution, for they would all be against it, and would *beg and pray* that he would *not leave them*; now it was presumption in him to thrust himself into such a temptation. These that resolve to walk with their Maker, and follow their Redeemer, must resolve that they will not so much as *parley* with their tempter.

2. The rebuke which Christ gave him for this request; (v. 62.) "*No man, having put his hand to the plough, and designing to make good work of his ploughing, will look back, or look behind him*, for then he makes balks with his plough, and the ground he ploughs is *not fit* to be sown; so thou, if thou hast designed to follow me, and to reap the advantages of these that do so, if thou *lookest back* to a worldly life again, and hankerest after that, if thou *lookest back*, as Lot's wife did to Sodom, which seems to be alluded to here, *thou art not fit for the kingdom of God*." (1.) "*Thou art not so fit to receive the good seed of the kingdom of God*, if thou art thus *ploughed* by the *hulvers*, and not gone through with." (2.) "*Thou art not a sower fit to scatter the good seed of the kingdom*, if thou canst *hold the plough* no better." Ploughing is in order to sowing. As those are not fit to be *sown* with divine comforts, whose *fallow ground* is not first *broken up*, so those are not fit to be employed in sowing, who know not how to break up the fallow ground, but, when they have *laid their hand to the plough*, upon every occasion look back, and think of quitting it. Note, Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to *go on* with it, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back inclines to *drawing back*, and *drawing back* is to *perdition*. Those are not fit for heaven, who, having set their faces heavenward, face about. But he, and he only, that *endures to the end*, shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, we have, I. The ample commission which Christ gave to the seventy disciples, to *preach the gospel*, and to confirm it by miracles; and the full instructions he gave them, how to manage themselves in the execution of their commissions, and great encouragements therein, v. 1. . 16. II. The report which the seventy disciples made to their Master of the success of their negotiation, and his discourse thereupon, v. 17. . 24. III. Christ's discourse with a lawyer concerning the way to heaven, and the instructions Christ gave him by a parable to look upon every one as his neighbour, whom he had occasion to show kindness to, or receive kindness from, v. 25. . 37. IV. Christ's entertainment at Martha's house, the reproof he gave to her for her care about the world, and his commendation of Mary for her care about her soul, v. 38. . 42.

1. **A**FTER these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4. Carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. 5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. 7. And in the same house remain, eating

and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. 13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples, two and two, into divers parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his entertainment. This is not taken notice of by the other evangelists; but the instructions here given them are much the same with those given to the twelve. Observe,

I. Their number; they were seventy. As in the choice of twelve apostles Christ had an eye to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve princes of those tribes, so here he seems to have an eye to the seventy elders of Israel. So many went up with Moses and Aaron to the mount, and saw the glory of the God of Israel; (Exod. 24. 1, 9.) and so many were afterward chosen to be assisting to Moses in the government, in order to which the Spirit of prophecy came unto them, Numb. 11. 24, 25. The twelve wells of water, and the seventy palm-trees that were at Elim, were a figure of the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, Exod. 15. 27. They were seventy elders of the Jews, that were employed by Ptolemy king of Egypt in turning the Old Testament into Greek, whose translation is thence called the *Septuagint*. The great Sanhedrim consisted of this number. Now,

1. We are glad to find that Christ had so many followers fit to be sent forth; his labour was not altogether in vain, though he met with much opposition. Note, Christ's interest is a *growing* interest, and his followers, like Israel in Egypt, though afflicted, shall multiply. These seventy, though they did not attend him so closely and constantly as the twelve did, yet they were the constant hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and believed in him. Those three mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, might have been of these seventy, if they would have applied themselves in

good earnest to their business. These seventy were those whom Peter speaks of as *the men which companioned with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, and were part of the one hundred and twenty there spoken of, Acts 1. 15, 21. Many of those that were the companions of the apostles, whom we read of in the Acts and the Epistles, we may suppose, were of these seventy disciples.

2. We are glad to find there was a work for so many ministers, hearers for so many preachers: thus the grain of mustard-seed began to *grow*, and the saviour of the heaven to diffuse itself in the meal, in order to the leavening of the whole.

II. Their work and business: He sent them *two and two*, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. *If one fall, the other will help to raise him up*. He sent them, not to all the cities of Israel, as he did the twelve, but only to *every city and place whither he himself would come*, (v. 1.) as his harbingers; and we must suppose, though it be not recorded, that Christ did soon after come to all those places whither he now sent them, though he could stay but a little while in a place. Two things they were ordered to do, the same that Christ did wherever he came; 1. They must *heal the sick*, (v. 9.) *heal them in the name of Jesus*, which would make people to long to see that Jesus, and ready to entertain him whose name was so powerful. 2. They must publish the approach of the kingdom of God, its approach to them; "Tell them this, *The kingdom of God is come nigh to you*, and you now stand fair for an admission into it, if you will but look about you. Now is the *day of your visitation*, know and understand it." It is good to be made sensible of our advantages and opportunities, that we may lay hold on them. When the *kingdom of God comes nigh us*, it concerns us to go forth to meet it.

III. The instructions he gives them.

1. They must set out with prayer; (v. 2.) and in prayer,

(1.) They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must *look about*, and see how *great the harvest was*, what abundance of people there were, that wanted to have the gospel preached to them, and were willing to receive it; nay, that had at this time their expectations raised of the coming of the Messiah and of his kingdom. There was corn ready to shed, and be lost, for want of hands to gather it in. Note, Ministers should apply themselves to their work, under a deep concern for *precious souls*, looking upon them as the riches of this world, which ought to be secured for Christ. They must likewise be concerned that the *labourers were so few*. The Jewish teachers were indeed many, but they were not labourers; they did not gather in souls to God's kingdom, but to their own interest and party. Note, Those that are good ministers themselves, wish that there were more good ministers, for there is work for more. It is common for tradesmen not to care how few there are of their own trade; but Christ would have the labourers in his vineyard reckon it a matter of complaint when the *labourers are few*.

(2.) They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God; that he would send them forth as *labourers into his harvest*, who is the *Lord of the harvest*, and that he would send others forth; for if God send them forth, they may hope he will go along with them and give them success. Let them therefore say, as the prophet, (Isa. 6. 8.) *Here am I, send me*. It is desirable to receive our commission from God, and then we may go on boldly.

2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution; "*Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves*; but *go your ways*, and resolve to make the best of it. Your enemies will be as *wolves*, bloody and cruel, and ready to pull you to

pieces; in their threatenings and revilings, they will be as *howling* wolves to *terrify* you, in their persecutions of you, they will be as *ravening* wolves to *tear* you. But you must be as *lambs*, peaceable and patient, though made an easy prey of." It would have been very hard thus to be sent forth as *sheep among wolves*, if he had not endued them with his spirit and courage.

3. They must not incur themselves with a load of provisions, as if they were going a long voyage, but depend upon God and their friends to provide what was convenient for them; "Carry neither a *purse* for money, nor a *scrip* or knapsack for clothes or victuals, nor new *shoes*," (as before to the twelve, *ch. 9. 3.*) and *salute no man by the way*. This command Elisha gave to his servant, when he sent him to see the Shunamite's dead child, 2 Kings 4. 29. Not that Christ would have his ministers to be rude, morose, and ill-mannered; but, (1.) They must go as men *in haste*, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message, and in their way directly to those places must not hinder or retard themselves with needless ceremonies or compliments. (2.) They must go as men of *business*, business that relates to another world, which they must be intent in, and intent upon, and therefore must not entangle themselves with conversation about secular affairs. *Minister verbi es; hoc age*—You are a minister of the word; attend to your office. (3.) They must go as *serious* men, and *men in sorrow*; it was the custom of mourners, in the first seven days of their mourning, not to *salute any*, Job 2. 13. Christ was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and it was fit that by this and other signs his messengers should resemble him, and likewise show themselves affected with the calamities of mankind, which they came to relieve, and touched with a *feeling* of them.

4. They must show, not only their *good-will*, but *God's good-will*, to all to whom they came, and leave the issue and success to him that knows the heart, *v. 5. 6.*

(1.) The charge given them, was, *Whatsoever house they entered into, they must say, Peace be to this house*. Here, [1.] They are supposed to enter into *private houses*; for, being not admitted into the synagogues, they were forced to preach where they could have liberty. And as their public preaching was driven into houses, so thither they carried it. Like their Master, wherever they *visited*, they *preached from house to house*, Acts 5. 42.—20. 20. Christ's church was at first very much a *church in the house*. [2.] They are instructed to say, "*Peace be to this house*, to all under this roof, to this family, and to all that belong to it." *Peace be to you*, was the common form of salutation among the Jews; they must not use it in *formality*, according to custom, to those they meet on the way, because they must use it with *solemnity*, to those whose houses they entered into; "*Salute no man by the way* in compliment, but those into whose house ye enter, say to them, *Peace be to you*, with seriousness and in reality; for this is intended to be more than a compliment." Christ's ministers go into all the world, to say, in Christ's name, *Peace be to you*. *First*, We are to *prophesy* peace to all; to *preach peace by Jesus Christ*, to proclaim the gospel of peace, the covenant of peace, *peace on earth*, and to invite the children of men to come and take the benefit of it. *Secondly*, We are to *pray* for peace to all. We must earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of those we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer; and it may be well to let them know that we do thus pray for them, and bless them in the name of the Lord.

(2.) The success was different, according to the different disposition of those they preached and

prayed for. According as the inhabitants are sons of peace or not, accordingly our peace will, or will not, *rest upon the house*. *Recipiatur ad modum recipientis*—The quality of the receiver determines the nature of the reception. [1.] "You will meet with some that are the *sons of peace*, that by the operations of the divine grace, pursuant to the designations of the divine counsel, are ready to admit the word of the gospel in the light and love of it, and have their hearts made as soft wax to receive the impressions of it. Those are qualified to receive the comforts of the gospel, in whom there is a good work of grace wrought. And as to these, *your peace* shall find them out, and *rest upon them*, your prayers for them shall be heard, the promises of the gospel shall be *confirmed* to them, the privileges of it *conferred* on them, and the fruit of both shall remain and continue with them; a good part that shall not be taken away." [2.] "You will meet with others that are no ways disposed to hear or heed your message; whole houses that have not one *son of peace* in them." Now it is certain that our peace shall *not come upon them*, they have no part nor lot in the matter; the blessing that rests upon the *sons of peace*, shall never come upon the sons of Belial, nor can any expect the blessings of the covenant, that will not come under the bonds of it. But it shall *return to us again*; that is, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God, and discharged our trust. Our prayers, like David's, shall *return into our own bosom*; (Ps. 35. 13.) and we shall have commission to go on in the work. Our peace shall return to us again, not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be communicated to others, to the next we meet with, them that are *sons of peace*.

5. They must *receive* the kindnesses of those that did *entertain* them, and *bid them welcome*; (*v. 7. 8.*) "Those that receive the gospel, will receive you that preach it, and give you entertainment; you must not think to raise estates, but you may depend upon a subsistence; and," (1.) "Be not *shy*; do not suspect your welcome, not be afraid of being troublesome, but *eat and drink heartily such things as they give*; for whatever kindness they show you, it is but a small return for the kindness you do them in bringing the glad tidings of *peace*; you will deserve it, for the labourer is *worthy of his hire*, the labourer in the work of the ministry is so, if he be indeed a *labourer*; and it is not an act of charity, but of justice, in them who are *taught in the word*, to *communicate to them that teach them*." (2.) "Be not *nice* and *curious* in your diet; *eat and drink such things as they give*, (*v. 7.*) *such things as are set before you*, *v. 8.* Be thankful for plain food, and do not find fault, though it be not dressed according to art." It ill becomes Christ's disciples to be *desirous of dainties*. As he has not tied them up to the Pharisees' superstitious fasts, so he has not allowed them the luxurious feasts of the Epicureans. Probably, Christ here refers to the traditions of the elders about their meat, which were so many, that those who observed them, were extremely critical: you could hardly set a dish of meat before them, but there was some scruple or other concerning it; but Christ would not have them to regard those things; but eat what was given them, *asking no question for conscience-sake*.

6. They must *denounce* the judgments of God against those who *rejected* them and their message; "If you *enter into a city*, and they do not *receive you*, if there be none there disposed to hearken to your doctrine, leave them, *v. 10.* If they will not *give you welcome* into their houses, do you *give them warning* in their streets." He orders them to do as (*ch. 9. 5.*) he had ordered the apostles to do; "Say to them, not with rage, or scorn, or resentment, but with compassion to their poor, perishing souls, and

a holy dread of the ruin which they are bringing upon themselves, *Even the dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you, v. 11.* From them do not receive any kindnesses at all, be not beholden to them; it cost that prophet of the Lord dear, who accepted a meal's meat with a prophet in Bethel, 1 Kings 13. 21, 22. Tell them that you will not carry away with you the dust of their city, let them take it to themselves, for *dust they are.*" It shall be a witness for Christ's messengers, that they had been there according to their Master's order; *tender and refusal* were a discharge of their trust. But it shall be a witness against the recusants, that they would not give Christ's messengers any entertainment, no, not so much as water to wash their feet with, but they were forced to wipe off the dust. "But tell them plainly, and bid them be sure of it, *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* Here is a fair offer made you; if you have not the benefit of it, it is your own fault. The gospel is brought to your doors; if you shut your doors against it, your blood is upon your own head. Now that the *kingdom of God is come nigh to you*, if you will not come up to it, and come into it, your sin will be inexcusable, and your condemnation intolerable." Note, The fairer offers we have of grace and life by Christ, the more we shall have to answer for another day, if we slight these offers; *it shall be more tolerable for Sodom, than for that city, v. 12.* The Sodomites indeed rejected the warning given them by Lot; but rejecting the gospel is a more heinous crime, and will be punished accordingly *in that day*; he means the day of judgment, (v. 14.) but calls it, by way of emphasis, *that day*, because it is the last and great day, the day when we must account for all the *days of time*, and have our state determined for the *days of eternity*.

Upon this occasion, the evangelist repeats,

(1.) The particular dream of the *se* cities wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done, which we had, Matth. 11. 20, &c. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all bordering upon the sea of Galilee, where Christ was most conversant, are the places here mentioned. [1.] They enjoyed greater privileges; Christ's *mighty works were done in them*, and they were all gracious works, works of mercy. They were hereby *exalted to heaven*, not only dignified and honoured, but put into a fair way of being happy; they were brought as near heaven as external means could bring them. [2.] God's design in favouring them thus, was to bring them to *repentance and reformation of life*; to *sit in sackcloth and ashes*, both in humiliation for the sins they had committed, and in humility, and a meek subjection to God's government. [3.] Their frustrating of this design, and their receiving of the grace of God therein in vain; it is implied, that they *repented not*, they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ, to think the better of him, or the worse of sin. They did not bring forth fruits agreeable to the advantages they enjoyed. [4.] There was reason to think, morally speaking, that, if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them, and wrought the same miracles among them, that he did in these cities of Israel, they would have repented *long ago*, so speedily would their repentance have been, and that *in sackcloth and ashes*, so deep would it have been. Now, to understand the wisdom of God, in *giving* of the means of grace to those who would not improve them, and *denying* of them to those that would, we must wait for the great day of discovery. [5.] The doom of those who thus receive the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful; they that were thus *exalted*, not making use of their elevation, will be *thrust down to hell*; thrust down with disgrace and dishonour; they will thrust in, to get

into heaven, in the crowd of professors but in vain; they shall be *thrust down*, to their everlasting grief and disappointment, into the lowest hell, and hell will be hell indeed to them. [6.] In the day of judgment Tyre and Sidon will fare better, and it will be more tolerable for them than for these cities.

(2.) The general rule which Christ would go by; as to those to whom he sent his ministers; he will reckon himself treated according as they treated his ministers, v. 16. What is done to the ambassador, is done, as it were, to the prince that sends him. [1.] "*He that heareth you*, and regardeth what you say, *heareth me*, and therein doeth me honour. But," [2.] "*He that despiseth you*, doth in effect *despise me*, and shall be reckoned with, as having put an affront upon me; nay, he *despiseth him that sent me.*" Note, Those who contemn the christian religion, do in effect put a slight upon natural religion, which it is perfective of. And they who *despise* the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they do not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, look scornfully upon them, and turn their backs upon their ministry, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*. 23. And he turned him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see. 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Christ sent forth the seventy disciples as he was going up to Jerusalem, to the *feast of tabernacles*, when he *went up, not openly, but as it were in secret*, (John 7. 10.) having sent abroad so great a part of his ordinary retinue; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was before his return from that feast, and while he was yet at Jerusalem or Bethany, which was hard by, for there he was. (v. 38.) that they, or at least some of them, returned to him. Now here we are told,

I. What account they gave him of the success of their expedition; (v. 17.) *They returned again with joy*; not complaining of the fatigue of their journeys, or of the opposition and discouragement

they met with, but rejoicing in their success, especially in casting out unclean spirits; *Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.* Though the *healing of the sick* only was mentioned in their commission, (v. 19.) yet, no doubt, the *casting out of devils* was included, and in this they had wonderful success. 1. They give Christ the glory of this; *It is through thy name.* Note, All our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ. We must *in his name* enter the lists with our spiritual enemies, and, whatever advantages we gain, he must have all the praise; if the work be done *in his name*, the honour is due *to his name*. 2. They entertain themselves with the comfort of it, they speak of it with an air of exultation; *Even the devils, those potent enemies, are subject to us.* Note, the saints have no greater joy or satisfaction in any of their triumphs than in those over Satan. If devils are *subject to us*, what can stand before us?

11. What acceptance they found with him, and how he entertained this account.

1. He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation; (v. 18.) "My heart and eye went along with you; I took notice of the success you had, and I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven." Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. "I see how it is," saith Christ, "as you get ground, the devil loseth ground." He falls as *lightning falls from heaven*, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, "See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles." They triumphed in casting of devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men; which is called his power *in high places*, Eph. 6. 12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done and was already begun—the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world, by the extirpating of idolatry, and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. Satan *falls from heaven* when he falls from the throne in men's hearts, Acts 26. 18. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would *fly like lightning* through the world, would, wherever it went, pull down Satan's kingdom. *Now is the prince of this world cast out.* Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride; "I saw angels turned into devils by *pride*; (that was the sin for which Satan was cast down from heaven, where he had been an angel of light;) I saw it, and give you an intimation of it, lest you, being *lifted up with pride*, should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride." 1 Tim. 3. 6.

2. He repeated, ratified, and enlarged, their commission; (v. 19.) *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents.* Note, To him that hath, and useth well what he hath, more shall be given. They had employed their power vigorously against Satan, and now Christ intrusts them with greater power. (1.) An *offensive* power, power to *tread on serpents and scorpions*, devils, malignant spirits, the old serpent; "You shall bruise their heads in my name, according to the first promise, Gen. 3. 15. Come, *set your feet on the necks of these enemies*; you shall tread upon these *lions and adders* wherever you meet with them, you shall *trample them under foot*," Ps. 91. 13. You shall *tread upon all the power of the enemy*, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be every where set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom; as the devils have now been *subject to you*, so they shall still be." (2.) A *defensive* power; "Nothing shall by any means hurt you: not serpents or scorpions, if you should be chastised with them, or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you

shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures," as St. Paul was, (Acts 28. 5.) and as is promised, Mark 16. 18. "If wicked men be as *serpents* to you, and you *dwell* among those *scorpions*, (as Ezek. 2. 6.) you may despise their rage, and *tread* upon it; it needs not disturb you, for they have no power against you but what is *given them from above*; they may *hiss*, but they cannot hurt. You may play upon the hole of the asp, for *death itself shall not hurt or destroy*," Isa. 11. 8, 19.—25. 8.

3. He directed them to turn their joy into the right channel; (v. 20.) "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; that they have been so, and shall be still so. Do not rejoice in this, only as it is your honour, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this *only*, or in this *chiefly*, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith." Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them, that their names were written in heaven, for it is the *Lamb's book of life* that they are written in. All believers are, through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance, and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God, is to be valued more than a power to work miracles: for we read of those who did in *Christ's name cast out devils*, as Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day; but they whose names are written in heaven, shall never perish; they are *Christ's sheep*, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a *more excellent way* than speaking with tongues.

4. He offered up a solemn thanksgiving to his Father, for employing such mean people as his disciples were, in such high and honourable services; (v. 21, 22.) this we had before, (Matth. 11. 25—27.) only here it is prefixed, that *in that hour Jesus rejoiced*; it was fit that particular notice should be taken of *that hour*, because there were so few such, for he was a *Man of sorrows*; in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, *in that hour he rejoiced*. Note, Nothing rejoices the heart of the Lord Jesus so much as the progress of the gospel, and its getting ground of Satan, by the conversion of souls to Christ. Christ's joy was a solid, substantial joy, an inward joy, *he rejoiced in spirit*; but his joy, like deep waters, made no noise; it was joy that a stranger did not intermeddle with; before he applied himself to thank his Father, he stirred up himself to rejoice; for as *thankful praise* is the genuine language of *holy joy*, so *holy joy* is the root and spring of *thankful praise*. Two things he gives thanks for:

(1.) For what was revealed by the Father through the Son; (v. 21.) *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth.* In all our adorations of God, we must have an eye to him, both as the Maker of heaven and earth, and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Now that which he gives thanks for is, [1.] That the counsels of God concerning man's reconciliation to himself, were revealed to some of the children of men, who might be fit also to teach others, and it is God that *by his Son* has spoken these things to us, and by his Spirit has revealed them in us; he has revealed that which had been kept secret from the beginning of the world. [2.] That they were revealed to babes, to those who were of mean parts and capacities, whose extraction and education had nothing in it promising, who were but *children in understanding*, till God by his Spirit elevated their faculties, and fur-

nished them with this knowledge, and an ability to communicate it. We have reason to thank God, not so much for the honour he has hereby put upon the babes, as for the honour he has hereby done himself in perfecting strength *out of weakness*. [3.] That at the same time when he revealed them unto the babes, he hid them from the wise and prudent, the Gentile philosophers, the Jewish rabbins. He did not reveal the things of the gospel to them, nor employ them in preaching up his kingdom; thanks be to God that the apostles were not fetched from their schools. For, *First*, They would have been apt to mingle their notions with the doctrine of Christ, which would have corrupted it, as afterward it proved. For christianity was much corrupted by the Platonists' philosophy in the first ages of it, by the Peripatetic in its latter ages, and by the Judaizing teachers at the first planting of it. *Secondly*, If rabbins and philosophers had been made apostles, the success of the gospel would have been ascribed to their learning and wit, and the force of their reasonings and eloquence; and therefore they must not be employed, lest they should have taken too much to themselves, and others should have attributed too much to them: they were passed by for the same reason that Gideon's army was reduced; *The people are yet too many*, Judges 7. 4. Paul indeed was bred a scholar among the wise and prudent; but he became a babe when he became an apostle, and laid aside the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, forgot them all, and made neither show nor use of any other knowledge than that of *Christ and him crucified*, 1 Cor. 2. 2, 4. [4.] That God herein acted in it by way of sovereignty; *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. If God gives his grace and the knowledge of his Son to some that are less likely, and doth not give it to others, whom we should think better able to deliver it with advantage; this must satisfy, so it pleases God, whose thoughts are infinitely above ours. He chooses to intrust the dispensing of his gospel in the hands of those who with a *divine energy* will give it the *setting on*, rather than in theirs who with *human art* will give it the *setting off*.

(2.) For what was *secret* between the *Father* and the *Son*, v. 22. [1.] The vast confidence that the *Father puts* in the *Son*: *All things are delivered to me of my Father*; all wisdom and knowledge; all power and authority; all the grace and comfort which are intended for the chosen remnant; it is all delivered into the hand of the Lord Jesus; in him all fulness must dwell, and from him it must be derived; he is the great *Trustee* that manages all the concerns of God's kingdom. [2.] The good understanding that there is between the *Father* and the *Son*, and their *mutual consciousness*, such as no creature can be admitted to: *No man knows who the Son is*, nor what his mind is, *but the Father, who possessed him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old*; (Prov. 8. 22.) nor *who the Father is*, and what his counsels are, *but the Son, who lay in his bosom from eternity, was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his Delight*, (Prov. 8. 30.) and *he to whom the Son by the Spirit will reveal him*. The gospel is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and to him we owe all the discoveries made us of the will of God for our salvation; he here sneaks of it as that which was a great pleasure to himself, and for being intrusted with which he was very thankful to his Father.

5. He told his disciples how well it was for them, that they had these things revealed to them, v. 23, 24. Having addressed himself to his Father, he turned him to his disciples, designing to make them sensible how much it was for their happiness, as well as for the glory and honour of God, that they know the mysteries of the kingdom, and were employed

to lead others into the knowledge of them; considering, (1.) What a step it is *toward* something better; though the bare knowledge of these things is not saving, yet it puts us in the way of salvation; *Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see*. God therein blesteth them, and if it be not their own fault, it will be an eternal blessedness to them. (2.) What a step it is *above* those that went before them, even the greatest saints, and those that were most the favourites of Heaven; "*Many prophets and righteous men*" (so it is, Matth. 13. 17. *Many prophets and kings*, so it is here) "*have desired to see and hear those things which you are daily and intimately conversant with, and have not seen and heard them.*" The honour and happiness of the New-Testament saints, far exceed those even of the *prophets and kings* of the Old Testament, though they also were *highly favoured*. The general ideas which the Old-Testament saints had, according to the intimations given them, of the graces and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, made them wish a thousand times that their lot had been reserved for those blessed days, and that they might see the substance of those things which they had faint shadows of. Note, The consideration of the great advantages which we have in the New-Testament light, above what they had, who lived in Old-Testament times, should awaken our diligence in the improvement of it; for if it do not, it will aggravate our condemnation for the non-improvement of it.

25. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readeest thou? 27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell?

among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in, and are so here, from Christ, though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

I. We are concerned to know what that good is, which we should do in *this* life, in order to our attaining of *eternal* life. A question to this purport was proposed to our Saviour by a *certain lawyer*, or *scribe*, only with a design to *try* him; not with a desire to be instructed by him, v. 25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?* If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the Scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church, to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* But it lost all its goodness, when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough to speak of the things of God, and to enquire about them, but we must do it with an agreeable concern. If we speak of *eternal life*, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as a matter of discourse, especially as a matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did.

Now, this question being started, observe,

1. How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bid him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he doth not answer him according to the folly of that, out according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question, *What is written in the law? How readest thou?* v. 26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law; the studies of his profession would inform him; let him practice according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of *eternal life*. Note, It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider *what is written in the law*, and *what we read* there. We must have recourse to our Bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ, and walk in the way that is showed us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law *written*, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the *further*, and lasting the *longer*. Having it *written*, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that, when there is occasion, we may be able to tell *what is written in the law*, and *how we read*. To this we must appeal, by this we must try doctrines, and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our touchstone, our rule, our guide. What is written in the law? How do we read? If there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

2. What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, which we must bind ourselves to the observance of, if we would inherit eternal life. He did not, like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but, like a good textuary, fastened upon the two first and greatest commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of *eternal life*, and which included all the rest, v. 27. (1.) We must love God with all our hearts, must look upon him

as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our relation to him; must please ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an *entire* love; he must have our *whole* souls, and must be served with *all that is within us*. We must love nothing *beside* him, but what we love *for* him, and in subordination to him. (2.) We must love our neighbours as *ourselves*, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God *better than ourselves*. We must wish well to all, and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world, and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves, to do to others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour as *ourselves*.

3. Christ's approbation of what he said, v. 28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good, Christ commended; *Thou hast answered right*. Christ himself fastened upon those as the two great commandments of the law: (Matth. 22. 37.) both sides agreed in this. These who do well, shall have praise of the same, and so should those have that speak well; so far is right; but the hardest part of this work yet remains; *This do, and thou shalt live*; thou shalt inherit *eternal life*.

4. His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, *This do, and thou shalt live*, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he *had not done this*, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, which way he should look, to get his sins pardoned; an acknowledgment also that he *could not do this* perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it; but he was *willing to justify himself*, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but saith, in effect, as another did, (Matth. 19. 20.) *All these things have I kept from my youth up*. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to *justify themselves* than to *inform themselves*; rather proudly to show what is good in them, than humbly to see what is bad in them.

II. We are concerned to know who is our neighbour; whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love. This is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might *drop* the former, lest Christ should have forced him, in the prosecution of it, to *condemn himself*, when he was resolved to *justify* himself. As to loving God, he was willing to say no more of it, but as to his neighbour, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule; for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words on this purport, where he saith, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles*, for they are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion. They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not *his neighbour*: indeed they say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but that if they saw a Gentile in *danger of death*, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to *save his life*. Such wicked inference did they draw from that holy covenant of peculiarity which God had distinguished them by, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-favours to the

Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and showed, by a parable, that whosoever we have need to receive kindness *from*, and *find ready* to show us the kindness we need, we cannot but look upon as *our neighbour*; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such, who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

(1.) The parable itself, which represents to us a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Let us see here,

[1.] How he was *abused* by his enemies. The honest man was travelling peaceably upon his lawful occasions in the road, and it was a great road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho, *v.* 30. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable: probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more *affecting*. This poor man *fell among thieves*. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers, who, notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army, did this villainy, doth not appear; but they were very *barbarous*; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition, (for otherwise *what profit was there in his blood?*) they *wounded him*, and left him *half dead*, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at *highwaymen*, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be *taken and destroyed*; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

[2.] How he was *slighted* by these who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest, and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station: nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion, (Heb. 5. 2.) who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to *deliver them that were drawn unto death*; yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and from thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of *passing and re-passing* of priests that way, and Levites their attendants; they came *this way*, and saw the poor wounded man; it is probable that they heard his groans, and could not but perceive that, if he were not helped, he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but *came, and looked on him*; (*v.* 32.) but they *passed by on the other side*; when they saw his case, they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, *Behold, we knew it not*. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity, are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who should, by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

[3.] How he was *succoured and relieved* by a *stranger*, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with; this man had some humanity in him, *v.* 33. The priest had his

heart hardened against one of *his own people*, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of *another people*; when he saw him, he had *compassion on him*, and never took into consideration what country he was of; though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man in *miser*y, and he has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That so great love should be found in a Samaritan, was perhaps thought as great as that faith which Christ admired in a Roman, and in a woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace.

The *compassion* of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, he helped:" (*Jam.* 2. 16.) but when he *drew out his soul*, he *reached forth his hand* also to this poor needy creature, *Isa.* 58. 7, 10. *Prov.* 31. 20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was, *First*, He *went to the poor man*, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he inquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condescended with him. *Secondly*, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better; he *bound up his wounds*, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that purpose; and *poured in oil and wine*, which perhaps he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up; he did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with them. *Thirdly*, He *set him on his own beast*, and went on foot himself, and *brought him to an inn*. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hinderance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste, to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose this Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. *Fourthly*, He *took care of him* in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and it may be, prayed with him. *Nay, Fifthly*, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. *Two pence* of their money was about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of content, to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner.

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended; and doth excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour, toward sinful, miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had *robbed us, stripped us, wounded us*; such is the mischief that sin hath done us; we are by nature more than *half dead*, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, *looks upon us*, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, it *passes by on the other side*, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan, (and they said of him by way of reproach, *He is a Samaritan*;) he has com-

passion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds, (Ps. 147. 3. Isa. 61. 1.) pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, *his own blood*; he takes care of us, and bids us put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this, though he was in need of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, "How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?"

(2.) The application of the parable.

[1.] The truth contained in it is extorted from the lawyer's own mouth. "Now tell me," saith Christ, "*which of these three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves, (v. 36.)* the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Which of those did the neighbour's part?" To this the lawyer would not answer, as he ought to have done; "Doubtless, the Samaritan was;" but, "*He that shewed mercy on him*; doubtless, he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and I cannot but say that it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing."

[2.] The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own conscience; *Go, and do thou likewise*. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are, as Grotius here speaks, *ἴσῳ ἔχει*; *equally binding on both sides*; if one side be bound, the other cannot be loose, as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan do well, that helps a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew does not well, if he do not in like manner help a distressed Samaritan. *Petimusque damusque vicissim—These kind offices are to be reciprocated*. "And therefore *go thou*, and do as the Samaritan did, when ever occasion offers; shew mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thine own opinion and communion in religion. Let thy charity be thus extensive, before thou boastest of having confirmed thyself to that great commandment, of *loving thy neighbour*." This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning, and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought to have puzzled Christ himself; but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan, to learn his duty; "Go, and do like him." Note, it is the duty of every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers particularly; and herein we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

38. Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. 41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. 42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

We may observe in this story,

I. The entertainment which Martha gave to

Christ and his disciples at her house, v. 38. Observe,

1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived; *As they went*, (Christ and his disciples together,) he and they with him *entered into a certain village*. This village was *Bethany*, nigh to Jerusalem, whither Christ was now going up, and he took this in his way. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus went about doing good, (Acts 10. 38.) scattering his benign beams and influences as the true Light of the world. (2.) Wherever Christ went, his disciples went along with him. (3.) Christ honoured the country-villages with his presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities only; for, as he *chose privacy*, so he *countenanced poverty*.

2. His reception at Martha's house; *A certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house*, and bid him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor, that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Zion's King, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it. (2.) There were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visited most frequently. He *loved* this family, (John 11. 5.) and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the token of his love, John 14. 23. (3.) There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses, when he was here upon earth. It is called Martha's house, for, probably, she was a widow, and was the housekeeper. Though it was chargeable to entertain Christ, for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the expense of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service!) Nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him, especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she ran for his name's sake; though there were many that rejected him, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that bid him welcome. Though Christ is every where spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

II. The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, v. 20. *She heard his word*. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into Martha's house, even before entertainment was got for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel: he presently took the chair with solemnity, for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this prize put into her hands, set herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be *swift to hear*. 2. She sat to hear, which denotes a close attention; her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it; not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. *She sat at his feet*, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures; hence Paul is said to be *brought up at the feet of Gamaliel*. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive his word, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet, or be made his footstool; but if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

III. The care of Martha about her domestic affairs. But Martha *was cumbered about much serving*, (v. 40.) and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was—sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment

of Christ and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsomely upon this occasion; she had not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be, when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here,

1. Something *commendable*, which must not be overlooked, (1.) Here was a commendable *respect to our Lord Jesus*; for we have reason to think that it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her good will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ, will think that well bestowed, that is laid out for his honour. (2.) Here was a commendable *care of her household affairs*. It appears by the respect showed to this family among the Jews, (John 11. 19.) that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her, to lay her hand even to the *service* of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families, to *look well to the ways of their household*. The affection of state and the love of ease make many families neglected.

2. Here was something *culpable*; which we must take notice of too. (1.) She was for *much serving*; her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, *περι πολλῶν διακονῶν*—concerning much attendance. Note, It does not become the disciples of Christ to affect *much serving*, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities, in eating and drinking. What need was there of *much serving*, when much less will serve? (2.) She was *cumbered* about it; *περιστάται*—she was just *distracted* with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be *cumbered* with them, nor be disquieted and perplexed by them. Care is good, and duty; but *cumber* is sin, and folly. (3.) She was *then cumbered about much serving*, when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. Note, Worldly business is *then* a snare to us, when it hinders us from serving God, and getting good to our souls.

IV. The *complaint* which Martha made to Christ against her sister Mary, for not *assisting* her, upon this occasion, in the *business of the house*; (v. 40.) "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone? Therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come help me."

Now, 1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a *discovery* of her *worldliness*: it was the language of her inordinate care and cumber. She speaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note, The inordinacy of worldly cares and pursuits is often the occasion of disturbance in families, and of strife and contention among relations. Moreover, those that are eager upon the world themselves, are apt to blame and censure those that are not so too; and while they justify themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others by their serviceableness to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the *main chance*, as they call it. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him to say that she *did well to be angry*. Lord, dost not thou care that my sister has left me to serve alone? It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected

that he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary and Christ, and all, to *care* too, or else she is not pleased. Note, These are not always in the right, that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest we at any time expect that Christ should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels. The cares which he casts upon us, we may cheerfully cast upon him, but not those which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious.

2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have *commended* her for it; should have told her that she was in the right; but, instead of that, she *condemns* her as wanting in her duty. Note, It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion, to meet with hinderances and discouragements from those that are about them; not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's *fasting*, and his dancing *before the ark*, were turned to his *reproach*.

V. The reproof which Christ gave to Martha for her inordinate care, v. 41. She appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her; *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful*.

1. He reproved her; though he was at this time her Guest, and her fault was her over-solicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify her in it, yet he publicly checked her for it. Note, *As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and chastens*. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it. *Nevertheless I have something against thee*.

2. When he reproved her, he called her by her name, *Martha*; for reproofs are *then* most likely to do good, when they are *particular*, applied to particular persons and cases, as Nathan's to David, *Thou art the man*. He repeated her name, *Martha, Martha*; he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are *entangled* in the cares of this life, are not easily *disentangled*. To them we must call again and again, *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord*.

3. That which he reproved her for, was, her being *careful and troubled about many things*. He was not *pleased* that she should think to *please* him with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be *sensual* in using such things, so not to be *selfish* in being willing that others should be *troubled*, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the *intenseness* of her care, "thou art *careful and troubled, divided and disturbed* by thy care;" and for the *extensiveness* of it, "about *many things*; thou dost *grasp* at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many *disappointments*. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and that puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve." Note, Inordinate care and trouble about many things in this world are a common fault among Christ's disciples; they are very displeasing to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was, that *but one thing is needful*. It is a *low* construction which some put upon this, that, whereas Martha was in care to provide *many* dishes of meat, there was occasion but for one: one would be enough. *There is need but of one thing*—*μία ἡ χρυσία*. If we take it so, it firmishes us with a rule of *temperance*, not to affect varieties and dainties, but to be content to sit down to *one* dish of meat, to ha'

of one, Prov. 23. 1—3. It is a *forced* construction which some of the ancients put upon it. *But oneness is needful*, in opposition to distractions. There is need of *one heart*, to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. *The one thing needful* is certainly meant of that which Mary made her choice—*sitting at Christ's feet*, to hear his word. She was troubled about *many things*, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness *unites* the heart, which the world had *divided*. The *many things* she was troubled about, were *needless*, while the *one thing* she neglected, was *needful*. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary for not doing as she did; but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the *judgement of Christ* is *according to truth*. The day will come, when Martha will wish she had sitten where Mary did.

VI. Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety; *Mary hath chosen the good part*. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but, since Martha has appealed to the Master, to him she is willing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; For *one thing is needful*; this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ, and *receive the law* from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a *needful* thing, it is the *one thing needful*; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself; Christ *justified Mary* against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part; *But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me*. Let not us then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ *against us*; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he *applauded* her for her wisdom; *She hath chosen the good part*; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took the better way of *honouring* Christ and of *pleasing* him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for his entertainment in her house. Note,

(1.) A *part with Christ* is a *good part*; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites, (John 13. 8.) who are partakers of Christ, (Heb. 3. 14.) and partakers *with Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. (2.) It is a part that shall *never be taken away from those that have it*. A portion in this life will certainly be *taken away* from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but *nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ*, and our part in that love. Men and devils *cannot* take it away from us, and God and Christ *will not*. (3.) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this *good part*, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must choose that which has a tendency to religion, and reckon that best for us, that is best for our souls. Mary was at her choice, whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and yet the reputation of a fine *housekeeper*, or sit at the feet of Christ, and approve herself a *zealous disciple*; and by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice. (4.) Those who *choose this good*

part, shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, I. Christ teaches his disciples to pray, and quickens and encourages them to be frequent, instant, and importunate, in prayer, v. 1. 13. II. He fully answers the blasphemous imputation of the Pharisees, who charged him with casting out devils by virtue of a compact and confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and shows the absurdity and wickedness of it, v. 14. 26. III. He shows the honour of obedient disciples to be greater than that of his own mother, v. 27, 28. IV. He applauds the men of that generation for their infidelity and obstinacy, notwithstanding all the means of conviction offered to them, v. 29. 36. V. He severely reproved the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy, their pride, and their oppressing of the consciences of those that submitted to them, and their hating and persecuting of those that witnessed against their wickedness, v. 37. 54.

I. **AND** it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread: 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us: And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. 5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a brute, is a monster, that never prays; that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels his favour, nor owns his dependence upon him. One great design therefore of christianity, is, *to assist us in prayer*; to enforce the duty upon us, to instruct us

in it, and encourage us to expect advantage by it. Now here,

I. We find Christ himself *praying in a certain place*, probably where he used to pray, v. 1. As God, he was *prayed to*; as Man, he *prayed*; and though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience. This evangelist has taken particular notice of Christ's *praying often*, more than any other of the evangelists: when he was baptized (ch. 3. 21.) he was *praying*; he *withdrew into the wilderness, and prayed*; (ch. 5. 16.) he *went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer*; he was *alone praying*; (ch. 9. 18.) soon after, he *went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed, he was transfigured*; (ch. 9. 28, 29.) and here he was *praying in a certain place*. Thus, like a genuine Son of David, he *gave himself unto prayer*, Ps. 109. 4. Whether Christ was now *alone* praying, and the disciples only knew that he was so, or whether he prayed with them, is uncertain; it is most probable that they were joining with him.

II. His disciples applied themselves to him for direction in prayer; when he was praying, they asked, *Lord, teach us to pray*. Note, The gifts and graces of others should excite us to covet earnestly the same. Their zeal should provoke us to a holy imitation and emulation; why should not we do as well as they? Observe, they came to him with this request, *when he ceased*; for they would not disturb him when he was at prayer, no, not with this good motion. Every thing is beautiful in its season. *One of his disciples*, in the name of the rest; and perhaps by their appointment, said, *Lord teach us*. Note, Though Christ is *apt to teach*, yet he will for this be inquired of, and his disciples must attend him for instruction.

Now, I. Their request is, "*Lord teach us to pray*"; give us a rule or model by which to go in praying, and put words into our mouths." Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to apply themselves to him for instruction in prayer. *Lord, teach us to pray*, is itself a good prayer, and a very needful one, for it is a hard thing to *pray well*; and it is Jesus Christ only that can *teach us*, by his word and Spirit, *how to pray*. "Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; Lord, give me praying graces, that I may serve God acceptably in prayer; Lord, teach me to pray in proper words; give me a mouth and wisdom in prayer, that I may speak as I ought; *teach me what I shall say*."

2. Their plea is, "*As John also taught his disciples*." He took care to instruct his disciples in this necessary duty, and we would be taught as they were, for we have a better Master than they had." Dr. Lightfoot's notion of this, is, That, whereas the Jews' prayers were generally adorations, and praises of God, and doxologies, John taught his disciples such prayers as were more filled with petitions and requests; for it is said of them that they did *δευόμενοι*—*make prayers*, Luke 5. 33. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary. "Now, Lord, teach us those, to be added to those benedictions of the name of God, which we have been accustomed to from our childhood." According to this sense, Christ did there teach them a prayer consisting wholly of petitions, and even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the *Amen*, which was usually said in the *giving of thanks*, (1 Cor. 14. 16.) and in the Psalms, is added to doxologies only. This disciple needed not to have urged John Baptist's example: Christ was more ready to teach than ever John Baptist was, and particularly taught to pray better than John did, or could, teach his disciples.

III. Christ gave them direction; much the same that he had given them before in his sermon upon

the mount, Matth. 6. 9, &c. We cannot think that they had forgotten it, but they thought to have had further and fuller instructions, and he did not, as yet, think fit to give them any; when the Spirit should be poured out upon them from on high, they would find all their requests couched in these few words, and would be able, in words of their own, to expatiate and enlarge upon them. In Matthew he had directed them to pray *after this manner*; here, *When ye pray, say*; which intimates that the Lord's prayer was intended to be used both as a form of prayer and a directory.

1. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, by which it appears that it was not the design of Christ that we should be *tied up* to these very words, for then there would have been no variation. Here is one difference in the translation only, which ought not to have been, when there is none in the original, and that is in the third petition; *as in heaven, so in earth*; whereas the words are the very same, and in the same order as in Matthew; but there is a difference in the fourth petition; in Matthew we pray, "Give us daily bread *this day*"; here "Give it us *day by day*"—*καὶ ἡμεῖς*. *Day by day* is, "Give us *each day* the bread which our bodies require, as they call for it;" not, "Give us *this day* bread for many days to come;" but as the Israelites had manna, "Let us have bread *to-day* for *to-day*, and *to-morrow* for *to-morrow*"; for thus we may be kept in a *continual dependence* upon God, as children upon their parents, and may have our mercies fresh from his hand daily, and may find ourselves under *fresh obligations* to do the work of every day in the day, according as the *duty of the day requires*, because we have from God the supplies of every day in the day, according as the *necessity of the day requires*.

Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition. In Matthew it is, *Forgive us our debts*, as we forgive: here it is, *Forgive us our sins*; which proves that our sins are our debts; for *we forgive*, not that our forgiving of those that have offended us, can *merit* pardon from God, or be an inducement to him to forgive us; (he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake;) but this is a very necessary qualification for forgiveness; and if God have wrought it in us, we may plead that work of his grace, for the enforcing of our petitions for the pardon of our sins; "Lord, forgive us, for thou hast thyself inclined us to forgive others." Here is another addition here; we plead not only in general, *We forgive our debtors*, but in particular, "*We profess to forgive every one that is indebted to us, without exception. We so forgive our debtors, as not to bear malice or ill-will to any, but true love to all, without any exception whatsoever.*"

Here also the doxology in the close is wholly omitted, and the *Amen*; for Christ would leave them at liberty to use that, or any other doxology fetched out of David's psalms; or rather, he left a vacuum here, to be filled up by a doxology more peculiar to the christian institutes, ascribing glory to *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*.

2. Yet it is, for substance, the same; and we shall therefore here only gather up some general lessons from it.

(1.) That in prayer we ought to come to God as children to a *Father*, a common Father to us and *all mankind*, but in a peculiar manner a Father to all the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to him with a humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

(2.) That at the same time, and in the same petitions wherein we address to God for *ourselves*, we should take in with us *all the children of men*, as God's creatures and our fellow-creatures. A *rooted*

principle of *catholic charity*, and of *christian sanctified humanity*, should go along with us, and dictate to us throughout this prayer, which is so worded as to be accommodated to that noble principle.

(3.) That in order to the confirming of the habit of heavenly-mindedness in us, which ought to act and govern us in the whole course of our conversation, we should, in all our devotions, with an eye of faith look *heaven-ward*, and view the God we pray to as our Father in *heaven*, that we may make the *upper world* more familiar to us, and may ourselves become better prepared for the future state.

(4.) That in prayer, as well as in the tenor of our lives, we must *seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, by ascribing honour to his name, his *holy name*, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world, and that of his grace in the church. O that both the one and the other may be more manifested, and we and others more manifestly brought into subjection to both !

(5.) That the *principles and practices* of the *upper world*, the *unseen world*, (which therefore by faith only we are *affrized of*;) are the *great original*—the ἀρχή, to which we should desire the principles and practices of this *lower world*, both in others and in ourselves, may be more conformable. Those words, *As in heaven, so on earth*, refer to all the three first petitions; “Father, let thy name be sanctified and glorified, and thy kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth that is now alienated from thy service, as it is in yonder heaven that is entirely devoted to thy service.”

(6.) That those who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that *all other things*, as far as to Infinite Wisdom seems good, *shall be added to them*, and they may in faith pray for them. If our first chief desire and care be, that God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done, we may then come boldly to the throne of grace for our *daily bread*, which will then be sanctified to us, when we are sanctified to God, and God is sanctified by us.

(7.) That in our prayers for temporal blessings we must *moderate* our desires, and confine them to a *competency*. The expression here used of *day by day*, is the very same with our *daily bread*; and therefore some think that we must look for another signification of the word *ἐπιβίωσις*, than that of *daily*, which we give it, and that it means our *necessary bread*; that bread that is *sui*ted to the cravings of our nature; the fruit that is brought out of the earth for our bodies that are made of the earth, and are earthly, Ps. 104. 14.

(8.) That sins are debts which we are daily contracting, and which therefore we should every day pray for the forgiveness of. We are not only going behind with our rent every day by *omissions* of duty, and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law, as well as the forfeiture of our bond, by our *commissions*; every day adds to the score of our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy, that we have so much encouragement given us to come every day to the throne of grace, to pray for the pardon of our sins of daily infirmity. God *multiplies to pardon* beyond seventy times seven.

(9.) That we have no reason to expect, nor can with any confidence pray, that God would forgive our sins against him, if we do not *sincerely*, and from a truly christian principle of *charity*, forgive those that have at any time affronted us, or been injurious to us. Though the *words of our mouth* be even this prayer to God, if the *meditation of our heart* at the same time be, as often as it is, malice and revenge to our brethren, we are not accepted, nor can we expect an answer of peace.

(10.) That temptations to sin should be as much

dreaded and deprecated by us as ruin by sin; and it should be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us, as to get the guilt of sin removed from us; and though temptation may be a charming, fawning, flattering thing, we must be as earnest with God, that we may not be led into that, as that we may not be led by that to sin, and by sin to ruin.

Lastly, That God is to be depended upon, and sought unto, for our deliverance *from all evil*; and we should pray, not only that we may not be left to ourselves to run into evil, but that we may not be left to Satan, to bring evil upon us. Dr. Lightfoot understands it of being delivered *from the evil one*, that is, the devil, and suggests that we should pray particularly against the apparitions of the devil and his possessions. The disciples were employed to *cast out devils*, and therefore were concerned to pray that they might be guarded against the particular spite he would always be sure to have against them.

IV. He stirs up and encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy, in prayer; by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, v. 5—8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be loath to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humour, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse; the door is shut and locked, his children are asleep, in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he makes a noise, he shall disturb them; his servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and for his own part, he shall catch cold, if he rise to give him; but his neighbour will have no nay, and therefore he continues *knocking* still, and tells him he will do so till he has what he comes for; so that he must give it him, to be rid of him; *he will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity*. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that, ch. 18. 1. *That men ought always to pray, and not to faint*. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity, we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity, because they are *displeased* with it, but with God, because he is *pleased* with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us.

(1.) To direct us in prayer. [1.] We must come to God with *boldness and confidence* for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him. [2.] We must come for *bread*, for that which is *needful*, and which we cannot be without. [3.] We must come to him by prayer *for others* as well as *for ourselves*. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord *accepted Job*, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42. 10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to *feed many with our lips*, to entertain and edify those that come to us. [4.] We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread, if his friend had not come in *unexpectedly*. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. [5.] We ought to *continue instant* in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(2.) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man, who was *any* at it much more with a God, who is infinitely more kind

and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he does not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of nature to take comfort from, but the word which he has spoken; (v. 9, 10.) "*Ask, and it shall be given you*: either the thing itself you shall ask, or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given in." We had this before, Matth. 7. 7, 8. *I say unto you*. We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only *ask*, but we must *seek*, in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours; and in *asking and seeking*, we must continue *pressing*, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in concert, but by our particular prayers; *Every one that asketh, receiveth*, even the meanest saint that asketh in faith. *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him*, Ps. 34. 6. When we ask of God those things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done, in these requests we must be importunate, *must never hold our peace day or night*; we must not *keep silence*, nor *give God any rest*, until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

V. He gives us both instruction and encouragement in prayer, from the consideration of our relation to God as a Father. Here is,

1. An *appeal to the bowels of earthly fathers*; "Let any of you that is a father, and knows the heart of a father, a father's affection to a child, and care for a child, tell me, if his son ask bread for his breakfast, will he give him a stone to breakfast on? If he ask a fish for his dinner, (when it may be a fish-day,) will he for a fish give him a serpent, that will poison and sting him? Or, if he shall ask an egg for his supper, (an egg and to bed,) will he offer him a scorpion? You know you could not be so unnatural to your own children," v. 11, 12.

2. An *application of this to the blessings of our heavenly Father*; (v. 13.) *If ye then, being evil, give, and know how to give, good gifts to your children, much more shall God give you the Spirit*. He shall give good things; so it is in Matthew. Observe,

(1.) The direction he gives us what to *pray for*; we must ask for the *Holy Spirit*, not only as necessary in order to our *praying well*, but as inclusive of all the good things we are to pray for; we need no more to make us happy, for the Spirit is the Worker of spiritual life, and the Earnest of eternal life. Note, The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are every one of us concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for.

(2.) The *encouragement* he gives us to hope that we shall speed in this prayer; *Your heavenly Father will give*. It is in his power to give the Spirit; he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that one; but that is not all, it is in his promise, the gift of the Holy Ghost is in the covenant, Acts 2. 33, 38. And it is here inferred from parents' readiness to supply their children's needs, and gratify their desires, when they are natural and proper. If the child ask for a serpent, or a scorpion, the father, in kindness, denies him, but not if he ask for what is needful, and will be nourishing. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for bread, for the Spirit is the Staff of life; nay, he is the Author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents, though evil, be yet so kind, if they, though weak,

be yet so knowing, that they not only give, but give with discretion, give what is best, in the best manner and time, much more shall your heavenly Father, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh both in wisdom and goodness, give you his Holy Spirit. If earthly parents be willing to lay out for the education of their children, to whom they design to leave their estates, much more will your heavenly Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he has predestinated to the inheritance of sons.

14. And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. 15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and a house divided against a house, falleth. 18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: 22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The substance of these verses we had, Matth. 12. 22, &c. Christ is here giving a general proof of his divine mission, by a particular proof of his power over Satan, his conquest of whom was an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was, to destroy the works of the devil; here too he gives an earnest of the success of that undertaking. He is here casting out a devil that made the poor possessed man dumb; in Matthew we are told that he was blind and dumb. When the devil was forced out by the word of Christ, the dumb spake immediately, echoed to Christ's word, and the lips were opened to show forth his praise. Now,

I. Some were affected with this miracle. The people wondered; they admired the power of God, and especially that it should be exerted by the hand of one who made so small a figure, that one who

laid the work of the Messiah, should have so little of that pomp of the Messiah, which they expected.

II. Others were *offended* at it, and to justify their infidelity, suggested that it was by virtue of a league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, that he did this, v. 15. It seems, in the devil's kingdom there are chiefs, which supposes that there are subalterns. Now they would have it *thought*, or *said* at least, that there was a correspondence settled between Christ and the devil, that the devil should have the advantage in the main, and be victorious at last, but that, in order hereto, in particular instances, he should yield Christ the advantage, and retire by consent. Some, to *corroborate* this suggestion, and *confront* the evidence of Christ's miraculous power, challenged him to *give them a sign from heaven*, (v. 16.) to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the clouds, such as was upon mount Sinai when the law was given; as if a *sign from heaven*, not disprovable by any sagacity of theirs, could not have been given as well by a compact and collusion with the prince of the power of the air, who works with power and lying wonders, as the casting out of a devil; nay, that would not have been any present prejudice to his interest, which this manifestly was. Note, Obstinate infidelity will never be at a loss for something to say in its own excuse, though ever so frivolous and absurd.

Now Christ here returns a full and direct answer to this cavil of theirs; in which he shows.

1. That it can by no means be imagined that such a subtle prince as Satan is, should ever give into measures that had such a tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom, v. 17, 18. What they objected they kept to themselves, afraid to speak it, lest it should be answered and baffled; but Jesus *knew their thoughts*, even when they industriously thought to conceal them; and he said, "You yourselves cannot but see the groundlessness, and, consequently, the spitefulness, of this charge; for it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by every day's experience that no interest can stand, that is divided against itself; not the more *public* interest of a kingdom; nor the *private* interest of a house or family; if either the one or the other be *divided against itself*, it cannot stand. Satan would herein act against himself; not only by the miracle which turned him out of possession of the bodies of people, but much more in the doctrine which the miracle was wrought for the explication and confirmation of, which had a direct tendency to the ruin of Satan's interest in the minds of men, by mortifying sin, and turning men to the service of God. Now, if Satan should thus be *divided against himself*, he would hasten his own overthrow, which you cannot suppose an enemy to do, that acts so subtly for his own establishment, and is so solicitous to have his kingdom stand."

2. That it was a very partial ill-natured thing for them to impute that in him to a compact with Satan, which yet they applauded and admired in others that were of their own nation; (v. 19.) "By whom do your sons cast them out? Some of your own kindred, as Jews, nay and some of your own followers, as Pharisees, have undertaken, in the name of the God of Israel, to cast out devils, and they were never charged with such a hellish combination as I am charged with." Note, It is gross hypocrisy to condemn that in those who *reprove* us, which yet we allow of in those that *flatter* us.

3. That, in opposing the conviction of this miracle, they were enemies to themselves, stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, for they thrust from them the kingdom of God; (v. 20.) "If I with the finger of God cast out devils, as you may assure yourselves I do, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you; the kingdom of the Messiah offers itself and all its advantages to you, and if you receive

it not, it is at your peril." In Matthew it is *by the Spirit of God*, here *by the finger of God*; the Spirit is the arm of the Lord, Isa. 53. 1. His greatest and most mighty works were wrought by *his Spirit*; but if the Spirit in this work is said to be the *finger of the Lord*, it perhaps may intimate how easily Christ did, and could conquer Satan, even with the *finger of God*, the exerting of the divine power in a less and lower degree than in many other instances. He needed not make bare his *everlasting arm*; that roaring lion, when he pleases, is crushed, like a moth, with a touch of a *finger*. Perhaps here is an allusion to the acknowledgement of Pharaoh's magicians, when they were run aground; (Exod. 8. 19.) This is the *finger of God*. "Now if the kingdom of God be herein come to you, and you will be found by those cavils and blasphemies fighting against it, it will come upon you as a victorious force which you cannot stand before."

4. That his casting out of devils was really the destroying of them and their power, for it confirmed a doctrine which had a direct tendency to the ruining of his kingdom, v. 21, 22. Perhaps there had been some who had cast out the inferior devils by compact with Beelzebub their chief; but that was without any real damage or prejudice to Satan and his kingdom; what he lost one way he gained another. The devil and such exorcists *played booty*, as we say, and while the forlorn hope of his army gave ground, the main body thereby gained ground; the interest of Satan in the souls of men was not weakened by it in the least. But when Christ cast out devils, he needed not do it by any compact with them, for he was *stronger than they*, and could do it *by force*, and did it so as to ruin Satan's power, and blast his great design by that doctrine and that grace which break the power of sin, and so rout Satan's main body, take from him all his armour, and divide his spoils, which no one devil ever did to another, or ever will. Now this is applicable to Christ's victories over Satan, both in the world and in the hearts of particular persons, by that power which went along with the preaching of his gospel, and doth still. And so we may observe here,

(1.) The miserable condition of an unconverted sinner. In his heart, which was fitted to be a habitation of God, the devil has his palace; and all the powers and faculties of the soul, being employed by him in the service of sin, are his goods. Note, [1.] The heart of every unconverted sinner is the *devil's palace*, where he *resides*, and where he *rules*; he works in the children of disobedience. The heart is a palace, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the *devil's palace*. His lusts are done, his interests are served, and the Militia is in his hands; he usurps the throne in the soul. [2.] The devil, as a strong man armed, keeps this palace, does all he can to secure it to himself, and to fortify it against Christ. All the prejudices with which he hardens men's hearts against truth and holiness, are the strong holds which he erects for the keeping of his palace; this palace is his garrison. [3.] There is a kind of peace in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a strong man armed, keeps it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure and merry, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state, nor any dread of the judgment to come; he flatters himself in his own eyes, and cries peace to himself. Before Christ appeared, all was quiet, because all went one way; but the preaching of the gospel disturbed the peace of the devil's palace.

(2.) The wonderful change that is made in conversion, which is Christ's victory over this usurper. Satan is a strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, as God, as Mediator. If we speak of strength, he is strong; more are with us than against us.

Observe, [1.] The manner of this victory. *He comes upon him* by surprise, when his *goods are in peace*, and the devil thinks it is all *his own* for ever, and *overcomes* him. Note, The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it, and dominion over it. [2.] The evidences of this victory. *First, He takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted.* The devil is a *confident* adversary, he *trusts* to his *armour*, as Pharaoh to his rivers; (Ezek. 29. 3.) but Christ disarms him. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the eyes opened, the heart humbled and changed, and made serious and spiritual, then Satan's *armour is taken away*. *Secondly, He divides the spoils; he takes possession* of them for himself; all the endowments of mind or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him; yet that is not all, he *makes a distribution* of them among his followers, and, having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.

Now from hence he infers, that, seeing the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him, and to follow his guidance, to receive his gospel, and come heartily into the interests of it, for otherwise they would justly be reckoned as siding with the enemy; (v. 23.) *He that is not with me, is against me.* Those therefore who rejected the doctrine of Christ, and slighted his miracles, were looked upon as adversaries to him, and in the devil's interest.

5. That there was a vast difference between the devil's *going out* by compact and his being *cast out* by compulsion. Those out of whom Christ *cast him*, he never entered into again, for so was Christ's charge; (Mark 9. 25.) whereas, if he had *gone out* whenever he saw fit, he would have made a re-entry, for that is the way of the unclean spirit, when he voluntarily and with design *goes out of a man*, v. 24—26. The prince of the devils may *give leave*, nay, may *give order* to his forces to retreat, or make a feint, to draw the poor deluded soul into an *ambush*; but Christ, as he gives a *total*, so he gives a *final*, defeat to the enemy.

In this part of the argument he has a further reach, which is, to represent the state of those who have had fair offers made them, among whom, and in whom, God has begun to break the devil's power, and overthrow his kingdom, but they reject his counsel against themselves, and relapse into a state of subjection to Satan. Here we have,

(1.) The condition of a *formal hypocrite*, his *bright side*, and his *dark side*; his heart still remains the *devil's house*, he calls it his own, and he retains his interest in it; and yet, [1.] *The unclean spirit is gone out.* He was not *driven out* by the power of converting grace, there was none of that *violence* which the kingdom of heaven suffers; but he *went out*, withdrew for a time, so that the man seemed not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so followed with his temptations. Satan is *gone*, or has *turned himself into an angel of light*. [2.] *The house is swept* from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's; a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's; and a partial reformation, as Herod's. There are those that have *escaped the pollutions of the world*, and yet are still under the power of the *god of this world*, 2 Pet. 2. 20. The house is *swept*, but it is not *washed*; and Christ hath said, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me*; the house must be *washed* or it is *none of his*. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that *besets* the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched. It

is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, Matth. 23. 25. It is *swept*, but the *leprosy is in the wall*, and will be till something more be done. [3.] The house is *garnished* with common gifts and graces. It is not *furnished* with any true grace, but *garnished* with the pictures of all graces. Simon Magus was *garnished* with faith; Balaam with good desires; Herod with a respect for John; the Pharisees with many external performances. It is *garnished*, but it is like a *potsherd covered with silver dross*, it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is *garnished*, but the property is not altered; it was never surrendered to Christ, nor inhabited by the Spirit. Let us therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short.

(2.) Here is the condition of a *final apostate*, into whom the devil returns after he had *gone out*; (v. 26.) *Then goes he, and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself*; a certain number for an uncertain, as *seven devils* are said to be cast out of Mary Magdalene: *seven wicked spirits* are opposed to the *seven spirits of God*; (Rev. 3. 1.) these are said to be more wicked than himself. It seems, even devils are not all alike wicked; probably, the degrees of their wickedness, now that they are *fallen*, are as the degrees of their holiness were, while they stood. When the devil would do mischief most effectually, he employs those that are more mischievous than himself. These *enter in* without any difficulty or opposition, they are welcomed, and they *dwell there*, where they *work*, there they *rule*; and the *last state of that man is worse than the first*. Note, [1.] Hypocrisy is the high road to apostacy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, the shows and shadows will *come to nothing*; those that have not set that right, will not long be steadfast; where secret haunts of sin are kept up under the cloak of a visible profession, conscience is debauched; God is provoked to withdraw his restraining grace, and the *close hypocrite* commonly proves an *open* apostate. [2.] The last state of such is *worse than the first*, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostates are usually the worst of men, the most vain and profligate, the most bold and daring; their consciences are seared, and their sins of all others the most aggravated. God often sets marks of his displeasure upon them in *this world*, and in the other world they will *receive the greater damnation*. Let us therefore hear, and fear, and hold fast our integrity.

27. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond doth, to that of Christ's mother and brethren desiring to speak with him, (for this evangelist also had related that some time ago, ch. 8. 19.) but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for an instruction.

1. The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the Scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of some quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake; (v. 27.) *As he spake these things*, with a convincing force and evidence, a cer-

tan, women of the company was so pleased to hear now he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame, and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, "*Blessed is the womb that bare thee.*" What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! Surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that hath him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to be the mother of one that *speaks as never man spake*; that has so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth." This was *well said*, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine; and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said, (ch. 1. 48.) *All generations shall call me blessed*; some even of this generation, had as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an *Honour*, 1 Pet. 2. 7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify the honour of his natural kindred, and so *know him after the flesh*, whereas we must now henceforth *know him so no more*.

2. The occasion which Christ took from thence to promanance *them* more happy, who are his faithful and obedient followers, than she was, who bare and nursed him. He does not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mother; but leads her from this to that which was of a higher consideration, and which more concerned her, *Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it*, v. 28. He thinks them so; and his saying that they are so, makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a *check* to her, for doting so much upon his bodily presence, and his human nature, partly as an *encouragement* to her to hope that she might be as happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would *hear the word of God, and keep it*. Note, Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet these only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it, and *keep it*; that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

29. And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign: and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 33. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is

full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Christ's discourse in these verses shows two things.

I. What is the *sign* we may expect from God, for the *confirmation* of our faith. The great and most convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and which they were yet to wait for, after the many signs that had been given them, was, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is,

1. A reproof to the people for demanding other signs than what had already been given them in great plenty; (v. 29.) *The people were gathered thick together*, a vast crowd of them, expecting not so much to have their consciences informed by the doctrine of Christ, as to have their curiosity gratified by his miracles. Christ knew what brought such a multitude together; they came *seeking a sign*, they came to gaze, to have something to talk of when they came home; and it is an *evil generation* which nothing will awaken and convince, no not the most sensible demonstrations of divine power and goodness.

2. A promise that yet there should be *one sign* more given them, different from any that had yet been given them, even the *sign of Jonas the prophet*, which in Matthew is explained, as meaning the *resurrection of Christ*. As Jonas being cast into the sea, and lying there three days, and then coming up alive, and preaching repentance to the Ninevites, was a sign to them, upon which they turned from their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection of Christ, and the preaching of his gospel immediately after to the Gentile world, be the last warning to the Jewish nation; if they be provoked to a *holy jealousy* by that, well and good: but if that do not work upon them, let them look for nothing but utter ruin. *The Son of man shall be a Sign to this generation*; (v. 30.) a Sign speaking to them, though a Sign spoken against by them.

3. A warning to them to improve this Sign, for it was at their peril if they did not.

(1.) *The queen of Sheba* would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their unbelief, v. 31. She was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that, notwithstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive against foreigners, she came from the uttermost parts of the earth, to *hear his wisdom*, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship, which is upon record, to her honour; and behold, a *greater than Solomon is here*, *οὐδὲν Σολομῶνι—more than a Solomon is here*; that is, saith Dr. Hammond, more of wisdom and more heavenly divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's words or writings; and yet these wretched Jews will give no manner of regard to what Christ saith to them, though he be in the midst of them.

(2.) The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impenitency; (v. 32.) *They repented at the preaching of Jonas*; but here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonas, is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a much sorer ruin than that of Nineveh, and yet none are startled by it, to turn *from their evil way*, as the Ninevites did.

II. He shows what is the *sign* that God expects,

from us, for the *evidencing* of our faith; and that is, the serious practice of that religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe,

1. They had the *light* with all the advantage they could desire. For God, having *lighted the candle* of the gospel, did not put it in a *secret place*, or *under a bushel*; Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both Christ and his ministers, wisdom and her maidens, cry in the *chief places of concourse*, v. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a *candlestick*, so that all that come in may see it, and may see by it where they are, and whither they are going, and what is the true and sure and only way to happiness.

2. Having the *light*, their concern was, to have the *sight*; or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the *object* ever so *clear*, if the *organ* be not *right*, we are never the better; (v. 34.) *The light of the body is the eye*, which receives the light of the candle, when it is brought into the room. So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as this is, accordingly the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; accordingly it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

(1.) If this eye of the soul be *single*, if it see *clear*, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning them, if it aim at truth only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister bylooks and intentions, the *whole body*, that is, the whole soul, is *full of light*, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both *knowledge and joy*; this denotes the same thing with that of the good ground, *receiving the word, and understanding it*. If our understanding admit the gospel in its full light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to *fill* it. And if the soul be thus *filled* with the light of the gospel, *having no part dark*; if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsanctified, then the *whole soul shall be full of light*, full of holiness and comfort; *it was darkness itself*, but is now light in the Lord, *as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light*, v. 36. Note, The gospel will come into those souls whose doors and windows are thrown open to receive it; and where it comes, it will bring light with it. But,

(2.) If the *eye of the soul be evil*, if the judgment be *biased* and *biassed* by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures; if the understanding be *prejudiced* against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them, though brought with ever so convincing an evidence, it is no wonder that the *whole body*, the whole soul is *full of darkness*, v. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort, from the gospel, that wilfully shut their eyes against it; and what hope is there of such, what remedy for them? The inference from hence therefore is, (v. 35.) *Take heed that the light which is in thee, be not darkness*. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your inquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light and love and power of it; and not as the men of *this generation* whom Christ preached to, who never sincerely desired to know God's will, or designed to do it, and therefore no wonder that they *walked on in darkness*, wandered *endlessly* and perished *eternally*.

37. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he

went in, and sat down to meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? 41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* are not aware of *them*. 45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. 52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Christ here saith many of those things to a Pharisee and his guests in a *private* conversation at table, which he afterward said in a *public* discourse in the temple; (Matth. 23.) for what he said in public and private, was of a *piece*. He would not say that in a corner, which he durst not repeat and stand to in the great congregation; nor would he give those reproofs

in any sort of sinners in general, which he durst not apply to them in particular as he met with them; for he was, and is, the *faithful Witness*. Here is,

I. Christ's going to dine with a Pharisee that very civilly invited him to his house: (v. 37.) *As he spake*, even while he was speaking, a *certain Pharisee* interrupted him with a request to him to come and dine with him, to come *forthwith*, for it was dinner-time. We are willing to hope that the Pharisee was so well pleased with his discourse, that he was willing to show him respect, and desirous to have more of his company, and therefore gave him this invitation, and bid him truly welcome; and yet we have some cause to suspect that it was with an *ill design*, to break off his discourse with the people, and to have an opportunity of ensnaring him, and getting something out of him which might serve for matter of accusation or reproach, v. 53, 54. We know not the mind of this Pharisee; but, whatever it was, Christ knew it: if he meant ill, he shall know Christ doth not fear him, if well, he shall know Christ is willing to do him good: so he went in and sat down to meat. Note, Christ's disciples must learn of him to be *conversable*, and not *morose*. Though we have need to be *cautious* what company we keep, yet we need not be *rigid*, nor must we therefore go out of the world.

II. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, as those of that sort had sometimes done at the disciples of Christ for not *washing before dinner*, v. 38. He wondered that a Man of his sanctity, a Prophet, a Man of so much devotion, and such a strict conversation, would sit down to meat, and not first wash his hands, especially being newly come out of a mixt company, and there being in the Pharisee's dining-room, no doubt, all accommodations set ready for it, so that he needs not fear being *troublesome*; and the Pharisee himself and all his guests, no doubt, *washing*, so that he could not be *singular*; what, and yet not wash? What harm had it been, if he had washed? Was it not strictly commanded by the canons of their church? It was so, and therefore Christ would not do it, because he would witness against their assuming of a power to impose that as a matter of religion, which God commanded them not. The ceremonial law consisted in *divers washings*, but this was none of them, and therefore Christ would not practise it, no not in *complaisance* to the Pharisee who invited him, nor though he knew that offence would be taken at his omitting of it.

III. The sharp reproof which Christ, upon this occasion, gave to the Pharisees, without begging pardon even of the Pharisee whose guest he now was; for we must not flatter our best friends in any evil thing.

1. He reproves them for placing religion so much in those instances of it, which are only external, and fall under the eye of man, while those were not only *postponed*, but quite *expunged*, which respect the soul, and fall under the eye of God, v. 39, 40. Now observe here, (1.) The absurdity they were guilty of; "*Ye Pharisees make clean the outside only, ye wash your hands with water, but do not wash your hearts from wickedness*; those are full of covetousness and malice, covetousness of men's goods, and malice against good men." Those would never be reckoned *cleanly* servants, that wash only the *outside of the cup* their master drinks out of, or the *platter* he eats out of, and take no care to make the *inside clean*, which immediately affects the meat and drink, and mingles with them all the filth that may adhere. The frame and temper of the mind in every religious service are the *inside* of the cup and platter; the impurity of that infects the services, and therefore to keep ourselves free from scandalous enormities, and yet to live under the dominion of spiritual wickedness, is as great an affront to God as

it would be for a servant that gives the cup into his master's hand, clean wiped from all the dust on the outside, but *within* full of cobwebs and spiders. *Ravens* and *wickedness*, that is, *reigning worldliness* and *reigning spitefulness*, which men think they can find some cloak and cover for, are the dangerous damning sins of many who have made the *outside of the cup* clean from the more gross and scandalous and inexcusable sins of whoredom and drunkenness. (2.) A particular instance of the absurdity of it; (v. 40.) "*Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?*" Did not that God who in the law of Moses appointed divers ceremonial washings with which you justify yourselves in these practices and impositions, appoint also that ye should cleanse and purify your hearts? He who made laws for that which is *without*, did not he even in those laws further intend something within, and by other laws show how little he regarded the *purifying of the flesh*, and the *putting away of the filth* of that, if the heart be not made clean?" Or, it may have regard to God, not only as a *Lav-giver*, but, (which the words seem rather to import, as a Creator. Did not God, who made us these bodies, (and they are *fearfully* and *wonderfully* made,) make us these souls also, which are more fearfully and wonderfully made; now if he made both, he justly expects we should take care of both; and therefore not only wash the *body*, which he is the *Former* of, and make the hands clean in honour of his work, but wash the spirit, which he is the Father of, and get the leprosy in the heart cleansed.

To this he subjoins a rule for making of our creature-comforts clean to us; (v. 41.) "*Instead of washing your hands before ye go to meat, give alms of such things as ye have*," (*τὰ εὐεργετῶν*—of such things as are set before you, and present with you,) "let the poor have their share out of them, and then all things are clean to you, and you may use them comfortably." Here is a plain allusion to the law of Moses, by which it was provided that certain portions of the increase of their land should be given to the *Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow*; and when that was done, what was reserved for their own use, was *clean to them*, and they could in faith pray for a blessing upon it, Deut. 26. 12—15. Then we can with comfort enjoy the gifts of God's bounty ourselves, when we *send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared*, Neh. 8. 10. Job ate not his morsel alone, but the *fatherless* ate thereof, and so it was *clean to him*, (Job 31. 17.) *clean*, that is, permitted and allowed to be used, and then only it can be used comfortably. Note, What we have, is not our own, unless God have his dues out of it; and it is by *liberality to the poor* that we clear up to ourselves our *liberty* to make use of our creature-comforts.

2. He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law, v. 42. (1.) Those laws which related only to the *means of religion* they were very exact in the observance of, as particularly those concerning the maintenance of the priests; *Ye pay tithe of mint and rue*, pay it in kind and to the full, and will not put off the priests with a *modus decimandi* or *compound* for it. By this they would gain a reputation with the people as strict observers of the law, and would make an interest in the priests, in whose power it was many a time to do them a kindness, and no wonder if the priests and the Pharisees contrived how to strengthen one another's hands. Now Christ does not condemn them for being so exact in paying tithes, (*These things ought ye to have done*,) but for thinking that that would atone for the neglect of their greater duties; for, (2.) Those laws which relate to the *essentials of religion* they made

nothing of; *Ye pass over judgment and the love of God, ye make no conscience of giving men their dues and God your hearts.*

3. He reproves them for their pride and vanity, and affectation of precedency and praise of men; (v. 43.) "*Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues;*" (or consistories where the elders met for government;) "*If ye have not those seats, ye are ambitious of them; if ye have, ye are proud of them; and ye love greetings in the markets, to be complimented by the people, and to have their cap and knee.*" It is not sitting uppermost, or being greeted, that is reprov'd, but *loving it*.

4. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences; (v. 44.) "*Ye are as graves overgrown with grass, which therefore appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them,* and so they contract the ceremonial pollution which by the law arose from the touch of a grave." These Pharisees were *within* full of abominations, as a grave of putrefaction, full of covetousness, envy, and malice; and yet they concealed it so artfully with a profession of devotion, that it did not appear, so that they who conversed with them, and followed their doctrine, were defiled with sin, infected with their corruptions and ill morals, and yet, they making a show of piety, suspected no danger by them. The contagion insinuated itself, and was *insensibly* caught, and those that caught it, thought themselves never the worse.

IV. The testimony which he bore also against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to *expound* the law according to the tradition of the elders, as the Pharisees did to *observe* the law according to that tradition.

1. There was one of that profession, who resented what he said against the Pharisees; (v. 45.) "*Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also, for we are scribes; and are therefore hypocrites?*" Note, It is a common thing for unhumiliated sinners to call and count reproofs reproaches. It is the wisdom of those who desire to have their sin mortified, to make a *good use* of reproaches that come from *ill will*, and to turn them into reproofs; if we can that way hear of our faults, and amend them, it is well: but it is the folly of those who are wedded to their sins, and resolved not to part with them, to make an *ill use* of the faithful and friendly admonitions given them, which come from love, and to have their passions provoked by them as if they were intended for *reproaches*, and therefore fly in the face of their reprovers, and justify themselves in rejecting the reproof. Thus the prophet complained, (Jer. 6. 10.) "*The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it.*" This lawyer espoused the Pharisee's cause, and so made himself partaker of his sins.

2. Our Lord Jesus thereupon took them to task; (v. 46.) "*Woe unto you also, ye lawyers;* and again, (v. 52.) "*Woe unto you, lawyers.*" They blessed themselves in the reputation they had among the people, who thought them happy men, because they studied the law, and were always conversant with that, and had the honour of instructing people in the knowledge of that; but Christ denounced *woes* against them, for he sees not as man sees. This was just upon him for taking the Pharisees' part, and quarrelling with Christ because he reprov'd them. Note, Those who quarrel with the reproofs of others, and suspect them to be reproaches to them, do but get *woes of their own* by so doing.

(1.) The lawyers are reprov'd for making the services of religion more *burdensome* to others, but more *easy* to themselves, than God had made them; (v. 46.) "*Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, by your traditions, which bind them out from*

many liberties God has allowed them, and *bind them up* to many slaveries which God never enjoined them, to show your authority, and to keep people in awe; but *ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers*; that is, [1.] "*Ye will not burden yourselves with them, nor be yourselves bound by those restraints with which you hamper others.*"

They would seem, by the hedges they pretended to make about the law, to be very strict for the observance of the law, but if you could see their practices you would find not only that they make nothing of those hedges themselves, but make nothing of the law itself neither: thus the confessors of the Romish church are said to do with their penitents. [2.] "*Ye will not lighten them to those ye have power over; ye will not touch them,* that is, either to repeal them, or to dispense with them, when ye find them to be burdensome and grievous to the people." They would come in with *both hands*, to dispense with a command of God, but not with a *finger*, to mitigate the rigour of any of the traditions of the elders.

(2.) They are reprov'd for pretending a veneration for the memory of the prophets whom their fathers killed, when yet they hated and persecuted those in their own day, who were sent to them on the same errand, to call them to repentance, and direct them to Christ, v. 47—49.

[1.] These hypocrites, among other pretences of piety, *built the sepulchres of the prophets*; that is, they erected monuments over their graves, in honour of them, probably with large inscriptions containing high encomiums of them. They were not so superstitious as to enshrine their relics, or to think devotions the more acceptable to God for their being paid at the *tombs of the martyrs*; they did not burn incense, or pray to them, or plead their merits with God; they did not add that iniquity to their hypocrisy; but, as if they owned themselves the *children of the prophets*, their heirs and executors, they *repaired and beautified* the monuments sacred to their *pious memory*.

[2.] Notwithstanding this, they had an inveterate enmity to those in their *own day*, that came to them in the *spirit and power* of those prophets; and, though they had not yet had an opportunity of carrying it far, yet they would soon do it, for the *Wisdom of God* said, that is, Christ himself would so order it, and did *now foretell* it, that they would *slay and persecute* the prophets and apostles that should be sent them. The *Wisdom of God* would thus make trial of them, and discover their odious hypocrisy, by sending them prophets, to reprove them for their sins, and warn them of the judgments of God. Those prophets should prove themselves apostles, or messengers sent from heaven, by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Or, "*I will send them prophets under the style and title of apostles, who yet shall produce as good an authority as any of the old prophets did; and those they shall not only contradict and oppose, but slay and persecute, and put to death.*" Christ foresaw this, and yet did not otherwise than as became the *Wisdom of God* in sending them, for he knew how to bring glory to himself in the issue, by the recompenses reserved both for the *persecutors* and the *persecuted* in the future state.

[3.] That therefore God will justly put another construction upon their *building* of the *tombs* of the prophets than what they would be brought to intend, and it shall be interpreted their *allowing of the deeds of their fathers*; (v. 45.) for since by their present actions it appeared that they had no true value of their prophets, their *building of their sepulchres* shall have this sense put upon it, that they resolved to keep them in their graves, whom their fathers had hurried thither. Josiah, who had a real

value for prophets, thought it enough not to disturb the grave of the *man of God at Bethel*; *Let no man move his bones*, 2 Kings 23. 17, 18. If these lawyers will carry the matter further, and will build their *sefulchres*, it is such a piece of *over-doing* as gives cause to suspect an ill-design in it, and that it is meant as a cover for some design against prophecy itself, like the kiss of a traitor; as *he that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him*, Prov. 27. 14.

[4.] That they must expect no other than to be reckoned with, as the *fillers up of the measure of persecution*, *τ. 50, 51*. They keep up the trade as it were in succession, and therefore are responsible for the *debts of the company*, even those it has been *contracting all along in the blood of Abel*, when the world began, to that of *Zacharias*, and so forward to the end of the Jewish state; it shall all be *required of this generation*, this last generation of the Jews, whose sin in persecuting Christ's apostles would exceed any of the sins of that kind that their fathers were guilty of, and so would bring *wrath* upon them *to the uttermost*. 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Their destruction by the Romans was so terrible, that it might well be reckoned the completing of God's vengeance upon that persecuting nation.

(3.) They are reproved for opposing the gospel of Christ, and doing all they could to obstruct the progress and success of it, *τ. 52*. [1.] They had not, according to the duty of their place, faithfully expounded to the people those scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at the Messiah, which if they had been led into the right understanding of by the lawyers, they would readily have embraced him and his doctrine; but, instead of that, they had perverted those texts, and had cast a mist before the eyes of the people, by their corrupt glosses upon them, and this is called *taking away the key of knowledge*; instead of using that key for the people, and helping them to use it aright, they *hid it from them*; this is called, in Matthew, *shutting up the kingdom of God against men*, Matth. 23. 13. Note, Those who take away the key of knowledge, shut up the kingdom of heaven. [2.] They themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ, though by their acquaintance with the Old Testament they could not but know that the time was *fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God was *at hand*; they saw the prophecies accomplished in that kingdom which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet would not themselves *enter into it*. Nay, [3.] Them that without any conduct or assistance of theirs were *entering in*, they did all they could to *hinder and discourage*, by threatening to *cast them out of the synagogue*, and otherwise terrifying them. It is bad for people to be averse to revelation, but much worse to be adverse to it.

Lastly, In the close of the chapter, we are told how spitefully and maliciously the scribes and Pharisees contrived to draw him into a snare, *τ. 53, 54*. They could not bear these cutting reproaches which they must own to be just; but since what he had said against them in particular, would not bear *an action*, nor could they ground upon it any *criminal accusation*, and therefore as if because his reproaches were warm, they hoped to stir him up to some intemperate heat and passion, so as to put him off his guard; they *began to urge him vehemently*, to be very fierce upon him, and to *provoke him to speak of many things*, to propose dangerous questions to him, *laying wait for something which might serve the design they had of making him either odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government, or both*. Thus did they seek occasion against him, like David's enemies that did *every day wrest his words*, Ps. 56. 5. *Evil men dig up mischief*. Note, Faith-

ful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies, and have need to set a watch before the door of their lips, because of *their observers* that watch for their halting. The prophet complains of those in his time, who *make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate*, Isa. 29. 21. That we may bear trials of this kind with patience, and get through them with prudence, let us consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have divers excellent discourses of our Saviour's upon various occasions; many of which are to the same purport with what we had in Matthew upon other the like occasions; for we may suppose that our Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed the same duties, at several times, in several companies, and that one of the evangelists took them as he delivered them at one time, and another at another time; and we need thus to have precept upon precept, line upon line. Here, I. Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypocrisy, and of cowardice in professing christianity and preaching the gospel, *v. 1. . 12*. II. He gives a caution against covetousness, upon occasion of a covetous motion made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a rich man suddenly cut off by death in the midst of his worldly projects and hopes, *v. 13. . 21*. III. He encourages his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and to live easy in a dependence upon his providence, and engages them to make religion their main business, *v. 22. . 34*. IV. He stirs them up to watchfulness for their Master's coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who are then found faithful, and the punishment of those who are found unfaithful, *v. 35. . 48*. V. He bids them expect trouble and persecution, *v. 49. . 53*. VI. He warns the people to observe and improve the day of their opportunities, and to make their peace with God in time, *v. 54. . 59*.

I. **I**N the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, inasmuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all. Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. 4. And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; 9. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. 10. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto

him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

We find here,

I. A vast auditory that was got together to hear Christ preach. The *Scribes and Pharisees* sought to *accuse him*, and do him mischief; but the people, who were not under the bias of their prejudices and jealousies, still *admired him*, attended on him, and did him honour; (*v. 1.*) *In the mean time*, while he was in the Pharisee's house, contending with them that sought to ensnare him, the people got together for an afternoon-sermon, a sermon after dinner, after dinner with a Pharisee; and he would not disappoint them. Though in the morning-sermon, when they were *gathered thick together*, (*ch. 11. 29.*) he had severely reprov'd them, as an *evil generation that seek a sign*, yet they renewed their attendance on him; so much better could the people bear their reproofs than the Pharisees *theirs*. The more the Pharisees strove to drive the people from Christ, the more flocking there was to him. Here was an *innumerable multitude of people gathered together*, so that they *trod one upon another*, in labouring to get foremost, and to come within hearing. It is a good sight to see people thus forward to hear the word, and venture upon inconvenience and danger rather than miss an opportunity for their souls. Who are these that thus *fly like the doves to their windows*? Isa. 60. 8. When the net is cast where there is such a multitude of fish, it may be hoped that some will be inclosed.

II. The instructions which he gave his followers, in the hearing of this auditory.

1. He began with a caution against *hypocrisy*. This he said to *his disciples first of all*; either to the twelve, or to the seventy. These were his more peculiar charge, his family, his school, and therefore he particularly *warned them* as his *beloved sons*; they made more profession of religion than others, and hypocrisy in *that*, was the sin they were most in danger of. They were to preach to others; and if they *prevaricate*, corrupt the word, and deal deceitfully, hypocrisy would be worse in them than in others. And besides, there was a Judas among them, that was a hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ's disciples were, for aught we know, the *best men* then in the world, yet needed to be cautioned against hypocrisy. Christ said this to the disciples, *in the hearing of this great multitude*, rather than *privately* when he had them by themselves, to add the greater weight to the caution, and to let the world know that he would not countenance hypocrisy, no, not in *his own disciples*.

Now observe,

(1.) The description of that sin which he warns them against; *it is the leaven of the Pharisees*. [1.] *It is leaven*, it is *spreading* as leaven, *insinuates* itself into the whole man, and all that he does; it is *swelling* and *souring* as leaven, for it puffs men up with pride, embitters them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God. [2.] *It is the leaven of the Pharisees*; "It is the sin they are most of them found in. Take heed of imitating them; be not you of their spirit; do not you dissemble in Christianity as they do in Judaism; make not *your religion a cloak of malitiousness*, as they do *theirs*."

(2.) A good reason against it; (*v. 2, 3.*) "*For*

there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed. It is to no purpose to dissemble, for, sooner or later, truth will come out; and a *lying tongue is but for a moment*. If you *speak in darkness* that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your public professions, *it shall be heard in the light*; some way or other it shall be discovered, *a bird of the air shall carry the voice*, (Eccl. 10. 20.) and your folly and falsehood will be *made manifest*." The iniquity that is concealed with a show of piety, will be discovered, perhaps in this world, as Judas's was, and Simon Magus's, at furthest, in the great day, when the *secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest*, (Eccl. 12. 14.) Rom. 2. 16. If men's religion prevail not to conquer and cure the wickedness of their hearts, it shall not always serve for a cloak. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be stripped of their fig-leaves.

2. To this he added a charge to them, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and not to betray it, through cowardice or base fear. Some make *v. 2, 3.* to be a caution to them not to *conceal* those things which they had been *instructed* in, and were *employed* to publish to the world. "Whether men will *hear*, or whether they will *forbear*, tell them the *truth*, the *whole truth*, and *nothing but the truth*; what has been spoken to you, and you have talked of among yourselves, *privately*, and in corners, that do you preach *publicly*, whoever is offended; for if you *please men*, you are not *Christ's servants*, nor can you please him." Gal. 1. 10.

But this was not the worst of it; it was likely to be a *suffering* cause, though never a *sinking* one, let them therefore arm themselves with courage; and divers arguments are furnished here, to steel them with a holy resolution in their work. Consider,

(1.) "The power of your enemies is a limited power, *v. 4. I say unto you, my friends*," (Christ's disciples are his friends, he calls them *friends*, and gives them this *friendly* advice,) "*be not afraid*"; do not disquiet yourselves with tormenting fears of the power and rage of men." Note, Those whom Christ owns for *his friends*, need not be afraid of any enemies. "*Be not afraid*, no, not of them that *kill the body*; let it not be in the power, not only of *scorners*, but even of *murderers*, to drive you off from your work, for you that have learned to triumph over death, may say, even of them, Let them do their worst, *after that there is no more that they can do*; the immortal soul lives, and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance." Note, Those can do Christ's disciples no real harm, and therefore ought not to be dreaded, who can but *kill the body*; for they only send that to its rest, and the soul to its joy, the sooner.

(2.) God is to be feared more than the most powerful men; (*v. 5.*) "*I will forewarn you whom you shall fear*; that you may fear man less, fear God more. Moses conquers his fear of the *wrath of the king*, by having an eye to him that is *invisible*. By *owning Christ* you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to *put you to death*; (and without God's permission they cannot do that;) but by *denying Christ*, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to *hell*, and there is no resisting of it; now of two evils the least is to be chosen, and the greatest to be dreaded, and therefore *I say unto you, Fear him*." "It is true," said that blessed martyr, Bishop Hooper, "life is sweet, and death bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter."

(3.) The lives of good christians and good ministers are the particular care of the Divine Providence, *v. 6, 7.* To encourage us in times of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles, and build upon them; now a firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and

the extent of it, would be satisfying to us, when at any time we are in peril, and would encourage us to trust to God in the way of duty. [1.] Providence takes cognizance of the *meanest creatures*; even of the *sparrows*. "Though they are of such small account, that *five* of them are sold for *two farthings*, yet not one of them is *forgotten of God*, but is provided for, and notice is taken of its death. Now, *ye are of more value than many sparrows*, and therefore ye may be sure ye are not forgotten, though imprisoned, though banished, though forgotten by your friends; much more *precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of saints* than the death of sparrows." [2.] Providence takes cognizance of the *meanest interest* of the disciples of Christ; (xv. 7.) "*Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered*; much more are your sighs and tears numbered, and the drops of your blood, which ye shed for Christ's name-sake." An account is kept of all your losses, that they *may be*, and without doubt they shall be, recompensed unspeakably to your advantage."

(4.) You will be owned or disowned by Christ in the great day, according as you now own or disown him, x. 8, 9. [1.] To engage us to *confess Christ before men*, whatever we may lose or suffer for our constancy to him, and how dear soever it may cost us, we are assured that they who *confess Christ* now, shall be owned by him in the great day *before the angels of God*, to their everlasting comfort and honour. Jesus Christ will *confess*, not only that he suffered for them, and that they are to have the benefit of his sufferings, but that they suffered *for him*, and that his kingdom and interest on earth were advanced by their sufferings; and what greater honour can be done them? [2.] To deter us from *denying Christ*, and a cowardly deserting of his truths and ways, we are here assured that those who *deny Christ*, and treacherously depart from him, whatever they may save by it, though it were life itself, and whatever they may *gain* by it, though it were a kingdom, will be vast losers at last, for they shall be *denied before the angels of God*; Christ will not know them, will not own them, will not show them any favour, which will turn to their everlasting terror and contempt. By the stress here laid upon their being *confessed or denied before the angels of God*, it should seem to be a considerable part of the happiness of glorified saints, that they will not only stand *right*, but stand *high*, in the esteem of the *holy angels*; they will love them, and honour them, and own them, if they be Christ's servants; they are their fellow-servants, and they will take them for their companions. On the contrary, a considerable part of the misery of damned sinners will be, that the holy angels will abandon them, and will be the pleased witnesses, not only of their disgrace, as here, but of their misery, for they shall be *tormented in the presence of the holy angels*, (Rev. 14. 10.) who will give them no relief.

(5.) The errand they were shortly to be sent out upon, was of the highest and last importance to the children of men, to whom they were sent, x. 10. Let them be bold in preaching the gospel, for a sorer and heavier doom would attend those that rejected them, (after the Spirit was poured out upon them, which was to be the *last method* of conviction,) than those that now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him; "*Greater works than these shall ye do*, and, consequently, greater will be the punishment of those that blaspheme the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost in you. *Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man*, shall stumble at the meanness of his appearance, and speak *slightly and spitefully* of him, it is capable of some excuse; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*. But unto him that *blasphemes the Holy*

Ghost, that blasphemeth the christian doctrine, and maliciously opposes it, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and his attestation of Christ's *being glorified*, (Acts 2. 33.—5. 32.) the privilege of the *forgiveness of sins* shall be denied, he shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel; you may shake off the dust of your feet against those that do so, and give them over as incurable; they have forfeited that *repentance* and that *remission* which Christ was *exalted to give*, and which you are *commissioned to preach*." The sin, no doubt, was the more daring, and, consequently, the case the more desperate, during the continuance of the *extraordinary gifts* and operations of the Spirit in the church, which were intended for a *sign to them who believed not*, 1 Cor. 14. 22. These, who, though they were not convinced by them at first, yet admired them, there were hopes of, but those who *blasphemed* them, were given over.

(6.) Whatever trials they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honourably brought through them, x. 11, 12. The faithful martyr for Christ has not only *sufferings to undergo*, but a *testimony to bear*, a *good confession to witness*, and is concerned to do that *well*, so that the cause of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer for it; and if this be his care, let him cast it upon God; "When they *bring you into the synagogues*, before church rulers, before the Jewish courts, or before *magistrates and powers*, Gentile rulers, rulers in the state, to be examined about your doctrine, what it is, and what the proof of it; *take no thought what ye shall answer*," [1.] "That ye may *serve yourselves*. Do not study by what art or rhetoric to mollify your judges, or by what tricks in law to bring yourselves off; if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually." [2.] "That ye may *serve your Master*; aim at this, but do not perplex yourselves about it, for the *Holy Ghost*, as a Spirit of wisdom, *shall teach you what you ought to say*, and how to say it, so as it may be for the honour of God and his cause.

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, *Thou fool!* this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

We have, in these verses,

I. The application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose *between him and his brother*, in a matter that concerned the estate of the family; (v. 9.) "*Master, speak to my brother; speak as a Prophet, speak as a King, speak with authority; he is one that will have regard to what thou sayest; speak to him, that he divide the inheritance with me.*" Now,

1. Some think that his brother *did him wrong*, and that he appeals to Christ to *right him*, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called *Ben-hamesen—a son of violence*, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of *natural equity* or *natural affection*, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged, have a God to go to, who will *execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed*.

2. Others think that he had a mind to *do his brother wrong*, and would have Christ to *assist him*; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule, (Deut. 21. 16, 17.) he would have Christ to *alter that law*, and to oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to *divide the inheritance equally with him*, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against *covetousness*, *φθονία—a desire of having more*, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a *sinful desire of getting more than his own*.

II. Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter; (v. 14.) *Man, who made me a Judge, or Divider over you?* In matters of this nature, Christ would not assume either a *legislative power* to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a *judicial power* to determine controversies concerning them; he could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission; *Who made me a Judge?* Probably, he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, which Stephen upbraided the Jews with, Acts 7. 27, 35. "If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, *Who made thee a Judge, or a Divider?*" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal, (it was *coram non iudice—not before the proper judge*;) and so dismisses his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuits of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do; *Who made me a Judge?* Note, Jesus Christ was no Usurper, he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, Heb. 5. 5. Whatever he did, he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority.

Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. 1. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power. 2. It does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not to be founded in grace. 3. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that, in consideration of that, Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of

another nature. 4. It does not encourage our contests with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace-sake, to recede from our right. 5. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life, (2 Tim. 2. 4.) to leave the word of God, to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, *Tractent fabrilis fabri—Each workman to his proper craft*.

III. The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from hence to give to his hearers. Though he came not to be a *Divider* of men's estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the *root of so much evil*. Here is,

1. The caution itself; (v. 15.) *Take heed and beware of covetousness; φθονία—“Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them, and φυλάσσετε—preserve yourselves, keep a strict hand upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them.”* Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against.

2. The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution; *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; that is, “Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world.”* (1.) The life of the *soul*, undoubtedly, doth not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay, (2.) Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it; (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a feast of fat things;) and, on the other hand, many live very miserably, who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they *bereave their souls of good*, Eccl. 4. 8. Many who have abundance, are discontented and fretting, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good doth their abundance do them.

3. The illustration of this by a parable; the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul, and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to *take heed of covetousness*. The parable gives us the life and death of a *rich man*, and leaves us to judge whether he was a *happy man*.

(1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance; (v. 16.) *The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, χωρα—regio—the country.* He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served of the field, Eccl. 5. 9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

(2.) Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, v. 17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for

it. He is both a Discerner and Judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are *hid*, and thoughts are *free*.

Let us here observe,

[1.] What his *cares and concerns* were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of *thank[ing] God* for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, *What shall I do because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* He speaks as one at a *loss*, and full of perplexity. *What shall I do now?* The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to have a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have, and to add to it, how to spare, and how to spend; so that even the *abundance* of the rich will not suffer them to *sleep*, for thinking what they shall do with what they have, and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, *What shall I do?* And if you ask, *Why, what is the matter?* Truly he has *abundance* of wealth, and wants a place to *put it in*, that is all.

[2.] What his *projects and purposes* were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them; (v. 18.) "*This will I do*, and it is the wisest course I can take; *I will pull down my barns*, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at ease."

Now here, *First*, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, *my fruits and my goods*; whereas what we have, is but *lent* us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our *Lord's goods*, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is *my corn*, (saith God) and *my wine*, Hos. 2. 8, 9. *Secondly*, It was folly for him to *hoard up* what he had, and then to think it *well-bestowed*; There will I bestow it *all*; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn. *Thirdly*, It was folly for him to let his *mind* rise with his *condition*; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore he had better to have *stacked* some of his corn this once. *Fourthly*, It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know that, who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care, is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. And besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him, the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Eccl. 5. 10. *Fifthly*, It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this *absolutely and without reserve*. *This I will do, I will pull down my barns, and I will build greater, yea that I will*; without so much as that necessary proviso, *If the Lord will, I shall live*, Jam. 4. 13, 14. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as *know what shall be on the morrow*.

[3.] What his *pleasing hopes and expectations* were, when he made good those projects; "Then *I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this secu-*

rity, whether God say it or no, *Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry*," v. 19. Here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it. *First*, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them, (which will be a work of time,) then he will take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, who was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places in the prosecution of his victories; Well, saith his friend, Cyncas, and what must we do then? *Postea vivamus*, saith he, *Then we will live*; *At hoc jam hec*, saith Cyncas, *We may live now if we please*. *Secondly*, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be *safer* than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground, perhaps by lightning, which there is no defence against, and all that was laid up in them. A few years may make a great change; *moth and rust may corrupt or thieves break through and steal*. *Thirdly*, It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance. One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world. *Fourthly*, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to *eat and drink and to be merry*; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation; as if we *lived to eat*, and did not *eat to live*, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness. *Fifthly*, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his *soul*. If he had said, *Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years*, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn, or a bag full of gold. If he had had the *soul of a swine*, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of *eating and drinking*; but what is this to the *soul of a man*, that has exigences and desires which these things will be no way suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of, that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

(3.) Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth: He said to himself, said to his soul, *Take thine ease*; if God hath said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers, to make them easy; but God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. His neighbours blessed him, (Ps. 10. 3.) praised him as *doing well for himself*; (Ps. 49. 18.) but God said he did ill for himself, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, v. 20. God said to him, that is, decreed this concerning him, and let him know it either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the *fulness of his sufficiency*, Job 20. 22.) when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by

pulling them down, and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought this to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again with a pleasing dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said, [1.] The character he gave him, *Thou fool, thou Nabal*, (alluding to the story of Nabal,) that *fool*; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him, whose heart was struck dead as a stone when he was regaling himself in his abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, *Thou fool*, and they will call themselves so. [2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death; *This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul*, (so the words are,) and then *whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* He thought he had goods that should be his many years, but he must part from them *this night*; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

First, It is a *force*, an *arrest*, it is the *requiring of the soul*, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be *required*; that intimates that he is loath to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it *torn* from him with violence, it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. *They shall require thy soul*; God shall require it, he shall require an account of it; "Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul? Give an account of that stewardship." *They shall*, that is, evil angels, as the messenger of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall *require it* as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires the soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Secondly, It is a *surprise*, an *unexpected* force. It is in the *night*, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man, it is his morning; but it is night to a worldling, a dark night, *he lies down in sorrow*. It is *this night*, this *present* night, without delay, there is no giving bail, or begging day; this *pleasant* night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment; thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast, but in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa. 21. 4.

Thirdly, It is the leaving of all *those things behind, which they have provided*, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. *Their pomp shall not descend after them*, (Ps. 49. 17.) but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all by what they have hoarded up either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fourthly, It is leaving them to *they know not who*. "Then *whose shall those things be?* Not *thine* to be sure, and thou knowest not what *they* will prove, for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be *wise or fools*, (Eccl. 2. 18, 19.) whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or

a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it, may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to some body else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last." If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

Fifthly, It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are *fools* while they live; *this their way is their folly*, (Ps. 49. 13.) but their folly is made most evident when they die; *at his end he shall be a fool* (Jer. 17. 11.) for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

Lastly, Here is the application of this parable; (v. 21.) *So is he, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*. This way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here,

1. The description of a worldly man; He *lays up treasures for himself*, for the body, for the world, for *himself* in opposition to God, for that *self* that is to be *denied*. (1.) It is his error, that he counts his *flesh himself*, as if the *body* were the *man*. If *self* be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is *wise for himself*, Prov. 9. 12. (2.) It is his error, that he makes it his business to *lay up for the flesh*, which he calls laying up *for himself*. All his labour is for his *mouth*. (Eccl. 6. 7.) *making provision for the flesh*. (3.) It is his error, that he counts those things his *treasure*, which are *laid up* for the world, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward. (4.) The greatest error of all, is, that he is in no care to be *rich toward God*, rich in the *account of God*, whose accounting of us rich makes us so, (Rev. 2. 9.) rich in the *things of God*, rich in *faith*, (Jam. 2. 5.) rich in *good works*, in the *fruits of righteousness*, (1 Tim. 6. 18.) rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world, are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich toward God, rich for eternity.

The folly and misery of a worldly man; *So is he*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men, to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is for the body only, and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

22. And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is *more* than raiment. 24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls? 25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27. Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and

yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more *will he clothe you*, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35. Let your loins be girded about, and *your lights burning*; 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. 39. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Our Lord Jesus is here inculcating some needful, useful lessons upon his disciples, which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterward to press upon them; for they need to have *precept upon precept, and line upon line*; "Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection to the wealth of this world, *I say unto you*, my disciples, take heed of it." *Thou, O man of God, flee these things*, as well as thou, O man of the world, 1 Tim. 6. 11.

1. He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting, perplexing cares about the necessary supports of life, (v. 22.) *Take no thought for your life*. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness which rich people are most in danger of; and that is, a *sensual complacency* in the abundance of this world's goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of that, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to, that have but a little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best, and

much more now that they had left all, to follow Christ; and that was, an *anxious solicitude* about the necessary supports of life. "*Take no thought for your life*, either for the preservation of it, if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, *what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on*." This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, Matth. 6. 25, &c. And the arguments here used are much the same, designed for our encouragement to cast all our care upon God, which is the *right way* to *ease* ourselves of it. Consider then,

1. God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the lesser. He has, without any care or forecast of our own, given us *life* and a *body*, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide *meat* for the support of that life, and *raiment* for the defence of that body.

2. God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for good christians. "Trust God for *meat*, for he *feeds the ravens*; (v. 24.) they *neither sow nor reap*, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are *fed*, and never perish for want. Now consider *how much better ye are than the fowls*, than the ravens. Trust God for clothing, for he clothes the lilies; (v. 27, 28.) they make no preparation for their own clothing, they *toil not*, they *spin not*, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet, as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully *beautified*. Now, if God has so clothed the flowers, which are fading perishing things, *shall he not much more clothe you* with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing suited to your nature, as theirs is?" When God fed Israel with *manna* in the wilderness, he also took care for their clothing; for though he did not furnish them with new clothes, yet (which came all to one) he provided that those they had should not *wax old upon them*, Deut. 8. 4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel; but then let not them be of *little faith*. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith; for a powerful practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of these disquieting, perplexing imaginations.

3. Our cares are fruitless, vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them; they will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose; (v. 25.) "*Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch; can add to his age one year, or one hour?*" Now if ye be *not able to do that which is least*, if it be not in your power to alter your statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things, which are as much out of your power, and about which it is as necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God?" Note, As in our *stature*, so in our *state*, it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carping and caring, will not mend it.

An inordinate solicitous pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ; (v. 29, 30.) "Whatever others do, *seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink*; do not ye afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor weary yourselves with constant toils; do not ye hurry hither and thither with inquiries *what ye shall eat or drink*, as David's enemies, that *wandered up and down for meat*, (Ps. 59. 15.) or as the eagle that *seeks the prey afar off*, Job 39. 29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus *seek* their food, but ask it of God day by day; let them not be of *doubtful mind*; μη μετὰ μετὰ σκεψασθε—Be not as me

tuors in the air, that are blown hither and thither with every wind; do not, like them, *rise and fall*, but maintain a consistency with yourselves, be even and steady, and have your hearts fixed; *live not in careful suspense*; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, ever upon the rack." Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy; for,

(1.) This is to make themselves like the children of this world; "*All these things do the nations of the world seek after*, v. 30. They that take care for the body only, and not for the soul, for this world only, and not for the other, look no further than what they shall *eat and drink*; and, having no all-sufficient God to seek to, and confide in, they burden themselves with anxious cares about those things; but it ill becomes you to do so. You, who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to *walk in the way of this people*," Isa. 8. 11, 12. When inordinate cares prevail over us, we should think, "What am I, a christian or a heathen? Baptized or not baptized? If a christian, if baptized, shall I rank myself with Gentiles, and join with them in their pursuits?"

(2.) It is needless for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life, for they have a Father in heaven, who doth and will take care for them; "*Your Father knows that ye have need of these things*, and considers it, and will supply your needs according to his riches and glory, for he is *your Father*, who made you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassions to them; *your Father*, who maintains you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you *want no good thing*."

(3.) They have better things to mind and pursue; (v. 31.) "*But rather seek ye the kingdom of God*, and mind that, ye, my disciples, who are to *preach the kingdom of God*; let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and that will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about the things of the world. And let all that have souls to save, *seek the kingdom of God*, in which only they can be *safe*. Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it, seek the *kingdom of grace*, to be subjects in that, the *kingdom of glory*, to be princes in that, and then *all these things shall be added to you*; mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs."

(4.) They have better things to expect and hope for; (v. 32.) *Fear not, little flock*. For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed; when we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination; therefore *fear not, little flock*, but *hope to the end*, for it is *your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*. This comfortable word we had not in Matthew. Note, [1.] Christ's flock in this world is a *little flock*; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard; a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel, (1 Kings 20. 27.) who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country. [2.] Though it be a little flock, quite *over-numbered*, and therefore in danger of being *overpowered*, by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not be afraid. "*Fear not, little flock*, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy." [3.] God has a *kingdom* in store for all that belong to Christ's *little flock*; a crown of glory, (1 Pet. 5. 4.) a throne of power, (Rev. 3. 21.) unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of *kings and provinces*. The *sheep on the right hand* are called

to come and inherit the kingdom, it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each. [4.] The kingdom is given according to the *good pleasure* of the Father; it is *your Father's good pleasure*, it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, *even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee*. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own? [5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble, for though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near." (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of, which cannot separate us from the love of God.") "*Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you*, for if it be *your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*, you need not question but he will *bear your charges* thither."

II. He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, v. 33, 34. Those who have done this may be very easy, as to all the events of time.

1. "*Sit loose to this world*, and to all your possessions in it. *Sell that ye have, and give alms*," that is, "rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly *necessitous*, sell that which you have *superfluous*, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the *poor*. *Sell that ye have*, if ye find it a hinderance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, though they be the *inheritance of your fathers*. Do not sell, to *hoard up the money*, or because you can make more of it, by usury, but *sell, and give alms*; what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the *best interest*, upon the *best security*."

2. "*Set your hearts upon the other world*, and your expectations from that world. *Provide yourselves bags that wax not old*, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart, and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last." Grace will *go with us* into another world, for it is *woven in the soul*, and our good works will *follow us*, for *God is not unrighteous to forget them*. These will be *treasures in heaven*, that will enrich us to eternity. (1.) It is treasure that will not be *exhausted*; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it. (2.) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for *no thief approaches* near it; what is laid up in heaven, is out of the reach of enemies. (3.) It is treasure that will not *spoil with keeping*, any more than it will *waste with spending*; the *moth* doth not *corrupt it*, as it doth our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven, if our hearts be there while we are here, (v. 34.) if we think much of heaven, and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it, and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

III. He charges them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ's coming; when all those who have laid up their treasure in heaven, shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, v. 35, &c.

1. Christ is our *Master*, and we are his *servants*, not only *working* servants, but *waiting* servants, servants that are to do him honour, in *waiting* on him, and attending his motions; if any man serve me, let him follow me, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; but that is not all, they must do him honour in *waiting for him*, and expecting his return. We

must be as men that *wait for their Lord*, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

2. Christ our Master, though now *gone from us*, will *return again*, return from the wedding, from solemnizing the nuptials abroad, to *complete* them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, *looking for their Master's glorious appearing*, and doing every thing with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and that being a *critical day*, they shall either stay with him, or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

3. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be *in the night*, it will be *far* in the night, when he has long *deferred* his coming, and when many have done looking for him; in the *second watch*, just before midnight, or in the *third watch*, next after midnight, v. 38. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for, (v. 40.) *The Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not*, without giving notice beforehand. This bespeaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are *unthinking*, and altogether regardless of the notices given them, so that, whenever he comes, it is *in an hour that they think not*.

4. That which he expects and requires from his servants, is, that they be *ready to open to him immediately*, whenever he comes, (v. 36.) that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or, rather to be received by him; that they be found *as his servants*, in the posture that becomes them, with their *loins girded about*; alluding to the servants that are ready to go whither their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up, (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them,) and their *lights burning*, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

5. Those servants will be happy, who are found ready and in a good frame, when their Lord comes; (v. 37.) *Blessed are those servants* who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake, and aware of his first approach, of his first knock; and again, (v. 38.) *Blessed are those servants*, for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honour done them, as is scarcely to be found among men; he *shall make them sit down to meat*, and *serve them*; for the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not the *manner of men*; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as *one that served*; and did once, to show his condescension, *gird himself*, and *serve them*, when he *washed their feet*; (John 13. 4, 5.) it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before, to prepare for them, and has told them that his *Father will honour them*, John 12. 26.

6. We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming, that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man, to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made; *The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would have come*, though he were ever so careless a man, *would yet have watched*, and have frightened away the thieves, v. 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the *good man of the house* had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he

would have sitten up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, *as a thief in the night*, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus *watch*. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls; *be ye therefore ready also*, as ready as the good man of the house would be, *if he knew what hour the thief would come*.

41. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them* their portion of meat in due season? 43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 44. Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. 49. I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Here is,

1. Peter's question, which he put to Christ upon occasion of the foregoing parable; (v. 41.) "Lord, speakest thou this parable to us that are thy constant followers, to us that are ministers, or also to all that come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and in them to all christians?" Peter was now, as often, spokesman for the disciples. We have reason to bless God that there are some such forward men, that have a gift of utterance; let those that are such, take heed of being proud. Now Peter desires Christ

to explain himself, and to direct the arrow of the foregoing parable to the mark he intended. He calls it a *parable*, because it was not only figurative, but weighty, solid, and instructive. Lord, said Peter, was it intended for us, or for all? To this Christ gives a direct answer, (Mark 13. 37.) *What I say unto you, I say unto all.* Yet here he seems to show that the apostles were primarily concerned in it. Note, We are all concerned to take to ourselves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to inquire accordingly concerning it; *Speakest thou this to us? To me? Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* Doth this word belong to me? *Speak it to my heart.*

II. Christ's reply to this question, directed to Peter and the rest of the disciples. If what Christ had said before, did not so peculiarly concern them, but in common with other christians, who must all watch and pray for Christ's coming, as his *servants*; yet this that follows, is peculiarly adapted to ministers, who are the *stewards* in Christ's house. Now our Lord Jesus here tells them,

1. What was their duty as *stewards*, and what the trust committed to them. (1.) They are made *rulers of God's household*, under Christ, whose own the house is; ministers derive an authority from Christ to preach the gospel, and to administer the ordinances of Christ, and apply the seals of the covenant of grace. (2.) Their business is to give God's children and servants *their portion of meat*, that which is proper for them, and allotted to them; convictions and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong. *Suum cuique—To every one his own.* This is *rightly to divide the word of truth*, 2 Tim. 2. 15. (3.) To give it them *in due season*, at that time and in that way which are most suitable to the temper and condition of those that are to be fed; a word *in season* to him *that is weary*. (4.) Herein they must approve themselves *faithful and wise*; *faithful* to their Master, by whom this great trust is reposed in them, and *faithful* to their fellow-servants, for whose benefit they are put in trust; and *wise* to improve an opportunity of doing honour to their Master, and service in the family. Ministers must be both *skillful and faithful*.

2. What would be their happiness, if they approve themselves faithful and wise; (v. 43.) *Blessed is that servant*, (1.) That is *doing*, and is not idle, nor indulgent of his ease; even the rulers of the household must be *doing*, and make themselves *servants of all*. (2.) That is *so doing*, doing as he should be, giving them their *portion of meat*, by public preaching, and personal application. (3.) That is *found* so doing, when his Lord comes; that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding the difficulties he may meet with in the way. Now his happiness is illustrated by the performance of a steward, that has approved himself within a lower and narrower degree of service; he shall be preferred to a larger and higher; (v. 44.) *he will make him ruler over all that he has*, which was Joseph's preferment in Pharaoh's court. Note, Ministers that obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, shall obtain further mercy to be abundantly rewarded for their faithfulness in the day of the Lord.

3. What a dreadful reckoning there would be, if they were treacherous and unfaithful, v. 45, 46. If that servant begin to be quarrelsome and profane, he shall be called to an account, and severely punished. We had all this before in Matthew, and therefore shall here only observe, (1.) Our looking upon Christ's second coming as a thing at a distance, is the cause of all those irregularities which render the thought of it terrible to us; *He saith in his heart, My Lord delays his coming.* Christ's patience is very often misinterpreted, his *delay* to his discouragement of his people, and the encouragement of his enemies. (2.) The persecutors of God's people are

commonly abandoned to security and sensuality; *they beat their fellow-servants*, and then *eat and drink with the drunken*, altogether unconcerned either at their own sin or their brethren's sufferings, as the king and Haman, who *sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed*. Thus they drank, to drown the clamours of their own consciences, and baffle them, which otherwise would fly in their faces. (3.) Death and judgement will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers; it will be a surprise to them, *at an hour when they are not aware*, it will be the determining of them to endless misery, they shall be cut in sunder, and have their portion assigned them with the *unbelievers*.

4. What an aggravation it would be of their sin and punishment, that they knew their duty, and did not do it, (v. 47, 48.) For *that servant that knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, shall fall under a sorer punishment, and *he that knew not, shall be beaten with few stripes*, his punishment shall, in consideration of that, be mitigated. Here seems to be an allusion to the law, which made a distinction between sins committed through ignorance and presumptuous sins, (Lev. 5. 15. Numb. 15. 29, 30.) as also to another law concerning the number of stripes given to a malefactor, to be according to the nature of the crime, Deut. 25. 2. Now, (1.) Ignorance of our duty is an extenuation of sin. He *that knew not his lord's will*, through carelessness and neglect, and his not having such opportunities as some others had of coming to the knowledge of it, and *did things worthy of stripes*, he shall be *beaten*, because he might have known his duty better, but *with few stripes*; his ignorance excuses in part, but not in whole. Thus through *ignorance* the Jews put Christ to death, (Acts 3. 17. 1 Cor. 2. 8.) and Christ pleaded that ignorance in their excuse; *They know not what they do*. (2.) The knowledge of our duty is an aggravation of our sin; *That servant that knew his lord's will*, and yet did his own will, shall be *beaten with many stripes*. God will justly inflict more upon him for abusing the means of knowledge he afforded him, which others would have made a better use of; and because it argues a great degree of wilfulness and contempt, to sin against knowledge, of how much sorer punishment then shall they be thought worthy, beside the many stripes that their own consciences will give them! Son, remember. Here is a good reason for this added, *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*, especially when it is committed as a trust he is to account for. Those that have greater capacities of mind than others, more knowledge and learning, more acquaintance and converse with the scriptures, to them *much is given*, and their account will be accordingly.

III. A further discourse concerning his own sufferings, which he expected, and concerning the sufferings of his followers, which he would have them also to live in expectation of; in general, (v. 49.) *I am come to send fire on the earth*. By this some understand the preaching of the gospel, and the pouring out of the Spirit, holy fire; this Christ came to send with a commission to refine the world, to purge away its dross, to burn up its chaff, and it was *already kindled*; the gospel was begun to be preached, some prefaces there were to the pouring out of the Spirit. Christ baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, this Spirit descended in fiery tongues; but by what follows, it seems rather to be understood of the fire of persecution; Christ is not the Author of it, as it is the sin of the incendiaries, the *persecutors*: but he permits it, nay he commissions it, as a *refining fire* for the trial of the persecuted. This fire was *already kindled* in the enmity of the carnal Jews to Christ and his followers. "What will I that it may pro-

sently be kindled? *What thou doest, do quickly. If it be already kindled, what will I? Shall I wait the quenching of it? No, for it must fasten upon myself, and upon all, and glory will redound to God from it.*"

1. He must himself suffer many things; he must pass through this fire that was already kindled: (v. 50.) *I have a baptism to be baptized with.* Afflictions are compared both to *fire* and *water*, Ps. 66. 12.—69. 1, 2. Christ's sufferings were both; he calls them a *baptism*, (Matth. 20. 22.) for he was watered or sprinkled with them, as Israel was baptized in the cloud, and dipped into them, as Israel was baptized in the sea, 1 Cor. 10. 2. He must be sprinkled with his own blood, and with the blood of his enemies, Isa. 63. 3. See here, (1.) Christ's *foresight* of his sufferings; he knew what he was to undergo, and the necessity of undergoing it; *I am to be baptized with a baptism*; he calls his sufferings by a name that *mitigates* them, it is a baptism, not a deluge; I must be *dipped* in them, not *drowned* in them; and by a name that *sanctifies* them, for baptism is a sacred rite. Christ in his sufferings *devoted* himself to his Father's honour, and *consecrated* himself a Priest for evermore, Heb. 7. 27, 28. (2.) Christ's *forwardness* to his sufferings; *How am I straitened till it be accomplished!* He longs for the time when he should suffer and die, having an eye to the glorious issue of his sufferings; it is an allusion to a woman in travail, that is *pained to be delivered*, and welcomes her pains, because they hasten the birth of the child, and wishes them sharp and strong, that the *work* may be *cut short*. Christ's sufferings were the *travail of his soul*, which he cheerfully underwent, in hope that he should by them *see his seed*, Isa. 53. 10, 11. So much was his heart upon the redemption and salvation of man.

2. He tells those about him, that they also must bear with hardships and difficulties; (v. 51.) "*Suppose ye that I came to give peace on earth, to give you a peaceable possession of the earth, and outward prosperity on the earth?*" It is intimated that they were ready to entertain such a thought as this, nay, that they went upon this supposition, that the gospel would meet with a *universal* welcome, that people would *unanimously* embrace it, and would therefore study to make the preachers of it *easy* and *great*, that Christ, if he did not give them *hemp* and *flax*, would at least give them *peace*; and herein they were encouraged by divers passages of the Old Testament, which speak of the peace of the Messiah's kingdom, which they were willing to understand of external peace. "But," saith Christ, "you will be mistaken, the event will declare the contrary, and therefore do not flatter yourselves into a fool's paradise. You will find."

(1.) "That the effect of the preaching of the gospel will be *division*." Not but that the design of the gospel and its proper tendency are to unite the children of men to one another, to knit them together in holy love, and, if all would receive it, this would be the effect of it; but there being multitudes that not only will not receive it, but oppose it, and have their corruptions exasperated by it, and are enraged at those that do receive it, it proves, though not the *cause*, yet the *occasion*, of *division*. While the *strong man armed kept his palace*, in the Gentile world, his *goods were at peace*; all was quiet, for all went one way, the sects of philosophers agreed well enough, so did the worshippers of different deities; but when the gospel was preached, and many were enlightened by it, and turned from the power of Satan to God, then there was a disturbance, a *noise* and a *shaking*, Ezek. 37. 7. Some *distinguished* themselves by embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so. Yea, and among them that received the gospel there would be different sentiments in lesser things, which would occasion *division*; and Christ

permits it for holy ends, (1 Cor. 11. 19.) that christians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, Rom. 14. 1, 2.

(2.) "That this *division* will reach into private families, and the preaching of the gospel will give occasion for discord among the nearest relations;" (v. 53.) *The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father*, when the one turns christian, and the other does not; for the one that does turn christian, will be zealous by arguments and endearments to turn the other too; (1 Cor. 7. 16.) as soon as ever Paul was converted, he *disputed*; (Acts 9. 29.) the one that continues in unbelief will be provoked, and will hate and persecute the one that by his faith and obedience witnesses against, and condemns, his unbelief and disobedience. A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection; see Matth. 10. 34.—24. 7. Even *mothers* and *daughters* fall out about religion; and those that believe not, are so violent and outrageous, that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the *Acts*, that, wherever the gospel came, *persecution* was *stirred up*; it was *every where spoken against*, and there was no *small stir about that way*. Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves *peace upon earth*, for they are sent forth *as sheep in the midst of wolves*.

54. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower: and so it is. 55. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it, that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? 58. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Having given his disciples *their lesson* in the foregoing verses, here Christ turns to *the people*, and gives them *theirs*, v. 54. He said also to the people: he preached *ad populum*—to the people, as well as *ad clerum*—to the clergy. In general, he would have them be as wise in the affairs of their souls as they are in their outward affairs. Two things he specifies,

1. Let them learn to *discern the way of God toward them*, that they may *prepare* accordingly. They were *weather-wise*, and by observing the winds and clouds, could foresee when there would be *rain*, and when there would be *hot weather*; (v. 54, 55.) and they did, accordingly, either house their hay and corn, or throw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they foresaw the weather would be. Even in the change of the weather God gives warning to us what is coming, and art has improved those notices of nature in weather-glasses. These preparations here spoken of, were made by repeated observations upon the chain of causes; from what *has been* we conjecture what *will be*; see the benefit of experience, by *ta*

king notice we may come to *give notice*; whoso is wise, will *observe and learn*. See now,

1. The particulars of the preages: "*Ye see a cloud arising out of the west*;" (the Hebrew would say, *out of the sea*); "perhaps it is at first no bigger than a man's hand, (1 Kings 18. 44.) but ye say, There is a shower in the womb of it, and it proves so. When ye observe the south wind blow, ye say, *There will be heat*," (for the hot countries of Africa lay not far south from Judea,) "and it usually comes to pass; yet nature has not tied itself to such a track, but that sometimes we are out in our prognostics.

2. The inferences from them, (v. 56.) "*Ye hypocrites, who pretend to be wise, but really are not so, who pretend to expect the Messiah and his kingdom,*" (for so the generality of the Jews did,) "and yet are no way disposed to receive and entertain it, *how is it that you do not discern this time*, that ye do not discern that, according to the indications given in the Old-Testament prophecies, now is the time for the Messiah to appear, and that, according to the marks given of him, I am he? Why are ye not aware that ye have now an opportunity which ye *will not have long*, and which ye *may never have again*, of securing to yourselves an interest in the kingdom of God, and the privileges of that kingdom?" Now is the *accepted time*, now or never. It is the folly and misery of man, that he *knows not his time*, Eccl. 9. 12. This was the ruin of the men of that generation, that they *knew not the day of their visitation*, Luke 19. 44. But a *wise man's heart discerns time and judgment*; such was the wisdom of the men of Issachar, who had *understanding of the times*, 1 Chron. 12. 32. He adds (v. 57.) "*Yea, and why even of yourselves*, though ye had not these loud alarms given you, *judge ye not what is right*? Ye are not only stupid and regardless in matters that are purely of divine revelation, and take not the hints which that gives you, but ye are so even in the dictates of the very light and law of nature." Christianity has reason and natural conscience on its side; and if men would allow themselves the liberty of *judging what is right*, they would soon find that all Christ's precepts concerning all things are right, and that there is nothing more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us, than to submit to them, and be ruled by them.

II. Let them hasten to *make their peace with God* in time, before it be too late, v. 55, 59. This we had upon another occasion, Matt. 5. 26.

1. We reckon it our wisdom in our temporal affairs, to compound with those with whom we cannot contend, to agree with our adversary upon the best terms we can, before the equity be *foreclosed*, and we be left to the rigour of the law; "*When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, to whom the appeal is made, and knowest that he has an advantage against thee, and thou art in danger of being cast, ye know it is the most prudent course, to make the matter up between yourselves; as thou art in the way, give diligence to be delivered from him*, to get a discharge, lest judgment be given, and execution awarded according to law." Wise men will not let their quarrels go to an extremity, but accommodate them in time.

2. Let us do thus in the affairs of our souls; we have by sin made God our *Adversary*, have provoked his displeasure against us, and he has both *right and might* on his side; so that it is to no purpose to think of carrying on the controversy with him either at *bar* or in *battle*. Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, is the Magistrate before whom we are hastening to appear: if we stand a trial before him, and insist upon our own justification, the cause will certainly go against us; the Judge will deliver us to the *officer*, the ministers of

his justice, and we shall be *cast into the prison* of hell, and the debt will be exacted to the utmost, though we cannot make a full satisfaction for it, it will be continually demanded, *till the last mite be paid*, which will not be to all eternity. Christ's sufferings were short, yet the *value* of them made them fully satisfactory. In the sufferings of damned sinners, what is wanting in value, must be made up in an endless duration. Now, in consideration of this, let us give diligence to be delivered *out of the hands of God as an Adversary*, into his hands as a Father, and this *as we are in the way*, which has the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are alive, we are *in the way*; and now is our time, by repentance and faith, through Christ, (who is the Mediator as well as the Magistrate,) to get the quarrel made up, while it may be done, before it be too late. Thus was God in Christ *reconciling the world to himself, beseeching us to be reconciled*. Let us take hold on the arm of the Lord stretched out in this gracious offer, that we may make peace, and we *shall make peace*; (Isa. 27. 4, 5.) for we cannot *walk together till we be agreed*.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The good improvement Christ made of a piece of news that was brought him concerning some Galileans, that were lately massacred by Pilate, as they were sacrificing in the temple at Jerusalem, v. 1. . 5. II. The parable of the fruitless fig-tree, by which we are warned to bring forth fruits meet for that repentance which he had in the foregoing passage called us to, v. 6. . 9. III. Christ's healing of a poor infirm woman on the sabbath-day, and justifying of himself in it, v. 11. . 17. IV. A repetition of the parables of the grain of mustard-seed, and the leaven, v. 18. . 22. V. His answer to the question concerning the number of the saved, v. 23. . 30. VI. The slight he put upon Herod's malice and menaces, and the doom of Jerusalem read, v. 31. . 35.

1. **T**HERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

We have here,

I. Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, v. 1. Let us consider,

1. What this tragical story was: it is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the historians of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing of some Samaritans, who, under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to mount Gerizzim, where the Samaritans' temple was; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulotina, who is called *Judas of Galilee*, (Acts 5. 37.) who disowned Cæsar's authority, and refused to pay tribute to him: or perhaps these, being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in with that pretender, were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable that this outrage committed upon them by Pilate, occasioned the

quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of, *ch.* 23. 12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps *but a few*, whom Pilate had some particular *hique* against; (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus; but the circumstance remarked is, that he mingled *their blood with their sacrifices* in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had reason to fear Pilate's malice, yet they would not, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whither the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were *themselves* killing their sacrifices, which was allowed; for the priest's work (they said) began with the *sprinkling of the blood*; and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at that time when they were off their guard, (for otherwise the Galileans were mottled men, and generally went well armed,) and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the holiness of the place nor of the work, would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, that neither *feared God nor regarded man*. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a place of danger and slaughter.

2. Why it was related *this season* to our Lord Jesus. (1.) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them. (2.) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be *delivered to the officer*, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," say they, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly *delivered to the officer*, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready." Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God, and to enforce it upon ourselves, by observing the providences of God. (3.) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a Prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite out; for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be *delivered into the hands of Pilate*, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice. (4.) Perhaps this was told Christ, to deter him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship, *v.* 22. lest he should serve him as he had served those Galileans, and should suggest against him, as, probably, he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his cruelty, that they came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a *seditions* design, under colour of sacrificing, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hand was in, should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way. (5.) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful *intuendo*, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet that, without doubt, they were secretly bad men, else God would not have permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invidious; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they will, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than

because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them; this fate of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable, construction, shall be called a *just judgment of God upon them*, though they knew not for what.

II. Christ's reply to this report: in which,

1. He seconded it with another story, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since the *tower in Siloam fell*, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is, that this tower adjoined to the *pool of Siloam*, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to those *porches* which were by the *pool*, in which the *impotent folk* lay, that waited for the stirring of the water, (*John* 5. 3.) and that they who were killed, were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for *as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them*, *Ecc.* 9. 12. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men's destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and such like events, nor from thence to censure *great sufferers*, as if they were *therefore* to be accounted *great sinners*; *Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? It'll you say, v.* 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans, were Jews, and were glad of any thing that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the *men of Jerusalem*, that came to an untimely end; for *with what measure of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again*. "Now suppose ye that *those eighteen* who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were *debtors* to divine justice *above all men that dwell at Jerusalem? It'll you say*." Whether itrike for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's *sins* by their *sufferings* in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold, to be purified, not as dress and chaff, to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we add sorrow to the sorrowful; nay, *lest we condemn the generation of the righteous*, *Psa.* 73.

14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we *know love or hatred by all that is before us*, because *all things come alike to all*, *Ecc.* 9. 1, 2. And we might as justly conclude that the *oppressors*, and Pilate among the rest, *on whose side are power and success*, are the greatest saints, as that the *oppressed*, and these Galileans among the rest, who are all in tears, and they have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the *greatest sinners*. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do we shall be done by. Judge not, that ye be not judged, *Matth.* 7. 1.

3. On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, *v.* 3, 4. (1.) This intimates that we all deserve to *perish* as much as *they did*, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the *iniquity of our holy things*, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censures, not only that we are *sinners*, but that we are as great sinners as they

have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for. (2.) That therefore we are all concerned to *repent*, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others, are loud calls to us to *repent*. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to *gain room* for, and *give hopes* to, but to enjoin upon us, —and that is, to *repent*. (3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way; *so iniquity shall not be your ruin*, but upon no other terms. (4.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word *likewise*, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had *their blood mingled with their sacrifices*; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perish out of this world. The same Jesus that bid us *repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, bid us *repent*, for otherwise we shall perish; so that he hath set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice. (5.) The perishing of *those* in their impenitency will be in a particular manner aggravated, who have been most harsh and severe in judging others.

6. He spake also this parable: A certain *man* had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*"; except ye be reformed, ye will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down."

1. This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which, turning to his praise and honour, he would have accounted *fruit*; but they disappointed his expectations, they did not do their duty, they were a reproach, instead of being a credit, to their profession; upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's, as of old upon Moses's, intercession, he graciously gave them further time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance; some of them were wrought upon to *repent*, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them:

about forty years after they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (Matth. 3. 10.) which saying of his this parable enlarges upon.

II. Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it, that the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the *fruit* required. Now observe here,

1. The advantages which this fig-tree had: it was *planted in a vineyard*, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it, and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in *vineyards*, (those are for vines,) but by the *way-side*, Matth. 21. 19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain *man*, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note, The church of God is *his vineyard*, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isa. 5. 1, 2. We are *fig-trees planted* in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and it is our privilege and happiness that we have so, it is a distinguishing favour. He has not *dealt so with other nations*.

2. The owner's expectation from it; *He came, and sought fruit thereon*, and he had reason to expect it. He did not *send*, but came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, *came to his own*, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects *fruit* from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has *his eye* upon those that *enjoy* the gospel, to see whether they *live* up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. *Leaves* will not serve, crying, *Lord, Lord; blossoms* will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be *fruit*. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel-light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation; *He found none*, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him, and a grief to the Spirit of his grace. (1.) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard; I come, *seeking fruit*, but am disappointed; *I find none*, looking for grapes, but behold, *wild grapes*; he is grieved with such a generation. (2.) He aggravates it, with two considerations: [1.] That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed; as he was not *high* in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not much fruit, so he was not *hasty*, he came *three years*, year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us, that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering, with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, *seeking fruit*, but has *found none*, or next to none, or worse than none! [2.] That this fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but did hurt; it *cumbered the ground*, it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not do *good*, commonly do *hurt* by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good, they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground the

more cumbered, if it be a high large spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

4. The down passed upon it; *Cut it down.* He saith this to the *Dresser of the vineyard*, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are, in his name, to declare this doom. Note, No other can be expected concerning barren trees, than that they should be *cut down.* As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common, (Isa. 5. 5, 6.) so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and wither, John 15. 6. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa. 6. 9, 10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for *why cumberst it the ground?* What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

5. The Dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor, he ever lives, interceding; ministers are intercessors; they that *dress* the vineyard, should *intercede* for it; these *we preach to*, we should *pray for*, for we must give ourselves to the *word of God*, and to *prayer.* Now observe,

(1.) What it is he prays for, and that is, a reprieve; *Lord, let it alone this year also.* He doth not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now." Lord, do not remove the Dresser, do not withhold the dews, do not pluck up the tree." Note, [1.] It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved. Some have not yet *grace to repent*, yet it is a mercy to them to have *space to repent*, as it was to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God. [2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that *barren trees* are not cut down immediately; had it not been for this interposal, the whole world had been cut down, upon the sin of Adam; but he said, *Lord, let it alone*; and it is he that upholds all things. [3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees; "Lord, *let them alone*;" continue them yet a while in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath. [4.] Reprieves of mercy are but for a time; *Let it alone this year also*, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has borne long, we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always. [5.] *Reprieves* may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not *pardons*; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(2.) How he promises to improve this reprieve, if it be obtained; *Till I shall dig about it, and dung it.* Note, [1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The Dresser seems to say, "Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness." Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for. [2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The Dresser of the vineyard engages to do *his* part, and therein teaches ministers to do *theirs.* He will *dig about* the tree, and will *dung* it. Unfruitful Christians must be *awakened* by the terrors of the law, which *break up the fallow ground*, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warning and fattening, as manure to the tree: both methods must be tried, the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(3.) Upon what foot he leaves the matter; "Let us try it" and try what we can do with it one year

more, and if it bear fruit, well; (vs. 9.) it is possible, nay there is hope, that it yet it may be fruitful;" in that hope the Owner will have patience with it, and the Dresser will take pains with it, and if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word *well* is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt; *If it bear fruit*; supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the Owner and Dresser will be; if it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing, we have what we would have; but it cannot be better expressed than as we do, *well.* Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if, after long unfruitfulness, they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find *all is well.* God will be pleased, if he will be *praised*; ministers' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now, and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it: the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is *well* for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall *receive blessing from God*; (Heb. 6. 7.) it shall be *purged*, and *shall bring forth more fruit*, for the Father is its Husbandman; (John 15. 2.) and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

But he adds, *If not then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.* Observe here, [1.] That though God bear long, he will not bear always, with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be *cut down* at last, and *cast into the fire.* [2.] The longer God has *waited*, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down *after that*, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation. [3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God doth not take pleasure in: for observe here, the Owner said to the Dresser, "Do thou *cut it down*, for it cumbereth the ground." "Nay," said the Dresser, "if it must be done at last, *thou shalt cut it down*, let not my hand be upon it." [4.] Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness, will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay they will approve and applaud the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, Rev. 15. 3, 4.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath: 11. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. 15. The Lord

then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite ! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering ?* 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day ? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed : and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Here is,

I. The miraculous cure of a woman that had been long under a spirit of infirmity. Our Lord Jesus spent his *sabbaths* in the *synagogues*, v. 10. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity, and not think we can spend the sabbath as well at home in reading a good book, for religious assemblies are a divine institution, which we must bear our testimony to, though but of two or three. And when he was in the synagogues on the sabbath-day, *he was teaching there*—*ἐν αὐταῖς* ; it denotes a continued act ; he still taught the people knowledge. He was in his element when he was teaching. Now to confirm the doctrine he preached, and recommend it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation, he wrought a miracle, a miracle of mercy.

1. The object of charity that presented itself, was, a woman in the synagogue, that had a *spirit of infirmity* eighteen years, v. 11. She had an infirmity, which an evil spirit, by divine permission, had brought upon her, which was such, that she was *bowled together* by strong convulsions, and could in *no wise lift up herself* ; and, having been so long thus, the disease was incurable, she could not stand erect, which is reckoned man's honour above the beasts. Observe, Though she was under this infirmity, by which she was much *deformed*, and made to look mean, and not only so, but, as is supposed, motion was very painful to her, yet she went to the *synagogue on the sabbath-day*. Note, Even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous indeed, should not keep us from public worship on sabbath-days ; for God can help us, beyond our expectation.

The offer of this cure to one that sought it not, bespeaks the preventing mercy and grace of Christ : (v. 11.) *When Jesus saw her, he called her to him*. It does not appear that she made any application to him, or had any expectation from him ; but *before she called he answered*. She came to him, to be taught, and to get good to her soul, and then Christ gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Note, Those whose first and chief care is for their souls, do best befriending the true interests of their bodies likewise, for *other things shall be added to them*. Christ in his gospel calls and invites those to come to him for healing, that labour under *spiritual infirmities*, and if he *calls us*, he will undoubtedly help us when we come to him.

3. The cure effectually and immediately wrought, bespeaks his almighty power. He *laid his hands on her*, and said, *Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity* ; though thou hast been long labouring under it, thou art at length released from it." Let not those despair, whose disease is *inveterate*, who have been long in affliction, God can at length relieve them ; therefore, though he tarry, wait for him. Though it was a *spirit of infirmity*, an evil spirit, that she was under the power of, Christ has a power superior to that of Satan, is *stronger than*

he. Though she could in *no wise lift up herself*, Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself. She that had been *crooked*, was immediately made straight, and the scripture was fulfilled, (Ps. 146. 8.) *The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down*.

This cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the souls of people. (1.) In the *conversion* of sinners. Unsanctified hearts are under this *spirit of infirmity*, they are distorted, the faculties of the soul are quite out of place and order ; they are *bowed down* toward things below. *O curvæ in terram anime !—Base souls that bend toward the earth* ? They can in no wise *lift up themselves* to God and heaven : the bent of the soul, in its natural state, is the quite contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ, but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he *looses them from their infirmity* ; makes the soul straight, reduces it to order, raises it above worldly regards, and directs its affections and aims heavenward. Though man cannot make that straight, which God has made crooked, (Eccl. 7. 13.) yet the grace of God can make that straight, which the sin of man has made crooked. (2.) In the *consolation* of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a *spirit of infirmity*, a spirit of bondage ; through prevailing grief and fear, their souls are cast down and disquieted within them, they are troubled, they are *bowed down greatly, they go mourning all the day long*, Ps. 38. 6. But Christ, by his spirit of adoption, looses them from this infirmity in due time, and raises them up.

4. The present effect of this cure upon the *soul* of the patient as well as upon her *body* ; she *glorified God*, gave him the praise of her cure, to whom all praise is due. When crooked souls are made straight, they will show it by their glorifying God.

II. The offence that was taken at this by the ruler of the synagogue, as if our Lord Jesus had committed some heinous crime, in healing this poor woman. He had indignation at it, because it was on the sabbath-day, v. 14. One would think that the miracle should have convinced him, and that the circumstance of its being done on the sabbath-day could not have served to evade the conviction, but what light can shine so clear, so strong, which a spirit of bigotry and enmity to Christ and his gospel will not serve to shut men's eyes against ? Never was such honour done to the synagogue he was ruler of as Christ had now done it, and yet he had indignation at it. He had not indeed the impudence to quarrel with Christ, but he said to the people, reflecting upon Christ in what he said, *There are six days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come, and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day*. See here how light he made of the miracles Christ wrought, as if they were *things of course*, and no more than what quacks and mountebanks did every day : "You may come and be healed, any day of the week." Christ's cures were become, in his eyes, cheap and common things. See also how he stretches the law beyond its intention, or any just construction that could be put upon it, in making either healing or being healed with a touch of the hand, or a word's speaking, to be that *work* which is forbidden on the sabbath-day. This was evidently the *work of God* ; and when God tied us out from working that day, did he tie himself out ? The same word in Hebrew signifies both *godly* and *merciful*, (*chesed*.) to intimate that works of *mercy* and *charity* are in a manner works of *piety*, (1 Tim. 5. 4.) and therefore very proper on sabbath-days.

III. Christ's justification of himself in what he had done ; (v. 15.) *The Lord then answered him*, as he had answered others, who in like manner ca-

villed at him, *Thou hypocrite*. Christ, who knows men's hearts, may call these *hypocrites*, whom it would be presumption for us to call so, who *must* judge charitably, and *can* judge but according to the outward appearance. Christ knew that he had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, that he did but cloak that with a pretended zeal for the sabbath-day, and that when he bid the people come on the *six days*, and be healed, he really would not have them be healed any day. Christ could have told him this, but he vouchsafes to reason the case with him: and,

1. He *appeals* to the common practice among the Jews, which was never disallowed, that of *watering* their cattle on the sabbath-day; those cattle that are kept up in the stable, are constantly *loosed from the stall on the sabbath-day, and led away to watering*. It would be a barbarous thing not to do it; for a merciful man regards the life of his beast, his own beast that serves him. Letting the cattle *rest* on the sabbath-day, as the law directed, would be worse than working them, if they must be made to fast on that day, as the Ninevites' cattle on their fast-day, that were not permitted to *feed or drink water*, Jon. 3. 7.

2. He applies this to the present case; (v. 16.) "Must an *ox* or an *ass* have compassion showed them on the sabbath-day, and have so much time and pains bestowed upon them *every* sabbath, to be loosed from the stall, led away perhaps a great way to the water, and then back again; and shall not this woman, only with a touch of the hand and a word's speaking, be *loosed* from a much greater grievance than that which the cattle undergo, when they are kept a day without water? For consider, (1.) "She is a daughter of Abraham, whom you all pride yourselves in a relation to; she is *your sister*, and shall she be denied a favour that you grant to an ox or an ass, dispensing a little with the supposed strictness of the sabbath-day? She is a daughter of Abraham, and therefore is entitled to the Messiah's blessings, to the bread which belongs to the children." (2.) "She is one whom Satan has bound, he has a hand in the affliction, and therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of piety to God, to break the power of the devil, and baffle him." (3.) "She has been in this deplorable condition, *to, these eighteen years*, and therefore now that there is an opportunity of delivering her, it ought not to be deferred a day longer, as you would have it, for any of you would have thought eighteen years' affliction full long enough."

IV. The different effect that this had upon those that heard him. He had sufficiently made it out, not only that it was lawful, but that it was highly fit and proper, to heal this poor woman on the sabbath-day, and thus publicly in the synagogue, that they might all be witnesses of the miracle. And now observe,

1. What a confusion this was to the malice of his persecutors; When he had said these things, *all his adversaries were ashamed*, (v. 17.) they were put to silence, and were vexed that they were so, that they had not a word to say for themselves; it was not a shame that worked repentance, but indignation rather. Note, Sooner or later, all the adversaries of Christ, and his doctrine and miracles, will be made *ashamed*.

2. What a confirmation this was to the faith of his friends; *All the people*, who had a better sense of things, and judged more impartially than their rulers, rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. The shame of his foes was the joy of his followers; the increase of his interest was what he one fretted at, and the other triumphed in. The things Christ did, were *glorious things*; they were all so, and, though now clouded, perhaps will

appear so, and we ought to rejoice in them. Every thing that is the honour of Christ, is the comfort of Christians.

18. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like! and whereunto shall I resemble it! 19. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The gospel's progress foretold in two parables, which we had before, Matth. 13. 31, 33. The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of God, for it advances his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes, about it. Now, when we would describe a thing to these that are strangers to it, we choose to do it by similitudes; "Such a person you know not, but I will tell you whom he is like;" so Christ undertakes here to show *what the kingdom of God is like*; (v. 18.) "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? v. 20. It will be quite another thing from what you expect, and will operate, and gain its point, in quite another manner."

(1.) "You expect it will appear *great*, and will arrive at its perfection all of a sudden; but you are mistaken, it is like a grain of mustard-seed, a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and promises but little; yet, when sown in soil proper to receive it, it *waxes a great tree*," v. 19. Many perhaps were prejudiced against the gospel, and loath to come in to the obedience of it, because its beginning was so small; they were ready to say of Christ, *Can this man save us?* And of his gospel, *Is this likely ever to come to any thing?* Now Christ would remove this prejudice, by assuring them that though *its beginning was small, its latter end should greatly increase*; so that many should come, should come upon the wing, should *fly like a cloud*, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction than in the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, Dan. 4. 21.

(2.) "You expect it will make its way by *external* means, by subduing nations and vanquishing armies; though it shall work *like leaven*, silently and insensibly, and without any force or violence, v. 21. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, so the doctrine of Christ will strangely *diffuse* its relish into the world of mankind: in this it triumphs, that the *savour of the knowledge of it* is unaccountably made manifest in *every place*, beyond what one could have expected, 2 Cor. 2. 14. But you must give it time, wait for the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world, and you will find it does wonders, and alters the property of the souls of men. By degrees the whole will be leavened, even as many as are, like the meal to the leaven, prepared to receive the savour of it."

2. Christ's progress toward Jerusalem recorded; (v. 22.) He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying. Here we find Christ an Itinerant, but an itinerant Preacher, journeying toward Jerusalem, to the Feast of Dedication, which was in the winter, when travelling was uncomfortable, yet he would be about his Father's business; and therefore, whatever cities or villages he could

make in his way, he gave them a sermon or two, not only in the cities, but in the country-villages. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavour to be doing all the good we can.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that are saved! And he said unto them, 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

We have here,

I. A question put to our Lord Jesus; who it was that put it, we are not told, whether a friend or a foe; for he gave both a great liberty of questioning him, and returned answers to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The question was, *Are there few that are saved?* v. 23. *οι λιγοι οι σωζομενοι*—“If the saved be few? Master, I have heard thou shouldst say so; Is it true?”

1. Perhaps it was a *captious* question; he put it to him, tempting him, with a design to ensnare him, and lessen his reputation. If he should say that many would be saved, they would reproach him as too loose, and making salvation cheap; if few, they would reproach him as precise and strait-laced. The Jewish doctors said, That all Israel should have a place in the world to come; and would he dare to contradict that! Those that have sucked in a corrupt notion, are ready to make it the standard by which to measure all men's judgments; and in nothing do men more betray their ignorance, presumption, and partiality, than in judging of the salvation of others.

2. Perhaps it was a *curious* question, a nice speculation, which he had lately been disputing upon with his companions, and they all agreed to refer it to Christ. Note, Many are more inquisitive respecting who shall be saved, and who not, than respecting what they shall do to be saved. It is commonly asked, “May such and such be saved?” But it is well that we may be saved without knowing that.

3. Perhaps it was an *admiring* question; he had taken notice how strict the law of Christ was, and how bad the world was, and comparing these together, cries out, “How few are there that will be saved!” Note, We have reason to wonder, that of the many to whom the word of salvation is sent,

there are so few to whom it is indeed a saving word.

4. Perhaps it was an *inquiring* question; “If there be few that be saved, what then? What influence should this have upon me?” Note, It concerns us all seriously to improve the great truth of the fewness of those that are saved.

II. Christ's answer to this question, which directs us what use to make of this truth. Our Saviour did not give a direct answer to his inquiry, for he came to *guide men's consciences*, not to *gratify their curiosity*. Ask not, “How many shall be saved?” But, be they more or fewer, “Shall I be one of them?” Not, “What shall become of such and such, and what shall this man do?” But, “What shall I do, and what will become of me?” Now in Christ's answer observe,

1. A quickening exhortation and direction; *Strive to enter in at the strait gate*. This is directed not to him only that asked the question, but to all, to us, it is in the plural number; *Strive ye*. Note, (1.) All that will be saved, must *enter in at the strait gate*, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as amounts to no less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline. (2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate, must *strive to enter*. It is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, strive against sin and Satan; we must strive in every duty of religion, strive with our own hearts, *μαχεσθαι*—“*Lee in an agony*, strive as those that run for a prize, exert ourselves to the utmost.”

2. Divers awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them! They are such considerations as will serve to answer the question, *Are there few that shall be saved?*

(1.) Think how many take *some pains* for salvation, and yet perish because they do not take *enough*; and you will say that there are *few that will be saved*, and that it highly concerns us to *strive*; *Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*; they seek, but they do not *strive*. Note, the reason why many come short of grace and glory, is, because they rest in a *lazy seeking* of that which will not be attained without a *laborious striving*. They have a *good mind to happiness*, and a *good opinion of holiness*, and take some *good steps* toward both; but their convictions are weak, they do not consider what they know and believe, and, consequently, their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they *come short*, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ avers this upon his own word, *I say unto you*; and we may take it upon his word, for he knows both the counsels of God and the hearts of the children of men.

(2.) Think of the *distinguishing* day that is coming, and the *decisions* of that day; and you will say there are *few that shall be saved*, and that we are concerned to strive; The *Master of the house* will *rise up, and shut to the door*, v. 25. Christ is the *Master of the house*, that will take cognizance of all that frequent his house, and are retainers to it, will examine comers and goers, and those that pass and repass. Now he seems as if he left things at large; but the day is coming when he will *rise up, and shut to the door*. What door? [1.] A door of *distinction*. Now, within the temple of the church there are *carnal* professors who worship in the *outer-court*, and *spiritual* professors who worship *within the veil*; between these the door is now open, and they meet *promiscuously* in the same external performances. But when the *Master of the house* is risen up, the door will be shut between them, that these who are

in the *outer-court*, may be kept out, and left to be *trdden under foot by the Gentiles*, Rev. 11. 2. They *that are filthy*, shut the door upon them, and let them be *filthy still*; that those who are within, may be kept within, that those who are *holy*, may be *holy still*. The door is shut, to *separate* between the *precious* and the *vile*, that sinners may no longer stand in the *congregation of the righteous*. Then you shall return, and discern betwixt them. [2.] A door of *denial* and exclusion. The door of *mercy* and *grace* has long stood open to them, but they would not come in by it, would not be beholden to the *favour* of that door, they hoped to climb up some other way, and to get to heaven by their own merits; and therefore when the Master of the house is risen up, he will justly shut that door; let them not expect to enter by it, but let them take their own measures. Thus, when Noah was safe in the ark, God shut the door, to exclude all those that depended upon shelters of their own in the approaching flood.

(3.) Think how many who were very confident that they should be saved, will be rejected in the day of trial, and their confidences will deceive them; and you will say that there are few that shall be saved, and that we are all concerned to strive; considering,

[1.] What an assurance they had of admission, and how far their hope carried them, even to *heaven's gate*; there they stand and knock, knock as if they had authority, knock as those that belonged to the house, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," for we think we have a right to enter; take us in among the saved ones, for we joined ourselves to them." Note, Many are ruined by an ill-grounded hope of heaven, which they never distrusted or called in question, and therefore conclude their state is good, because they never doubted it. They call Christ Lord, as if they were his servants; nay, in token of their importunity, they double it, Lord, Lord; they are desirous now to enter in by that door which they had formerly made light of, and would now gladly come in among those serious christians whom they had secretly despised.

[2.] What grounds they had for this confidence. Let us see what their plea is, v. 26. First, They had been Christ's guests, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours; *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence*, at thy table. Judas ate bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children. Secondly, They had been Christ's hearers; had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law; "Thou hast taught in our streets—a distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for wouldst thou teach us, and not save us?"

[3.] How their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, "I know you not whence you are, v. 25. And again, (v. 26.) I tell you, I know you not, depart from me. He doth not deny that that which they pleaded was true, they had eaten and drunk in his presence, by the same token, that they had no sooner eaten of his bread, than they lifted up the heel against him. He had taught in their streets, by the same token that they had despised his instruction, and would not submit to it. And therefore, First, He disowns them; "I know you not; you do not belong to my family. The Lord knows them that are his, but them that are not he does not know, he has nothing to do with them; "I know you not whence ye are. Ye are not of me, ye are not from above, ye are not branches of my house, of my vine." Secondly, He discards them; Depart from me. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ; the princ-

pal part of the misery of the damned, "Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water." Thirdly, He gives them such a character as is the reason of this doom; *Ye are workers of iniquity*. This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

[4.] How terrible their punishment will be; (v. 28.) *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved; *Ye shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out*. Observe here, [1.] That the *Old-Testament saints* are in the kingdom of God; those had benefit by the Messiah, who died before his coming; for they saw his day at a distance, and it reflected comfort upon them. [2.] That *New-Testament sinners* will be thrust out of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. [3.] That the sight of the saints' glory will be a great aggravation of sinners' misery; they shall thus far see the kingdom of God, that they shall see the prophets in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, who thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Ps. 112. 10.

(4.) Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding; (v. 29, 36.) *They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first*.

[1.] By what Christ had said, it appeared that but few should be saved, of those whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain, for though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world, that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there, whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many thence, whom we verily expected to have found there.

[2.] Those who sit down in the kingdom of God, are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far—from the east, and from the west; from the north, and from the south; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties and discouragements; which shows that they who would enter into that kingdom, must strive, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They who travel now in the service of God and religion, shall shortly sit down to rest in the kingdom of God.

[3.] Many who stood fair for heaven, came short, and others who seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will win and wear this prize, and therefore it concerns us to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desired the Jews might be, to a holy emulation by the zeal and forwardness of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be got by striving, why should not I strive?

31. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. 32. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. 33. Ne-

vertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35. Behold your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Here is,

I. A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction; (v. 31.) *Certain of the Pharisees* (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, *Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee*, as he did John. Some think that those Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had a great and growing interest, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance which John preached. Herod was willing to get rid of Christ out of his dominions; and when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to frighten him away by sending him this threatening message.

II. His defiance of Herod's rage and the Pharisees too: he fears neither the one nor the other; *Go ye and tell that fox so*, v. 32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft, and treachery, and baseness, and preying (as they say of a fox) furthest from his own den. And though it be a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*. For Christ was a Prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a King, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. "Go, and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too," (for so it is in the original,) *τις αλτρου ταυτη*, *that Pharisee* whoever he is that whispers this in my ear, let him know that I do not fear him, nor regard his menaces. For,

1. "I know that I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it and count upon it, *the third day*," that is, "very shortly; my hour is at hand." Note, it will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. "If Herod should kill me, he will not surprise me."

2. "I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him, I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected, I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking, I shall have completed my business;" *τελειωμην*—*I shall be consecrated*. When Christ died, he is said to have sanc-

tified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. "I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me, till I have done my work. Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. *I will cast out devils, and do cures, to-day, and to-morrow*," that is, "now and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must go about, as I now do, preaching and healing, *to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following*." Note, it is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the utmost, that we may thereby be quickened to *do the work of the day in its day*. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. "I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction. *It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem*," that is, "any where but at Jerusalem." If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great Sanhedrim, which always sat at Jerusalem; it was a cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

III. His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, v. 34, 35. This we had, Matth. 23. 37—39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not desiring to bring it in in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note, 1. The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God, is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! *O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!*

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ hath showed himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection; *How often would I have gathered thy children together*, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings; with such care and tenderness!

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is, because they will not; *I would, I often would, and ye would not*. Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves, is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though hugely frequented, is yet desolate, if Christ have deserted it; he leaves it to them, they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make the best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore, saith he, "You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more;" as Moses said to

Pharaoh, when he forbid him his presence, Exod. 10. 28, 29.

7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced; "Then you will say, *Blessed is he that cometh,*" that is, "you will be glad to be among those that say so, and *will not see me* to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, we have, I. The cure which our Lord Jesus wrought upon a man that had the dropsy, on the sabbath-day, and his justifying of himself therein, against those who were offended at his doing it on that day, v. 1. . 6. II. A lesson of humility given to those who were ambitious of the highest rooms, v. 7. . 11. III. A lesson of charity to those who feasted the rich, and did not feed the poor, v. 12. . 14. IV. The success of the gospel-offer foretold in the parable of the guests invited to a feast, signifying the rejection of the Jews, and all others that set their hearts upon this world, and the entertainment of the Gentiles, and all others that come empty of self, to be filled with Christ, v. 15. . 24. V. The great law of discipleship laid down, with a caution to all that will be Christ's disciples, to undertake it deliberately, and with consideration, and particularly to ministers to retain their savour, v. 25. . 35.

1. **AND** it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3. And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? 4. And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; 5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? 6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

In this passage of story we find,

I. That the *Son of man came, eating and drinking*, conversing familiarly with all sorts of people; not declining the society of publicans, though they were of ill fame, nor of Pharisees, though they bare him ill will, but accepting the friendly invitations both of the one and the other; that, if possible, he might do good to both. Here he *went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees*, a ruler, it may be, and a magistrate in his country, to *eat bread on the sabbath-day*, v. 1. See how favourable God is to us, that he allows us time, even on his own day, for bodily refreshments; and how careful we should be not to abuse that liberty, or turn it into licentiousness. Christ went only to *eat bread*, to take such refreshment as was necessary on the sabbath-day. Our sabbath-meals must, with a particular care, be guarded against all manner of excess. On sabbath-days we must do, as Moses and Jethro did, *eat bread before God*, (Exod. 18. 12.) and, as is said of the primitive christians, on the Lord's day, must *eat and drink* as those that must *pray again before we go to rest*, that we may not be unfit for that.

II. That he *went about, doing good*. Wherever he came, he sought opportunities to do good, and not only improved those that *fell in his way*; here was a *certain man before him, which had the dropsy*, v. 2. We do not find that he offered himself, or that his friends offered him to be Christ's patient, but Christ *prevented him* with the blessings of his goodness, and *before he called* he answered him. Note, It is a happy thing to be where Christ is, to be present *before him*, though we be not presented

to him. This man had the *dropsy*, it is probable, in a high degree, and that he appeared much swelled with it; probably, he was some relation of the Pharisee's that now *lodged* in his house, which is more likely than that he should be an *invited guest* at the table.

III. That he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*; (v. 1.) *They watched him*. The Pharisee that invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ *knew it*, and yet *went*, for he knew himself a match for the most *subtle* of them, and how to order his steps with an eye to his *observers*. Those that are *watched*, had need to be *wary*. It was, as Dr. Hammond observes, contrary to all laws of hospitality, to seek advantage against one that you invited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to *ensnare* the birds, *held their peace*, and acted very *silently*. When Christ asked them *whether they thought it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day*, (and herein he is said to *answer* them, for it was an answer to their *thoughts*, and thoughts are words to Jesus Christ,) they would say neither *Yea* nor *Nay*, for their design was to *inform against him*, not to be *informed by him*. They would not say, *It was lawful to heal*, for then they would preclude themselves from imputing it to him as a crime: and yet the thing was so plain and self-evident, that they could not for shame say it was *not lawful*. Note, Good men have often been persecuted for doing that which even their persecutors, if they would but give their consciences leave to speak out, could not but own to be lawful and good. Many a *good work* Christ did, for which they *cast stones* at him and his name.

IV. That Christ would not be hindered from *doing good by the opposition and contradiction of sinners*; (v. 4.) *He took him, and healed him, and let him go*. Perhaps he *took him aside* into another room, and healed him *there*, because he would neither *proclaim* himself, such was his humility, nor *provoke* his adversaries, such was his wisdom, his *meekness of wisdom*. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the least offensive. Or, *He took him*, that is, he *laid hands* on him, to cure him; *ἐπὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ, complexus*—he *embraced him*, took him in his arms, big and unwieldy as he was, (for so dropsical people generally are,) and reduced him to shape. The cure of a dropsy, as much as of any disease, one would think, should be gradual; yet Christ cured even *that* disease, perfectly cured it in a moment. He then let him go, lest the Pharisees should fall upon him for *being healed*, though he was purely passive: for what absurdities would not such men as they were be guilty of?

V. That our Lord Jesus did *nothing but what he could justify*, to the conviction and confusion of those that quarrelled with him, v. 5, 6. He still answered their thoughts, and made them *hold their peace for shame*, who before held their peace for *subtlety* by an appeal to their own practice, as he had been used to do upon such occasions, that he might show them how in condemning him they condemned themselves; *Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit*, by accident, *will he not pull him out on the sabbath-day*, and that straightway, not deferring it till the sabbath be over, lest it perish? Observe, It is not so much out of *compassion to the poor creature*, that they do it, but a concern for their own interest. It is *their own ox*, and *their own ass*, that is worth money, that they will dispense with the law of the sabbath for the *saving of*. Now this was an evidence of their hypocrisy, and that it was not out of any real regard to the sabbath, that

they found fault with Christ for healing on the *sabbath-day*; (that was only the pretence;) but really they were angry at the *miraculous good works* which Christ wrought, the *proof* he thereby gave of his divine mission, and the interest he thereby gained among the people. Many can easily dispense with that, for their own interest, which they cannot dispense with for God's glory and the good of their brethren. This question *silenced* them; *they could not answer him again to these things*, v. 6. Christ will be justified when he speaks, and every mouth stopped before him.

7. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. 12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. 13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable, edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find that when he had none but his disciples, that were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was *good, and to the use of edifying*: and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that *watched him*, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them; though the *wicked were before him*, he did not *keep silence from good*, (as David did, Ps. 39. 1, 2.) for, notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had not his *heart hot within him*, nor was his *spirit stirred*. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the *hypocritical mockers at feasts*, but we must go beyond common harmless talk, and should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables, to speak well of him, and learn to *spiritualize* common things. The lips of the righteous should then *feed many*.

Our Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet, as one that had not respect of persons,

I. He takes occasion to reprove *the guests* for striving to sit *uppermost*, and from thence gives us a lesson of *humility*.

1. He observed how these lawyers and Pharisees affected the *highest seats*, toward the head-end of

the table, v. 7. He had charged that sort of men with this in general, *ch. 11. 43*. Here he brings home the charge to particular persons; for Christ will give *every man his own*. He marked how they chose out the *chief rooms*; every man, as he came in, got as near the best seat as he could. Note, *Even* in the common actions of life, Christ's eye is upon us, and he *marks* what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables, and *makes remarks* upon it.

2. He observed how those who were thus aspiring, often exposed themselves, and came off *with a slur*; whereas those who were modest, and seated themselves in the lowest seats, often *gained respect* by it. (1.) Those who, when they come in, assume the highest seats, may perhaps be *degraded*, and forced to come down to give place to one *more honourable*, v. 8, 9. Note, It ought to check our high thoughts of ourselves, to think how many there are, that are *more honourable* than we, not only in respect of worldly dignities, but of personal merits and accomplishments. Instead of being proud that so many give place to us, it should be humbling to us, that there are so many that we must give place to. The master of the feast will marshal his guests, and will not see the *more honourable* kept out of the seat that is his due, and therefore will make hold to take him lower that usurped it; *Give this man place*; and this will be a disgrace to him that would be thought more deserving than really he was, before all the company. Note, Pride will have *shame*, and will at last have a *fall*. (2.) Those who, when they come in, content themselves with the lowest seats, are likely to be preferred; (v. 10.) "Go, and *seat thyself in the lowest room*, as taking it for granted that thy friend who invited thee, has guests to come, that are of better rank and quality than thou art; but perhaps it may not prove so, and then it will be said to thee, *Friend, go up higher*. The master of the feast will be so just to thee, as not to keep thee at the lower end of the table, because thou wast so *modest* as to seat thyself there." Note, The way to *rise high*, is, to *begin low*; and this recommends a man to those about him; "Thou shalt have honour and respect before those that sit with thee. They will see thee to be an *honourable man*, beyond what at first they thought; and honour appears the brighter for shining out of *obscurity*. They will likewise see thee to be a *humble man*, which is the greatest honour of all. Our Saviour here refers to that advice of Solomon, (Prov. 25. 6, 7.) *Stand not in the place of great men, for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldest be put lower*." And Dr. Lightfoot quotes a parable out of one of the rabbins, somewhat like this, "Three men" (said he) "were bidden to a feast; one sat highest, For, said he, I am a prince; the other next, For, said he, I am a wise man; the other lowest, For, said he, I am a humble man. The king seated the humble man highest, and put the prince lowest."

3. He applies this generally, and would have us all learn not to *mind high things*, but to content ourselves with mean things, as for other reasons, so for this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men, for *whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased*; but humility and self-denial are really honourable, *he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted*, v. 11. We see it in other instances, that a man's *pride will bring him low*, but *honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*, and *before honour is humility*.

11. He takes occasion to reprove the master of the feast, for inviting so many *rich people*, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have invited the *poor*, or, which was all one, have *sent portions to them for whom nothing is prepared*, and who could not afford themselves a good meal's meat. See Neh. 8. 10. Our Saviour

here teaches us, that the using of what we have, in works of charity, is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificent house-keeping.

1. "Covet not to *treat the rich*; (v. 12.) invite not *thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours that are rich*." This does not *prohibit* the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivation of friendship among relations and neighbours. But, (1.) "Do not make a common custom of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayst not disable thyself to lay out in a much better way, in almsgiving." Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor." Solomon saith, *He that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want*, Prov. 22. 16. "Give" (saith Pliny, Epist.) "to thy friends, but let it be to thy *poor* friends, not to those that need thee not." (2.) "Be not *proud of it*." Many make feasts, only to make a show, as Ahasuerus did; (Esth. 1. 3, 4.) and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies. (3.) "Aim not at being paid again in your own coin." This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments; "You commonly do it in hopes that you will be invited by them, and so a *recompense will be made you*; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last.

2. "Be forward to *relieve the poor*; (v. 13, 14.) *When thou makest a feast*, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite *the poor and maimed*, such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity, they want necessities; furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away, and reproach thee. Say not that thou art a *loser* because *they cannot recompense thee*, thou art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for *thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just*." There will be a *resurrection of the just*, a *future state of the just*. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world: and we may be sure that the *charitable* will be remembered in the *resurrection of the just*, for alms are *righteousness*. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in *this world*, for the things of this world are not the *best things*, and therefore God doth not pay the best men in *those things*; but they shall in *no wise* lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the *resurrection*. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned *till the resurrection*.

15. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*. 16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready. 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto

him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. 24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Here is another discourse of our Saviour's, in which he *spiritualizes* the feast he was invited to; which is another way of keeping up good discourse in the midst of common actions.

1. The occasion of the discourse was given by one of the guests, who, when Christ was giving rules about feasting, said to him, *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, (v. 15.) which, some tell us, was a saying commonly used among the rabbins. But with what design does this man bring it in here? 1. Perhaps this man, observing that Christ reproved first the guests, and then the master of the house, fearing he should put the company out of humour, started this, to *divert* the discourse to something else. Or, 2. Admiring the good rules of humility and charity which Christ had now given, but despairing to see them lived up to in the present degenerate state of things, he longs for the *kingdom of God*, when these and other good laws shall obtain, and pronounces them *blessed*, who shall have a place in that kingdom. Or, 3. Christ having mentioned the *resurrection of the just*, as a recompense for acts of charity to the poor, he here confirms what he said, "Yea, Lord, they that shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, shall *eat bread in the kingdom*, and that is a greater recompense than being reintived to the table of the greatest man on earth." Or, 4. Observing Christ to be silent, after he had given the foregoing lessons, he was willing to draw him in again to further discourse, so wonderfully well-pleased was he with what he said; and he knew nothing more likely to engage him, than to mention the *kingdom of God*. Note, Even these that are not of ability to carry on good discourse themselves, ought to put in a word now and then, to countenance it, and help it forward.

Now that which this man said, was a plain and acknowledged truth, and it was quoted very *oppositely* now that they were sitting at meat; for we should take occasion from common things to think and speak of those heavenly and spiritual things which in scripture are *compared* to them; for that is one end of borrowing similitudes from them. And it will be good for us, when we are receiving the gifts of God's Providence, to pass through them to the consideration of the gifts of his grace, those *better things*. This thought will be very seasonable when we are partaking of bodily refreshments: *Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom*

of God. (1.) In the kingdom of grace, in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was expected now shortly to be set up. Christ promised his disciples that they should *eat and drink with him in his kingdom*. They that partake of the Lord's supper, *eat bread in the kingdom of God*. (2.) In the kingdom of glory, at the resurrection. The happiness of heaven is an *everlasting feast*; blessed are they that shall sit down at that table, whence they shall rise no more.

II. The parable which our Lord Jesus put forth upon this occasion, v. 16, &c. Christ joins with the good man in what he said; "It is very true, *Blessed are they that shall partake of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom*. But who are they that shall enjoy that privilege? You Jews, who think to have the monopoly of it, will generally reject it, and the Gentiles will be the greatest sharers in it." This he shows by a parable; for, if he had spoken it plainly, the Pharisees would not have borne it.

Now in this parable we may observe,

1. The free grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ; it appears, (1.) In the rich provision he has made for poor souls, for their nourishment, refreshment, and entertainment; (v. 16.) *A certain rich man made a great supper*. There is that in Christ and the grace of the gospel, which will be *food* and a *feast* for the soul of a man that knows its own capacities, for the soul of a sinner that knows its own necessities and miseries. It is called a *supper*, because in those countries supper-time was the chief feasting-time, when the business of the day was over. The manifestation of gospel-grace to the world was the evening of the world's day; and the fruition of the fulness of that grace in heaven is reserved for the evening of our day. (2.) In the gracious invitation given us to come and partake of this provision. Here is, [1.] A general invitation given; he *bade many*. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake of the benefits of his gospel. There is provision enough for as many as come; it was prophesied of as a *feast for all people*, Isa. 25. 6. Christ in the gospel, as he keeps a *good house*, so he keeps an *open house*. [2.] A particular memorandum given, when the supper-time was at hand; the servant was sent round to put them in mind of it; *Come, for all things are now ready*. When the spirit was poured out, and the gospel-church planted, those who before were invited, were more closely pressed to come in *presently*; Now *all things are ready*, the full discovery of the gospel ministry is now made, all the ordinances of the gospel are now instituted, the society of Christians is now incorporated, and, which crowns all, the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the call now given to us; "*All things are now ready*, now is the *accepted time*, it is now, and *has not been long*, it is now, and *will not be long*; it is a season of grace that will be soon over; and therefore *come now*; do not delay; accept the invitation; believe yourselves welcome; *eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved*."

2. The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. The invited guests declined coming, they did not say flat and plain that they *would not come*, but they *all with one consent began to make excuse*, v. 18. One would have expected that they should *all with one consent* have come to a good supper, when they were so kindly invited to it; who would have refused such an invitation? Yet, on the contrary, they all found out some pretence or other to shift off their attendance. This bespeaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to close with Christ, and accept of the offers of his grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It speaks also the backwardness there is in most people to close with the gospel-call. They cannot for shame

avow their refusal, but they desire to be *excused*; they all *οὐκ οὐκ*, some supply *καὶ*, *all straightway*, they could give an answer *extempore*; and needed not to study first; *were not to seek* for an excuse. Others supply *καὶ*, they were *unanimous* in it; *with one voice*.

(1.) Here were *two* that were *purchasers*, who were in such haste to go and see their purchases, that they could not find time to go to this supper: one had *purchased land*, he had *bought a piece of ground*, which was represented to him to be a good bargain, and he must needs *go and see* whether it was so or no; and therefore *I pray thee have me excused*. His heart was so much upon the enlarging of his estate, that he could neither be civil to his friend nor kind to himself. Note, Those that have their hearts full of the world, and fond of *laying house to house, and field to field*, have their ears deaf to the gospel-invitation. But what a frivolous excuse was this! He might have deferred going to see his piece of ground till the next day, and have found it in the same place and plight it was now in, if he had so pleased. Another had purchased *stock* for his land; "*I have bought five yoke of oxen* for the plough, and I must just now *go prove them*, must go and try whether they be fit for my purpose; and therefore excuse me for this time." The former intimates that inordinate *complacency* in the world, this, the inordinate *care and concern* about the world, which keep people from Christ and his grace; both intimate a preference given to the body above the soul, and to the things of time above those of eternity. Note, It is very criminal, when we are called to any duty, to make excuses for our neglect of it: it is a sign that there are convictions that it is duty, but no inclination to it. These things here, that were the matter of the excuses, were, [1.] *Little things*, and of small concern. It had better become them to have said, "I am invited to *eat bread in the kingdom of God*, and therefore must be excused from going to see the *ground* or the *oxen*." [2.] *Lawful things*. Note, *Things lawful in themselves*, when the heart is too much set upon them, *prove fatal* hinderance in religion—*Licitis perimus omnes*. It is a hard matter so to manage our worldly affairs, that they may not divert us from spiritual pursuits; and this ought to be our great care.

(2.) Here was one that was *newly married*, and could not leave his wife to go out to supper, no not for once; (v. 20.) *I have married a wife, and therefore, in short, I cannot come*. He pretends that he cannot, when the truth is, he *will not*. Thus many pretend *inability* for the duties of religion, when really they have an *aversion* to them. He has *married a wife*; it is true, he that was married, was excused by the law from going to war for the first year, (Deut. 24. 5.) but would that excuse him from going up to the feasts of the Lord, which all the males were yearly to attend? Much less will it excuse from the gospel feast, which the other were but types of. Note, Our affection to our relations often proves a hinderance to us in our duty to God. Adam's excuse was, *The woman that thou gavest me, persuaded me to eat*; this here was, *The woman persuaded me not to eat*. He might have gone and taken his wife along with him, they would both have been welcome.

3. The account which was brought to the master of the feast, of the affront put upon him by his friends whom he had invited, who now showed how little they valued him; (v. 21.) *That servant came, and showed his lord these things*; told him with surprise, that he was likely to sup alone, for the guests that were invited, though they had timely notice a good while before, that they might order their affairs accordingly, yet were now engaged to some other business. He made the matter neither better nor

worse, but related it just as it was. Note, Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace; if they see the *travail of their soul*, they must go to God with their *thanks*; if they *labour in vain*, they must go to God with their *complaints*. They will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ; they shall be produced as witnesses *against* those who persist and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited; and for those who accepted the call, *Behold, I and the children thou hast given me*. The apostle urges this as a reason why people should give ear to the word of God sent them by his ministers, for they watch for your souls, as those that must give account, Heb. 13. 17.

4. The master's just resentment of this affront; *He was angry*, v. 21. Note, The ingratitude of those that slight gospel offers, and the contempt they put upon the God of heaven thereby, are a very great provocation to him, and justly so. Abused mercy turns into the greatest wrath. The doom he passed upon them, was, *None of the men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper*. This was like the doom passed upon ungrateful Israel, when they despised the pleasant land: God *sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest*. Note, Grace despised is grace forfeited, like Esau's birthright. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have him when they would. Even those that were bidden, if they slight the invitation, shall be forbidden; when the door is shut, the foolish virgins will be denied entrance.

5. The care that was taken to furnish the table with guests, as well as meat. "Go," (saith he to the servants,) "*go first into the streets and lanes of the city, and invite, not the merchants that are going from the custom-house, or the tradesmen that are shutting up their shops, they will desire to be excused; (one is going to his counting-house, to cast up his books, another to the tavern, to drink a bottle with his friend;) but, that you may invite those that will be glad to come, bring in hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind; pick up the common beggars.*" The servants object not, that it will be a disparagement to the master and his house, to have such guests at his table: for they knew his mind, and they soon gather an abundance of such guests; *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded*. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the Scribes and Pharisees, such as Christ was *now at dinner with*, who thought themselves most likely to be guests at the Messiah's table, but publicans and sinners, these are the *poor and the maimed*. But yet there is room for more guests, and provision enough for them all. "Go, then, *secondly, into the highways and hedges; go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning now in the evening from their work in the field, from hedging and ditching there, and compel them to come in, not by force of arms, but by force of arguments; be earnest with them, for in this case it would be necessary to convince them that the invitation was sincere, and not a banter; they will be shy and modest, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome, and therefore be importunate with them, and do not leave them till you have prevailed with them.*" This refers to the *calling of the Gentiles*, to whom the apostles were to turn, when the Jews refused the offers, and with them the church was filled.

Now observe here, (1.) The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, shall appear not to have been made in vain; for if some reject it, yet others will thankfully accept the offer of it. Christ comforts himself with this, that, *though Israel be not gathered, yet he shall be glorious, as a Light to the Gentiles*, Isa. 54. 5, 6. God will have a church in the world, though there are those that

are unchurched; for *the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect*. (2.) Those that are very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; nay, and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages, as the *poor*, and bodily infirmities, as the *maimed, and the halt, and the blind*. Christ here plainly refers to what I had said just before, in direction to us, to invite to our tables the *poor and maimed, the lame and blind*, v. 13. For, the consideration of the countenance which Christ's gospel gives to the poor, should engage us to be charitable to them. His condescensions and compassions toward them should engage ours. (3.) Many times the gospel hath the *greatest success* among those that are *least likely* to have the benefit of it, and whose submission to it was least expected. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees; so that the last shall be first, and the first last. Let us not be confident concerning those that are most forward, nor despair of those that are least promising. (4.) Christ's ministers must be both very expeditious and very importunate, in inviting to the gospel-feast; "*Go out quickly, (v. 21.) lose no time, because all things are now ready. Call to them to come to-day, while it is called to-day. And compel them to come in, by accosting them kindly, and drawing them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love.*" Nothing can be more absurd than fetching an argument from hence for compelling men's consciences, nay, for compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion; "You shall receive the Lord's supper, or you shall be fined and imprisoned, and ruined in your estate." Certainly nothing like this was the compulsion here meant, but only that of reason and love; for *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*. (5.) Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still there is room for more; for the riches of Christ are *unsearchable and inexhaustible*; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves. (6.) Christ's house, though it be large, shall at last be filled; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed, and as many as were given him are brought to him.

25. And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See how Christ in his doctrine suited himself to those to whom he spake, and gave every one his *portion of meat*. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity. He is in these verses directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him: and his exhortation to them is, to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did. See here,

I. How zealous people were in their attendance on Christ; (v. 25.) *There went great multitudes with him*, many for love, and more for company, for where there are many, there will be more. Here was a *mixed multitude*, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate between the precious and the vile.

II. How considerate he would have them to be in their *zeal*. Those that undertake to follow Christ, must count upon the worst, and prepare accordingly.

1. He tells them what the worst is, that they must count upon; much the same with what he had gone through before them and for them. He takes it for granted that they had a mind to be his *disciples*, that they might be *qualified* for preferment in his kingdom. They expected that he should say, "If any man come to me, and be my disciple, he shall have wealth and honour in abundance, let me alone to make him a great man;" but he tells them the quite contrary.

(1.) That they must be willing to *quit* that which was *very dear*, and therefore must come to him *thoroughly weaned* from all their creature-comforts, and *dead* to them, so as cheerfully to part with them rather than quit their interest in Christ, v. 26. A man cannot be Christ's disciple, but he must *hate father, and mother, and his own life*. He is not *sincere*, he will not be *constant* and persevering, unless he love Christ better than any thing in this world, and be willing to part with that which he may and must leave, either as a *sacrifice*, when Christ may be glorified by our parting with it, (so the martyrs, *who loved not their lives to death*,) or as a *temptation*, when by our parting with it we are put into a better capacity of serving Christ. Thus Abraham parted with his own country, and Moses with Pharaoh's court. Mention is not made here of *houses and lands*; philosophy will teach a man to look upon those with contempt; but christianity carries it higher. [1.] Every good man loves his *relations*; and yet, if he be a disciple of Christ, he must comparatively *hate them*, must love them *less than Christ*, as Leah is said to be *hated*, when Rachel was better loved. Not that their persons must be in any degree hated, but our comfort and satisfaction in them must be lost and swallowed up in our love to Christ, as Levi's was, when he *said to his father*, *I have not seen him*, Deut. 33. 9. When our duty to our parents comes in competition with our evident duty to Christ, we must give Christ the preference. If we must either *deny Christ*, or be *banished* from our families and relations, (as many of the primitive christians were,) we must rather lose their society than his favour. [2.] Every man

loves *his own life*, no man ever yet *hated it*; and we cannot be Christ's disciples, if we do not love him better than our own lives, so as rather to have our lives *imbittered* by cruel *bondage*, nay, and *taken away* by cruel *deaths*, than to dishonour Christ, or depart from any of his truths and ways. The experience of the pleasures of the *spiritual life*, and the believing hopes and prospects of *eternal life*, will make this *hard saying easy*. When tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then chiefly the trial is, whether we love better, Christ or our relations and lives; yet even in *days of peace* this matter is sometimes brought to the trial. Those that decline the service of Christ, and opportunities of converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of disobliging a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to suspect that they love them better than Christ.

(2.) That they must be willing to *bear* that which was *very heavy*; (v. 27.) *Whosoever doth not carry his cross*, as those did, that were condemned to be crucified, in *submission* to the sentence and in *execution* of the execution of it, and so *come after me*, whithersoever I shall lead him, he cannot be my disciple; that is, (saith Dr. Hammond,) he is not *for my turn*; and my service, being so *me* to bring persecution along with it, will not be *for his*. Though the disciples of Christ are not *all crucified*, yet they *all bear their cross*, as if they counted upon being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace; for no name is more ignominious than *furcifer*—the bearer of the gibbet. He must bear his cross, and *come after Christ*; that is, he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye to Christ, and fetch encouragements from him, and live in hope of a recompence with him.

2. He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Since he has been so *just to us*, as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so *just to ourselves*, as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did when they promised to *serve the Lord*, Josh. 24. 19. It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other cases. The cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny. Satan shows the best, but hides the worst; because his best will not countervail his worst; but Christ's will abundantly. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the *expenses* of our religion, the latter, that we must consider the *perils* of it.

(1.) When we take upon us a profession of religion, we are like a man that undertakes to *build a tower*, and therefore must consider the *expense* of it; (v. 28—30.) *Which of you, intending to build a tower, or stately house for himself, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?* And he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will be him in. Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by *beginning to build* what he is *not able to finish*. Note, [1.] All that take upon them a profession of religion, undertake to *build a tower*, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to Heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to Heaven, which therefore shall have its *top-stone brought forth*. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven. [2.] Those

that intend to build this tower, must *sit down, and count the cost*; let them consider, it *will cost them* the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts, it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties; it *may, perhaps, cost them* their reputation among men, their estates and liberties, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and without price? [3.] Many that begin to *build this tower*, do not *go on with it*, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a *fixed principle*, and so bring nothing to pass. It is true, we have none of us in ourselves *sufficient to finish* this tower, but Christ hath said, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it, and make use of it. [4.] Nothing is more *shameful* than for those that have begun well in religion to break off; every one will justly *mock him*, as having lost all his labour hitherto, for want of perseverance. *We lose the things we have wrought*; (2 John 8.) and all we have done and suffered, is *in vain*, Gal. 3. 4.

(2.) When we undertake to be Christ's disciples, we are like a man that *goes to war*, and therefore must consider the *hazard* of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered, v. 31, 32. A king that declares war against a neighbouring prince, considers whether he hath strength wherewith to make his part good, and if not, he will lay aside his thoughts of war. Note, [1.] The state of a christian in this world, is a military state. *Is not the christian life a warfare?* We have many passes in our way, that must be disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition. [2.] We ought to consider whether we can *endure the hardness* which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must expect and count upon, before we enlist ourselves under Christ's banner; *whether* we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth, which come against us *twenty thousand strong*. [3.] Of the two it is better to make the best terms we can with the world than pretend to renounce it, and afterward, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the world, to *return to it*. That *young man* that could not find in his heart to part with his possessions for Christ, did better to go away from Christ *sorrowing* than to have staid with him *dissembling*.

This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin *speedily* to be religious, rather than to begin *cautiously*; and may mean the same with Matth. 5. 25. *Agree with thine adversary quickly*. Note, *First*, Those that persist in sin, make war against God, the most unnatural, unjustifiable war; they rebel against their lawful Sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. *Secondly*, The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between *ten thousand* and *twenty thousand*. *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* No, surely; *who knows the anger of his anger?* In consideration of this, it is our interest to make peace with him; we need not send to *desire conditions of peace*, they are offered to us, and are unexceptionable, and highly to our advantage; let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, *while the other is yet a great way off*; for delays in such a case are highly dangerous, and make after-applications difficult.

But the application of this parable here, (v. 33.) is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion. Solomon saith, *With good advice make war*; (Prov. 20.

18.) for he that *draws the sword, throws away the scabbard*; so with *good advice* enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that *except you forsake all you have, you cannot be Christ's disciples*; that is, except you count upon forsaking all, and consent to it, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must *suffer persecution*, and yet continue to *live godly*.

3. He warns them against apostasy and a degeneracy of mind from the truly christian spirit and temper, for that would make them utterly useless, v. 34, 35. (1.) Good christians are *the salt of the earth*, and good ministers especially, (Matth. 5. 13.) and this *salt is good* and of great use; by their instructions and examples they season all they converse with, to keep them from putrefying, and to quicken them, and make them savoury. (2.) Degenerate christians, who, rather than part with what they have in the world, will throw up their profession, and then of course become carnal and worldly, and wholly destitute of a christian spirit, are like *salt that has lost its savour*; like that which the chymists call *the caput mortuum*, that has all its salts drawn from it, that is the most useless, worthless thing in the world; it has no manner of virtue or good property in it. [1.] It can never be recovered; *Wherewith shall it be seasoned?* You cannot salt it. This intimates that it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to recover an apostate, Heb. 6. 4—6. If christianity will not prevail to cure men of their worldliness and sensuality, if that remedy have been tried in vain, their case must even be concluded desperate. [2.] It is of no use; it is *not fit*, as dung is, *for the land*, to manure that, nor will it be the better if it be laid in the dunghill to rot, there is nothing to be got out of it. A professor of religion, whose mind and manners are depraved, is the most *insipid* animal that can be. If he do speak of the things of God, which he hath had some knowledge of, it is so *awkwardly*, that none are the better for it: it is a *parable in the mouth of a fool*. [3.] It is abandoned; *men cast it out*, as that which they will have no more to do with. Such scandalous professors ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have forfeited all the honours and privileges of their church-membership, but because there is danger that others will be infected by them. Our Saviour concludes this with a call to all to take notice of it, and to take warning; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Now can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, and particularly to the alarms he has given us of the danger we are in *of* apostasy, and the danger we run ourselves into *by* apostasy?

CHAP. XV.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; so, in this chapter, the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees at the grace of Christ and the favour he showed to publicans and sinners, gave occasion for a more full discovery of that grace than perhaps otherwise we should have had, in these three parables which we have in this chapter; the scope of all which is the same, to show, not only what God had said and sworn in the Old Testament, that he had no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, but that he has great pleasure in their return and repentance, and rejoices in the gracious entertainment he gives them thereupon. Here is, I. The offence which the Pharisees took at Christ for conversing with heathen men and publicans, and preaching his gospel to them, v. 1, 2. II. His justifying of himself in it, by the design and proper tendency of it, and which with many had been, the effect of it, and that was, the bringing of them to repent, and reform their lives; than which there could not be a more pleasing and acceptable service done to God; which he shows in the parable, 1. Of the lost sheep that was brought home with joy, v. 4, 5, 6, 7. 2. Of the lost silver that was found with joy, v. 8, 9, 10. 3. Of the lost son that had been a prodigal, but returned to his father's house, and was received with great joy, though his elder brother, like these scribes and Pharisees, was offended at it, v. 11, 12, 13.

1. **T**HEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him. 2. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. 8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Here is,

I. The diligent attendance of the publicans and sinners upon Christ's ministry; *Great multitudes of Jews went with him*, (ch. 14. 25.) with such an assurance of admission into the kingdom of God, that he found it requisite to say that to them, which would shake their vain hopes. Here multitudes of *publicans* and *sinners* drew near to him, with an humble, modest fear of being *rejected* by him, and to them he found it requisite to give encouragement, especially because there were some haughty, supercilious people, that frowned upon them. The *publicans*, who collected the tribute paid to the *Romans*, were perhaps some of them *bad men*, but they were all industriously put into an *ill name*, because of the prejudices of the Jewish nation against their office; they are sometimes ranked with *harlots*, (Matth. 21. 32.) here and elsewhere with *sinners*, such as were openly vicious, that traded with *harlots*; known rakes. Some think that *sinners* here were *heathens*, and that Christ was now on the other side Jordan, or in *Galilee of the Gentiles*. These *drew near*, when perhaps the multitude of the Jews that had followed him, were (upon his discourse in the close of the foregoing chapter) *dropt off*; thus afterward the Gentiles took their turn in hearing the apostles, when the Jews had rejected them. *They drew near to him*; being afraid of drawing nearer than just to come within *hearing*. They drew near to him, not, as some did, for curiosity to *see him*, nor as others did, to solicit for cures, but to hear his excellent doctrine. Note. In all our approaches to Christ, this we must have in our eye, to *hear him*; to hear the instructions he gives us, and his answers to our prayers.

II. The offence which the *scribes* and *Pharisees* took at this; (v. 2.) They *murmured*, and turned it to the reproach of our Lord Jesus, *This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*. 1. They were

angry that *publicans* and *heathens* had the means of grace allowed them, were called to repent, and encouraged to hope for pardon upon repentance; for they looked upon their case as *desperate*, and that none but Jews had the privilege of repenting and being pardoned, though the prophets preached repentance to the nations, and Daniel particularly to Nebuchadnezzar. 2. They thought it a disparagement to Christ, and inconsistent with the dignity of his character, to make himself familiar with such sort of people; to *admit* them into his company, and *to eat with them*. They could not, for shame, condemn him for *preaching to them*, though that was the thing they were most enraged at; and therefore they reproached him for *eating with them*, which was more expressly contrary to the tradition of the elders. Censure will fall, not only upon the most innocent and the most excellent *persons*, but upon the most innocent and most excellent *actions*, and we must not think it strange.

III. Christ's justifying of himself in it, by showing that the worse these people were to whom he preached, the more glory would redound to God, and the more joy there would be in heaven, if by his preaching they were brought to repentance. It would be a more pleasing sight in heaven, to see Gentiles brought to the worship of the true God, than to see Jews go on in it; and to see publicans and sinners live an orderly sort of life, than to see *scribes* and *Pharisees* go on in living such a life. This he here illustrates by two parables, the explication of both which is the same.

1. The parable of the *lost sheep*. Something like it we had, Matth. 18. 12. There it was designed to show the care God takes for the preservation of saints, as a reason why we should not offend them; here it is designed to show the pleasure God takes in the conversion of sinners, as a reason why we should rejoice in it. We have here,

(1.) The case of a sinner that goes on in sinful ways; he is like a *lost sheep*; a sheep *gone astray*; *lost* to God, who has not the honour and service he should have from him; *lost* to the flock, which has not communion with him; *lost* to himself, he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the heats of prey, subject to frights and terrors, from under the Shepherd's care, and wanting the green pastures; and it cannot of itself find the way back to the fold.

(2.) The care the God of heaven takes of poor wandering sinners. He *continues* his care of the sheep that did not go astray, they are *safe in the wilderness*; but there is a particular care to be taken of this lost sheep; and though he has a hundred sheep, a considerable flock, yet he will not *lose* that *one*; but he goes after it, and shows abundance of care. [1.] In *finding it out*; he follows it, inquiring after it, and looking about for it, until he *finds it*. God follows backsliding sinners with the calls of his word, and the strivings of his Spirit, until at length they are wrought upon to think of returning. [2.] In *bringing it home*; though he finds it *weary*, and perhaps *worried* and worn away with its wanderings, and not able to bear being driven home, yet he doth not leave it to perish, and say, It is not worth carrying home; but *lays it on his shoulders*, and, with a great deal of tenderness and labour, brings it to the fold. This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were gone astray; (Isa. 53. 6.) the value of the whole race to God was not so much as that of one sheep to him that had a hundred; what loss would it have been to God, if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to *seek and save that which was lost*, Luke 19. 10. Christ is said to *gather the lambs in his arms*, and carry

them in his bosom, denoting his pity and tenderness toward poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, denoting the power wherewith he supports and bears them up; those can never perish, whom he carries upon his shoulders.

(3.) The pleasure that God takes in repenting, returning sinners; he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing that he had not lost his labour in seeking; and the joy is the greater, because he began to be out of hope of finding it; and he calls his friends and neighbours, the shepherds that keep their flocks about him, saying, *Rejoice with me*; perhaps among the pastoral songs which the shepherds used to sing, there was one for such an occasion as this which these words might be the burden of, *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost*, whereas they never sung, *Rejoice with me, for I have lost none*. Observe, He calls it his sheep though a stray, a wandering sheep; he has a right to it; (*All souls are mine*;) and he will claim his own, and recover his right; therefore he looks after it himself, *I have found it*; he did not send a servant, but his own Son, the great and good Shepherd, who will find what he seeks, and will be found of those that seek him not.

2. The parable of the lost piece of silver.

(1.) The *loser* is here supposed to be a woman, who will more passionately grieve for her loss, and rejoice in the finding of what she lost, than perhaps a man would do, and therefore it the better serves the purpose of the parable. She has ten pieces of silver, and out of them loses only one. Let this keep up in us high thoughts of the divine goodness, notwithstanding the sinfulness and misery of the world of mankind, that there are nine to one, nay, in the foregoing parable there are ninety-nine to one, of God's creation, that retain their integrity, in whom God is praised, and never was dishonoured. O the numberless beings, for aught we know, numberless worlds of beings that never were lost, or steep aside from the laws and ends of their creation!

(2.) That which is lost is, a piece of silver, *δραχμὴν*—the fourth part of a shekel. The soul is silver of intrinsic worth and value; not of base metal, as iron or lead, but of silver; the mines of which are royal mines. The Hebrew word for silver is taken from the desirableness of it. It is silver coin, for so the *drachma* was; it is stamped with God's image and superscription, and therefore must be rendered to him. Yet it is comparatively but of small value; it was but seven pence half penny; intimating, that if sinful men be left to perish, God would be no loser. This silver was lost in the dirt; a soul plunged in the world, and overwhelmed with the love of it, and care about it, is like a piece of money in the dirt; any one would say, It is a thousand pities that it should be there.

(3.) Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in quest of it. The woman lights a candle, to look behind the door, under the table, and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she find it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself: he has lighted a candle of the gospel, not to show himself the way to us, but to show us the way to him, to discover us to ourselves; he has swept the house by the convictions of the word; he seeks diligently, his heart is upon it, to bring lost souls to himself.

(4.) Here is a great deal of joy for the finding of it; (v. 9.) *Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost*. Those that rejoice, desire that others should rejoice with them; those that are merry, would have others merry with them; she was glad that she had found the piece of money, though she should spend it in entertaining those whom she called to make merry with her. The

pleasing surprise of finding it, put her, for the present, into a kind of transport, *εὐφρατα, εὐφρατα*—*I have found, I have found*, is the language of joy.

3. The explication of these two parables is to the same purport; (v. 7, 10.) *There is joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth*, as those publicans and sinners did, some of them, at least, (and if but one of them did repent, Christ would reckon it worth his while,) more than over a great number of just persons, which need no repentance. Observe,

(1.) The repentance and conversion of sinners on earth, are matter of joy and rejoicing in heaven. It is possible that the greatest of sinners may be brought to repentance; while there is life there is hope, and the worst are not to be despaired of; and the worst of sinners, if they repent and turn, shall find mercy. Yet that is not all. [1.] God will delight to show them mercy; will reckon their conversion a return for all the expense he has been at upon them. There is always joy in heaven; God rejoiceth in all his works, but particularly in the works of his grace; he rejoiceth to do good to penitent sinners, with his whole heart, and his whole soul. He rejoiceth not only in the conversion of churches and nations, but even over one sinner that repenteth, though but one. [2.] The good angels will be glad that mercy is shown them, so far are they from repining at it, though those of their nature that sinned be left to perish, and no mercy showed to them; though those sinners that repent, that are so mean, and have been so vile, are, upon their repentance, to be taken into communion with them, and shortly to be made like them, and equal to them. The conversion of sinners is the joy of angels, and they gladly become ministering spirits to them for their good, upon their conversion. The redemption of mankind was matter of joy in the presence of the angels; for they sung, *Glory to God in the highest*, Luke 2. 14.

(2.) There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, and turneth to be religious from a course of life that had been notoriously vile and vicious, than there is over ninety-nine just persons, who need no repentance. [1.] More joy for the redemption and salvation of fallen man than for the preservation and confirmation of the angels that stand, and did indeed need no repentance. [2.] More joy for the conversion of the sinners of the Gentiles, and of those publicans that now heard Christ preach, than for all the praises and devotions, and all the *God I thank thee*, of the Pharisees, and the other self-justifying Jews, who thought that they needed no repentance, and that therefore God should abundantly rejoice in them, and make his boast of them, as those that were most his honour; but Christ tells them that it was quite otherwise, that God was more praised in, and pleased with, the penitent, broken heart of one of those despised, envied sinners, than all the long prayers which the scribes and Pharisees made, who could not see any thing amiss in themselves. Nay, [3.] More joy for the conversion of one such great sinner, such a Pharisee as Paul had been in his time, than for the regular conversion of one that had always conducted himself decently and well, and comparatively needs no repentance, needs not such a universal change of the life as those great sinners need. Not but that it is best not to go astray; but the grace of God, both the power and the pity of that grace, is most manifested in the reducing of great sinners, more than in the conducting of those that never went astray. And many times those that have been great sinners before their conversion, prove more eminently and zealously good after; of which Paul is an instance, and therefore in him God was greatly glorified, Gal. 1. 24. They to whom much is forgiven, will love much. It is spoken after the manner of men; we are moved with a more sen-

sible joy for the recovery of what we had lost than for the continuance of what we had always enjoyed; for health *out of* sickness than for health *without* sickness. It is as *life from the dead*. A constant course of religion may in itself be more valuable, and yet a sudden return from an evil course and way of sin may yield a more surprising pleasure. Now if there is such *joy in heaven*, for the conversion of sinners, then the Pharisees were very much strangers to a heavenly spirit, who did all they could to hinder it, and were grieved at it; and who were exasperated at Christ when he was doing a piece of work that was of all others most grateful to Heaven.

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said *to his father*, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living. 13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing: 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore

came his father out, and entreated him. 29. And he answering said *to his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

We have here the parable of the prodigal son; the scope of which is the same with those before, to show how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such, upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth the riches of gospel grace than those did, and it has been, and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. Now,

I. The parable represents God as a *common Father* to all mankind; to the whole family of Adam; we are all his *offspring*; have all *one Father*, and *one God* created us, Mal. 2. 10. *From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance.* He is *our Father*, for he has the *educating* and *portioning* of us, and will *put us* in his testament, or *leave us out*, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees, that these publicans and sinners, whom thus they despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, *not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles*; (Rom. 3. 29.) *the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.*

II. It represents the children of men as of *different* characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had *two sons*, one of them a solid, grave youth, *reserved* and *austere*, sober himself, but not at all *good-humoured* to those about him; such an one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other *volatile* and *mercurial*, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, whom the apostles were to be sent forth to *preach repentance* to. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God, which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The *younger son* is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some.

Now we are to observe concerning him,

I. His *riot* and *ramble* when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

(1.) What his request to his father was; (v. 12.) *He said to his father*, proudly and perty enough, "*Father, give me,*" (he might have put a little

more in his mouth, and have said, *Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me*, but he makes an imperious demand,) "*give me the portion of goods that falleth to me*; not so much as you think fit to allot me, but that which falls to me as my due." Note, It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as due debts. "*Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me*;" not, "*Try me with a little*, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but, "*Give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter.*" Note, The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is, being content to have *their portion in hand*; now in this life-time to *receive their good things*. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone.

And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so to make it more? No, he had no thought of that. But, [1.] He was weary of his father's government, of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest slavery, for such a *liberty to sin* is. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own men, till they have broken all God's bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, and, instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up to the rules of God's government, they will themselves be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what themselves please. [2.] He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check upon him, and often gave a check to him. A shyness of God and a willingness to disbelieve his omniscience, are at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked. [3.] He was distrustful of his father's management; he would have his *portion of goods* himself, for he thought that his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expenses, and that he did not like. [4.] He was proud of himself, and had a great conceit of his own sufficiency. He thought that if he had but his portion in his own hands, he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners persisting in their sin—they will be for themselves.

(2.) How kind his father was to him; *He divided unto them his living*. He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it; (v. 31.) *All that I have, is thine*. He got all by staying for something in reserve. He gave the younger son what he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more. [1.] Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him, and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him, when he wanted an excuse to be gone. [2.] Thus he would in a little time be made to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself as he would be thought to be.

Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful, *διουρίσας τοις υίοις* — *He divided to them life*. God's giving of us life, is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands; he set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do, in a little time he made himself a beggar, *not many days after*, v. 13. Note, If God leaves us ever so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we depart from him. As soon as ever the bridle of restraining grace is taken off, we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined, was, to be gone presently, and, in order to that, he gathered all together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture their all.

✓ Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble of his represents to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

✓ First, A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God. 1. It is the *unfulness* of sin, that is an apostasy from God. He took his journey from his father's house. Sinners are fled from God; they go a whoring from him, they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that runs from his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, *Depart*. They get as far off as they can. The world is the *far country* in which they take up their residence, and are as at home; and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all. 2. It is the misery of sinners, that they are afar off from God, from him who is the Fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being afar off from God?

✓ Secondly, A sinful state is a spending state; There he wasted his substance with riotous living, (v. 13.) devoured it with harlots, (v. 30.) and in a little time he had spent all, v. 14. He bought fine clothes; spent a deal in meat and drink, treated high, conversed with those that helped him to make an end of what he had, in a little time. As to this world, they that live riotously, waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts, which should be for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families. But this is to be applied spiritually; wilful sinners waste their patrimony, for they misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, mispend their time and all their opportunities; do not only bury, but embezzle, the talents they are entrusted to trade with for their Master's honour; and the gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God, and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a drudge, either to the world or to the flesh, wastes his substance, and lives riotously. One sinner destroys much good, Eccl. 9. 18. The good he destroys, is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are his Lord's goods that he wastes, which must be accounted for.

Thirdly, A sinful state is a wanting state; When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey; and there arose a mighty famine in that land, every thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, v. 14. Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread; especially when bad times hasten on the consequences of bad husbandry, which good husbandry would have provided for. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, the admonitions of conscience; these they game away for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then

are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessities for their souls, they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where *famine reigns, a mighty famine*; for the *heaven is as brass*; the dews of God's favour and blessing are withheld, and we must need want good things if God deny them us; and the *earth is as iron*; the sinner's heart, that should bring forth good things, is dry and barren, and has no good in it, those sinners are *wretchedly and miserably poor*, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it, by refusing the supplies offered.

Fourthly, A sinful state is a *vile, servile state*. When this young man's riot had brought him to want, his want brought him to servitude; (v. 15.) *He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country*. The same wicked life that before was represented by *riotous living*, is here represented by *servile living*; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the *citizen of that country*, for he is both in city and country; sinners *join themselves* to him, hire themselves into his service, to *do his work*, to be at *his beck*, and to depend upon him for maintenance and a portion. They that commit sin, are the *servants of sin*, John 8. 34. How did this young gentleman debase and disparage himself, when he hired himself into such a service and under such a master as this! *He sent him into the fields*, not to feed sheep, (there had been some credit in that employment, Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheep,) but to *feed swine*. The business of the devil's servants is to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

Fifthly, A sinful state is a *state of perpetual dissatisfaction*. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by *going to service*; and he must be content with the provision which not the house, but the field, afforded, but it is poor provision; (v. 16.) *He would fain have filled his belly*, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, *with the husks that the swine did eat*. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they *depart from God*, promise themselves *satisfaction in*, will certainly disappoint them; they are *labouring for that which satisfies not*, Isa. 55. 2. That which is the *stumbling-block of their iniquity*, will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels, Ezek. 7. 19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are those to *precious souls*? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them, *feeds on wind*, (Hos. 12. 1.) *feeds on ashes*, Isa. 44. 20.

Sixthly, A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by *working*, took to *begging*; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was rakish, and provoking to every body: such poor are *least fitted*. This, in the application of the parable, intimated that those who depart from God, cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh; (those gods which we have served;) they have that which will *poison* a soul, but have nothing to give it, which will *feed and nourish* it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

Seventhly, A sinful state is a *state of death*; (v. 24. 32.) *This my son was dead*. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins,

destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore *dead*. The prodigal in the *far country* was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body, or a branch from the tree, and therefore *dead*, and it is his own doing.

Eighthly, A sinful state is a *lost state*; *This my son was lost*; lost to every thing that was good, lost to all virtue and honour, lost to his father's house, they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God, are *lost souls*; lost as a *traveller* that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

Ninthly, A sinful state is a state of *madness and frenzy*. This is intimated in that expression, (v. 17.) *When he came to himself*, which intimates that he had been *beside himself*, surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. *Madness* is said to be *in the heart of sinners*, Eccl. 9. 3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are *mad*, destroy themselves with *foolish lusts*, and yet, at the same time, deceive themselves with *foolish hopes*; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

2. We have here his *return* from this *ramble*, his penitent *return* to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he bethought himself how much it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not despair of the worst; for while there is life, there is hope. The grace of God can soften the hardest heart, and give a happy turn to the strongest stream of corruption. Now observe here,

(1.) What was the *occasion* of his return and repentance; it was his *affliction*, when he was in *want*, then he *came to himself*. Note, Afflictions, when they are sanctified by divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the ear is opened to discipline, and the heart disposed to receive instruction; and they are sensible proofs both of the vanity of the world and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually, when we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and have tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to think of returning to God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and no man gives unto us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

(2.) What was the *preparative* for it; it was *consideration*. He said within himself, he reasoned within himself, when he recovered his right mind, *How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough!* Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Ezek. 18. 28. *He considers and turns*. To consider is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, and to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly.

Now observe what it was that he considered.

[1.] He considered how bad his condition was; *I perish with hunger*. Not only, "I am hungry," but, "*I perish with hunger*, for I see not what way to expect relief." Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ, till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin; and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. *Master save us, we perish*. And though we be thus driven to Christ, he will not therefore reject us, nor think himself dishonoured by our being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

[2.] He considered how much better it might be

made, if he would but return; *How many hired servants of my father's, the meanest in his family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare:* such a good house does he keep! Note, *First*, In our *Father's house* there is bread for all his family; that was taught by the twelve loaves of *Shew-bread*, that were constantly upon the holy table in the sanctuary, a loaf for every tribe. *Secondly*, There is *enough* and *to spare*, enough for all, enough for each, enough to spare for such as will join themselves to his domestics, enough and *to spare* for *charity*. Yet there is *room*; there are *crumbs* that fall from his table, which many would be glad of, and thankful for.

Thirdly, Even the *hired servants* in God's family are well provided for; the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and depend upon his reward, shall be well provided for. *Fourthly*, The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have gone astray from God, to think of returning to him. Thus that adulteress reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lover; *I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now*, Hos. 2. 7.

(3.) What was the *purpose* of it. Since it is so that his condition is so bad, and may be bettered by returning to his father, his consideration issues, at length, in this conclusion, *I will arise, and go to my father.* Note, Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all.

[1.] He determined what to do; *I will arise, and go to my father.* He will not take any longer time to consider of it, but will *forthwith* arise and go. Though he be in a *far country*, a great way off from his father's house, yet, far as it is, he will return; every step of backsliding from God, must be a step back again in return to him. Though he be *joined to a citizen of this country*, he makes no difficulty of breaking his bargain with him. *We are not debtors to the flesh*, we are under no obligation at all to our Egyptian task-masters to give them warning, but are at liberty to quit the service when we will. Observe with what resolution he speaks, *"I will arise, and go to my father; I am resolved I will, whatever the issue be, rather than stay here, and starve."*

[2.] He determined what to say. True repentance is a *rising, and coming* to God; *Behold, we come unto thee*. But what words shall we take with us? He here considers what to say. Note, In all our addresses to God, it is good to deliberate with ourselves beforehand what we shall say, that we may *order our cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments*. We have *liberty of speech*, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it.

Let us observe what he purposed to say,

First, He would confess his fault and folly; *I have sinned*. Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon. If we plead *not guilty*, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocence, which will certainly condemn us. If we plead *guilty*, with a contrite, penitent, and obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that *confess their sins*.

Secondly, He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter, that he would lay a load upon himself for it; *I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee*. Let those that are *undutiful* to their *earthly parents*, think of this, they sin *against heaven, and before God*. Offences against them are offences against God. Let us all think of this, as that which renders our *sin exceeding sinful*,

and should render us exceeding sorrowful for it. 1. Sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us; *We have sinned against heaven*. God is here called *Heaven*, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the *Heavens do rule*. The malignity of sin aims high, it is *against Heaven*. The daring sinner is said to have *set his mouth against the Heavens*, Ps. 73. 9. Yet it is *impotent* malice, for we cannot hurt the Heavens. Nay, it is foolish malice; what is shot *against the heavens*, will return upon the head of him that shoots it, Ps. 7. 16. Sin is an affront to the *God of Heaven*, it is a forfeiture of the glories and joys of heaven, and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven. 2. It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us; *"I have sinned against heaven, and yet before thee, and under thine eye; than which there could not be a greater affront put upon him."*

Thirdly, He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledge himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family; *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*, v. 29. He does not deny the relation, (for that was all he had to trust to,) but he owns his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of goods that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

Fourthly, He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there; *"Make me as one of thy hired servants; that is good enough, and too good for me."* Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it be but as *door-keepers*, Ps. 84. 10. If it be imposed on him as a mortification, to sit with the servants, he will not only submit to it, but count it a preferment, in comparison with his present state. Those that return to God, from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him; *"Make me as a hired servant, that I may show I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it."*

Fifthly, In all this he would have an eye to his father as a father; *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father*. Note, Eying God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance, and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights both by penitents and petitioners to be called *Father: Is not Ephraim a dear son?*

(4.) What was the performance of this purpose; *He arose, and came to his father*. His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said that we will arise, and go? Let us immediately arise, and come. He did not come half way, and then pretend that he was tired, and could get no further, but weak and weary as he was, he made a thorough business of it. *If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works*.

3. We have here his reception and entertainment with his father, *He came to his father; but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome*. And by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent, and submit themselves, not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case by the wisdom that is from above, which is *gentle, and easy to be entreated*.

reated; herein let them be followers of God, and merciful, as he is. But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners that repent, and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

(1.) The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son; (v. 20.) *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him.* He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance; for God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness; even *before we call, he answers*; for he knows what is in our hearts. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.* How lively are the images presented here! [1.] Here were *eyes of mercy*, and those eyes quick-sighted; *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him*, before any other of the family were aware of him, as if from the top of some high tower he had been looking that way that his son was gone, with such a thought as this, "O that I could see yonder wretched son of mine coming home?" This intimates God's desire of the conversion of sinners, and his readiness to meet them that are coming toward him. *He looketh on men*, when they are gone astray from him, to see whether they will return to him, and he is aware of the first inclination toward him. [2.] Here were *bowels of mercy*, and those bowels turning within him, and yearning at the sight of his son; *He had compassion.* Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner; though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates. *His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel*, Hos. 11. 8. Judg. 10. 16. [3.] Here were *feet of mercy*, and those feet quick-paced; *He ran*, this denotes how swift God is to show mercy. The prodigal son came slowly, under a burden of shame and fear; but the tender father ran to meet him with his encouragements. [4.] Here were *arms of mercy*, and those arms stretched out to embrace him; *He fell on his neck*; though guilty, and deserving to be beaten, though dirty, and newly come from feeding swine, that any one who had not the strongest and tenderest compassions of a father, would have loathed to touch him; yet he thus takes him in his arms, and lays him in his bosom. Thus dear are true penitents to God, thus welcome to the Lord Jesus. [5.] Here are *lips of mercy*, and those lips dropping as a honey-comb; *He kissed him.* This kiss not only *assured* him of his *welcome*, but *sealed his pardon*; his former follies shall be all forgiven, and not mentioned against him, nor is one word said by way of upbraiding. This was like David's kissing Absalom, 2 Sam. 14. 33. And this intimates how ready and free and forward the Lord Jesus is to receive and entertain poor returning, repenting sinners, according to his Father's will.

(2.) The penitent submission which the poor prodigal made to his father; (v. 21.) *He said unto him, Father, I have sinned.* As it commends the good father's kindness, that he showed it before the prodigal expressed his repentance; so it commends the prodigal's repentance, that he expressed it after his father had showed him so much kindness. When he had received the kiss which sealed his pardon, yet he said, *Father I have sinned.* Note, Even those that have received the pardon of their sins, and the comfortable sense of their pardon, must have in their hearts a sincere contrition for it, and with their mouths must make a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned Ps. 51. after Nathan had said, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die.* Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin should increase our sorrow for it; and that is ingenuous evangelical sorrow, which is increased by such a consideration. See Ezek. 16. 63. *Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am sacrificed toward thee.* The more we see of God's

readiness to *forgive us*, the more difficult it should be to us to *forgive ourselves.*

(3.) The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose to say, (v. 19.) which we do not find that he did say, (v. 21.) and that was, *Make me as one of thy hired servants.* We cannot think that he *forgot* it, much less that he *changed his mind*, and was now either less *desirous to be in the family*, or less *willing to be a hired servant* there than when he made that purpose, but his father interrupted him, prevented his saying it; "Hold, son, talk no more of thine unworthiness, thou art heartily welcome, and, though not *worthy to be called a son*, shalt be treated as a *dear son*, as a *pleasant child*." He who is thus entertained at first, needs not ask to be made as a *hired servant*. Thus when *Ephraim bemoaned himself*, God comforted him, Jer. 31. 18, 20. It is strange that here is not one word of rebuke; "Why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home till beaten hither with your own rod." No, here is nothing like this; which intimates that, when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more, they *shall not be mentioned against them*, Ezek. 18. 22.

But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did, or could, expect. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner with his servants; but God does for those who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think. The prodigal came home between hope and fear, fear of being rejected, and hope of being received; but his father was not only better to him than his fears, but better to him than his hopes, not only *received* him, but *received him with respect*.

[1.] He came home *in rags*, and his father not only *clothed* him, but *adorned* him. *He said to the servants*, who all attended their master, upon notice that his son was come, *Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.* The worst old clothes in the house might have served and had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a *coat*, but for a *robe*, the garment of princes and great men, the *best robe*—*τὴν εἰς αὐτὸν πρῶτην*; there is a double emphasis, "*that robe, that principal robe*, you know which I mean;" the *first robe*, (so it may be read,) the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent, and do their *first works*, they shall be received, and dressed in their *first robes*. "Bring hither that robe, and put it on him; he will be ashamed to wear it, and think that it ill becomes him who comes home in such a dirty pickle, but *put it on him*; and do not offer it him only: and *put a ring on his hand*, a signet-ring with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family." Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that though he had spent one portion, yet, upon his repentance, he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore, "Put *shoes on his feet*, to make him easy." Thus doth the grace of God provide for true penitents. *First*, The *righteousness of Christ* is the robe, that *principal robe*, with which they are clothed; they *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, are clothed with that *Sun*. The *robe of righteousness* is the garment of salvation, Isa. 61. 10. A *new nature* is this *best robe*, true penitents are clothed with that, being sanctified through out. *Secondly*, The *earnest of the Spirit*, by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption, is the *ring on the hand*. After that *ye believed, ye were sealed*.

They that are sanctified, are adorned and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him a ring; "*Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it.*" *Thirdly*, The preparation of the gospel of peace, is shoes for our feet; (Eph. 6. 15.) so that, compared with this here, signifies (saith Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting of others by their instructions, at least, by their examples. David, when pardoned, will teach transgressors God's ways, and Peter, when he is converted, will strengthen his brethren. Or, it intimates that they shall go on cheerfully, and with resolution, in the way of religion, as a man does when he has shoes on his feet, above what he does when he is bare-foot.

[2.] He came home hungry, and his father not only fed him, but feasted him; (v. 23.) "*Bring hither the fatted calf, that has been stall-fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and kill it, that my son may be satisfied with the best we have.*" Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meal; but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed. Note, There is excellent food provided by our heavenly Father for all those that arise, and come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls, a feast of fat things. It was a great change with the prodigal, who a while ago would fain have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant be, and the relishes of its comforts, to those who have been labouring in vain for satisfaction in the creature? Now he found his own words made good, *In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.*

(4.) The great joy and rejoicing that there were for his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a festival for the family; "*Let us all eat and be merry, for it is a good day; for this my son was dead, when he was in his rambles, but his return is as life from the dead, he is alive again; we thought that he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold, he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found.*" Note, [1.] The conversion of a soul from sin to God, is the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost: it is a great and wonderful and happy change. What was in itself dead, is made alive; what was lost to God and his church, is found, and what was unprofitable becomes profitable, Philem. 11. It is such a change as that upon the face of the earth, when the spring returns. [2.] The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven; and all that belong to his family, ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should. Observe, it was the father that began the joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing. Therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God's design; it is the bringing of those to Christ, whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. *We joy for your sakes before our God, with an eye to him,* (1 Thess. 3. 9.) and *we are our rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Master of the family,* 1 Thess. 2. 19.

The family complied with the master; *They began to be merry.* Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is.

4. We have here the refining and envying of the elder brother, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly

and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them; and he represents it so as not to aggravate the matter, but as allowing them still the privileges of elder brethren; the Jews had those privileges, (though the Gentiles were favoured,) for the preaching of the gospel must begin at Jerusalem. Christ, when he reproves them for their faults, yet accosted them mildly, to soothe them into a good temper toward the poor publicans. But by the elder brother here we may understand those who are really good, and have been so from their youth up, and never went astray into any vicious course of living; who comparatively need no repentance: and to such these words in the close, *Son, thou art ever with me*, are applicable without any difficulty, but not to the scribes and Pharisees.

Now concerning the elder brother, observe,

(1.) How foolish and fretful he was upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it. It seems he was abroad in the field, in the country, when his brother came, and by the time he was returned home, the mirth was begun; *When he drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing;* either while the dinner was in getting ready, or rather after they had eaten and were full, v. 25. He inquired *what these things meant*, (v. 26.) and was informed that his brother was come, and his father had made him a feast for his welcome home, and great joy there was, *because he had received him safe and sound*, v. 27. It is but one word in the original; he had received him *εὐχάρωντα*—in health, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his right mind, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received *safe and sound*. Now this obliged him to the highest degree; *He was angry, and would not go in*, (v. 28.) not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would show his displeasure at it, and would intimate to his father, that he should have kept out his younger brother. This shows what is a common fault, [1.] In men's families, that those who have always been a comfort to their parents, think they should have the monopoly of their parents' favours, and are apt to be too sharp upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents' kindness to them. [2.] In God's family, those who are comparatively innocents, seldom know how to be compassionate toward those who are manifestly penitents. The language of such we have here, in what the elder brother said, (v. 29, 30.) and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it.

First, He boasted of himself and of his own virtue and obedience. He had not only not run from his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a servant in it, and had done so long; *Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.* Note, It is too common for those that are better than their neighbours to boast of it, yea, and to make their boasts of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. I am apt to think that this elder brother said more than was true, when he gloried that he had never transgressed his father's commands, for then I believe he would not have been so obstinate as now he was to his father's entreaties. However, we will admit it comparatively; he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those

that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of.

Secondly, He *complained of his father*, as if he had not been so kind to him as he ought to have been, who had been so dutiful; *Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends*. He was out of humour now, else he would not have made this complaint; for, no question, if he had asked such a thing at any time, he might have had it at first word; and we have reason to think that he did not desire it, but the *killing of the fatted calf* put him upon making this peevish reflection. When men are *in a passion*, they are apt to reflect so as they would not if they were in their right mind. He had been fed at his father's table, and had many a time been merry with him and the family; but his father had never given him so much as a kid, which was but a small token of love compared with the *fatted calf*. Note, Those that think *highly* of themselves and their services, are apt to think *hardly* of their master, and meanly of his favours. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God hath thought fit to give us, much more of those that he hath not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not *complain*. He would have had a kid, to *make merry with his friends* abroad, whereas the *fatted calf* he grudged so much, was given to his brother, not to *make merry with his friends* abroad, but *with the family* at home: the mirth of God's children should be with their friends and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any *other friends*.

Thirdly, He was very *ill-humoured* towards his younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and said concerning him. Some good people are apt to be overtaken in this fault, nay, and to indulge themselves too much in it; to look with disdain upon those who have not preserved their reputation so clean as they have done, and to be sour and morose toward them, yea though they have given very good evidences of their repentance and reformation; this is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let us observe the instances of it.

1. He *would not go in*, except his brother be *turned out*; one house shall not hold him and his own brother, no not his *father's house*. The language of this was that of the Pharisee, (Isa. 65. 5.) *Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*; and, (Luke 18. 11.) *I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican*. Note, Though we are to shun the society of those sinners whom we are in danger of being infected by, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, whom we may get good by. He saw that his father had *taken him in*, and yet he would not *go in* to him. Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot find in our hearts to *receive* those whom God *hath received*, and to admit those into favour and friendship and fellowship with us, whom we have reason to think God has a favour for, and who are taken into friendship and fellowship with him.

2. He would not call him *brother*; but this *thy son*, which sounds arrogantly, and not without reflection upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal; "He is *thy son*, thy darling." Note, Forgetting the relation we stand in to our brethren, as brethren, and disowning that, are the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor *brethren*, and let the innocents call the penitents so.

3. He *aggravated his brother's faults*, and made the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his father against him; *He is thy son, who hath devoured thy living with harlots*. It is true, he had spent his

own portion foolishly enough; (whether *upon harlots* or no we are not told before, perhaps that was only the language of the elder brother's jealousy and ill will;) but that he had *devoured all his father's living*, was false, the father had still a good estate; now this shows how apt we are, in censuring our brethren, to *make the worst* of every thing, and to set it out in the blackest colours, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father does by us, who is not extreme to mark iniquities.

4. He *grudged him the kindness* that his father *showed him*: *Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf*, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note, It is a wrong thing to *envy* penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil because his is good. As we must not envy those that are the worst of sinners, the gifts of common providence, (*Let not thine heart envy sinners*;) so we must not envy those that *have been* the worst of sinners, the gifts of covenant-love upon their repentance; we must not envy them their pardon, and peace, and comfort, no, nor any extraordinary gift which God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had been a prodigal, had *devoured* his heavenly Father's living, by the *havo*c he made of the church; yet, when after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him, and more honour put upon him than the other apostles, they who were the elder brethren, who had been *serving Christ* when he was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any time his commandments, did not envy him his visions and revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness, but *glorified God in him*; which ought to be an example to us, as the reverse of this elder brother.

(2.) Let us now see how *favourable and friendly* his father was in *his carriage toward him* when he was thus sour and ill-humoured; this is as surprising as the former. Methinks, the mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as bright in his tender and gentle bearing with *peevish saints*, represented by the elder brother here, as before, in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented by the younger brother. The disciples of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bore with them, as a nurse with her children; see 1 Thess. 2. 7.

[1.] When he would not come in, his father *came out, and entreated him*, accosted him mildly, gave him good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, "If he will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is not the house my own, and may I not do what I please in it? Is not the fatted calf my own, and may I not do what I please with it?" No, as he went to meet the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder, did not send a servant out with a kind message to him, but went himself. Now, *First*, This is designed to *represent* to us the goodness of God; how strangely gentle and winning he has been toward those that were strangely forward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain; *Why art thou wroth? He bare Israel's manners in the wilderness*, Acts 13. 18. How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he was upon the fric, (1 Kings 19. 4—6.) and especially with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this here, for he was there disquieted at the repentance of Nineveh, and the mercy showed it, as the elder brother here; and those questions, *Dost thou well to be angry*; and, *Should not I spare Nineveh?* are not unlike these expostulations of the father with the elder brother here. *Secondly*, It is to teach all superiors to be mild and gentle with their inferiors, even when they are in a fault, and passionately justifi-

themselves in it, than which nothing can be more provoking; and yet even in that case let fathers *not provoke their children to more wrath*, and let masters forbear threatening, and both *show all meekness*.

[2.] His father assured him that the kind entertainment he gave his younger brother, was neither any reflection upon him, nor should be any prejudice to him; (v. 31.) "Thou shalt fare never the worse for it, nor have ever the less for it. *Son, thou art ever with me*; the reception of him is no rejection of thee, nor what is laid out on him, any sensible diminution of what I design for thee; thou shalt still remain entitled to the *pars entia*, (so our law calls it,) the *double portion*; (so the Jewish law called it;) thou shalt be *heres ex asse*; (so the Roman law called it;) *all that I have is thine*, by an indefeasible title." If he had not *given him a kid, to make merry with his friends*, he had eaten bread at his table continually; and it is better to be *happily with our Father* in heaven, than *merry with any friend* we have in this world. Note, *First*, It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are, and shall be, ever with him; they are so in this world by faith, they shall be so in the other world by fruition, and all that he has, is theirs; for *if children, then heirs*, Rom. 8. 17. *Secondly*, Therefore we ought not to envy others God's grace to them, because we shall have never the less for their sharing in it. If we be true believers, all that God is, and all that he has, is *ours*; and if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has, is theirs too, and yet we have not the less; as they that walk in the light and warmth of the sun, have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much: for Christ in his church, is like as they say of the soul in the body, it is *tota in toto—the whole in the whole*, and yet *tota in qualibet parte—the whole in each part*.

[3.] His father gave him a good reason for this uncommon joy in the family; (v. 32.) *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad*. He might have insisted upon his own authority; "It was *my will* that the family should make merry and be glad." *Stat pro ratione voluntas—My reason is, I will it to be so*. But it does not become even those that have authority, to be vouching and appealing to it upon every occasion, that does but make it cheap and common; it is better to give a convincing reason, as the father does here; *It was meet and very becoming, that we should make merry for the return of a prodigal son*, more than for the perseverance of a dutiful son; for though the latter be a greater blessing to a family, yet the former is a more sensible pleasure. Any family would be much more transported with joy at the raising of a dead child to life, yea, or at the recovery of a child from sickness that was adjudged mortal, than for the continued life and health of many children. Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh shall, sooner or later, be silent before him. We do not find any reply that the elder brother made to what his father said, which intimates that he was entirely satisfied, and acquiesced in his father's will, and was well reconciled to his prodigal brother; and his father put him in mind that he was his brother; *This thy brother*. Note, A good man, though he have not such command of himself at all times as to *keep his temper*, yet will, with the grace of God, *recover his temper*; though he *fall*, yet *shall he not be utterly cast down*. But as for the Scribes and Pharisees, for whose conviction it was primarily intended, for aught that appears, they continued the same disaffection to the sinners of the Gentiles, and to the gospel of Christ because it was preached to them.

CHAP. XVI.

The scope of Christ's discourse in this chapter, is, to awaken and quicken us all; so to use this world as not to abuse it; so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here, as that they may make for us, and may not make against us, in the other world; for they will do either the one or the other, according as we use them now. 1. If we do good with them, and lay out what we have in works of piety and charity, we shall reap the benefit of it in the world to come; and this he shows in the parable of the unjust steward, who made so good a hand of his lord's goods, that, when he was turned out of his stewardship, he had a comfortable subsistence to take him self to. The parable itself we have, v. 1. . 8; the explanation and application of it, v. 9. . 13; and the contempt which the Pharisees put upon the doctrine Christ preached to them, for which he sharply reproveth them, adding some other weighty sayings, v. 14. . 18. 11. If instead of doing good with our worldly enjoyments, we make them the food and fuel of our lusts, of our luxury and sensuality, and deny relief to the poor, we shall certainly perish eternally, and the things of this world, which were thus abused, will but add to our misery and torment. This he shows in the other parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which has likewise a further reach, and that is, to awaken us all to take the warning given us by the written word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world, v. 19. . 31.

1. **A**ND he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and he said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters: for

either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. 16. The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. 18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband, committeth adultery.

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to amuse us with notions of divine mysteries, or to entertain us with notions of divine mercies. No, the divine revelation of both these in the gospel, is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of christian duties, and, as much as any one thing, to the duty of beneficence, and doing good to those who stand in need of any thing that either we have, or can do for them. This our Saviour is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but *stewards of the manifold grace of God*; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favour of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intention, and therefore we must not hence infer that any one can befriend us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord; but that, in the general, we must so lay out what we have, in works of piety and charity, as that we may meet it again with comfort, on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be as diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests. So Dr. Clarke.

Now let us consider,

1. The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as *stewards* of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards; whatever we have, the property of it is God's, we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, saith, "This world is a house; heaven, the roof; the stars, the lights; the earth with its fruits, a table spread; the Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." Now,

1. Here is the *dishonesty* of this steward. He *wasted his lord's goods*, embezzled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was *accused to his lord*, v. 1. We are all *liable* to the same charge; we have not made a due improvement of what God

has intrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose. And that we may not be for this *judged of our Lord*, it concerns us to *judge ourselves*.

2. His *discharge* out of his place. His lord *called for him*, and said, "*How is it that I hear this of thee?*" I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it, but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts, and be gone in a little time, v. 2. Now this is designed to teach us, (1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our *stewardship* in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and *dismiss* us from our stewardship, will *deprive* us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places, and have the same. (2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death, is *just*, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us. (3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us, we must *give an account* of it to our Lord; *after death the judgment*; both which, both our discharge and our account, we are fairly warned of, and ought to be frequently thinking of.

3. His *after-wisdom*. Now he began to consider, *What shall I do?* v. 3. He would have done well to have considered that before he had so foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to *consider* late than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood?

(1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work; "*I cannot dig*; I cannot earn my bread by my labour." But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he was either old or lame, but the truth is, he is *lazy*; his *cannot* is a *will not*; it is not a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He *cannot dig*, for he was never used to it! now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world; nor indeed can do any thing to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of *humility* as to get his bread by begging; *To beg I am ashamed*. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness; those whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be *ashamed* to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed of his cheating his master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it; (v. 4.) "*I am resolved what to do*. My lord turns me out of his house, I have none of my own to go to, I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many a good turn, and now I will do them one more, which will so oblige them, that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends, was, by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord,

and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed his lord a *hundred measures of oil*; (in that commodity he paid his rent;) *Take thy bill*, said he, *here it is*, and *sit down quickly, and write fifty*; (v. 6.) so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, He was in haste to have it done; "*Sit down quickly*, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed his lord a *hundred measures of wheat*, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bid him write *four score*; (v. 7.) probably, he did the like by others, abating more or less according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are most so to those who have most of them, who devolve upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to *cheat them*, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found even among those in whom trust is reposed. How hard is it to find one that confidence can be reposed in! Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4. The approbation of this; (v. 8.) *The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely*. It may be meant of *his lord*, the lord of that servant, who, though he could not but be angry at his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of *our Lord*, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity." He does not commend him because he had done *falsely* to his master, but because he had done *wisely* for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what *hard bargains* he had *set them*, so that they could not *pay their rent*, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown *behindhand*, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of this, he now, at going off, did as he ought to do both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating of their rent for the future. *How much owest thou?* may mean, "What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will sit thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have." He had been *all for his lord*, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have *their favour* when he had lost *his lord's*. The abating of their rent would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only.

Now, this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world; *The children of this world*, who choose and have their portions in it, are *wiser for their generation*, act more considerably, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the *children of light*, who enjoy the gospel, in *their generation*, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note, (1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world, is to be imitated by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities; to do that first, which is most needful; in summer and harvest to lay up for winter; to take a good bargain when it is offered them; to trust the *faithful*, and not the *false*. O that we were thus wise in our spiritual affairs! (2.) The children of light are commonly *outdone* by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are *truly wise*, it is only in *their generation*; but in that they are *wiser*

than the children of light in theirs; for though we are told that we must shortly be *turned out of our stewardship*, yet we do not provide as we should for such a day; we live as if we were to be *here always*, and as if there were not *another life after this*; and are not solicitous, as this steward was, to provide for *hereafter*; though, as *children of the light*, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see *another world* before us, yet we do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects and best affections thither, as we should.

II. The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it; (v. 9.) "*I say unto you, you my disciples*;" (for to them this parable is directed, v. 1.) "though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little." Observe,

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world; "*Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness*, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends." It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money, as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to interest, buy land with it, put it into this or the other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money, so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so *cast it upon the waters*, as that we may *find it again after many days*, Eccl. 11. 1. And in our case, though whatever we have is *our Lord's goods*, yet, as long as we dispose of them among *our Lord's tenants* and for their advantage, it is so far reckoned from being a wrong to our Lord, that it is duty to him as well as policy for ourselves.

Note, (1.) The things of this world are the *mammon of unrighteousness*, or the false *mammon*; not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness, will certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations from them. (2.) Though this *mammon of unrighteousness* is not to be *trusted to* for a happiness, yet it may and must be *made use of* in subserviency to our pursuits of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may *make to ourselves friends* with it, not by way of *purchase* or *merit*, but *recommendation*; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends; and it is a desirable thing to be *befriended* in the account and state to come. (3.) At death we must all *fail* *ὅταν ἴκηται*—when ye suffer an eclipse. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to *fail*, when he becomes a *bankrupt*; we must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will *all fail us*; flesh and heart fail. (4.) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that *when we fail* at death we may be *received into everlasting habitations* in heaven. The *habitations* in heaven are *everlasting*; not *made with hands*, but *eternal*, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to *receive them*; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and when a *guard of angels* carries them thither, a *choir of angels* is ready to receive them there. The poor saints that are gone before to glory, will receive those that in this world distributed to their necessities. (5.) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them *lay up in store a good*

bond, a good security, a good foundation *for the time to come*, for an eternity to come. See 1 Tim. 6. 17—19. which explains this here.

2. With what arguments he presses this exhortation, he abounds in works of piety and charity.

(1.) If we do not make a right use of the *gifts of God's providence*, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the *gifts of his spiritual grace*? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour in the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a *forfeiture* of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shows, v. 10—12.

[1.] The riches of this world are the *less*; grace and glory are the *greater*. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things in this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we shall be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we shall receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us; *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much*. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God; and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnest of heaven; but he that buries the *one talent* of this world's wealth, will never improve the *five talents* of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are *deceitful* and *uncertain*, they are the *unrighteous mammon*, which is hastening from us apace, which if we will make any advantage of, we must bestir ourselves quickly; but if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only *true riches*? v. 11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are *truly rich*, and *very rich*, who are rich in *faith*, and rich toward God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnest of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, and expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the *kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in *ordinate ad spiritualia*—with a *spiritual reference*, so that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the *true riches*, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God; for *God giveth to a man that is good in his sight*, that is, to a free-hearted charitable man, *wisdom, and knowledge, and joy*; (Eccl. 2. 26.) that is, to a man that is *faithful in the unrighteous mammon*, he gives the *true riches*.

[3.] The riches of this world are *another man's*; they are τὰ ἀλλότρια, not our own, for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest; they are not our own, for they are God's, his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in him, we are but usufructuaries; they are *another man's*; we have them from others; we use them for others, and *what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes*, while still they are increased that eat them; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know not who? But spiritual and eternal riches are *our own*, (they enter into the soul that becomes *possessed* of them,) and *inseparably*; they are a good part that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call *our own*. But how can we expect God should *enrich us* with these, if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, which we are but stewards of?

(2.) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God, than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make *mammon*, that is, all

our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service, (v. 13.) *No servant can serve two masters*, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and *mammon* are. If a man will *love the world*, and *hold to that*, it cannot be but he will *hate God*, and *despise him*. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world; but on the other hand, if a man will *love God*, and *adhere to him*, he will comparatively *hate the world*, (whenever God and the world come in competition,) and will *despise* it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to the furtherance of him in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us; *he cannot serve God and mammon*. So divided are their interests, that their services can never be *compounded*. If therefore we be determined to *serve God*, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

3. We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

(1.) They wickedly *ridiculed him*, v. 14. The *Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things*, and could not contradict him, but they *derided him*. Let us consider this, *First*, As their *sin*, and the fruit of their *covetousness*, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercises of devotion, yet are ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that *touched*, which was their *Delilah*, their darling lust; for this they derided him, ἰξουκατιζέοντες—they *snuffed up their noses at him*, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a *reproach*, Jer. 6. 10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to *make a jest* of the word of God, who are resolved that they will not be ruled by it; but they will find at last it cannot be turned off so. *Secondly*, As his *suffering*. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their *contempt*; they had him in *derision* all the day. He that spake as never man spake, was bantered and ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, who preach- ing is unjustly *derided*, may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man, to be *laughed at*, but to *deserve to be laughed at*. Christ's apostles were *mocked*, and no wonder; the *disciple* is not *greater than his Lord*.

(2.) He justly reproveth them; not for *deriding him*, (he knew how to *despise the shame*,) but for *deceiving themselves* with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, v. 15. Here is,

[2.] Their *specious outside*; nay, it was a *splendid one*. *First*, They justified themselves before men; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to be looked upon as men of singular sanctity and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim; "*Ye are they that do that*, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; you are notorious for this." *Secondly*, They were *highly esteemed among men*; men did not only acquit them from any blame they were under, but *applauded* them, and had them in veneration, not only as *good men*, but as the *best of men*. Their sentiments were

esteemed as oracles, their directions as laws, and their practices as inviolable prescriptions.

[3.] Their *odious inside*, which was under the eye of God; "He *knows your heart*, and it is in his sight an *abomination*, for it is full of all manner of wickedness." Note, *First*, It is folly to *justify ourselves before men*, and to think this enough to bear us out, and bring us off in the judgment of the great day, that men *know us all* of us; for God, who knows our hearts, knows that ill of us, which no one else can know. This ought to check our value for ourselves, and our confidence in ourselves, that *God knows our hearts*, and how much deceit is there, for we have reason to abase and distrust ourselves. *Secondly*, It is folly to *judge of persons and things* by the opinion of men concerning them, and to go down with the stream of vulgar estimate; for that which is *highly esteemed among men*, who judge according to outward appearance, is perhaps an *abomination in the sight of God*, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. On the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn, who yet are accepted and approved of God, 2 Cor. 10. 18.

(3.) He turned from them to the publicans and sinners, as more likely to be wrought upon by his gospel than those covetous conceited Pharisees; (v. 16.) "The *law and the prophets* were indeed *until John*; the Old-Testament dispensation, which was *confined to you Jews*, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation; and you are puffed up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets; but since John Baptist appeared, the *kingdom of God is preached*; a New-Testament dispensation, which does not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but *every man presses* into the gospel kingdom, Gentiles as well as Jews; and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his betters go before him into it, or to stay till the *rulers* and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political, national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when *salvation was of the Jews*; but it is made a particular personal concern, and therefore *every man* that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting." Some give this sense of it; they derided Christ for speaking in contempt of riches, for thought they, were there not many promises of riches and other temporal good things in the *law and the prophets*? And were not many of the best of God's servants very rich, as Abraham and David? "It is true," saith Christ, "so it was, but now that the kingdom of God is begun to be preached, things take a new turn: now blessed are the poor, and the mourners, and the persecuted." The Pharisees to requite the people for their high opinion of them, allowed them in a cheap, easy, formal religion; "But," saith Christ, "now that the *gospel is preached*, the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees, as they have had, so they cannot content themselves with such an indifference in religion as they have been trained up in, but they *press* with a holy violence into the kingdom of God." Note, Those that would go to heaven, must take pains, must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

(4.) Yet still he protests against any design to invalidate the law? (v. 17.) *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*, though the foundations of the earth and the pillars of heaven are so firmly established, *than one tittle of the law to fail*. The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties

enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel, and its shades are filled up with the gospel-colours; not *one tittle* of that *fails*, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very bright, witness the Epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were connived at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, which the gospel has indeed taken away the permission of, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive intention of the law, as in the case of divorce, (v. 18.) which we had before, Matth. 5. 32.—19. 9. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far *indulged* as that permission *did* indulge them, for the more they are indulged, the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. 22. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried: 23. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: 24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that *would come* from thence. 27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, 28. For I have five brethren: that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31. And he said unto him. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all ; so this sets before us the *wrath to come*, and is designed for our awakening ! and very fast asleep those are in sin, that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness ; now this parable was intended to make those mockers serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and affliction, and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality. Now this parable, by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting those two great intentions.

This parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which spiritual things are represented by similitudes borrowed from worldly things, as those of the sower and the seed, (except that of the sheep and goats,) the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this. But here the *spiritual things themselves* are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. Yet we need not call it a history of a particular occurrence, but it is *matter of fact* that is true every day ; that poor godly people, whom men neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows ; and that rich epicures, who live in luxury, and are unmerciful to the poor, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is the more grievous and terrible to them, because of the sensual lives they lived ; and that there is no gaining any relief from their torments. Is this a parable ? What similitude is there in this ? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it the more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Saviour came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to show us the reference which *this* world has to *that* ; and here he does it.

In this description, (for so I shall choose to call it,) we may observe,

I. The different condition of a *wicked rich man*, and a *godly poor man*, in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true church, of a good man, and a favourite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favourable thoughts of a *poor man*. This mistake Christ, upon all occasions, set himself to correct, and here very fully ; where we have,

1. A wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity ; (v. 19.) *There was a certain rich man*, from the Latin we commonly call him *Dives*—a *rich man* ; but, as Bishop Tillotson observes, he has no name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been invidious to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill-will. But others observe, that Christ would not do the rich man so much honour as to name him, though when perhaps he called his lands by his own name, he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is here preserved, when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion. Now we are told concerning this rich man, (1.) That he was *clothed in purple and fine linen*, and that was his *adornings*. He had *fine linen for pleasure*, and clean, no doubt, every day ; night-linen, and day-linen. He had *purple for state*, for that was the wear of princes ; which has made some conjecture that Christ had an eye to Herod in it. He never appeared abroad but in great magnificence. (2.) He *fed* deliciously and *sumptuously every day*. His table was furnished with all the

varieties and dainties that nature and art could furnish him with ; his side-table richly adorned with plate, his servants, who waited at table, in rich liveries, and the guests at his table, no doubt, such as he thought *graced* it.

Well, and what harm was there in all this ? It is no sin to be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, nor to keep a plentiful table, if a man's estate will afford it. Nor are we told that he got his estate by fraud, oppression, or extortion, no, nor that he was drunk, or made others drunk ; but, [1.] Christ would hereby show that a man may have a great deal of the *wealth and pomp and pleasure* of this world, and yet lie and perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. We cannot infer from men's living great, either that God loves them in giving them so much, or that they love God for giving them so much ; happiness consists not in these things. [2.] That plenty and pleasure are a very *dangerous*, and to many a *fatal* temptation to luxury and sensuality, and forgetfulness of God and another world. This man might have been happy if he had not had great possessions and enjoyments. [3.] That the indulgence of the body, and the ease and pleasure of that, are the ruin of many a soul, and the interests of it. It is true, eating good meat and wearing good clothes are lawful ; but it is as true, that it often becomes the food and fuel of pride and luxury, and so turns into sin to us. [4.] That feasting ourselves and our friends, and, at the same time, forgetting the distresses of the poor and afflicted, are very provoking to God and damning to the soul. The sin of this rich man was not so much his dress or his diet, but his providing for himself only.

2. Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress ; (v. 20.) *There was a certain beggar*, named *Lazarus* ; a beggar of that name, eminently devout, and in great distress, was, probably, well known among good people at that time : a beggar, suppose such a one as Eleazar, or Lazarus. Some think Eleazar a proper name for any poor man ; for it signifies the *help of God*, which they must fly to, that are destitute of other helps. This poor man was reduced to the last extremity, as miserable as you can lightly suppose a man to be in this world, as to outward things. (1.) His body was *full of sores*, like Job. To be sick and weak in body is a great affliction ; but sores are more *painful* to the patient, and more *loathsome* to those about him. (2.) He was forced to beg his bread, and to take up with such scraps as he could get at rich people's doors. He was so sore and lame, that he could not go himself, but he was carried by some compassionate hand or other, and *laid at the rich man's gate*. Note, These that are not able to help the poor with their *purses*, should help them with their *hands* ; those that cannot lend them a *penny*, should lend them a *hand* ; those that have not wherewithal to give to them themselves, should either bring them, or go for them, to those that have. Lazarus, in his distress, had nothing of his own to subsist on, no relation to go to, nor did the parish take care of him. It is an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, that such a godly man as Lazarus was, should be suffered to perish for want of necessary food. Now observe,

[1.] His expectations from the rich man's table. *He desired to be fed with the crumbs*, v. 21. He did not look for a mess from off his table, though he ought to have had one, one of the best ; but would be thankful for the crumbs from under the table, the broken meat which was the rich man's leavings ; nay, the leavings of his dogs. *The poor use entreaties*, and must be content with such as they can get. Now this is taken notice of to show, *First*, What was the distress, and what the disposition, of the poor man. He was *poor*, but he was *poor in spirit*,

contentedly poor. He did not lie at the rich man's gate, complaining, and bawling, and making a noise, but silently and modestly desiring to be *fed with the crumbs*. This miserable man was a good man, and in favour with God. Note, It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world, while wicked people prosper, and have abundance; see Ps. 73. 7, 10, 14. Here is a child of wrath and an heir of hell sitting in the house, faring sumptuously; and a child of love and an heir of heaven, lying at the gate, perishing for hunger. And is men's spiritual state to be judged of then by their outward condition? *Secondly*, What was the temper of the rich man toward him; we are not told that he abused him, or forbid him his gate, or did him any harm, but it is intimated that he slighted him; he had no concern for him, took no care about him. Here was a *real* object of charity, and a very *moving* one, which spake for itself; it was presented to him at *his own gate*; the poor man had a good character and a good conduct, and every thing that could recommend him. A little thing would be a great kindness to him, and yet he took no cognizance of his case, did not order him to be taken in, and lodged in the barn, or some of the out-buildings, but let him lie there. Note, It is not enough not to oppress and trample upon the poor; we shall be found unfaithful stewards of our Lord's goods in the great day, if we do not succour and relieve them. The reason given for the most fearful doom is, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat*. I wonder how those rich people who have read the gospel of Christ, and say that they believe it, can be so unconcerned as they often are, in the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted!

[2.] The usage he had from the dogs; *The dogs came and licked his sores*. The rich man kept a kennel of hounds, it may be, or other dogs, for his diversion, and to please his fancy, and those were fed to the full, when poor Lazarus could not get enough to keep him alive. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for hereafter, that feed their dogs, but neglect the poor. And it is a great aggravation of the uncharitableness of many rich people, that they bestow that upon their fancies and follies, which would supply the necessity, and rejoice the heart, of many a good christian in distress. Those offend God, nay, and they put a contempt upon human nature, that pamper their dogs and horses, and let the families of their poor neighbours starve. Now those dogs *came, and licked the sores* of poor Lazarus; which may be taken, *First*, As an aggravation of his misery. His sores were *bloody*, which tempted the dogs to come and lick them, as they did the blood of Naboth and Ahab, 1 Kings 21. 19. And we read of the *tongue of the dogs dipped in the blood of enemies*, Ps. 68. 23. They attacked him while he was yet alive, as if he had been already dead, and he had not strength himself to keep them off, nor would any of the servants be so civil as to check them. The dogs were like their master, and thought they fared sumptuously when they regaled themselves with human gore. Or, it may be taken, *Secondly*, As some relief to him in his misery; ἀλλὰ οὕτως, the master was *hard-hearted* toward him, but the dogs *came, and licked his sores*, which mollified and eased them; it is not said, *They sucked them*, but *licked them*, which was good for them. The dogs were more kind to him than their master was.

II. Here is the *different condition* of this *godly poor man*, and this *wicked rich man*, *at, and after, death*. Hitherto the wicked man seems to have the advantage, but *Exitus acta probat—Let us wait a while, to see the end hereof*.

1. They both die; (v. 22.) *The beggar died;*

the rich man also died. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly; there they meet together. One dieth in *his full strength*, and another in the *bitterness of his soul*; but they shall lie down alike in the dust, Job 21. 26. Death favours not either the rich man for his riches, or the poor man for his poverty. Saints die, that they may bring their sorrows to an end, and may enter upon their joys. Sinners die, that they may go to give up their account. It concerns both rich and poor to prepare for death, for it waits for them both. *Mors sceptrum legibus aequat—Death blends the sceptre with the spade*.

—aquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres.

With equal pace, impartial Fate

Knocks at the palace, as the cottage gate.

2. The beggar *died first*. God often takes godly people out of the world, when he leaves the wicked to flourish still. It was an advantage to the beggar, that such a speedy end was put to his miseries; and since he could find no other shelter or resting-place, he was *hid in the grave*, where the *wearies are at rest*.

3. The rich man *died, and was buried*. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man; they digged a hole any where, and tumbled his body in, without any solemnity; he was *buried with the burial of an ass*; nay, it is well if they that let the dogs lick his sores, did not let them gnaw his bones. But the rich man had a pompous funeral, lay in state, had a train of mourners to attend him to his grave, and a stately monument set up over it; probably, he had a funeral oration in praise of him, and his generous way of living, and the good table he kept, which those would commend, that had been feasted at it. It is said of the wicked man, that he is *brought to the grave* with no small ado, and *laid in the tomb, and the clouds of the valley*, were it possible, are made *sweet to him*, Job 21. 32. 33. How foreign is the ceremony of a funeral to the happiness of the man!

4. The beggar *died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*. How much did the honour done to his soul, by this convey of it to its rest, exceed the honour done to the rich man, by the carrying off his body with so much magnificence to its grave! Observe, (1.) His soul *existed* in a state of separation from its body. It did not *die*, or *fall asleep*, with the body, his candle was not put out with him, but lived, and acted, and knew what it did, and what was done to it. (2.) His soul *removed* to another world, to the world of spirits; it returned to God who gave it, to its native country; this is implied in its being *carried*. The spirit of a man goes upward. (3.) Angels took care of it; it was *carried by angels*. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die, and have a charge concerning them, to *bear them up in their hands*, not only in their journeys to and fro on earth, but in their great journey to their long home in heaven, be both their guide and their guard through regions unknown and unsafe. The soul of man, if not chained to this earth, and clogged by it as unsanctified souls are, has in itself an elastic virtue, by which it *springs upward* as soon as it gets clear of the body; but Christ will not trust those that are his to that, and therefore will send special messengers to fetch them to himself. One angel one would think sufficient, but here are more, as many were sent for Elijah. Amasis, king of Egypt, had his chariot drawn by kings; but what was that honour to this? Saints ascend in the virtue of Christ's ascension; but this convey of angels is added for state and decorum; saints shall be brought home, not only safely, but

honourably. What were the bearers at the rich man's funeral, though, probably, those of the first rank, compared with Lazarus's bearers? The angels were not shy of touching him, for his sores were on his *body*, not on his *soul*; that was presented to God, *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. "Now, blessed angels," said a good man just expiring, "now come, and do your office." (4.) It was carried into *Abraham's bosom*. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death, three ways; they go to the *garden of Eden*; they go to be under the *throne of glory*; and they go to the *bosom of Abraham*; and that is it which our Saviour here makes use of. Abraham was the *father of the faithful*; and whither should the souls of the faithful be gathered but to him, who, as a tender father, lays them in his *bosom*, especially at their first coming, to bid them welcome, and to refresh them when newly come from the sorrows and fatigues of this world? He was carried to his *bosom*, that is, to feast with him, for at feasts the guests are said to lean on one another's breasts; and the saints in heaven sit down with *Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob*. Abraham was a great and rich man, yet in heaven he does not disdain to lay poor Lazarus in his bosom. Rich saints and poor meet in heaven. This poor Lazarus, who might not be admitted within the rich man's gate, is conducted into the dining-room, into the bed-chamber, of the heavenly palace; and he is laid in the bosom of Abraham, whom the rich glutton scorned to set with the dogs of his flock.

5. The next news you hear of the *rich man*, after the account of his death and burial is, that in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, v. 23.

(1.) His state is very miserable. *He is in hell, in hades*, in the state of separate souls, and there he is in the utmost misery and anguish possible. As the souls of the faithful, immediately after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; so wicked and unsanctified souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment endless, useless, and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. This rich man had entirely devoted himself to the pleasures of the world of sense, was wholly taken up with them, and took up with them for his portion, and therefore was wholly unfit for the pleasures of the world of spirits; to such a carnal mind as his they would indeed be no pleasure, nor could he have any relish of them, and therefore he is of course excluded from them. Yet that is not all; he was hard-hearted to God's poor, and therefore he is not only cut off from mercy, but he has judgment without mercy, and falls under a punishment of sense as well as a punishment of loss.

(2.) The misery of his state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus; He lift up his eyes, and sees *Abraham afar off*, and *Lazarus in his bosom*. It is the soul that is in torment, and they are the eyes of his mind that are lifted up. He now began to consider what was become of Lazarus; he does not find him where he himself is, nay, he plainly sees him, and with as much assurance as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes, afar off in the bosom of Abraham. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned we had before; (ch. 13. 28.) *Ye shall see Abraham, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out*. [1.] He saw *Abraham afar off*. To see Abraham we should think a pleasing sight; but to see him afar off was a tormenting sight. Near himself he saw devils and damned companions, frightful sights, and painful ones; afar off he saw Abraham. Note, Every sight in hell is aggravating. [2.] He saw *Lazarus in his bosom*; that same Lazarus whom he

had looked upon with so much scorn and contempt, as not worthy his notice, he now sees preferred, and to be envied. The sight of him brought to his mind his own cruel and barbarous conduct toward him; and the sight of him in that happiness made his own misery the more grievous.

III. Here is an account of what passed between the rich man and Abraham in the separate state—a state of separation one from another, and of both from this world. Though it is probable that there will not be, nor are, any such dialogues or discourses between glorified saints and damned sinners, yet it is very proper, and what is usually done in descriptions, especially such as are designed to be pathetic and moving, by such dialogues to represent what will be the mind and sentiments both of the one and of the other. And since we find damned sinners tormented in the presence of the Lamb, (Rev. 14. 10.) and the faithful servants of God looking upon them that have transgressed the covenant, there where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched, (Isa. 66. 23, 24.) such a discourse as this is not incongruous to be supposed.

Now in this discourse we have,

1. The request which the rich man made to Abraham for some mitigation of his present misery; (v. 24.) seeing Abraham afar off, he cried to him, cried aloud, as one in earnest and as one in pain and misery, mixing shrieks with his petitions, to enforce them by moving compassion. He that used to command aloud, now begs aloud; louder than ever Lazarus did at his gate. The songs of his riot and revels are all turned into lamentations. Observe here,

(1.) The title he gives to Abraham; *Father Abraham*. Note, There are many in hell, that can call Abraham father; that were Abraham's seed after the flesh; nay, and many that were, in name and profession, the children of the covenant made with Abraham. Perhaps this rich man, in his carnal mirth, had ridiculed Abraham and the story of Abraham, as the scoffers of the latter days do; but now he gives him a title of respect, *Father Abraham*. Note, The day is coming, when wicked men will be glad to scrape acquaintance with the righteous, and to claim kindred to them, though now they slight them. Abraham in this description represents Christ, for to him all judgment is committed, and it is his mind that Abraham here speaks. These that now slight Christ, will shortly make their court to him, *Lord, Lord*.

(2.) The representation he makes to him of his present deplorable condition; *I am tormented in this flame*. It is the torment of his soul that he complains of, and therefore such a fire as will operate upon souls; and such a fire the wrath of God is, fastening upon a guilty conscience; such a fire horror of mind is, and the reproaches of a self-accusing, self-condemning heart. Nothing is more painful and terrible to the body than to be tormented with fire; by that therefore the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented.

(3.) His request to Abraham, in consideration of this misery; *Have mercy on me*. Note, The day is coming, when those that make light of divine mercy, will beg hard for it. O for mercy, mercy, when the day of mercy is over, and offers of mercy are no more made. He that had no mercy on Lazarus, yet expects Lazarus should have mercy on him, "For," thinks he, "Lazarus is better natured than ever I was." The particular favour he begs is, *Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue*. [1.] Here he complains of the torment of his tongue particularly, as if he were more tormented there than in any other part, the punishment answering the sin. The tongue is one of the organs of speech, and by the torments of that he is put in mind of all the wicked words that

he had spoken against God and man; his cursing, and swearing, and blasphemy, all his *hard speeches*, and *filthy speeches*; by his words he is condemned, and therefore in his tongue he is tormented. The tongue is also one of the organs of *tasting*; and therefore the torments of that will remind him of his inordinate relish of the delights of sense, which he had *rolled under his tongue*. [2.] He desires a *drop of water to cool his tongue*. He does not say, "Father Abraham, send for me to thy bosom, to lie where Lazarus lies;" unsanctified souls do not, cannot, truly *desire* the happiness of heaven; nay, he does not say, "Father Abraham, order me a release from this misery, help me out of this pit," for he utterly *despised* of that; but he asks as small a thing as could be asked, a *drop of water to cool his tongue* for one moment. [3.] He desires that Lazarus might bring it. I have sometimes suspected that he had herein an ill design upon Lazarus, and hoped, if he could get him within his reach, he should keep him from returning to the bosom of Abraham again. The heart that is filled with rage against God, is filled with rage against the people of God. But we will think more charitably even of a damned sinner, and suppose he intended here to show respect to Lazarus as one whom he would now gladly beholden to. He *names* him, because he *knows* him, and thinks Lazarus will not be unwilling to do him this good office for old acquaintance-sake. Grotius here quotes Plato describing the torments of wicked souls, and among other things he saith, "They are *continually raving* on those whom they have murdered, or been any way *injurious to*, calling upon them to *forgive them* the wrongs they did them. Note, There is a day coming, when those that now hate and despise the people of God would gladly receive kindness from them.

2. The reply which Abraham gave to this request. In general, he did not grant it. He would not allow him one *drop of water to cool his tongue*. Note, The damned in hell shall not have any the least abatement or mitigation of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain in hell to expect the least drop of mercy. See how justly this rich man is paid in his own coin. He that denied a crumb, is denied a drop. Now it is said to us, *Ask, and it shall be given you*; but if we let slip this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us. But this is not all; had Abraham only said, "You shall have nothing to abate your torment," it had been sad; but he saith a great deal which would add to his torment, and make the flame the hotter, for every thing in hell will be tormenting.

(1.) He calls him *son*; a kind and civil title, but here it serves only to aggravate the denial of his request, which shut up the bowels of the compassion of a father from him. He had been a son, but a rebellious one, and now an abandoned, disinherited one. See the folly of those who rely on that *plea*, *We have Abraham to our father*, when we find one in hell, and doomed to bethere for ever, whom Abraham calls *son*.

(2.) He puts him in mind of what had been both his own condition, and the condition of Lazarus, in their *life-time*: *Son, remember*; this is a cutting word. The memories of damned souls will be their tormentors, and conscience will then be awakened and stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Nothing will bring more oil to the flames of hell than *Son, remember*. Now sinners are called upon to *remember*, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. "*Son, remember thy Creator, thy Redeemer, remember thy latter end*;" but they can turn a deaf ear to these

memories, and forget that for which they have their memories; justly therefore will their everlasting misery arise from a *son, remember*, which they will not be able to turn a deaf ear to. What a dreadful peal will this ring in our ears, "*Son, remember* the many warnings that were given thee, not to come to this place of torment, which thou wouldst not regard; remember the fair offers made thee of eternal life and glory, which thou wouldst not accept!" But that which he is here put in mind of, is, [1.] That *thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things*. He does not tell him that he had *abused* them, but that he had *received* them; "Remember what a bountiful benefactor God has been to thee, how ready he was to do thee good; thou canst not therefore say, He owes thee any thing, no, not a *drop of water*. What he gave thee, *thou receivest*, and that was all; thou never gavest him a receipt for them, in a thankful acknowledgment of them, much less didst thou ever make any grateful return for them, or improvement of them; thou hast been the grave of God's blessings, in which they were buried, not the field of them, in which they were sown. Thou *receivest thy good things*; thou *receivest* them, and *usest* them, as if they had been *thine own*, and thou hadst not been at all accountable for them. Or rather, they were the things which thou didst choose for *thy good things*, which were in thine eye the *best things*, which thou didst content thyself with, and portion thyself in. Thou hadst meat and drink, and clothes of the richest and finest, and these were the things thou didst place thy happiness in; they were thy *reward, thy consolation, the penny* thou didst *agree for*, and thou hast had it. Thou wast for the *good things of thy life-time*, and hadst no thought of better things in another life, and therefore hast no reason to expect them. The day of thy *good things* is past and gone, and now is the day of thine *evil things*, of recompense for all thine evil deeds. Thou hast already had the last drop of the *ials of mercy* that thou couldst expect to fall to thy share; and there remains nothing but *ials of wrath* without mixture" [2.] "Remember, too, what *evil things Lazarus received*. Thou enviest him his happiness here; but think what a large share of misery he had in his *life-time*. Thou hadst as much *good* as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so bad a man*, and he as much *evil* as could be thought to fall to the lot of *so good a man*. He *received* his evil things; he bore them patiently, received them from the hand of God, as Job did; (*ch. 2. 10. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?*) he *received* them as physic appointed for the cure of his spiritual distempers, and the cure was effected. As wicked people have *good things* only in this life, and at death they are for ever separated from all good; so godly people have evil things only in *this life*, and at death they are for ever put out of the reach of them. Now Abraham, by putting him in mind of both these together, awakening his conscience to remind him how he had behaved toward Lazarus, when he was revelling in his *good things*, and Lazarus groaning under his *evil things*; he cannot forget that then he would not help Lazarus, and then how could he expect that Lazarus should now help him? Had Lazarus in his life-time afterward grown rich, and he poor, Lazarus would have thought it his duty to relieve him, and not to have upbraided him with his former unkindness; but in the future state of recompence and retribution, those that are now dealt with, both by God and man, better than they deserve, must expect to be rewarded *every man according to his works*.

(3.) He puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery; *But now the tables are turned*, and so they must abide for ever; *now he is*

comforted, and thou art tormented. He did not need to be told that he was *tormented*, he felt it to his cost; he knew likewise that one who lay in the bosom of Abraham, could not but be comforted there; yet Abraham puts him in mind of it, that he might, by comparing one thing with another, observe the *righteousness of God*, in recompensing tribulation to them who trouble his people, and to those who are troubled, rest, 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. Observe, [1.] Heaven is *comfort*, and hell is *torment*: heaven is *joy*, hell is *weeping and wailing*, and pain in perfection. [2.] The soul, as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment, immediately, and does not sleep, or go into purgatory. [3.] Heaven will be heaven indeed to those that go thither through many and great calamities in this world; of those that had grace, but little of the comfort of it here, (perhaps their souls refused to be comforted,) yet, when they are fallen asleep in Christ, you may truly say, "Now they are comforted: now all their tears are wiped away, and all their fears are vanished." In heaven there is everlasting consolation. And, on the other hand, hell will be hell indeed to those that go thither from the midst of the enjoyment of all the delights and pleasures of sense; to them the torture is the greater, as temporal calamities are described to be to the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. 28. 56.

(4.) He assures him that it was to no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus; for, (v. 26.) *Beside all this, worse yet, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed*, an impassable one; a great chasm, that so there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners. [1.] The kindest saint in heaven cannot make a visit to the congregation of the dead and damned, to comfort or relieve any there, who once were their friends. "They that would pass from hence to you, cannot; they cannot leave beholding the face of their Father, nor the work about his throne, to fetch water for you; that is no part of their business." [2.] The most daring sinner in hell cannot force his way out of that prison, cannot get over that great gulf. *They cannot pass to us, that would come from thence.* It was not to be expected, for the door of mercy is shut, the bridge is drawn; there is no coming out upon parole or bail, no, not for one hour. In this world, blessed be God, there is no gulf fixed between a state of nature and grace, but we may pass from one to the other, from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It is a pit in which there is no water, and out of which there is no redemption. The decree and counsel of God have fixed this gulf, which all the world cannot unfix. This abandons this miserable creature to despair; it is now too late for any change of his condition, or any the least relief: it might have been prevented in time, but it cannot now be remedied to eternity. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irreversible and unalterable sentence. A stone is rolled to the door of the pit, which cannot be rolled back.

3. The further request he had to make to his father Abraham; not for himself, his mouth is stopped, and he has not a word to say in answer to Abraham's denial of a drop of water. Damned sinners are made to know that the sentence they are under is just, and they cannot alleviate their own misery by making any objection against it. And since he cannot obtain a drop of water to cool his tongue, we may suppose he gnawed his tongue for pain, as those are said to do, on whom one of the *visals* of God's wrath is poured out, Rev. 16. 10. The shrieks and outcries which we may suppose to be now uttered

by him were hideous; but since he has an opportunity of speaking to Abraham, he will improve it for his relations whom he had left behind, since he can not improve it for his own advantage. Now as to this,

(1.) He begs that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house, upon an errand thither; (v. 27.) *I pray thee therefore, father.* Again he calls upon Abraham, and in this request he is importunate, "I pray thee. O deny me not this." When he was on earth, he might have prayed, and been heard, but now he prays in vain. "Therefore, because thou hast denied me the former request, surely thou wilt be so compassionate as not to deny this: or, Therefore, because there is a great gulf fixed, seeing there is no getting out hence when they are once here, O send to prevent their coming hither:" or, "Though there is a great gulf fixed between you and me, yet since there is no such gulf fixed between you and them, send him thither. Send him back to my father's house; he knows well enough where it is, has been there many a time, having been denied the crumbs that fell from the table. He knows I have five brethren there; if he appear to them, they will know him, and will regard what he saith, for they knew him to be an honest man; let him testify to them; let him tell them what condition I am in, and that I brought myself to it by my luxury and sensuality, and my unmercifulness to the poor; let him warn them not to tread in my steps, nor to go on in the way wherein I led them, and left them, lest they also come into this place of torment," v. 28. Some observe, that he speaks of five brethren only, whence they infer he had no children, else he would have mentioned them, and then it was an aggravation of his uncharitableness, that he had no children to provide for. Now he would have them stopped in their sinful course. He does not say, "Give me leave to go to them, that I may testify to them;" for he knew that there was a gulf fixed, and despaired of a permission so favourable to himself: his going would frighten them out of their wits; but, "Send Lazarus, whose address will be less terrible, and yet his testimony sufficient to frighten them out of their sins."

Now he desired the preventing of their ruin, partly in tenderness to them, for whom he could not but retain a natural affection; he knew their temper, their temptations, their ignorance, their infidelity, their inconsideration, and wished to prevent the destruction they were running into; but it was partly in tenderness to himself; for their coming to him, to that place of torment, would but aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to show them the way thither, as the sight of Lazarus helped to aggravate his misery. When partners in sin come to be sharers in wee, as tares bound in bundles for the fire, they will be a terror to one another.

(2.) Abraham denies him this favour too. There is no request granted in hell. Those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham, a justification of their praying to saints departed, as they are far to seek for proofs, when the practice of a damned sinner must be valued for an example, so they have little encouragement to follow the example, when all his prayers were made in vain. Abraham leaves them to the testimony of Moses and the prophets, the ordinary means of conviction and conversion; they have the written word, which they may read and hear read; "Let them attend to that sure word of prophecy, for God will not go out of the common method of his grace for them." Here is their privilege; They have Moses and the prophets, and their duty; "Let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment." By this it appears

that there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and the prophets, to convince those that will hear them impartially, that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men; for that was the thing which the rich man would have his brethren assured of, and for that they are turned over to Moses and the prophets.

(3.) He urges his request yet further; (v. 30.) "Nay, father Abraham, give me leave to press this. It is true, they have Moses and the prophets, and if they would but give a due regard to them, it would be sufficient; but they do not, they will not; yet it may be hoped, if one went to them from the dead, they would repent; that would be a more sensible conviction to them. They are used to Moses and the prophets, and therefore regard them the less; but this would be a new thing, and more startling; surely that would bring them to repent, and to change their wicked habit and course of life." Note, Foolish men are apt to think any method of conviction better than that which God has chosen and appointed.

(4.) Abraham insists upon the denial of it, with a conclusive reason; (v. 31.) "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, and will not believe the testimony nor take the warning they give, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." If they regard not the public revelation, which is confirmed by miracles, neither would they be wrought upon by a private testimony to themselves. [1.] The matter was long since settled upon trial, that God should speak by Moses and such prophets, and not by immediate messengers from heaven. Israel chose it in mount Sinai, because they could not bear the terrors of such expresses. [2.] A messenger from the dead, could say no more than what is said in the scriptures, nor say it with more authority. [3.] There would be every jot as much reason to suspect that to be a cheat and a delusion, as to suspect the scriptures to be so, and much more; and infidels in one case would certainly be so in another. [4.] The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word, would certainly triumph over those by a witness from the dead; and though a sinner might be frightened at first by such a testimony, when the fright was over, he would soon return to his hardness. [5.] The scripture is now the ordinary way of God's making known his mind to us, and it is sufficient; and it is presumption for us to prescribe any other way, nor have we any ground to expect or pray for the grace of God to work upon us in any other way abstracted from that, and when that is rejected and set aside. This that our Saviour here said, was soon after verified in the unbelieving Jews, who would not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and then would not be persuaded, though Lazarus rose from the dead; (and perhaps it was with some eye to him, that Christ named this poor man Lazarus;) nay, they consulted to put him to death, and did put him that raised him, to death, and would not be persuaded by him neither, though he also rose from the dead. When Eutychus was raised to life, the people that were present continued to hear Paul preach, but did not turn to inquire of him, Acts 20. 11. Let us not therefore desire visions and apparitions, nor seek to the dead, but to the law and to the testimony, (Isa. 1. 19, 20.) for that is the sure word of prophecy, which we may depend upon.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Some particular discourses which Christ had with his disciples, in which he teaches them to take heed of giving offence, and to forgive the injuries done them, (v. 1. 4.) encourages them to pray for the increase of their faith, (v. 5. 6.) and then teaches them humility, whatever service they had done for God, v. 7. 10. II.

His cleansing of ten lepers, and the thanks he had from one of them only, and he a Samaritan, v. 11. 19. III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of an inquiry of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should appear, v. 20. 37.

1. **THEN** said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him through whom they come! 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. 7. But which of you, having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.

We are here taught,

1. That giving of offences is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid, and carefully watch against, v. 1, 2. We can expect no other than that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but that offences will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom thou come, his doom will be heavy, (v. 2.) more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors, who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more ponderous than that of millstones.

This speaks a woe, 1. To persecutors, who offer any injury to the least of Christ's little ones, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it. 2. To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ, and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples; for they are those by whom offences come. 3. To those who, under the profession of the christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the hands and sadden the hearts of God's people: for by them the offence comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will

be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offences will come.

II. That *forgiving of offences is a great duty*, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of; (v. 3.) *Take heed to yourselves*. This may refer either to what goes before, or to what follows; *Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones*. Ministers must be very careful not to say or do any thing that may be a discouragement to weak Christians; there is need of great caution, and they ought to speak and act very considerately, for fear of this: or, "When your brother trespasses against you, does you any injury, puts any slight or affront upon you, if he be necessary to any damage done you in your property or reputation, take heed to yourselves at such a time, lest you be put into a passion; lest, when your spirits are provoked, you speak unadvisedly, and rashly vow revenge, (Prov. 24. 29.) *I will do so to him, as he has done to me*. Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you say amiss."

1. "If you are permitted to rebuke him, you are advised to do so. Smother not the resentment, but give it vent; tell him his faults, show him wherein he has not done well nor fairly by you, and, it may be, you will perceive (and you must be very willing to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not a trespass against you, or not designed, but an oversight, and then you will beg his pardon for misunderstanding him;" as Josh. 22. 30, 31.

2. "You are commanded, upon his repentance, to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to him; If he repents, forgive him; forget the injury, never think of it again, much less upbraid him with it. Though he do not repent, you must not therefore bear malice to him, or meditate revenge; but if he do not at least say that he repents, you are not bound to be so free and familiar with him as you have been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the offence of the christian community he is a member of, let him be gravely and mildly reprov'd for his sin, and, upon his repentance, received into friendship and communion again." This the apostle calls *forgiveness*, 2 Cor. 2. 7.

3. "You are to repeat this every time he repeats his trespass, v. 4. If he could be supposed to be either so negligent, or so impudent, as to trespass against thee seven times in a day, and as often professes himself sorry for his fault, and promises not again to offend in like manner, continue to forgive him." *Humanum est errare—To err is human*. Note, Christians should be of a forgiving spirit, willing to make the best of every body, and all about them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to aggravate them; and should contrive as much to show that they have forgiven an injury, as others to show that they resent it.

III. That we have all need to get our faith strengthened, because, as that grace grows, all other graces grow. The more firmly we believe the doctrine of Christ, and the more confidently we rely upon the grace of Christ, the better it will be with us every way. Now observe here,

1. The address which the disciples made to Christ, for the strengthening of their faith, v. 5. The apostles themselves, so they are here called, though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and deficiency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's grace for the improvement of it: they said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith, and perfect what is lacking in it. Let the discoveries of faith be more clear, the desires of faith more strong, the dependences of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights of faith more pleasing." Note, The increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we

should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some think that they put up this prayer to Christ, upon occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries; "Lord, increase our faith, or we shall never be able to practise such a difficult duty as this." Faith in God's pardoning mercy will enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others think that it was upon some other occasion, when the apostles were run aground in working some miracle, and were reprov'd by Christ for the weakness of their faith, as Matth. 17. 16, &c. To him that blamed them they must apply themselves for grace to mend them; to him they cry, Lord, increase our faith.

2. The assurance Christ gave them of the wonderful efficacy of true faith; (v. 6.) "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, so small as mustard-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to all other graces, as mustard to the animal spirits," and therefore used in palsies, "you might do wonders much beyond what you now do; nothing would be too hard for you, that were fit to be done for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the doctrine you preach, yea though it were the transplanting of a tree from the earth to the sea. See Matth. 17. 20. As with God nothing is impossible, so are all things possible to him that can believe."

IV. That whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all God's servants; (his apostles and ministers are in a special manner so;) and, as servants, are bound to do all we can for his honour: our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for we are not our own, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's.

2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been ploughing or feeding cattle in the field, when he comes home at night, has work to do still; he must wait at table, v. 7, 8. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been working for God, still we must be waiting on God, waiting on him continually.

3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to do that when we have done our day's work. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

4. It is fit that Christ should be served before us: Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong; first, let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall eat and drink in the comfort of that love, and in that there is a feast.

5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go on, and go through, with their work; they must gird up the loins of their mind. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have made ready wherewith he may sup, we must then

gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was *among his disciples, as one that served*, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and *to be ministered unto, but to minister*; witness his washing his disciples' feet.

6. Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him; "*Doth he thank that servant?* Doth he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means." No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favour, not because we have by our services made him a Debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a Debtor to his own honour, and that we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a *quantum meruit*—according to merit.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should *do all things that are commanded us*, and alas! in many things we come short of that, yet there is no work of *supererogation*, it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment, of *loving God with all our heart and soul*, which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are *unprofitable servants*; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into *utter darkness*, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are *unprofitable*: our *goodness extendeth not unto God*, nor if we are *righteous is he the better*, Ps. 16. 2. Job 22. 2.—35. 7. God cannot be a Gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a Debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections; it becomes us therefore to call ourselves *unprofitable servants*, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17. And Jesus answering said; Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God's displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took parti-

cular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance, in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee; he was now in the frontier country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee; he went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them, for he is *found of them that sought him not*. Observe,

1. The address of these lepers to Christ; they were ten in a company; for though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to console with one another. Now observe,

(1.) They met Christ as he entered into a certain village. They did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he entered the town, weary as he was; and yet he did not put them off, or adjourn their cause.

(2.) They stood afar off, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to keep their distance. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we, that we should draw near to him that is infinitely pure? We are impure.

2. Their request was unanimous, and very importunate; (v. 13.) They lifted up their voices, being at a distance, and cried, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*. Those that expect help from Christ, must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Saviour, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, *Have mercy on us*; and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they *fail not*. They had heard the fame of this Jesus, (though he had not been much conversant in that country,) and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

3. Christ sent them to the priest, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively that they should be cured, but bid them *go show themselves to the priests*, v. 14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case, *Go wash in Jordan*. Note, Those that expect Christ's favours, must take them in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription; "Let him either cure, or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool's errand;" but, overruled by the rest, they all *went to the priest*. While the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here a further design, which was to have the priest's judgment of, and testimony to, the perfectness of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to inquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

4. As they went, they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him, that they were clean. Observe, Then we may expect God to meet us with mercy, when we are found in the way of duty. If we do what we can, God will not be wanting to do that for us which we cannot. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; *Go show thyself to the priests*; go and open thy case to a faithful minister; and though the means will not heal thee of thyself, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means.

5. One of them, and but one, *returned, to give thanks*; (v. 15.) When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he *turned back* toward him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings; *With a loud voice he glorified God*, acknowledging it to come originally from him: and he *lifted up his voice* in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, v. 13. Those that have received mercy from God, should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. But he also made a particular address of thanks to Christ; (v. 16.) *He fell down at his feet*, put himself into the most humble, reverent posture he could, and *gave him thanks*. Note, we ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness: and we ought to be *speedy* in our returns of praise, and not to defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes the seed of Jacob, like him, to own themselves *less than the least of God's mercies*, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

6. Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself, for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, v. 16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that *glorified God*, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, *refused*, to do it. Now observe here,

(1.) The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy—that he who was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, was the only one that *returned to give glory to God*, v. 17, 18. See here, [1.] How rich Christ is in *doing good*; *Were there not ten cleansed?* Here was a cure by *wholesale*, a whole *hospital* healed with *one* word's speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing, cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though ever so many. Here are *ten* at a time cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others' sharing it. [2.] How *poor* we are in our returns; "*Where are the nine?*" Why did not they return to give thanks?" This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that *return to give thanks* in a right manner, (scarcely *one in ten*,) that render according to the benefit done unto them. [3.] How those often prove most grateful, from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion, are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral virtue, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews of whom Christ speaks, as *taking it very ill* that his kindness was so slighted. And it intimates how justly he resents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had *done so much*, and from whom he has *received so little*.

(2.) The great encouragement Christ gave him, v. 19. The rest had their *cure*, and had it not *revoked*, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude, though they had such a good example of gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium; *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. The rest were *made whole*

by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole *by his faith*, which Christ saw him differed by from the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are *then* doubled and sweetened to us, when they are *fetched* in by the prayers of faith, and *returned* by the praises of faith.

20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23. And they shall say to you, See here; or. See there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24. For as the lightning, that lighteth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32. Remember Lot's wife. 33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34. I tell you, In that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36. Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the *kingdom of God*, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be *set up*, and of which there was great expectation.

I. Here is a demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse; they asked *when*

the kingdom of God should come ; forming a notion of it as a *temporal kingdom*, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth : they were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach ; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was *at hand* ; “ Now,” say the Pharisees, “ when will that glorious view open ? When shall we see this *long-looked-for* kingdom ? ”

II. Christ’s reply to that demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterward to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it ; (v. 22.) what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a *spiritual kingdom*, and not temporal and external. They asked *when* it would come. “ You know not what you ask,” saith Christ, “ it may come, and you not be aware of it.” For it has not an *external show*, as other kingdoms have ; the advancements and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers ; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. “ No,” saith Christ, (1.) “ It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise ; it *cometh not with observation*,” *μητιι παραρρησις*—*with outward show*. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the *time* of it, to which Christ doth not give them any answer, but will have their mistakes rectified, concerning the nature of it ; “ *It is not for you to know the times* of this kingdom, those are *secret things* which belong not to you : but the great intentions of this kingdom, those are *things revealed*.” When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, *Lo here, or, Lo there*, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories, it is in every body’s mouth, he is here, or he is there ; for *where the king is, there is the court*. Christ will not come with all this talk ; it will not be set up in this or that particular place ; nor will the court of that kingdom be *here or there* ; nor will it be *here or there*, as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or further from, that kingdom. Those who confine christianity and the church to this place or that party, cry, *Lo here, or, Lo there*, than which nothing is more contrary to the designs of catholic christianity ; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church. (2.) “ It has a *spiritual influence* ; *The kingdom of God is within you*.” It is not of this world : (John 18. 36.) its glory does not strike men’s fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences ; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The *kingdom of God* will not change men’s outward condition, but their hearts and lives ; then it *comes*, when it makes those humble and serious and heavenly, that were proud and vain and carnal : when it *weans* those from the world, that were *wedded* to the world ; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is *among you* ; so some read it. “ You inquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up *in the midst of you*. The gospel is preached, it is *confirmed* by miracles, it is *embraced* by multitudes, so that it is *in your nation*, though not *in your hearts*.” Note, It is the folly of many curious inquirers concerning the times to come, that they look for that *before them*, which is already *among them*.

2. That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of *opposition and interruption*, v. 22. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work ; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise ; “ *The days will*

come, before you have finished your testimony, and done your work, *when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man*,” (one such a day as we *now* have,) “ of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and *shall not see it*. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success ; (so they had, when *thousands* were added to the church in a day ;) “ but do not think it will be always so ; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned ; so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel without fear, as you now have : people will grow cool to it, when they have enjoyed it a while, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterward as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him *as doves to their windows*.” This looks forward to his disciples in after-ages ; they must expect much disappointment ; the gospel will not be always preached with like liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under *outward restraints*. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered ; then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath-days, sacrament-days, preaching-days, praying-days ; these are *days of the Son of man*, in which we hear from him, and converse with him ; the time may come, when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them : it concerns us while they are continued, to *improve* them, and in the years of plenty to lay up in store for the years of famine. Sometimes they will be under *inward restraints*, will not have such tokens of the *presence of the Son of man* with them as they have sometimes had ; the Spirit is withdrawn from them, they *see not their signs*, the angel comes not down to stir the waters, there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great lukewarmness among the children of God ; then we would wish to see such *victorious, triumphant* days of the *Son of man* as we have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but we cannot see them. Note, We must not think that Christ’s church and cause are lost, because not always alike visible and prevailing.

3. That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in this or that particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once ; (v. 23, 24.) “ *They will say to you, See here, or, See there* ; here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the oppressing Jews ; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet. *Here in this mountain, or there at Jerusalem*, you will find the true church. *Go not after them, or follow them* ; do not heed such suggestions ; the kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to *give light to the Gentiles* ; for as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven ; so shall also the *Son of man be in his day*.” (1.) “ The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the christians from them, shall *fly like lightning* through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another ; and those that are marked for this destruction, can no more avoid it, or oppose it, than they can a *flash of lightning*.” (2.) “ The gospel that is to set up Christ’s kingdom in the world, shall *fly like lightning* through the nations ; the kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a *local* thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the whole earth ; it shall *shine* from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a *moment* ; the kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel, ere they are aware of it.” The trophies of Christ’s victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil’s

kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued by the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up Christ's kingdom, was not to make *one nation great*, but to make *all nations good*; some, at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the *nations rage*, and the *kings of the earth set themselves* with all their might against it.

4. That the Messiah must *suffer* before he must *reign*; (v. 25.) "*First he must suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation*; and if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other than to *suffer* and be *rejected* too for his sake." They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour; "No," saith Christ, "we must go by the cross to the crown. The *Son of man* must *suffer many things*; pain, and shame, and death, are those *many things*; he must be *rejected by this generation* of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles; that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power will appear to be *of God, and not of man*; for though Israel be not *gathered*, yet he will be *glorious* to the ends of the earth."

5. That the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah would introduce the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of *security*, and drowned in *sensuality*, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, v. 26, &c. Observe,

(1.) How it had been with sinners formerly, and what posture the judgments of God, which they had been fairly warned of, did at length find them in. Look as far back as the *old world*, when all flesh had *corrupted their way*, and the *earth was filled with violence*; come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were *wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*; now observe concerning both these. [1.] That they had *fair warning given* them of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a *preacher of righteousness* to the old world, so was Lot to the Sodomites! they gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off. [2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it; they were very secure, went on in their business as unconcerned as you could imagine; *they did eat, they drank*, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to *make provision for the flesh*, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and *were given in marriage*, that their families might be built up; they were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too; *they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded*. These were lawful things, but the fault was, they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were entirely set upon them, so that they had no heart at all to prepare against the threatening judgments; when they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, *fasting and praying, repenting and reforming*, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, *eating flesh, and drinking wine*, when God called to *weping and to mourning*, Isa. 22. 12, 13. [3.] That they continued in their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came; until the day that *Noah entered into the ark, and Lot went out of Sodom*, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note. The stupidity of sinners in a sinful way, though it is as strange as it is *without excuse*, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the *old way* that *wicked men have trodden*, that have gone slumbering to hell,

as if their damnation slumbered while they did. [4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the warning themselves, which they gave to others. Noah entered *into the ark*, and there he was safe, Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on *heedless and headlong* into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of them that believe. [5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. The *flood came*, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; *fire and brimstone* came, and *destroyed* all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will, in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here, is, to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

(2.) How it will be with sinners still; (v. 30.) *Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*; when Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them by the apostles after him, as they had by Noah and Lot; but it will be all *in vain*. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition of Christ and his gospel; till all the christians are withdrawn from among them, and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought that this discourse of our Saviour's, which was public, and not long after *published* to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and *remember not their latter end*, nor the account that they must give. *Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion*.

6. That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers, to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to flee at the signal given, according to the direction that should be given; let them retire, as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoar. *You would have healed Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul*, Jer. 51. 6, 9.

(1.) This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be *expedious*, and must not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs; (v. 31.) "*He that shall be on the house-top* when the alarm is given, *let him not come down to take his stuff away*; both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but encumber him, and retard his flight. Let him not regard his *stuff*, at such a time when it will be next to a miracle of mercy if he have his *life given him for a prey*. It will be better to leave his stuff behind him, than to stay to look after it, and *perish with them that believe not*. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do; *Escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this ungodly generation*."

(2.) When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning; (v. 32.) "*Remember Lot's wife*; and take warning by her not only to flee from this

Sodom, (for so Jerusalem is become, Isa. 1. 10.) but to persevere in your flight, and do not *look back*, as she did; be not loath to leave a place marked for destruction, whomever or whatever you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you." Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not *look back*, lest they should be tempted to *go back*; nay, lest that be construed a *going back in heart*, or an evidence that the heart was left behind. Lot's wife was *turned into a pillar of salt*, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates, who *begin in the spirit and end in the flesh*.

(3.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken; (v. 33.) "*Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his christianity and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them and perish in the common calamity; but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or ensure upon their securities.*" Note, Those do best for themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

7. That all good christians should certainly escape, but many of them very *narrowly*, from that destruction, v. 34—36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others that were nearest to them; *two in a bed, one taken and the other left*; one snatched out of the burning and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and *all things* seem to come *alike to all*; yet, sooner or later, it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to *take out the precious from the vile*. We are sure that *the Judge of all the earth will do right*; and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purpose to avenge the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be *taken away* by that judgment.

Lastly, That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, v. 37. *Where, Lord?* They had inquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question, "*Where, Lord?*" Where shall those be *safe*, that are *taken*? Where shall those *perish*, that are *left*?" The answer is proverbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question; *Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together*. (1.) Wherever the wicked are, who are marked for perdition, they shall be *found out* by the judgments of God; as wherever a dead carcass is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews having made themselves a dead and putrefied carcass, *odious* to God's holiness and *obnoxious* to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the eagles do upon the prey: *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies*, (Ps. 21. 8.) though they *set their nests among the stars*, Obad. 4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape. (2.) Wherever the godly are, who are marked for preservation,

they shall be *found* happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be extended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the christian church. Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or showed the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel and his ordinances and church are; *For where two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them*, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to have one particular place for its *metropolis*, such as Jerusalem was to the Jewish church, to which all Jews were to resort; but, *wherever the body is*, wherever the gospel is preached, and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith feast upon him. *Whosoever Christ records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them*, John 4. 21, &c. 1 Tim. 2. 8. Many good interpreters understand it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory; "Ask not where the carcass will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to him who is their living, quickening Head, and the Centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of the people be."

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, I. The parable of the importunate widow, designed to teach us fervency in prayer, v. 1. . . 8. II. The parable of the Pharisee and publican, designed to teach us humility, and humiliation for sin, in prayer, v. 9. . . 14. III. Christ's favour to little children that were brought to him, v. 15. . . 17. IV. The trial of a rich man that had a mind to follow Christ, whether he loved better Christ or his riches; his coming short upon that trial; and Christ's discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, v. 18. . . 30. V. Christ's foretelling of his own death and sufferings, v. 31. . . 34. VI. His restoring of sight to a blind man, v. 35. . . 43. And these four passages we had before in Matthew and Mark.

1. **A**ND he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint: 2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5. Yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it are *prefixed*. Christ spake it with this intent, to teach us that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, v. 1. It supposes that all God's people are *praying* people; all God's children keep up both a *constant* and an *occasional* correspondence with him, send to him *statedly*, and upon *every emergency*. It is our privilege and honour that we *may* pray; it is our duty, we *ought* to pray, we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant

work; we ought *always* to pray, it is that which *the duty of every day requires*; we must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving it off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. But that which seems particularly designed here, is, to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God; when we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies; we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and *not faint*, for we shall not *seek God's face in vain*; so we must likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

I. Christ shows, by a parable, the *power of importunity* among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence to do that which is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by *dint of importunity*. Observe here,

1. The bad character of the judge that was in a certain city; he *neither feared God, nor regarded man*; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the censures of men concerning him: or, he took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. It is not strange, if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator, be altogether regardless of their fellow-creatures; where *no fear of God* is, no good is to be expected. Such a prevalence of irreligion and inhumanity is bad in any, but very bad in a *judge*, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. *Wickedness in the place of judgment*, was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Eccl. 3. 16.

2. The distressed case of a poor widow that was necessitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror; she had manifestly right on her side; but, it should seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, *Avenge me of mine adversary*, that is, *Do me justice against mine adversary*; not that she desired to be revenged on him for any thing he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state, to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged, not only not to do *violence to the widow*, (Jer. 22. 3.) but to *judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow*, (Isa. 1. 17.) to be their patrons and protectors; then they are *as gods*, for God is so, Ps. 68. 5.

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause; *He would not for a while*: according to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at all the wrong her adversary did her; for she had no bribe to give him, no great man whom he stood in any awe of, to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to redress her grievances; and he himself was conscious of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself, that he *neither feared God nor regarded man*; it is sad that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The gaining of her point by continual dunning of this unjust judge; (v. 5.) "*Because this widow troubles me*, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much, lest by her clamour against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamour to me she weary me; for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last." Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, *Avenge me of mine adversary*, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

II. He applies this for the encouragement of God's praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

1. He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them; (v. 6.) *Hear what the unjust judge saith*; how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and from thence infers, *Shall not God avenge his own elect*? Observe,

(1.) What it is that they desire and expect; that God would *avenge his own elect*. Note, [1.] There are a people in the world that are God's people, his *elect*, his *own elect*, a choice people, a chosen people. And this he has an eye to in all he does for them; it is because they are his *chosen*, and in pursuance of the choice he has made of them. [2.] God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world; there are *many adversaries* that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary. [3.] That which is wanted and waited for, is God's preserving and protecting of them, and the work of his own hands in them; his securing of the interest of the church in the world, and of his grace in the heart.

(2.) What it is that is required of God's people in order to the obtaining of this; they must *cry day and night to him*; not that he needs their remonstrances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. We ought to be particular in praying against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was; *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*; like this importunate widow. Lord, mortify *this* corruption; Lord, arm me against *this* temptation. We ought to concern ourselves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set them in safety. And herein we must be very urgent, we must *cry with earnestness*; we must *cry day and night*, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must *wrestle with God*, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God's praying people are bid to *give him no rest*, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

(3.) What encouragements they may perhaps meet with in their prayers and expectations; he may *bear long with them*, and may not presently appear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is *μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς*—he *exercises patience toward* the adversaries of his people, and does not take vengeance on them; and he *exercises the patience of his people*, and does not plead for them. He *bore long with the cry of the sin of the Egyptians* that oppressed Israel, and with the *cry of the sorrows* of those that were oppressed.

(4.) What assurance they have that mercy will come at last, though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith; If this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail! For, [1.] This widow was a *stranger*, nothing related to the judge; but God's praying people are his own elect, whom he

knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for. [2.] She was but *one*, but the praying people of God are *many*, all of whom come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need, Matth. 18. 19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers. [3.] She came to a *judge* that bid her *keep her distance*; we come to a *Father* that bids us *come boldly* to him, and teaches us to cry, *Abba, Father*. [4.] She came to an *unjust judge*; we come to a *righteous Father*, (John 17. 25.) one that regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as *widows and fatherless*. [5.] She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, *Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause; and what wilt thou do to thy great name?* [6.] She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an *Advocate with the Father*, his own Son, who *ever lives to make intercession* for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven. [7.] She had no promise of speeding, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are bid to ask, and it is promised that it shall be given us. [8.] She could have access to the judge only at some certain times; but we may cry to God *day and night*, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity. [9.] Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is *his delight*, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer.

2. He intimates to them that, notwithstanding this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him; (τ. 8.) "*Nevertheless*, though such assurances are given, that God will avenge his own elect, yet, *when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*" The Son of man will come to *avenge his own elect*, to plead the cause of persecuted Christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his providence to plead the cause of his injured people in every age, and at the great day he will come finally to determine the controversies of Zion. Now, when he comes, will he find faith in the earth? The question implies a strong negation; No, he shall not; he himself foresees it. (1.) This supposes that it is *on earth* only that there is occasion for *faith*: for sinners in hell are *feeling* that which they would not believe, and saints in heaven are *enjoying* that which they did believe. (2.) It supposes that *faith* is the great thing that Jesus Christ *looks for*. He *looks down* upon the children of men, and does not ask, Is there innocency? but, *Is there faith?* He inquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures. (3.) It supposes that if there were faith, though ever so little, he would discover it, and *find it out*. The weakest believer and most obscure, his eye is upon. (4.) It is foretold that, when Christ comes to plead his people's cause, he will find but *little faith* in comparison with what one might expect. That is,

[1.] In general, he will find but *few good people*, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest; nay, he will find little *fidelity* among men; the *faithful fail*, Ps. 12. 1, 2. Even to the end of time there will still be occasion for the same complaint; the world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous.

[2.] In particular, he will find few that have *faith* concerning his coming. When he comes to *avenge his own elect*, he looks if there be any faith to *help* and to *uphold*, and wonders that there is none, Isa. 59. 16.—63. 5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will, delay his coming so long as that, *First*, Wicked people will begin to *despise* it, and to say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. 3. 4. They will challenge him to come; (Isa. 5. 10. Amos 5. 19.) and his delay will harden them in their wickedness, Matth. 24. 48. *Secondly*, Even his own people will begin to *despair* of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God's time to appear for his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Zion begins to say, *The Lord has forsaken me*. See Isa. 49. 14.—40. 27. But this is our comfort, that, when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelief of man has not made the promise of God of no effect.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: 12. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. 13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his eyes* unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14. I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told, (τ. 9.) who they were, whom it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*. They were such as had, 1. A great conceit of themselves, and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all, 2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed to God, as their plea; they *trusted in themselves as being righteous*; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand any thing from him; and, 3. They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a *parable*, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that *proudly justify themselves* and those that *humbly condemn themselves*; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

1. Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time; (τ. 10.) *Two men went up into the temple*, (for the tem-

ple stood upon a hill,) *to pray*. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the *place*, but the *medium* of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner, *in or toward* that house, it should *therefore* be rather be accepted. Christ is our Temple, and to him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. The Pharisee and the publican both went to the temple, *to pray*. Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer: nor could the publican, humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1. The Pharisee went to the temple, to pray, because it was a *public* place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that *all their works they did to be seen of men*, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to *save or gain* credit. There are many whom we see *every day* at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a *house of prayer* for all people, Isa. 56. 7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a *compliment*, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

II. Here is the Pharisee's address to God; (for a prayer I cannot call it;) he *stood and prayed thus with himself*; (v. 11, 12.) *standing by himself*, he *prayed thus*, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but *self*, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or *setting himself* with a great deal of state and formality he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is, that which shows,

1. That he *trusted to himself that he was righteous*. A great many good things he saith of himself, which we will suppose to be true—he was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an *extortioner*, not an usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him; he was not *unjust* in any of his dealings; he did no man any wrong; he could say, as Samuel, *Whose ox or whose ass have I taken?* He was *no adulterer*, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he *fasted twice in the week*, partly as an act of temperance, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday; thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all; he *gave tithes of all that he possessed*, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate: now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee: yet he was not accepted; and why was he not? (1.) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, *By the grace of God I am that I am*, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, *God, I thank thee*; which is intended but for a plausible introduc-

tion to a proud, vainglorious ostentation of himself. (2.) He makes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of, (Isa. 58. 3.) *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* (3.) He *trusted to it* as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made him his Debtor. (4.) Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith. He went *up to the temple, to pray*, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness, that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it should seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he *despised others*. (1.) He thought meanly of all mankind but himself; *I thank thee that I am not as other men are*. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as *some men* are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if *we* only were good, and all beside us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale. (2.) He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an *extortioner, unjust*, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he *say his prayers*, (and that was all that the Pharisees did,) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his *God, I thank thee*? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

III. Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of *humility and humiliation* as his was of *pride and ostentation*; and of *repentance* for sin, and *desire* toward God, as his was of *confidence in himself*, and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in *what he did*; and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was *expressive* of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent, and obedient heart. (1.) He *stood afar off*. The Pharisee *stood*, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican in a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, *kept at a distance*, and perhaps, for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned that God might justly *behold him afar off*, and send him into a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him *thus nigh*. (2.) He *would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven*, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did *lift up his heart* to God in the heavens, in *holy desires*, but, through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in *holy confidence and courage*. His iniquities are *gone over his head, as a heavy burden*, so that he is *not able to look up*, Ps. 40. 12. The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin. (3.) He *smote upon his breast*, in a holy indignation at himself for sin; "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it." The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke, 2 Sam. 24. 10. David's heart *smote him*; Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he

smites his heart with penitent remorse; *O wretched man that I am!* Ephraim is said to *smite upon his thigh*, Jer. 31. 19. Great mourners are represented *labouring upon their breasts*, Nah. 2. 7.

2. He expressed it in what he said. His prayer was short; fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose, *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* And blessed be God, that we have this prayer upon record, as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it, went to his house justified; and so shall we, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ; "*God be merciful to me a sinner*," the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for if he be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me, for I have been cruel to myself." (1.) He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God; *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee?* The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself with any thing amiss; *he is clean, he is pure from sin*; but the publican gives himself no other character than that of a sinner, a convicted criminal at God's bar. (2.) He has no dependence but upon the *mercy of God*; that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the *merit* of his fastings and tithes; but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me, nothing will save me but mercy, mercy." (3.) He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy; *O God be merciful, be propitious to me*; forgive my sins, be reconciled to me; take me into thy favour; receive me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably, he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more to the same purport; made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for; but still this was the burden of his song, *God, be merciful to me a sinner.*

IV. Here is the publican's *acceptance with God*. We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worth while to inquire how they speed. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, and by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking, whining publican. But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican *went to his house justified, rather than the other*. The Pharisee thought, if one of them two must be justified, and not the other, that certainly it must be he, rather than the publican. "No," saith Christ, "*I tell you*, I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, *I tell you*, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee." The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God! his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted, that they are an *abomination*; he is *not justified*, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins; and he whom the Pharisee would not set *with the dogs of his flock*, God sets with the children of his family.

The reason given for this is, because God's glory is to *resist the proud, and give grace to the humble*. 1. Proud men, who *exalt themselves*, are rivals with God, and therefore *they shall certainly be abased*. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof

that he is God, that he *looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low*, Job 40. 12. 2. Humble men, who *abase themselves*, are *subject to God*, and they shall be *exalted*. God has preferment in store for those that will take it as a favour, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be *exalted* into the love of God, and communion with him; shall be exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin; *He that exalteth himself, shall be abased*. See how the recompense answers the duty; *He that humbles himself, shall be exalted*. See also the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance; *out of the eater came forth meat*. See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner, or unjust; but the devil made him proud of this, to his ruin.

15. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 17. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

This passage of story we had both in Matthew and Mark; it very fitly follows here after the story of the publican, as a confirmation of the truth which was to be illustrated by that parable, that those shall be accepted with God, and honoured, who humble themselves, and for them Christ has *blessings in store*, the choicest and best of blessings. Observe here,

1. Those who are themselves blessed in Christ, should desire to have their children also blessed in him, and should hereby testify the true honour they have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the true love they have for their children, by their concern about their souls; They brought to him *infants*, very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some think. None are too little, too young, to bring to Christ, who knows how to show kindness to them that are not capable of doing service to him.

2. One gracious touch of Christ's will make our children happy; They brought *infants to him, that he might touch them*, in token of the application of his grace and Spirit to them, for that always makes way for his *blessing*, which likewise they expected; see Isa. 44. 3. *I will first pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and then my blessing upon thine offspring.*

3. It is no strange thing for those who make their application to Jesus Christ, for themselves or for their children, to meet with discouragement, even from those who should countenance and encourage them; *When the disciples saw it, they thought, if this were admitted, it would bring endless trouble upon their Master, and therefore they rebuked them, and frowned upon them*. The spouse complained of the watchmen, Cant. 3. 3.—5. 7.

4. Many whom the disciples rebuke, the Master invites; *Jesus called them unto him*, when, upon the disciples' check, they were retiring. They did not *appeal* from the disciples to the Master, but the Master took cognizance of their despised cause.

5. It is the mind of Christ, that *little children* should be brought to him, and presented as living sacrifices to his honour; "*Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not*"; let nothing be done

to hinder them, for they shall be as welcome as any. *The promise is to us, and to our seed*; and therefore he that has the dispensing of promised blessings, will bid them welcome to him with us.

6. The children of those who belong to the kingdom of God, do likewise belong to that kingdom, as the children of freemen are freemen. If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too; for if the root be holy, the branches are so.

7. So welcome are *children* to Christ, that those grown people are most welcome to him, who have in them most of the disposition of children; (v. 17.) *Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child*, that is, receive the benefits of it with humility and thankfulness, not pretending to merit them, as the Pharisee did, but gladly owning himself indebted to free grace for them, as the publican did; unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame, he shall in *no wise* enter into that kingdom. They must receive the kingdom of God as *children*, receive their estates by descent and inheritance, not by purchase, and call it their Father's gift.

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, *that is*, God. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they that heard it, said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. 28. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

In these verses, we have,

I. Christ's discourse with a ruler, that had a good mind to be directed by him in the way to heaven. In which we may observe,

1. It is a blessed sight to see persons of distinction in the world distinguish themselves from others of their rank, by their concern about their souls and another life. Luke takes notice of it, that he was a ruler; few of the rulers had any esteem for Christ, but here was one that had; whether a church or

state-ruler, does not appear, but he was one *in authority*.

2. The great thing we are every one of us concerned to inquire after, is, what we shall do, to get to heaven; *what we shall do, to inherit eternal life*. This implies such a belief of an eternal life after this, as atheists and infidels have not; such a concern to make it sure, as a careless, unthinking world have not; and such a willingness to comply with any terms that it may be made sure, as those have not, who are resolutely devoted to the world and the flesh.

3. Those who would inherit eternal life, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ as their *Master*, their *teaching Master*, so it signifies here, (*διδάσκων*;) and their *ruling Master*, and so they shall for certain find him. There is no learning the way to heaven, but in the school of Christ, by those that enter themselves into it, and continue in it.

4. Those who come to Christ as their Master, must believe him to have not only a *divine mission*, but a *divine goodness*. Christ would have this ruler know that if he understood himself aright in calling him good, he did, in effect, call him *God*; and indeed he was so; (v. 19.) "*Why callest thou me good? Thou knowest there is none good but one, that is, God; and dost thou then take me for God? If so, thou art in the right.*"

5. Our Master, Christ himself, has not altered the way to heaven from what it was before his coming, but only has made it more plain and easy, and comfortable, and provided for our relief, in case we take any false step. *Thou knowest the commandments*; Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to establish them. Wouldst thou inherit eternal life? Govern thyself by the commandments.

6. The duties of the second table must be conscientiously observed, in order to our happiness, and we must not think that any acts of devotion, how plausible soever, will atone for the neglect of them. Nor is it enough to keep ourselves free from the gross violations of these commandments, but we must *know these commandments*, as Christ has *explained them* in his sermon upon the mount, in their extent and spiritual nature, and so observe them.

7. Men think themselves *innocent*, because they are *ignorant*; so this ruler did; He said, *All these have I kept from my youth up*, v. 21. He knows no more evil of himself than the Pharisee did, v. 11. He boasts that he began *early* in a course of virtue; that he had continued in it to this day; and that he had not in any instance transgressed. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, and with the workings of his own heart; had he been but Christ's disciple a while, and learned of him, he would have said the quite contrary; "*All these have I broken from my youth up, in thought, word, and deed.*"

8. The great things by which we are to try our spiritual state, are, how we stand affected to Christ and to our brethren, to this world and to the other; by these this man was tried. For, (1.) If he have a true *affection to Christ*, he will *come and follow him*, will attend to his doctrine, and submit to his discipline, whatever it cost him. None shall inherit eternal life, who are not willing to take their lot with the Lord Jesus, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. (2.) If he have a true *affection to his brethren*, he will, as there is occasion, *distribute to the poor*, who are God's receivers of his dues out of our estates. (3.) If he think meanly of *this world*, as he ought, he will not stick at *selling what he has*, if there be a necessity for it, for the relief of God's poor. (4.) If he think highly of the other world, as he ought, he will desire no more than to have *treasure in heaven*, and will reckon that a sufficient,

abundant recompense for all that he has left or lost, or laid out for God in this world.

9. There are many that have a great deal in them that is very commendable, and yet they perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler here, he broke with Christ upon this, he liked all his terms very well, but this which would part between him and his estate; "In this, I pray thee, have me excused." If this be the bargain, it is no bargain.

10. Many that are loath to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day at last; they are very sorry that they cannot serve God and mammon both; but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their worldly gain.

11. Christ's discourse with his disciples upon this occasion: in which we may observe,

1. Riches are a great hinderance to many in the way to heaven. Christ took notice of the reluctance and regret with which the rich man broke off from him; he saw that he was very sorrowful, and was sorry for him; but from thence he infers, *How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God!* v. 24. If this ruler had had but as little of the world as Peter, and James, and John had, in all probability he would have left it, to follow Christ, as they did; but, having a great estate, it had a great influence upon him, and he chose rather to take his leave of Christ than to lay himself under an obligation to dispose of his estate in charitable uses. Christ asserts the difficulty of the salvation of rich people very emphatically; (v. 25.) *It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* It is a proverbial expression, that denotes the thing to be extremely difficult.

2. There is in the hearts of all people such a general affection to this world and the things of it, that, since Christ has required it as necessary to salvation, that we should sit loose to this world, it is really very hard for any to get to heaven. If we must sell all, or break with Christ, who then can be saved? v. 26. They do not find fault with what Christ required, as hard and unreasonable. No, it is very fit that they who expect an eternal happiness in the other world, should be willing to forego all that is dear to them in this world, in expectation of it. But they know how closely the hearts of the most of men cleave to this world, and are ready to despair of their being ever brought to this.

3. There are such difficulties in the way of our salvation as could never be got over but by pure omnipotence, by that grace of God which is almighty, and to which that is possible, which exceeds all created power and wisdom. The things which are impossible with men, (and utterly impossible it is that men should work such a change upon their own spirits as to turn them from the world to God, it is like dividing the sea, and driving Jordan back,) these things are possible with God. His grace can work upon the soul so as to alter the bent and bias of it, and give it a contrary ply; and it is he that works in us both to will and to do.

4. There is an aptness in us to speak too much of what we have left and lost, of what we have done and suffered, for Christ. This appears in Peter; (v. 28.) *Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.* When it came in his way, he could not forbear magnifying his own and his brethren's affection to Christ, in quitting all to follow him. But this we should be so far from boasting of, that we should rather acknowledge it not worth taking notice of, and be ashamed of ourselves that there have been any regret and difficulty in the doing of it, and any hankering toward those things afterward.

5. Whatever we have left, or laid out, for Christ,

it shall without fail be abundantly made up to us in this world and that to come, notwithstanding our weaknesses and infirmities; (v. 29, 30.) *No man has left the comfort of his estate or relations for the kingdom of God's sake, rather than they should hinder either his services to that kingdom, or his enjoyments of it, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, in the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, in the pleasures of communion with God and of a good conscience, advantages which, to those that know how to value and improve them, will abundantly countervail all their losses.* Yet that is not all; in the world to come they shall receive life everlasting, which is the thing that the ruler seemed to have his eye and heart upon.

31. Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Here is,

1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, and of the glorious issue of them, which he himself had a perfect sight and foreknowledge of, and thought it necessary to give them warning of, that it might be the less surprise and terror to them.

Two things here are, which we had not in the other evangelists. 1. The sufferings of Christ are here spoken of as the fulfilling of the scriptures, with which consideration Christ reconciled himself to them, and would reconcile them; *All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, especially the hardships he should undergo, shall be accomplished.* Note, The Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets, testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that shall follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11. This proves that the scriptures are the word of God, for they had their exact and full accomplishment; and that Jesus Christ was sent of God, for they had their accomplishment in him; this was he that should come, for, whatever was foretold concerning the Messiah, was verified in him; and he would submit to any thing for the fulfilling of scripture, that not one jot or tittle of that should fall to the ground. This makes the offence of the cross to cease, and puts an honour upon it. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, thus it became him. 2. The ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings, are here most insisted upon. The other evangelists had said that he should be mocked; but here it is added, *He shall be spitefully treated, ἐπιδοκίμαται—he shall be loaded with contumely and contempt, shall have all possible reproach put upon him.* This was that part of his sufferings, by which in a spiritual manner he satisfied God's justice for the injury we had done him in his honour by sin. Here is one particular instance of disgrace done him, that he was spit upon, which had been particularly foretold, Isa. 50. 6. But here, as always, when Christ spake of his sufferings and death, he foretold his resurrection as that which took off both the terror and reproach of his sufferings; *The third day he shall rise again.*

II. The confusion that the disciples were hereby put into; this was so contrary to the notions they had had of the Messiah and his kingdom, such a balk to their expectations from their Master, and such a breaking of all their measures, that *they understood none of these things*, v. 34. Their prejudices were so strong, that they *would not* understand them literally, and they *could not* understand them otherwise, so that they did not understand them at all; it was a mystery, it was a riddle to them, it must be so; but they think it impossible to be reconciled with the glory and honour of the Messiah, and the design of setting up his kingdom. This saying was *hid from them*, *κακρυμμένον ὑπ' αὐτῶν*, it was apocrypha to them, they could not receive it: for their parts, they had read the Old Testament many a time, but they could never see any thing in it that should be *accomplished* in the disgrace and death of this Messiah. They were so intent upon those prophecies that spake of his glory, that they overlooked those that spake of his *sufferings*, which the scribes and doctors of the law should have directed them to take notice of, and should have brought into their creeds and catechisms, as well as the other; but they did not suit their scheme, and therefore were laid aside. Note, *therefore* it is that people run into mistakes, because they *read their Bibles by the halves*, and are as partial in the prophets as they are in the law. They are only for the *smooth things*, Isa. 30. 10. Thus now we are too apt, in reading the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, to have our expectations raised of the glorious state of the church in the latter days. But we overlook its wilderness, sackcloth-state, and are willing to fancy that is over, and nothing is reserved for us but halcyon days; and then, when tribulation and persecution arise, we do not *understand* it, neither *know we the things that are done*; though we are told as plainly as can be, that *through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God*.

35. And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side, begging: 36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou son of David*, have mercy on me. 39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, *Thou son of David*, have mercy on me. 40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise unto God.

Christ came not only to bring *light* to a dark world, and so to set before us the *objects* we are to have in view, but also to give *sight* to blind *souls*, and by healing the *organ* to enable them to view those objects. As a token of this, he cured many of their bodily blindness; we have now an account of one to whom he *gave sight* near Jericho. Mark gives us an account of one, and names him, whom

he cured *as he went out of Jericho*, Mark 10. 46. Matthew speaks of two, whom he cured *as they departed from Jericho*, Matth. 20. 30. Luke says it was *ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτῶν*—*when he was near to Jericho*, which might be when he was going out of it, as well as when he was coming into it.

Observe,

I. This poor blind man *sat by the way-side, begging*, v. 35. It seems, he was not only *blind* but *poor*, had nothing to subsist on, nor any relations to maintain him; the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save; they are therefore *wretched* and *miserable*, for they are both *poor* and *blind*, Rev. 3. 17. He sat begging, for he was blind, and could not work for his living. Note, Those ought to be relieved by charity, whom the providence of God has any way disabled to get their own bread. Such objects of charity *by the way-side* ought not to be overlooked by us. Christ here cast a favourable eye upon a *common beggar*, and though there are cheats among such, yet they must not therefore be all thought such.

II. Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked *what it meant*, v. 36. This we had not before. It teaches us that it is good to be *inquisitive*, and that those who are so, some time or other find the benefit of it. Those who want their *sight*, should make so much the better use of their *hearing*, and when they cannot see with their own eyes, should, by *asking questions*, make use of other people's eyes. So this blind man did, and by that means came to understand that Jesus of Nazareth *passed by*, v. 37. It is good being in Christ's way; and, when we have an opportunity of applying ourselves to him, not to let it slip.

III. His prayer has in it a great deal both of faith and fervency; *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me*, v. 38. He owns Christ to be the *Son of David*, the Messiah promised; he believes him to be Jesus a Saviour, he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly begs his favour; "*Have mercy on me*, pardon my sin, pity my misery." Christ is a merciful King; those that apply themselves to him as the *Son of David*, shall find him so, and ask enough for themselves when they pray, *Have mercy on us*; for Christ's mercy includes all.

IV. Those who are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings, will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they meet with opposition and rebuke. They who went along, chid him as troublesome to the Master, noisy and impertinent, and bid him *hold his peace*; but he went on with his petition, nay, the check given him was but as a dam to a full stream, which makes it swell so much the more; he *cried the louder, Thou son of David, have mercy on me*. Those who would speed in prayer, must be importunate in prayer. This history, in the close of the chapter, speaks the same thing with the parable in the beginning of the chapter, that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*.

V. Christ encourages poor beggars, whom men frown upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to entertain them, and bid them welcome; *He commanded him to be brought to him*. Note, Christ has more tenderness and compassion for distressed supplicants than any of his followers have. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped and stood, and commanded him to be brought *to him*. Those who had checked him must now lend him their hands to lead him to Christ.

VI. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us; (v. 41.) *What wilt thou, that I shall do unto thee?* By spreading our case before God, with a particular representation of our wants and burdens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of; and it is necessary that we

should, else we are not fit to receive it. This man poured out his soul before Christ, when he said, *Lord, that I may receive my sight*. Thus particular should we be in prayer, upon particular occasions.

VII. The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encouraging promises, and grounded on them shall not be in vain; nay, it shall not only receive an *answer of peace*, but of *honour*; (v. 42.) Christ said, *Receive thy sight, thy faith has made thee whole*. True faith will produce fervency in prayer, and both together will fetch in abundance of the fruits of Christ's favour; and they are then doubly comfortable, when they come in that way, when we are *saved by faith*.

VIII. *The grace of Christ* ought to be thankfully acknowledged, to the *glory of God*, v. 43. 1. The poor beggar himself, that had his sight restored, *followed Christ, glorifying God*. Christ made it his business to glorify his Father; and those whom he healed, then *pleased him best*, when they *praised God*, as those shall *please God best*, who *praise Christ*, and do him honour; for in *confessing that he is Lord*, we give glory to God the Father. It is for the *glory of God* if we *follow Christ*, as those will do, whose *eyes are opened*. 2. *The people that saw it*, could not forbear *giving praise to God*, who had given such power to the *Son of man*, and by him had conferred such favours on the *sons of men*. Note, We must give praise to God for his mercies to others as well as for mercies to ourselves.

CHAP. XIX.

In this chapter, we have, I. The conversion of Zaccheus the publican at Jericho, v. 1. . 10. II. The parable of the pounds which the king intrusted with his servants, and of his rebellious citizens, v. 11. . 27. III. Christ's riding in triumph, (such triumph as it was,) into Jerusalem; and his lamentation in prospect of the ruin of that city, v. 28. . 44. IV. His teaching in the temple, and casting of the buyers and sellers out of it, v. 45. . 48.

1. **AND** *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. 2. And, behold, *there was* a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3. And he sought to see *Jesus* who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way. 5. And when *Jesus* came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, *Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house*. 6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7. And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, *That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner*. 8. And *Zaccheus* stood, and said unto the Lord, *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold*. 9. And *Jesus* said unto him, *This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham*. 10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of
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Christ, of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zaccheus. Christ passed through Jericho, v. 1. That city was built under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel *takes away the curse*. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not therefore a sin to live in it when it was built. Christ was now going from the other side Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus to life; when he was going to do one good work, he contrived to do many by the way. He did good both to the *souls* and to the *bodies* of people; we have here an instance of the former. Observe,

I. Who, and what, this Zaccheus was.

His name bespeaks him a Jew. *Zacchar* was a common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbin, much about this time, of that name. Observe,

1. His calling, and the post he was in; *He was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general*; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ. But here was one that was *chief* of the publicans, was in authority, that inquired after him. God has his remnant among all sorts; Christ came to save even the *chief of sinners*, and therefore even the *chief of publicans*.

2. His circumstances in the world were very considerable; *He was rich*. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was *chief of the publicans*, had raised a good estate. Christ had lately showed how *hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God*, yet presently produces an instance of one rich man that had been lost, and was found, and that not, as the prodigal, by being reduced to want.

II. How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him.

1. He had a great *curiosity to see Jesus*, what kind of a man he was, having heard great talk of him, v. 3. It is natural to us, to come in sight, if we can, of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, he would be able to say hereafter, that he had seen such and such *great men*. But the eye is *not satisfied with seeing*. We should *now seek to see Jesus* with an eye of faith, to see *who he is*; we should address ourselves in holy ordinances with this in our eye, *We would see Jesus*.

2. He could not get his curiosity gratified in this matter, because he was *little*, and the crowd was *great*. Christ did not study to *show himself*, was not carried on men's shoulders, (as the pope is in procession,) that all men might see him, neither he nor his kingdom *came with observation*; he did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but, as *one of us*, he was *lost in a crowd*; for that was the day of his humiliation. *Zaccheus* was *low of stature*, and over-topped by all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature, have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Saul, though he was *higher by head and shoulders* than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature, *take thought of adding cubits to it*.

3. Because he would not disappoint his curiosity, he *forgot his gravity*, as chief of the publicans, and *ran before*, like a boy, and *climbed up into a sycamore-tree*, to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ, will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see him. Those that find themselves *little*, must take all the advantage they can get to *raise themselves* to a sight of Christ, and not be

ashamed to own that they need them, and all little enough. Let not dwarfs despair, with good help, by aiming high to reach it.

III. The notice Christ took of him, the call he gave him to a further acquaintance, (v. 5.) and the efficacy of that call, v. 6.

1. Christ *invited himself* to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of his hearty welcome there; nay, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own *entertainment* along with him, so he brings his own *welcome*, he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. Christ *looked up* into the tree, and *saw* Zaccheus. He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. See how Christ *prevented* him with the blessings of his goodness, and *outdid* his expectations; and see how he *encouraged* very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He that had a mind to know Christ, shall be *known of him*; he that only courted to see him, shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more. And sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and their hearts changed. Christ called him *by name, Zaccheus*, for he knows his chosen *by name*; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathaniel did, (John 1. 48.) *Whence knowest thou me?* But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bid him *make haste, and come down*. Those that Christ calls, must *come down*, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any righteousness of their own: and they must *make haste*, and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration, whether he should welcome such a guest to his house. He must *come down*, for Christ intends this day to *bait at his house*, and stay an hour or two with him. *Behold, he stands at the door, and knocks*.

2. Zaccheus was *overjoyed* to have such an honour put upon his house; (v. 6.) *He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully*: and his receiving of him *into his house*, was an indication and token of his receiving of him *into his heart*. Note, When Christ *calls* to us, we must *make haste* to answer his calls; and when he *comes to us*, we must *receive him joyfully*; *Lift up your heads, O ye gates*. We may well *receive him joyfully*, who brings all good along with him, and when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there, which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, *Open to me*, when we have, with the spouse, made excuses, Cant. 5. 2, 3. Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

IV. The offence which the people took at this *kind greeting* between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-souled, censorious Jews *murmured*, saying that he was *gone to be a Guest with a man that is a sinner*, *συνεσθαι μετὰ ἁμαρτωλοῦ*—*with a sinful man*; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world, to seek and save *men* that are *sinners*? But Zaccheus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho; such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with.

Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to his house; for, 1. Though he was a publican, and many of the publicans were *bad men*, it did not therefore follow that they were *all so*; we must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by com-

mon fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is. 2. Though he *had been a sinner*, it did not therefore follow that he was now as bad as he had been; though they knew his past life to be bad, Christ might know his present frame to be good. God allows room for repentance, and so must we. 3. Though he was *now a sinner*, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in *no danger* of getting hurt by a sinner, but in *great hopes* of doing good to a sinner; whether should the physician go but to the sick? Yet see how that which is *well done*, may be *ill construed*.

V. The proofs which Zaccheus gave publicly that, though he had been a *sinner*, he was now a *penitent*, and a *true convert*, v. 8. He does not expect to be justified by his works as the Pharisee who boasted of what he had done, but by his *good works* he will, through the grace of God, evidence the *sincerity of his faith and repentance*; and here he declares what his determination was. He makes this declaration *standing*, that he might be seen and heard by those who murmured at Christ for coming to his house; *with the mouth confession is made of repentance* as well as faith. He *stood*, which denotes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people, (they were not to be his judges,) but to the Lord, and he *stands* as it were at his bar. What we do that is good we must do *as unto him*; we must appeal to him, and approve ourselves to him, in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. He makes it appear that there is a change in *his heart*, (and that is repentance,) for there is a change in his way.

His resolutions are of second-table duties; for Christ, upon all occasions, laid great stress on them. and they are such as are suited to his condition and character; for in them will best appear the truth of our repentance.

1. Zaccheus had a good estate, and, whereas he had been in it hitherto laying up treasure for himself, and doing hurt to himself, now he resolves that for the future he will be all toward God, and do good to others with it; *Behold, Lord, the half of my goods, I give to the poor*. Not, "I will give it by my will when I die," but, "I do give it now." Probably, he had heard of the command of trial which Christ gave to another rich man, to sell what he had, and give to the poor, (Matth. 19. 21.) and how he broke with Christ upon it. "But so will not I," saith Zaccheus, "I agree to it at the first word; though hitherto I have been uncharitable to the poor, now I will relieve them, and give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long; even the *half of my goods*." This is a very large proportion to be set apart for works of piety and charity. The Jews used to say that a fifth part of a man's income yearly was very fair to be given to pious uses, and about that share the law directed; but Zaccheus would go much further, and give one moiety to the poor; which would oblige him to retrench all his extravagant expenses, as his retrenching of those would enable him to relieve many with his superfluities. If we were but more temperate and self-denying, we should be more charitable; and were we content with less ourselves, we should have the more to give to them that need. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. Note, It well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

2. Zaccheus was conscious to himself that he had not gotten all he had honestly and fairly, but some by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promises to make restitution; "If I have taken any thing from any man by *false accusation*, or if I have wronged any man in the way of my business as a *publican*, exacting more than was appointed, I promise to restore him *four*

fold." This was the restitution that a thief was to make, Exod. 22. 1. (1.) He seems plainly to own that he had *done wrong*; his office as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, imposing upon the merchants, to curry favour with the government. True penitents will own themselves not only in general guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them. (2.) That he had done wrong by *false accusation*; this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, Luke 3. 14. They had the ear of the government and every thing would be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill-will. (3.) He promises to restore *four-fold*, as far as he could recollect or find by his books that he had *wronged any man*. He does not say, "If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution;" (some are *honest* when they cannot help it;) but he will do it *voluntarily*. It shall be *my own act and deed*. Note, Those who are convinced of having done wrong, cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by *making restitution*. Observe, He does not think that his giving of half his estate to the poor, will atone for the wrong he has done; God *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*, and we must first *do justly* and then *love mercy*. It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which is *none of our own*; and we are not to reckon that our own which we have not come honestly by, nor that our own which is not so, when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done.

VI. Christ's *approbation* and *acceptance* of Zaccheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a Guest with him, *7. 9, 10.*

1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a *hasty man*; now he is turned from sin to God, now he has bid Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest charitable good man; *This day is salvation come to this house*. Now that he is *converted*, he is, in effect, *saved*, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his; Christ is come to *his house*, and where Christ comes, he brings salvation along with him; he is, and will be, the *Author of eternal salvation* to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation this day comes to *his house*. (1.) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be, more than he had been, a *blessing to his house*. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a *son of Abraham* indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to *keep the way of the Lord*. He *that is greedy of gain, troubles his own house*, and brings a curse upon it; (Hab. 2. 9.) but he that is charitable to the poor, does a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least, Ps. 112. 3. (2.) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself, his *family* also become related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so *salvation comes to his house*, for that he is a *son of Abraham*, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that *blessing of Abraham*, which comes upon the publicans, *upon the Gentiles*, through faith, that God will be a God to *them and to their children*; and therefore, when he believes, *salvation comes* to his house, as to the gaoler's, to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou shalt be saved, and thine house*, Acts 16. 31. Zaccheus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen; they are put upon a level, Math. 18. 17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ

should be so; but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become *rectus in curia*—*upright in court*, as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been a publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man, was consentant to the great design and intention of his coming into the world; (*7. 10.*) with the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Math. 9. 13. There he pleaded, that he came to *call sinners to repentance*; now that he came to *seek and save that which was lost*; *το ἀπολαύειν*—*the lost thing*. Observe, (1.) *The deplorable case of the sons of men*; they were *lost*; but here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as *one body*. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a *lost world*; lost, as a city is lost when it is revolted to the rebels; as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness; as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable; or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him. (2.) *The gracious design of the Son of God*; he came to *seek and save*, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth, (a long journey!) to *seek* that which was *lost*, (which had wandered and gone astray,) and to bring it back; (Math. 18. 11, 12.) and to *save* that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up for *lost*; undertook to bring those to themselves, that were *lost* to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ *came* into this lost world, to seek and save it. His design was to *save*, when *there was no salvation in any other*. In prosecution of that design, he *sought*, took all probable means, to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him, as Zaccheus here.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20. And another came, saying, Lord behold *here is thy pound,*

which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27. But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

Our Lord Jesus is now upon his way to Jerusalem, to his last passover, when he was to suffer and die; now here we are told,

I. How the expectations of his friends were raised upon this occasion; *They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear*, v. 11. The Pharisees expected it about this time, (ch. 17. 20.) and, it seems, so did Christ's own disciples; but they both had a mistaken notion of it. The Pharisees thought that it must be introduced by some other temporal prince or potentate. The disciples thought that their Master should introduce it, but with temporal pomp and power, which, with the power he had to work miracles, they knew he could clothe himself with in a short time, whenever he pleased. Jerusalem, they concluded, must be the seat of his kingdom, and therefore now that he is going directly thither, they doubt not but in a little time to see him upon the throne there. Note, Even good men are subject to mistakes concerning the kingdom of Christ, and to form wrong notions of it, and are ready to think that should *immediately appear*, which is reserved for hereafter.

II. How their expectations were checked, and the mistakes rectified upon which they were founded; and this he does in three things.

1. They expected that he should appear in his glory now *presently*, but he tells them that he must not be publicly installed in his kingdom of a great while yet. He is like a certain nobleman, *ὁριστὸς τις ἰσχυρὸς*—*a certain man of high birth*, (so Dr. Hammond,) for he is the Lord from heaven, and is entitled by birth to the kingdom; but he *goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom*. Christ must go to heaven, to sit down at the right hand of the Father there, and to receive from him *honour and glory*, before the Spirit was poured out, by which his kingdom was to be set up on earth, and before a church was to be set up for him in the Gentile world. He must receive the kingdom, and then *return*. Christ returned when the Spirit was poured out; when Jerusalem was destroyed, by which time that generation, both of friends and enemies, which he had personally conversed with, was wholly worn off by death, and gone to give up their

account. But his chief return here meant, is, that at the great day, which we are yet in expectation of. That which they thought should *immediately appear*, Christ tells them will not appear, till this same Jesus, which is taken into heaven, shall in *like manner come again*; see Acts 1. 11.

2. They expected that his apostles and immediate attendants should be advanced to dignity and honour; that they should all be made princes and peers, privy-counsellors and judges, and have all the pomp and preferments of the court, and of the town; but Christ here tells them, that, instead of that, he designed them to be *men of business*, they must expect no other preferment in this world than that of the trading end of the town; he would set them up with a stock under their hands, that they might employ it themselves, in serving him and the interest of his kingdom among men. That is the true honour of a christian and a minister, which if we be as we ought to be truly ambitious of, we shall be able to look upon all temporal honours with a holy contempt. The apostles had dreamed of *sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom*, enjoying ease after their present toil, and honour after the present contempt put upon them, and were pleasing themselves with this dream; but Christ tells them that which, if they understood it aright, would fill them with care, and concern, and serious thoughts, instead of those *aspiring* ones which they filled their heads with.

(1.) They have a *great work* to do now; their Master leaves them to receive his kingdom, and, at parting, he gives each of them a *pound*, which, the margin of our common Bibles tells us, amounts in our money to *three pounds and half a crown*; this signifies the same thing with the talents in the parable that is parallel to this, (Matth. 25.) all the gifts with which Christ's apostles were endued, and the advantages and capacities which they had, of serving the interest of Christ in the world, and others, both ministers and christians, like them in a lower degree. But perhaps it is in the parable thus represented, to make them the more humble; their honour in this world is only that of *traders*, and that not of first-rate merchants, who have vast stocks to begin upon, but that of poor traders, who must take a great deal of care and pains to make any thing of what they have.

He gave these pounds to his servants, not to buy rich liveries, much less robes, and a splendid equipage, for themselves to appear in as they expected, but with this charge, *Occupy till I come*. Or, (as it might much better be translated,) *Trade till I come*. Πραγματεύεσθε—*Be busy*. So the word properly signifies; "You are sent forth to preach the gospel, to set up a church for Christ in the world, to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, and to build them up in it; *Ye shall receive power to do this*, for ye shall be filled with the *Holy Ghost*," Acts 1. 8. When Christ *breathed on* the eleven disciples, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, then he delivered them *ten pounds*. "Now," saith he, "mind your business, and make a business of it; set about it in good earnest, and stick to it; lay on yourselves to do all the good you can to the souls of men, and to gather them in to Christ." Note, [1.] All christians have *business* to do for Christ in this world, and ministers especially; the one was not *baptized*, nor the other *ordained*, to be *idle*. [2.] Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnishes with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, from these to whom he gives power he expects service. He delivers the *pounds* with this charge, *Go work, go trade*. *The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal*, 1 Cor. 12. 7. And as every one has received the gifts, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. 4

10. [3.] We must continue to mind our business *till our Master comes*, whatever difficulties or oppositions we may meet with in it; those only that *endure to the end*, shall be saved.

(2.) They have a *great account* to make shortly. These servants are *called to him*, to show what use they made of the gifts they were dignified with, what service they had done to Christ, and what good to the souls of men, that *he might know what every man had gained by trading*. Note, [1.] They that trade diligently and faithfully in the service of Christ, shall be *gainers*; we cannot say so of the business of the world, many a labouring tradesman has been a loser, but those that trade for Christ, shall be *gainers*; though *Israel be not gathered*, yet they *will be glorious*. [2.] The conversion of souls is the *winning* of them; every true convert is clear gain to Jesus Christ. Ministers are but factors for him, and to him they must give account what fish they have inclosed in the gospel-net; what guests they have prevailed with, to come to the wedding-supper; that is, what they have *gained by trading*. Now in the account given up, observe,

First, The *good account* which was given by some of the servants, and the master's approbation of them. Two such are instanced, v. 16, 19.

1. They had both made considerable improvements, but not both *alike*; one had gained *ten pounds* by his trading, and another *five*. Those that are diligent and faithful in serving Christ, are commonly blessed in being made blessings to the places where they live. They shall see the *travail of their soul*, and not *labour in vain*. And yet, all that are *alike faithful*, are not *alike successful*. And perhaps though they were both faithful, it is intimated that one of them took more pains, and applied himself more closely to his business, than the other, and sped accordingly. Blessed Paul was surely this servant that gained *ten pounds*, double to what any of the rest did, for he *laboured more abundantly than they all*, and *fully preached the gospel of Christ*.

2. They both acknowledged their obligations to their Master, for intrusting them with these abilities and opportunities to do him service; Lord, it is not *my industry*, but *thy pound*, that has gained *ten pounds*. Note, God must have all the glory of all our gains; *not unto us*, but unto him, must be the praises, Ps. 115. 1. Paul, who gained the *ten pounds*, acknowledges, "*I laboured, yet not I. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and do what I do; and his grace was not in vain*," 1 Cor. 15. 10. He will not speak of what he had done, but of what *God had done by him*, Rom. 15. 18.

3. They were both commended for their fidelity and industry; *Well done, thou good servant*, v. 17. And to the other he said likewise, v. 19. Note, They who do that which is good, shall have *praise of the same*. Do well, and Christ will say to thee, *Well done*; and if he saith *Well done*, the matter is not great who saith otherwise. See Gen. 4. 7.

4. They were *preferred* in proportion to the improvement they had made; "*Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, and didst not say, 'As good sit still as go to trade with one pound, what can one do with so small a stock?' but didst humbly and honestly apply thyself to the improvement of that, have thou authority over ten cities*." Note, Those are in a fair way to rise, who are content to begin low. *He that has used the office of a deacon well, purchaseth to himself a good degree*, 1 Tim. 3. 13. Two things are hereby promised the apostles; (1.) That, when they have taken pains to *plant* many churches, they shall have the satisfaction and honour of presiding in them, and governing among them; they shall have great respect paid them, and have a great interest in the love and esteem of good christians. *He that keepeth the fig-tree, shall eat the fruit thereof*;

and he that *laboureth in the word and doctrine*, shall be counted worthy of double honour. (2.) That, when they have served their generation according to the will of Christ, though they pass through this world despised and trampled upon, and perhaps pass out of it under disgrace and persecution, as the apostles did, yet in the other world they shall reign as kings with Christ, shall sit with him on his throne, shall have *power over the nations*, Rev. 2. 26. The happiness of heaven will be a much greater advancement to a good minister or christian, than it would be to a poor tradesman, that with much ado had cleared ten pounds, to be made governor of ten cities. He that had gained but *five pounds*, had dominion over *five cities*. This intimates that there are *degrees of glory* in heaven; every vessel will be *alike full*, but not *alike large*. And the degrees of glory there, will be according to the degrees of usefulness here.

Secondly, The *bad account* that was given by one of them, and the sentence passed upon him, for his slothfulness and unfaithfulness, v. 20, &c.

1. He owned that he had not *traded* with the pound with which he had been intrusted; (v. 20.) "*Lord, behold, here is thy pound*; it is true, I have not made it *more*, but withal I have not made it *less*; I have kept it safe *laid up in a napkin*." This represents the carelessness of those who have gifts, but never lay out themselves to do good with them; it is all one to them, whether the interests of Christ's kingdom sink or swim, go backward or forward; for their parts, they will take no care about it, no pains, be at no expenses, run no hazard; those are the servants that lay up their pound *in a napkin*; who think it is enough to say that they have done no hurt in the world, but *did no good*.

2. He justified himself in his omission, with a plea that made the matter worse and not better; (v. 21.) *I feared thee, because thou art an austere man*, rigid and severe, *ἀστυς καὶ σκληρός*. *Austere* is the Greek word itself; a sharp man; *Thou takest up that thou laidst not down*. He thought that his master put a hardship upon his servants, when he required and expected the improvement of their pounds, and that it was *reaping where he did not sow*, whereas really it was reaping where he had sown, and, as the husbandman, expects in proportion to what he had sown. He had no reason to *fear* his master's austerity, nor blame his expectations, but this was a mere sham; a frivolous, groundless excuse for his idleness, which there was no manner of colour for. Note, The pleas of slothful professors, when they come to be examined, will be found more to their *shame* than in their *justification*.

3. His excuse is turned upon him; (v. 22.) *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant*. He will be condemned by his crime, but *self-condemned* by his plea. "If thou didst look upon it as hard, that I should expect the profits of thy trading, which would have been the greater profit; yet, if thou hadst any regard to my interest, thou mightest have put it into the bank, into some of the funds, that I might have had, not only *mine own*, but mine own *with usury*, which, though a *less* advantage, would have been *some*." If he durst not *trade*, for fear of *losing* the principal, and so being made accountable to his lord for it, though it was lost, which he pretends, yet that would be no excuse for his not setting it out to interest, where it would be sure. Note, Whatever may be the pretences of slothful professors, in excuse for their slothfulness, the true reason of it is a reigning indifference to the interests of Christ and his kingdom, and their coldness therein. They care not whether religion gets ground or loses ground, so they can but live at ease.

4. His pound is taken from him, v. 24. It is fit

that those should *lose* their gifts, who will not *use* their gifts; and that those who have dealt falsely should be no longer trusted. Those who will not serve their Master with what he bestows upon them, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? *Take from him the pound.*

5. It is given to him that had got the *ten pounds*. When this was objected against by the standers-by, because he had so much already, (*Lord, he has ten pounds*, v. 25.) it is answered, (v. 26.) *Unto every one that hath shall be given.* It is the rule of justice, (1.) That those should be most encouraged, who have been most industrious, and that those who have laid out themselves most to do good, should have their opportunities of doing good *enlarged*, and be put into a higher and more extensive sphere of usefulness. To him that hath gotten shall more be given, that he may be in a capacity to get more. (2.) That those who have their gifts, as if they had them not, who have them to no purpose, who do no good with them, should be deprived of them. Those who endeavour to increase the grace they have, God will increase it; those who neglect it, and suffer it to decline, can expect no other than that God should do so too. This needful warning Christ gives to his disciples, lest, while they were gazing for honours on earth, they should neglect their business, and so come short of their happiness in heaven.

3. Another thing they expected was, that, when the kingdom of God should appear, the body of the Jewish nation should immediately fall in with it, and submit to it, and all their aversions to Christ and his gospel should immediately vanish; but Christ tells them that, after his departure, the generality of them: would persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, and it would be their ruin. This is showed here,

(1.) In the message which his citizens sent after him, v. 14. They not only opposed him, while he was in obscurity, but, when he was gone into glory, to be invested in his kingdom, then they continued their enmity to him, protested against his dominion, and said, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* [1.] This was fulfilled in the prevailing infidelity of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom; they would not submit their necks to his yoke, nor touch the top of his golden sceptre. They said, *Let us break his bands in sunder*, Ps. 2. 1—3. Acts 4. 26. [2.] It speaks the language of all unbelievers; they could be content that Christ should *save* them, but they will not have him to *reign over* them; whereas Christ is a Saviour to those only to whom he is a Prince, and who are willing to obey him.

(2.) In the sentence passed upon them at his return; (v. 27.) *Those mine enemies bring hither.* When his faithful subjects are preferred and rewarded, then he will take vengeance on his enemies; and particularly on the Jewish nation, the doom of which is here read. When Christ had set up his gospel-kingdom, and thereby put reputation upon the gospel ministry, then he comes to *reckon with* the Jews; then it is remembered against them, that they had particularly disclaimed and protested against his kingly office, when they said, *We have no king but Cæsar*, nor would own him for their King; they appealed to Cæsar, and to Cæsar they shall go; Cæsar shall be their ruin. Then the *kingdom of God appeared*, when vengeance was taken on those irreconcilable enemies to Christ and his government; they were *brought forth*, and *slain before him*. Never was so much slaughter made in any war as in the wars of the Jews. That nation lived to see christianity victorious in the Gentile world, in spite of their enmity and opposition to it, and then it was *taken away as dross*. The wrath

of Christ came upon them to the uttermost, (1 Thess. 2. 15, 16.) and their destruction redounded very much to the honour of Christ and the peace of the church. But this is applicable to all others who *persist* in their infidelity, and will undoubtedly *perish* in it. Note, [1.] Utter ruin will certainly be the portion of all Christ's enemies; in the day of vengeance they shall all be brought *forth*, and *slain before him*. *Bring them hither*, to be made a spectacle to saints and angels; see Josh. 10. 22, 24. *Bring them hither*, that they may see the glory and happiness of Christ and his followers, whom they hated and persecuted. *Bring them hither*, to have their frivolous pleas overruled, and to receive sentence according to their merits. *Bring them*, and *slay them before me*, as Agag before Samuel. The Saviour whom they have slighted, will stand by, and see them slain, and not interpose on their behalf. [2.] Those that *will not have Christ to reign over them*, shall be reputed and dealt with as his enemies. We are ready to think that none are Christ's enemies but persecutors of christianity, or scoffers at least; but you see that those will be accounted so, that dislike the terms of salvation, will not submit to Christ's yoke, but will be their own masters. Note, Whoever will not be *ruled* by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ.

28. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount of Olives*, he sent two of his disciples, 30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*. 31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? Thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

We have here the same account of Christ's riding in some sort of triumph, (such as it was,) into Jeru

sedem, which we had before in Matthew and Mark ; let us therefore here only observe,

I. Jesus Christ was forward and willing to suffer and die for us. He went forward, *bound in the Spirit, to Jerusalem*, knowing very well the things that should befall him there, and yet he went before, *ascending up to Jerusalem*, v. 28. He was the foremost of the company, as if he longed to be upon the spot, longed to engage, to take the field, and to enter upon action. Was he so forward to suffer and die for us, and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him ?

II. It was no ways inconsistent, either with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a *public entry* into Jerusalem a little before he died. Thus he made himself to be the more taken notice of, that the ignominy of his death might appear the greater.

III. Christ is entitled to a dominion over all the creatures, and may use them when and as he pleases. No man has a property in his estate against Christ, but that *his* title is prior and superior. Christ sent to fetch an *ass* and her *colt* from their *owner's* and *master's* crib, when he had occasion for their service, and might do so, for all the *beasts of the forest* are *his*, and the tame beasts too.

IV. Christ has all men's hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to their taking them away, as soon as they were told that the Lord had occasion for them.

V. Those that go on Christ's errands, are sure to speed ; (v. 32.) *They that were sent, found what he told them they should find*, and the owners willing to part with them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers that what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it, they shall bring it.

VI. The disciples of Christ, who fetch that for him from others, which he has occasion for, and which they have not, should not think that enough, but, whatever they have themselves, wherewith he may be served and honoured, they should be ready to serve him with it. Many can be willing to attend Christ at other people's expense, who care not at being at any charge upon him themselves ; but those disciples not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but *cast their own garments upon the colt*, and were willing that those should be used for his trappings.

VII. Christ's triumphs are the matter of the disciples' praises. When Christ came nigh to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the *whole multitude of the disciples*, not to the twelve only, but abundance more, that were disciples at large, *to rejoice and praise God* ; (v. 37.) and their *spreading of their clothes in the way*, (v. 36.) was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. Observe, 1. What was the matter or occasion of their joy and praise. They praised God *for all the mighty works they had seen*, all the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the *raising of Lazarus*, which is particularly mentioned, John 12. 17, 18. That brought others to mind, for fresh miracles and mercies should revive the remembrance of the former. 2. How they expressed their joy and praise ; (v. 38.) *Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord* ; Christ is the King, he comes in the name of the Lord, clothed with a divine authority, commissioned from heaven to give laws, and treat of peace ; *blessed be he*. Let us praise him, let God prosper him. He is blessed for ever, and we will speak well of him. *Peace in heaven*. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be *glory in the highest*. It will redound to the glory of the most high God ; and the angels, the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, will give him the glory of it. Compare this song of the saints on earth with that of the

angels, (ch. 2. 14.) they both agree to give glory to God in the highest, there the praises of both centre ; the angels say, *On earth peace*, rejoicing in the benefit which men on earth have by Christ ; the saints say, *Peace in heaven*, rejoicing in the benefit which the angels have by Christ ; such is the communion we have with the holy angels, that, as they rejoice in the *peace on earth*, so we rejoice in the *peace in heaven*, the *peace God makes in his high places*, (Job 25. 2.) and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

VIII. Christ's triumphs, and his disciples' joyful praises of them, are the vexation of proud Pharisees, that are enemies to him and his kingdom. There were some Pharisees among the multitude, who were so far from joining with them, that they were enraged at them, and Christ being a famous Example of humility, they thought that he would not admit such acclamations as these, and therefore expected that he should *rebuke his disciples*, v. 39. But it is the honour of Christ, that, as he despises the corrupt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble.

IX. Whether men praise Christ or no, he will, and shall, and must, be praised ; (v. 40.) *If these should hold their peace, and not speak the praises of the Messiah's kingdom, the stones would immediately cry out*, rather than that Christ should not be praised ; which was, in effect, literally fulfilled, when, upon men's reviling Christ upon the cross, instead of praising him, and his own disciples' sinking into a profound silence, the *earth did quake, and the rocks rent*. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot gain their point ; for as God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, so he can out of the mouths of those children perfect praise.

41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. 45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought ; 46. Saying unto them. It is written, My house is the house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him ; 48. And could not find what they might do : for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

The great Ambassador from heaven is here making his public entry into Jerusalem, not to be *respected* there, but to be *rejected* ; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into ; and yet see here two instances of his love to that place, and his concern for it.

1. The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city ; (v. 41.) *When he was come near, he be-*

held the city, and wept over it. Probably, it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the *mount of Olives*, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here, 1. What a tender spirit Christ was of; we never read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were *men of war*. There are cases in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men, to melt into tears. 2. That Jesus Christ *wept* in the midst of his triumphs, *wept* when all about him were *rejoicing*, to show how little he was elevated with the applause and acclamation of the people. Thus he would teach us to *rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not*. If Providence do not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sully it with our sorrows. 3. That he *wept over Jerusalem*. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ weep at the sight of Jerusalem? Was it because "Yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified?" No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears.

(1.) Jerusalem has not improved the day of her opportunities. He wept, and said, *If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day*, if thou wouldst but yet know, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldst at length bethink thyself, and understand the things that *belong to thy peace*, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare—but thou *dost not know the day of thy visitation*, v. 44. The manner of speaking is abrupt; *If thou hadst known*. O that thou hadst, so some take it; like that O that my people had hearkened unto me, Ps. 81. 13. Isa. 48. 18. Or, *If thou hadst known*, well; like that of the fig-tree, ch. 13. 9. How happy had it been for thee! Or, "If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee, but should have rejoiced rather." What he saith lays all the blame of Jerusalem's impending ruin upon herself. Note, [1.] There are things which *belong to our peace*, which we are all concerned to *know and understand*; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace, are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application. [2.] There is a *time of visitation*, when those things which *belong to our peace*, may be *known by us*, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, as powerfully preached to us, when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened, then is the *time of visitation*, which we are concerned to improve. [3.] Those that have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last, in this their day, their eyes be opened, and they bethink themselves, all will be well yet. Those shall not be refused, that come into the vineyard at the *eleventh hour*. [4.] It is the amazing folly of multitudes that enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they do not improve the day of their opportunities. The things of their peace are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they *hide their eyes* from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the *accepted time* and the *day of salvation*, and so let it slip and perish through mere carelessness. None are so *blind* as those that will not *see*; nor have any the

things of their peace more certainly hid from their eyes, than those that turn their back upon them. [5.] The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel-grace, are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, and run headlong upon their own ruin; he had rather that they would *turn and live* than *go on and die*, for he is not willing that any should perish.

(2.) Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. The things of her peace are now in a manner hid from her eyes; they will be shortly. Not but that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles; all the house of Israel were called to *know assuredly* that Christ was their *Peace*, (Acts 2. 36.) and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation and the leading part of it, it was sealed up under unbelief, God had *given them the spirit of slumber*, Rom. 11. 8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, that nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them; and it could not be expected that such a miracle should be wrought, and so they were justly given up to *judicial blindness and hardness*. The *peaceful things* are not *hid from the eyes* of particular persons; but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews as *such*, becoming a christian nation, by embracing Christ.

And therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretells, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation often brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than forty years after this; when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled. [1.] The Romans besieged the city, *cast a trench about it, compassed it round, and kept their inhabitants in on every side*. Josephus relates, that Titus ran up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping. [2.] They *laid it even with the ground*. Titus commanded his soldiers to *dig up the city*, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers; see Josephus's history of the wars of the Jews, lib. 5. chap. 27. lib. 7. chap. 1. Not only the city, but the citizens, were laid even with the ground, (*thy children within thee*), by the cruel slaughters that were made of them; and there was scarcely one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying of Christ, this was because they *knew not the day of their visitation*. Let other cities and nations take warning.

II. The zeal he showed for the present purifying of the temple. Though it must be destroyed ere long, it does not therefore follow, that no care must be taken of it in the mean time.

1. Christ cleared it of those who profaned it. He went straight to the temple, and *began to cast out the buyers and sellers*, v. 45. Hereby (though he was represented as an Enemy to the temple, and that was the crime laid to his charge before the High Priest) he made it to appear that he had a truer love for the temple than they had who had such a veneration for its corban, its treasury, as a sacred thing; for its purity was more its glory than its wealth was. Christ gave a reason for his dislodging of the temple-merchants, v. 46. The temple is a *house of prayer* set apart for communion with God: the *buyers and sellers* made it a *den of thieves* by the fraudulent bargains they made there; which was by no means to be suffered, for it would be a distraction to those who came there to pray.

2. He put it to the best use that ever it was put to, for he *taught daily in the temple*, v. 47. Note, It is not enough that the corruption of a church be purged out, but the preaching of the gospel must be

encouraged. Now, when Christ preached in the temple, observe here,

(1.) How spiteful the church-rulers were against him; how industrious to seek an *opportunity, or pretence* rather, to do him a mischief; (v. 47.) *The chief priests and scribes, and the chief of the people, the great sanhedrim, that should have attended him, and summoned the people too to attend him, they sought to destroy him, and put him to death.*

(2.) How respectful the common people were to him; They were *very attentive to hear him*; he spent most of his time in the country, and did not then preach in the temple, but, when he did, the people paid him great respect, attended on his preaching with diligence, and let no opportunity slip of hearing him; attended to it with care, and would not lose a word. Some read it, *All the people, as they heard him, took his part*; and so it comes in very properly, as a reason why his enemies could not find what they might do against him; they saw the people ready to fly in their faces if they offered him any violence. Till his hour was come, his interest in the common people protected him: but when his hour was come, the chief priests' influence upon the common people delivered him up.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's answer to the chief priests' question concerning his authority, v. 1. . 8. II. The parable of the vineyard let out to the unjust and rebellious husbandmen, v. 9. . 19. III. Christ's answer to the question proposed to him concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar, v. 20. . 26. IV. His vindication of that great fundamental doctrine of the Jewish and Christian institutes, the resurrection of the dead and the future state, from the foolish cavils of the Sadducees, v. 27. . 38. V. His puzzling of the scribes with a question concerning the Messiah's being the son of David, v. 38. . 44. VI. The caution he gave his disciples, to take heed of the scribes, v. 45. . 47. All which passages we had before in Matthew and Mark, and therefore need not enlarge upon them here, unless on those particulars which we had not there.

1. **AND** it came to pass, *that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders,* 2. And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, By what authority doest thou these things? Or who is he that gave thee this authority? 3. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 4. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 5. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 6. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 7. And they answered, That they could not tell whence it was. 8. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

In this passage of story nothing is added here to what we had in the other evangelists; but only in the first verse, where we are told,

1. That he was now *teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel.* Note, Christ was a Preacher of his own gospel. He not only purchased the salvation for us, but published it to us, which is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and gives abundant encouragement to us to receive it, for it is a sign that the heart of Christ was much upon it, to have it received. This likewise

puts an honour upon the preachers of the gospel, and upon their office and work, how much soever they are despised by a vain world. It puts an honour upon the *popular preachers* of the gospel; Christ condescended to the capacities of the *people* in preaching the gospel, and taught them. And observe, when he was *preaching the gospel to the people*, he had this interruption given him. Note, Satan and his agents do all they can to hinder the *preaching the gospel to the people*, for nothing weakens the interest of Satan's kin, do more.

II. That his enemies are here *said to come upon him*—*v. 17, 20*, that word is used only here, and it intimates, 1. That they thought to surprise him with this question; they *came upon him* suddenly, hoping to catch him unprovided with an answer, as if this were not a thing he had himself thought of. 2. That they thought to frighten him with this question. They *came upon him* in a body, with violence. But how could he be terrified with the *wrath of men*, when it was in his *own power to restrain it*, and make it turn to his praise? From this story itself we may learn,

(1.) That it is not to be thought strange, if even that which is evident to a demonstration, be disputed, and called into question, as a doubtful thing, by those that shall shut their eyes against the light. Christ's miracles plainly showed *by what authority he did these things*, and sealed his commission; and yet this is that which is here *arraigned*.

(2.) Those that question Christ's authority, if they be but catechised themselves in the plainest and most evident principles of religion, will have their folly made manifest unto all men. Christ answered these priests and scribes with a question concerning the baptism of John, a plain question, which the meanest of the common people could answer? *Was it from heaven or of men?* They all knew it was *from heaven*, there was nothing in it that had an earthly relish or tendency, but it was all heavenly and divine. And this question gravelled them, and run them aground, and served to shame them before the people.

(3.) It is not strange if those that are governed by reputation and secular interest, imprison the plainest truths, and smother and stifle the strongest convictions, as these priests and scribes did, who, to save their credit, would not own that John's baptism was *from heaven*, and had no other reason why they did not say it was *of men* but because they *feared the people*. What good can be expected from men of such a spirit?

(4.) Those that bury the knowledge they have, are justly denied further knowledge. It was just with Christ to refuse to give an account of his authority to them that knew the baptism of John to be from heaven, and would not believe in him, nor own their knowledge, v. 7, 8.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entertained him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13. Then said the lord of the vineyard,

What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him, when they see him. 14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

Christ spake this parable against those who were resolved not to own his authority, though the evidence of it was ever so full and convincing; and it comes very seasonably to show that by questioning his authority they forfeited their own. Their disowning of the lord of their vineyard, was a defeasance of their lease of the vineyard, and a giving up all their title.

I. The parable has nothing added here to what we had before in Matthew and Mark. The scope of it is to show that the Jewish nation, by persecuting the prophets, and at length Christ himself, had provoked God to take away from them all their church privileges, and to abandon them to ruin. It teaches us,

1. That those who enjoy the privileges of the visible church, are as tenants and farmers that have a vineyard to look after, and rents to pay for it. God, by setting up revealed religion and instituted orders in the world, hath planted a vineyard, which he lets out to those people among whom his tabernacle is, *v. 9.* And they have *vineyard-work* to do, needful and constant work, but pleasant and profitable. Whereas man was, for sin, condemned to *till the ground*, they that have a place in the church, are restored to that which was Adam's work in innocency, to *dress the garden*, and to keep it, for the church is a paradise, and Christ the Tree of life in it. They have also *vineyard-fruits* to present to the Lord of the vineyard. There are rents to be paid, and services to be done, which, though bearing no proportion to the value of the premises, yet must be *done*, and must be *paid*.

2. That the work of God's ministers is to call upon those who enjoy the privileges of the church to *bring forth fruit* accordingly. They are God's rent-gatherers, to put the husbandmen in mind of their arrears, or rather to put them in mind that they have a Landlord who expects to hear from them, and to receive some acknowledgment of their dependence on him, and obligation to him, *v. 10.* The Old-Testament prophets were sent on this errand to the Jewish Church, to demand from them the duty and obedience they owed to God.

3. That it has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused by his own tenants: they have been *beaten* and *treated* shamefully

by those that resolved to *send them empty away*. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot bear to be called upon to do it. Some of the best men in the world have had the hardest usage from it, for their best services.

4. That God sent his Son into the world to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, to *gather the fruits of the vineyard* for God: and one would have thought that he should have been revered and received. The prophets spake as *servants*, *Thus saith the Lord*; but Christ as a *Son*, among his own, *Verily I say unto you*. Putting such an honour as this upon them, to send him, one would have thought, should have won upon them.

5. That those who reject Christ's ministers, would reject Christ himself, if he should come to them; for it has been tried, and found, that the persecutors and murderers of his servants the prophets, were the persecutors and murderers of him himself. They said, *This is the Heir, come let us kill him*. When they slew the servants, there were other servants sent; "But if we can but be the death of the son, there is never another son to be sent, and then we shall be no longer molested with these demands; we may have a quiet possession of the vineyard for ourselves." The Scribes and Pharisees promised themselves, that if they could but get Christ out of the way, they should for ever ride masters in the Jewish Church; and therefore they took the bold step, they *cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him*.

6. That the putting of Christ to death, filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy. No other could be expected than that God should *destroy those wicked husbandmen*. They began in *not paying their rent*, but then proceeded to beat and kill the servants, and at length their young Master himself. Note, Those that live in the neglect of their duty to God, know not what degrees of sin and destruction they are running themselves into.

II. To the application of the parable is added here, which we had not before, their deprecation of the doom included in it; (*v. 16.*) *When they heard it, they said, God forbid, Μὴ γίνωται—Let not this be done*; so it should be read; though they could not but own that for such a sin such a punishment was just, and what might be expected, yet they could not bear to hear of it. Note, It is an instance of the folly and stupidity of sinners, that they proceed and persevere in their sinful ways, though at the same time they have a foresight and dread of the destruction that is at the end of those ways. And see what a cheat they put upon themselves, to think to avoid it by a cold *God forbid*, when they do nothing toward the preventing of it; but will this make the threatening of no effect? No, they shall know whose word shall stand, God's or theirs.

Now observe what Christ said, in answer to this childish deprecation of their ruin. 1. He *beheld them*. That is taken notice of only by the evangelist, *v. 17.* He *looked upon* them with pity and compassion, grieved to see them cheat themselves thus to their own ruin. He *beheld them*, to see if they would blush at their own folly, or if he could discern in their countenances any show of relenting. 2. He referred them to the scripture; "*What is this then that is written?*" How can you escape the judgment of God, when you cannot prevent the exaltation of him whom you despise and reject? The word of God hath said it, that *the Stone which the builders rejected, is become the Head of the corner.*" The Lord Jesus will be exalted to the Father's right hand, he has all judgment and all power committed to him, he is the Corner-stone and Top-stone of the church, and if so, his enemies can expect no other than to be destroyed; for even those that slight

him, that stumble at him, and are offended in him, they *shall be broken*, it will be their ruin; but those that not only reject him, but hate and persecute him, as the Jews did, he will fall upon them and crush them to pieces, *will grind them to powder*. The condemnation of spiteful persecutors will be much sorer than that of careless unbelievers.

Lastly, We are told how the chief priests and scribes were exasperated by this parable; (v. 19.) *They perceived that he spake this parable against them*; and so he did. A guilty conscience needs no accuser; but they, instead of yielding to the convictions of conscience, fell into a rage at him who awakened that sleeping lion in their bosoms, and *sought to lay hands on him*. Their corruptions rebelled against their convictions, and got the victory. And it was because they had not any fear of God or of his wrath before their eyes, but only because they *fear'd the people*, that they did not now fly in his face, and take him by the throat. They were just ready to make his words good; *This is the hear, come let us kill him*. Note, When the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, the fairest warnings both of the sin they are about to commit, and of the consequences of it, make no impression upon them. Christ tells them, that instead of *kissing the Son of God* they would *kill him*; upon which they should have said, *What, is thy servant a dog?* But they do, in effect, say this, "And so we will; have at him now." And though they deprecate the punishment of the sin, in the next breath they are projecting the commission of it.

20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar, or no? 23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24. Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Cæsar's. 25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's. 26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

We have here Christ's evading a snare which his enemies laid for him, by proposing a question to him about tribute. We had this passage before, both in Matthew and Mark. Here is,

I. The mischief designed him, and that is more fully related here than before. The plot was to *deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor*, v. 20. They could not themselves put him to death by course of law, nor otherwise than by a *popular tumult*, which they could not depend upon. And since they cannot be his judges, they will willingly condescend to be his prosecutors and accusers, and will themselves *inform* against him. They hoped to gain their point, if they could but incense the governor against him. Note, It has been the common artifice of persecuting church-rulers, to make the secular powers the tools of their malice,

and oblige the *kings of the earth to do their drudgery*, who, if they had not been instigated, would have let their neighbours live quietly by them, as Pilate did Christ till the chief priests and the scribes presented Christ to him. But thus Christ's word must be fulfilled by their cursed politics, that he should *be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles*.

II. The persons they employed. Matthew and Mark told us that they were disciples of the Pharisees, with some Herodians. Here it is added, They were *spies*, which should *feign themselves just men*. Note, It is no new thing for *bad men* to feign themselves *just men*, and to cover the most wicked projects with most specious and plausible pretences. The devil can *transform himself into an angel of light*, and a Pharisee appear in the garb, and speak the language, of a disciple of Christ. A spy must go in disguise. These spies must take on them to have a value for Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it as an oracle, and therefore must desire his advice in a case of conscience. Note, Ministers are concerned to stand upon their guard against some that feign themselves to be *just men*, and to be *wise as serpents*, when they are in the midst of a *generation of vipers and scorpions*.

III. The question they proposed, with which they hoped to ensnare him. 1. Their preface is very courtly; *Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly*, v. 21. Thus they thought to flatter him into an incautious freedom and openness with them, and so to gain their point. They that are proud, and love to be commended, will be brought to do any thing for those that will but flatter them, and speak kindly to them; but they were much mistaken who thought thus to impose upon the humble Jesus. He was not pleased with the testimony of such hypocrites, nor thought himself honoured by it. It is true that he *accepts not the person of any*, but it is as true that he knows the hearts of all, and knew theirs, and the *seven abominations* that were there, though they *spoke fair*. It was certain that he *taught the way of God truly*; but he knew that they were unworthy to be taught by him, who came to *take hold of his words*, not to be *taken hold of* by them. 2. Their case is very nice: "Is it lawful for us," (that is added here in Luke,) "to give tribute to Cæsar?" For us Jews, us the free-born seed of Abraham, us that pay the Lord's tribute, may we give tribute to Cæsar? Their pride and covetousness made them loath to pay taxes, and then they would have it a question, whether it was lawful or no. Now if Christ should say that *it was lawful*, the people would take it ill, who expected that he who set up to be the Messiah, should in the first place free them from the Roman yoke, and stand by them in denying tribute to Cæsar. But if he should say that *it was not lawful* as they expected he would, (for if he had not been of that mind, they thought he could not have been so much the Darling of the people as he was,) then they should have something to accuse him of to the governor, which was what they wanted.

IV. His evading of the snare which they laid for him; *He perceived their craftiness*, v. 23. Note, Those that are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot with all their art conceal them from his cognizance. He can see through the most political disguises, and so break through the most dangerous snare; for *surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*. He did not give them a direct answer, but reprieved them by offering to *impose upon him*; (*Why tempt ye me?*) and called for a *piece of money*, current money with the merchants; (*Shew me a penny*;) and asked them whose money it was; whose stamp it bore; who coined it. They owned, "It is Cæsar's money." "Why then," saith Christ, "you should first have

asked whether it was lawful to *pay* and *receive* Cæsar's money among yourselves, and to admit that to be the instrument of your commerce. But you having granted that by a common consent, are concluded by your own act, and, no doubt, you ought to give tribute to him who furnished you with this convenience for your trade, protects you in it, and lends you the sanction of his authority for the value of your money. You must therefore *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*. In civil things you ought to submit to the civil powers, and so, if Cæsar protects you in your civil rights by laws and the administration of justice, you ought to *pay him tribute*; but in sacred things God only is your King, you are not bound to be of Cæsar's religion; you must *render to God the things that are God's*, must worship and adore him only, and not any golden image that Cæsar sets up; and we must worship and adore him in such a way as he has appointed, and not according to the inventions of Cæsar. It is God only that has authority to say, *My son give me thy heart*.

V. The confusion they were hereby put into, v. 26. 1. The snare is broken; *They could not take hold of his words before the people*. They could not fasten upon any thing wherewith to incense either the governor or the people against him. 2. Christ is honoured; even the wrath of man is made to praise him. *They marvelled at his answer*, it was so discreet and unexceptionable, and such an evidence of that wisdom and sincerity which make the face to shine. 3. Their mouths are stopped; they *held their peace*. They had nothing to object, and durst ask him nothing else, lest he should shame and expose them.

27. Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. 35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

This discourse with the Sadducees we had before,

just as it is here, only that the description Christ gives of the future state is somewhat more full and large here. Observe here,

I. In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, that have endeavoured to subvert the fundamental principles of revealed religion. As there are deists now, who call themselves *free-thinkers*, but are really *false-thinkers*; so there were Sadducees in our Saviour's time, who bantered the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, though they were plainly revealed in the Old Testament, and were articles of the Jewish faith. The Sadducees deny that *there is any resurrection*, any *future state*; so *ἀνάστασις* may signify; not only no return of the body to life, but no continuance of the soul in life; no world of spirits, no state of recompense and retribution for what was done in the body. Take away this, and all religion falls to the ground.

II. It is common for those that design to undermine any truth of God, to perplex it, and load it with difficulties. So those Sadducees here did; when they would weaken people's faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, they put a question upon the supposition of it, which they thought could not be answered either way to satisfaction. The case perhaps was matter of fact, however it might be so, of a woman that had *seven husbands*. Now in the resurrection, *whose wife shall she be?* Whereas it was not at all material whose she was, for when death puts an end to that relation, it is not to be resumed again.

III. There is a great deal of difference between the state of the children of men on earth and that of the children of God in heaven; a vast unlikeness between *this world* and *that world*; and we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of that world of spirits by our present enjoyments in this world of sense.

1. The children of men in this world *marry, and are given in marriage*, *οἱ τοῦ αἵματος τέκνα*—the children of this age, this generation, both good and bad, marry themselves, and give their children in marriage. Much of our business in this world, is, to raise and build up families, and to provide for them. Much of our pleasure in this world is in our relations, our wives, and children; nature inclines to it. Marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life, here in this state where we carry bodies about with us. It is likewise a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and control. The children of this world are dying, and going off the stage, and therefore they marry, and give their children in marriage, that they may furnish the world of mankind with needful recruits, that, as one generation passeth away, another may come, and that they may have some of their own offspring to leave the fruit of their labours to; especially that the chosen of God in future ages may be introduced, for it is a *godly seed* that is sought by marriage, (Mal. 2. 15.) a seed to serve the Lord, that shall be a *generation to him*.

2. The world to come is quite another thing; it is called *that world*, by way of emphasis and eminency. Note, There are more worlds than one; a present visible world, and a future invisible world; and it is the concern of every one of us to compare worlds, *this world*, and *that world*, and give the preference in our thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. Now observe,

(1.) Who shall be the inhabitants of *that world*; they that shall be *accounted worthy to obtain it*, that is, that are interested in *Christ's merit*, who *purchased it for us*, and have a *holy meetness* for it wrought in them by the Spirit, whose business it is to prepare us for it. They have not a *legal worthi*

ness, upon the account of any thing in them or done by them, but an *evangelical* worthiness upon the account of the inestimable price which Christ paid for the *redemption of the purchased possession*. It is a worthiness imputed, by which we are glorified, as well as a righteousness imputed, by which we are justified; *καταλογίζετε*, they are *made agreeable to that world*. The disagreeableness that there is in the corrupt nature, is taken away, and the dispositions of the soul are by the grace of God conformed to that state. They are by grace made and *counted worthy to obtain that world*; it intimates some difficulty in reaching after it, and danger of coming short. We must *so run* as that we may obtain. They shall obtain the *resurrection from the dead*, that is, the blessed resurrection; for that of *condemnation*, (as Christ calls it, John 5. 29.) is rather a resurrection to death, a second death, an eternal death, than *from death*.

(2.) What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot express or conceive, 1 Cor. 2. 9. See what Christ here saith of it.

[1.] They *neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. Those that are entered into the joy of their Lord, are entirely taken up with that, and need not the joy of the bridegroom in his bride. The love in that world of love is all seraphic, and such as eclipses and loses the purest and most pleasing loves we entertain ourselves with in this world of sense. Where the body itself shall be a spiritual body, the delights of sense are all vanished; and where there is a perfection of holiness, there is no occasion for marriage as a preservative from sin; into that *new Jerusalem* there enters nothing that defiles.

[2.] They cannot *die any more*; and this comes in as a reason why they do not *marry*. In this dying world there must be marriage, in order to the filling up of the vacancies made by death; but where there are no burials there is no need of weddings. This crowns the comfort of that world, that there is no more death there, which sullies all the beauty, and damps all the comforts, of this world. Here death reigns, but thence it is for ever excluded.

[3.] They are *equal unto the angels*. In the other evangelists it was said, They are *as the angels*—*ὡς ἄγγελοι*, but here they are said to be *equal to the angels*, *ἰσὺν ἄγγελοι*—*angels' peers*; they have a glory and bliss no way inferior to that of the holy angels. They shall see the same sight, be employed in the same work, and share in the same joys, with the holy angels. Saints, when they come to heaven, shall be *naturalized*, and though by nature strangers, yet, having obtained this *freedom with a great sum*, which Christ paid for them, they have in all respects equal privileges with them that were free-born, the angels that are the natives and aborigines of that country. They shall be companions with the angels, and converse with those blessed spirits that love them dearly, and with an innumerable company, to whom they are now come in faith, hope, and love.

[4.] They are the *children of God*, and so they are as the angels, who are called the *sons of God*. In the *inheritance of sons*, the *adoption of sons* will be completed. Hence believers are said to *wait for the adoption*, even the *redemption of the body*, Rom. 8. 23. For till the body is redeemed from the grave, the adoption is not completed. *Now are we the Sons of God*, 1 John 3. 2. We have the nature and disposition of sons, but that will not be *perfected* till we come to heaven.

[5.] They are the *children of the resurrection*, that is, they are made capable of the employments and enjoyments of the future state; they are *born o that world*, belong to that family, had their education in it here, and shall there have their inheritance in it. They are the *children of God*, being

the *children of the resurrection*. Note, God owns those only for his children, that are the children of the resurrection, that are born from above, are called to the world of spirits, and prepared for that world, the children of that family.

IV. It is an undoubted truth, that there is another life after this, and there were eminent discoveries made of this truth in the early ages of the church; (cp. 57, 38.) *Moses showed this, as it was showed to Moses at the bush*, and he hath showed it to us, when he calleth the Lord, as the Lord calleth himself, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were then dead to our world, they were departed out of it many years before, and their bodies were turned into dust in the cave of Machpelah; how then could God say, *not I was, but I am, the God of Abraham?* It is absurd that the living God and Fountain of life should continue related to them as their God, if there were no more of them in being than what lay in that cave, undistinguished from common dust; we must therefore conclude that they were then in being in another world, for *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. Luke here adds, *For all live unto him*, that is, all who, like them, are true believers; though they are dead, yet they *do live*; their souls which *return to God that gave them*, (Eccl. 12. 7.) live to him as the Father of spirits; and their bodies shall live again at the end of time by the power of God; for he calleth things that are not as though they were, because he is the God that *quickens the dead*, Rom. 4. 17. But there is more in it yet; when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was their Felicity and Portion, a *God all-sufficient to them*, (Gen. 17. 1.) their *exceeding great Reward*, Gen. 15. 1. Now it is plain by their story, that he never did that for them in this world, which would answer the *true intent and full extent* of that great undertaking, and therefore there must be another life after this, in which he will do that for them that will amount to a *discharge in full* of that promise—that he would be to them a God; which he is able to do, for *all live to him*, and he has wherewithal to make every soul happy that lives to him; enough for *all*, enough for *each*.

39. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all. 41. And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43. Till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 44. David therefore calleth him Lord; how is he then his son? 45. Then, in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, 46. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts: 47. Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers; the same shall receive greater damnation.

The scribes were *students in the law*, and *expositors* of it to the people; men in reputation for wisdom and honour, the generality of them, were enemies to Christ and his gospel; now here we have some of them attending him, and for things we

have in these verses concerning them, which we had before.

I. We have them here commending the reply which Christ made to the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; (v. 39.) *Certain of the scribes said, Master, thou hast well said.* Christ had the testimony of his adversaries, that he said well; and therefore the scribes were his enemies, because he would not conform to the traditions of the elders; but yet when he vindicated the fundamental practices of religion, and appeared in defence of them, even the scribes commended his performance, and owned that he said well. Many that call themselves christians, come short even of that spirit.

II. We have them here struck with an awe of Christ, and of his wisdom and authority; (v. 40.) *They durst not ask him any questions at all*, because they saw that he was too hard for all that contended with him. His own disciples, though weak, yet being willing to receive his doctrine, durst ask him any question; but the Sadducees, who contradicted and cavilled at his doctrine, durst ask him none.

III. We have them here puzzled and run aground with a question concerning the Messiah, v. 41. It was plain by many scriptures, that Christ was to be the *Son of David*; even the blind man knew that, (ch. 18. 39.) and yet it was plain that David called the Messiah *his Lord*, (v. 42, 44.) his Owner, and Ruler, and Benefactor; *The Lord said to my Lord.* God said it to the Messiah, Ps. 110. 1. Now if he be *his Son*, why doth he call him *his Lord*? If he be *his Lord*, why do we call him *his Son*? This he left them to consider of, but they could not reconcile this seeming contradiction; thanks be to God, we can; that Christ, as *God*, was David's Lord, but Christ, as *Man*, was David's Son. He was both the *Root* and the *Offspring of David*, Rev. 22. 16. By his *human nature* he was the *Offspring of David*, a Branch of his family; by his *divine nature* he was the *Root of David*, from whom he had his being and life, and all the supplies of grace.

IV. We have them here described in their black characters, and a public caution given to the disciples to take heed of them, v. 45—47. This we had, just as it is here, Mark 12. 38, and more largely, Matth. 23. Christ bid his disciples *beware of the scribes*, that is, 1. "Take heed of being drawn into sin by them, of learning their way, and going into their measures; beware of such a spirit as they are governed by. Be not you such in the christian church, as they are in the Jewish church." 2. "Take heed of being brought into trouble by them;" in the same sense that he had said, (Matth. 10. 17.) "*Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils; beware of the scribes, for they do so. Beware of them, for,*"

(1.) "*They are proud and haughty; they desire to walk about the streets in long robes, as those that are above business, (for men of business went with their loins girt up,) and as those that take state, and take place.*" *Cedant arma togæ—Let arms yield to the gown.* They loved in their hearts to have people make their obeisance to them in the markets, that many might see what respect was paid them; and were very proud of the precedence that was given them in all places of concourse. They loved the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts, and when they were placed in them, looked upon themselves with great conceit, and upon all about them with a great contempt. *I sit as a queen.*

(2.) "*They are covetous and oppressive, and make their religion a cloak and cover for it.*" They devour widows' houses, get their estates into their hands, and then by some trick or other make them their own; or, they live upon them, and eat up what they have. And widows are an easy prey to them,

because they are apt to be deluded by their specious pretences; for a show they make long prayers, perhaps long prayers with the widows when they are in sorrow, as if they had not only a pious but a pious concern for them, and thus endeavour to ingratiate themselves with them, and get their money and effects into their hands. Such devout men may surely be trusted with untold gold; but they will give such an account of it as they think fit.

Christ reads them their doom in a few words; *These shall receive a more abundant judgment; a double damnation, both for their abuse of the poor widows, whose houses they devoured, and for abuse of religion, and particularly of prayer, which they had made use of as a pretence for the more plausible and effectual carrying on of their worldly and wicked projects; for dissembled piety is double iniquity.*

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. The notice Christ took, and the approbation he gave, of a poor widow that cast two mites into the treasury, v. 1. 4. II. A prediction of future events, in answer to his disciples' inquiries concerning them, v. 5. 7. 1. Of what should happen between that and the destruction of Jerusalem—false christians arising, bloody wars and persecutions of Christ's followers, v. 8. 19. 2. Of that destruction itself, v. 20. 24. 3. Of the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, under the type and figure of that, v. 25. 33. III. A practical application of this, by way of caution and counsel, (v. 34. 36.) and an account of Christ's preaching, and the people's attendance on it, v. 37, 38.

1. **A**ND he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, That this poor widow had cast in more than they all. 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

This short passage of story we had before in Mark. It is thus recorded twice, to teach us,

1. That *charity* to the poor is a *main matter* in religion; our Lord Jesus took all occasions to commend it, and recommend it. He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes, who devoured *poor widows*; (ch. 20.) and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it, that the poor widows were the best benefactors to the public funds, which the scribes had the disposal of.

2. That Jesus Christ has his eye upon us, to observe what we give to the poor, and what we contribute to works of piety and charity. Christ, though intent upon his preaching, looked up, to see what *gifts were cast into the treasury*, v. 1. He observes whether we give largely and liberally, in proportion to what we have, or whether we be sneaking and paltry in it; nay, his eye goes further, he observes whether we give charitably and with a willing mind, or grudgingly and with reluctance. This should make us afraid of coming short of our duty in this matter; men may be deceived with excuses which Christ knows to be frivolous; and this should encourage us to be abundant in it, without desiring that men should know it; it is enough that Christ does; he sees in secret, and will reward openly.

3. That Christ observes and accepts the charity of the poor in a particular manner. Those that have nothing to give, may yet do a great deal in charity, by ministering to the poor, and helping them, and begging for them, that cannot help themselves, or beg for themselves. But here was an

that was herself poor, and yet gave what little she had to the treasury. It was but *two mites*, which make a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest; *She has cast in more than they all.* Christ does not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury; but commended her liberality, and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God; which proceeded from a belief of, and dependence upon, God's providence to take care of her. *Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide.*

4. That, whatever may be called the *offerings of God*, we ought to have a respect for, and to our power, yea, and beyond our power, to contribute cheerfully to. These have *cast in unto the offerings of God.* What is given to the support of the ministry and the gospel, to the spreading and propagating of religion, the education of youth, the release of prisoners, the relief of widows and strangers, and the maintenance of poor families, is given to the *offerings of God*, and it shall be so accepted and recompensed.

5. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6. *As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.* 7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? And what sign *will there be* when these things shall come to pass? 8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am *Christ*; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. 10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: 11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights; and great signs shall there be from heaven. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

See here,

I. With what admiration some spake of the ex-

ternal pomp and magnificence of the temple, and they were some of Christ's own disciples too; and they took notice of it to him, *how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts*, v. 5. The outside was built up with goodly stones, and within it was beautified and enriched with the *presentments* that were offered up for that purpose, and were *hung up* in it. They thought their Master should be as much affected with those things as they were, and should as much regret the destruction of them as they did. When we *speak of the temple*, it should be of the presence of God in it, and of the ordinance of God administered in it, and the communion which his people there have with him. It is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our discourse dwell upon its pomps and revenues, and the dignities and powers of its officers and rulers; for the king's daughter is all *glorious within*.

II. With what contempt Christ spake of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly; (v. 6.) "*As for those things which ye behold, those dear things which ye are so much in love with, behold, the days will come, and some now living may live to see them, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another.*" His building, which seems so beautiful, that one would think none could, for pity, pull it down, and which seems so strong, that one would think none should be able to pull it down, shall yet be utterly ruined; and this shall be done as soon as ever the spiritual temple of the gospel-church (the substance of that shadow) begins to flourish in the world." Did we by faith foresee the blasting and withering of all external glory, we should not set our hearts upon it as the do, that cannot see, or will not look, so far before them.

III. With what curiosity those about him inquire concerning the time when this great desolation should be; (v. 7.) *Master, when shall these things be?* It is natural to us to covet to know future things and the time of them, which it is not for us to know; when we are more concerned to ask what is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them. This it is for us to know. They inquire *what sign there shall be, when these things shall come to pass.* They ask not for a present sign, to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it, (Christ's word was enough for that,) but what the future signs will be of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which they may be put in mind of it. These *signs of the times* Christ had taught them to observe.

IV. With what clearness and fullness Christ answers their inquiries, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice.

1. They must expect to hear of false christs and false prophets appearing, and false prophecies given out; (v. 8.) *Many shall come in my name*; he does not mean in the name of *Jesus*, though there were some deceivers who pretended commissions from him, (as Acts 19. 13.) but usurping the title and character of the Messiah. Many pretended to be the deliverers of the Jewish church and nation from the Romans, and to fix the time when the deliverance should be wrought, by which multitudes were drawn into a snare, to their ruin. They shall say, *ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ χριστός—that I am he, or, I am*, as if they would assume that incommunicable name of God, by which he made himself known, when he came to deliver Israel out of Egypt, *I am*; and to encourage people to follow them, they added, "*The time draweth near, when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and if they will follow him, they shall share in it.*"

Now as to this, he gives them a needful caution; (1.) "*Take heed that ye be not deceived*"; do not ye imagine that I shall myself come again in external glory, to take possession of the throne of kingdoms.

No, ye must not expect any such thing, for my kingdom is not of this world." When they asked solicitously and eagerly, *Master, when shall these things be?* the first word Christ said, was, *Take heed that ye be not deceived.* Note, Those that are most inquisitive in the things of God, (though it is very good to be so,) are in most danger of being imposed upon, and have most need to be upon their guard. (2.) "*Go ye not after them, ye know the Messiah is come, and ye are not to look for any other; and therefore do not so much as hearken after them, nor have any thing to do with them.*" If we are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine is the *gospel of God*, we must be deaf to all intimations of another christ and another gospel.

2. They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments inflicted upon the Jews and their neighbours. (1.) There shall be *bloody wars*; (v. 10.) *Nation shall rise against nation*; one part of the Jewish nation against another, or rather the whole against the Romans. Encouraged by the false christ, they shall wickedly endeavour to throw off the Roman yoke, by taking up arms against the Roman powers; when they had rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free, they were left to themselves, to grasp at their civil liberty in ways that were *sinful*, and therefore could not be *successful*. (2.) There shall be *earthquakes*, great earthquakes, in *divers places*, which shall not only frighten people, but destroy towns and houses, and bury many in the ruins of them. (3.) There shall be *famines and pestilences*, the common effects of war, which destroy the fruits of the earth, and, by exposing men to ill weather and reducing them to ill diet, occasion infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people. The four sorts of judgments which the Old-Testament prophets so often speak of, are threatened by the New-Testament prophets too; for though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel-times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. (4.) There shall be *fearful sights*, and *great signs from heaven*, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as *ominous and portending something bad*.

Now as to these, the caution he gives them, is, "*Be not terrified.*" Others will be frightened at them, but be not ye frightened, v. 2. As to the *fearful sights*, let them not be *fearful* to you, who look above the visible heavens to the throne of God's government in the highest heavens. *Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them*, Jer. 10. 2. And as to the *famines and pestilences*, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his, that in the *days of famine they shall be satisfied*, and that he will keep them from the *noisome pestilence*; trust therefore in him, and *be not afraid*. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings and within are fears, yet then *be not you terrified*; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do you, and therefore be not afraid of them; for, [1.] "It is your interest to *make the best of that which is*, for all your fears cannot alter it, *these things must first come to pass*, there is no remedy, it will be your wisdom to make yourselves easy by accommodating yourselves to them." [2.] "There is *worse behind*; flatter not yourselves with a fancy that you will soon see an end of these troubles, no, not so soon as you think of, *the end is not by and by, not suddenly*. Be not terrified, for if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you bear up under what is yet before you?"

3. They must expect to be themselves for *signs and wonders* in Israel; their being *persecuted* would

be a prognostic of the destruction of the city and temple, which he had now foretold. Nay, this should be the *first* sign of their ruin coming; "*Before all these, they shall lay their hands on you.*" The judgment shall begin at the house of God; you must smart first, for warning to them, that, if they have any consideration, they may consider, *If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* See 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18. But that is not all; this must be considered not only as the *suffering of the persecuted*, but as the *sin of the persecutors*. *Before* God's judgments are brought upon them, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity by *laying their hands on you*." Note, The ruin of a people is always introduced by their sin; and nothing introduces a surer and sorer ruin than the sin of persecution. This is a *sign* that God's wrath is coming upon a people to the uttermost, when their *wrath against the servants of God comes to the uttermost*.

Now as to this,

(1.) Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purport with what he had told them when he first called them to follow him, Matth. 10. They should know the wages of it, that they might *sit down and count the costs*. St. Paul, who was the greatest labourer and sufferer of them all, not being now among them, was told by himself what *great things he should suffer for Christ's name's sake*, (Acts 9. 16.) so necessary is it that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, should count upon persecution. The Christians having themselves been originally Jews, and still retaining an equal veneration with them for the Old Testament, and all the essentials of their religion, and differing only in ceremony, might expect fair quarter with them; but Christ bids them not expect it; "No, they shall be the most forward to *persecute you*." [1.] "They shall use their own church-power against you; *they shall deliver you up to the synagogues* to be scourged there, and stigmatized with their *anathemas*." [2.] "They shall incense the magistrates against you; they shall *deliver you into prisons*, that you may be brought *before kings and rulers for my name's sake*, and be punished by them." [3.] "Your own relations will betray you, (v. 16.) *your parents, brethren, and kinsfolks and friends*; so that you will not know whom to put a confidence in, or where to be safe." [4.] "Your religion will be made a capital crime, and you will be called to *reist unto blood*; *some of you shall they cause to be put to death*; so far must you be from expecting honour and wealth, that you must expect nothing but death in its most frightful shapes, death in all its dreadful pomp. Nay," [5.] "*You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake*." This is worse than death itself, and was fulfilled when the apostles were not only *appointed to death*, but made a *spectacle to the world*, and counted as the *filth of the world*, and the *off-couring of all things*, which every body loathes, 1 Cor. 4. 19, 13. They were hated of *all men*, that is, of all bad men, who could not bear the light of the gospel, (because it discovered their evil deeds,) and therefore hated those who brought in that light, flew in their faces, and would have pulled them to pieces. The wicked world, which hated to be reformed, hated Christ the great Reformer, and all that were his, for his sake. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing very well that, if the gospel obtained among the Jews, their usurped, abused power was at an end, raised all their forces against it, put it into an ill name, filled people's minds with prejudices against it, and so made the preachers and professors of it odious to the mob.

(2.) He encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with.

[1.] God will bring glory both to himself and them out of their sufferings; (v. 13.) "*It shall turn to you for a testimony.*" Your being thus set up for a mark, and publicly persecuted, will make you and your doctrine and miracles the more taken notice of and inquired into; your being brought *before kings and rulers*, will give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, who otherwise would never have come within hearing of it; your suffering such severe things, and being so hated by the worst of men, of the most vicious lives, will be a testimony that you are good, else you would not have such bad men your enemies; your courage and cheerfulness and constancy under your sufferings will be a testimony for you, that you believe what you preach, and that you are supported by a divine power, and the Spirit of God and glory rests upon you."

[2.] "God will stand by you, and own you, and assist you, in your trials; you are his advocates, and you shall be well furnished with instructions, v. 14, 15. Instead of setting your hearts on work to contrive an answer to informations, indictments, articles, accusations and interrogatories, that will be exhibited against you in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, on the contrary, *settle it in your hearts*, impress it upon them, take pains with them to persuade them *not to meditate before what ye shall answer*, do not depend upon your own wit and ingenuity, your own prudence and policy, and do not distrust or despair of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the divine grace. Think not to bring yourselves off in the cause of Christ, as you would in a cause of your own, by your own parts and application, with the common assistance of divine providence, but promise yourselves, for I promise you, the special assistance of divine grace; *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.*" This proves Christ to be God, for it is God's prerogative to give wisdom, and he it is that made man's mouth. Note, *First*, A mouth and wisdom together completely fit a man both for services and sufferings; wisdom to know what to say, and a mouth wherewith to say it as it should be said. It is a great happiness to have both *matter* and *words* wherewith to honour God and do good; to have in the mind a *store-house* well furnished with things *new and old*, and a *door of utterance* by which to bring them forth. *Secondly*, Those that plead Christ's cause, may depend upon him to give them a mouth and wisdom, which way soever they are called to plead it, especially when they are brought before magistrates for his name's sake. It is not said that he will send an angel from heaven to answer for them, though he could do that, but that he will give them a mouth and wisdom to enable them to answer for themselves; which puts a great honour upon them, which requires them to use the gifts and graces Christ furnishes them with, and redounds the more to the glory of God, who *still the enemy and the avenger out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.* *Thirdly*, When Christ gives to his witnesses a mouth and wisdom, they are enabled to say that both for him and themselves, which *all their adversaries are not able to gainsay or resist*, so that they are silenced and put to confusion. This was remarkably fulfilled presently after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this mouth and wisdom, when the apostles were brought before the priests and rulers, and answered them so as to make them ashamed, Acts 4, 5, and 6.

[3.] "You shall suffer no real damage by all the hardships they shall put upon you; (v. 18.) *There shall not a hair of your head perish.*" Shall some of them lose their heads, and yet not lose a hair! It is a proverbial expression, denoting the greatest indemnity and security imaginable; it is frequently used, both in the Old Testament and New, in that sense. Some think that it refers to the preservation

of the lives of all the Christians that were among the Jews, when they were cut off by the Romans; historians tell us that not one christian perished in that desolation. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ saith, *The that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.* "Not a hair of your head shall perish but," *First*, "I shall take cognizance of it." To this end he had said, (Matth. 10. 30.) *The hairs of your head are all numbered*; and an account is kept of them, so that none of them shall perish but he will miss it. *Secondly*, "It shall be upon a valuable consideration." We do not reckon that *lost or perishing*, which is laid out for good purposes, and will turn to a good account. If we drop the body itself for Christ's name's sake, it does not perish, but is well bestowed. *Thirdly*, "It shall be abundantly recompensed; when you come to balance profit and loss, you will find that there is nothing perished, but, on the contrary, that you have great gain in present comforts, especially in the joys of a life eternal." So that though we may be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

[4.] "It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings and those of the nation, to maintain a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always easy; (v. 19.) *In your patience possess ye your souls*; get and keep possession of your souls." Some read it as a promise, "You may or shall possess your souls." It comes all to one. Note, *First*, It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous, trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls; not only that they be not destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not distempered now, nor our possession of them disturbed and interrupted. "*Possess your souls*, be your own men, keep up the authority and dominion of reason, and keep under the tumults of passion, that neither grief nor fear may tyrannize over you, or turn you out of the possession and enjoyment of yourselves." In difficult times, when we can keep possession of nothing else, then let us make that sure which will be made sure, and keep possession of our souls. *Secondly*, It is by patience, christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls. "In suffering times, set patience upon the guard for the preserving of your souls; by it keep your souls composed and in a good frame, and keep out all these impressions which would ruffle you and put you out of temper.

20. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon

the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, he here comes to show them what all those things would issue in at last, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersion of the Jewish nation; which would be a little day of judgment; a type and figure of Christ's second coming, which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place, (Matth. 24.) yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world to those whose hearts were bound up in it.

I. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem besieged, *compassed with armies*, (v. 20.) the Roman armies; and when they saw that, they might conclude that *its desolation was nigh*, for in that the siege would infallibly end, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins, he will make an end.

II. He warns them, upon this signal given, to shift for their own safety; (v. 21.) "*Then let them which are in Judea, quit the country and flee to the mountains; let them which are in the midst of it,*" (of Jerusalem,) "*depart out, before the city be closely shut up, and*" (as we say now) "*before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about, enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people.*"

III. He foretells the terrible havoc that should be made of the Jewish nation; (v. 22.) *Those are the days of vengeance* so often spoken of by the Old-Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people; all their predictions must now be fulfilled; and the blood of the Old-Testament martyrs must now be required. *All things that are written, must be fulfilled* at length. After days of patience long abused, there will come *days of vengeance*; for reprieves are not pardons. The greatness of that destruction is set forth, 1. By the inflicting cause of it, it is *wrath upon this people*, the wrath of God; that will kindle this devouring, consuming fire. 2. By the particular terror it would be to women with child, and poor mothers that are nurses. *Woe to them*, not only because they are most subject to frights, and least able to shift for their own safety, but because it will be a very great torment to them, to think of having borne and nursed children for the murderers. 3. By the general confusion that should be all the nation over. There shall be *great distress in the land*, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

IV. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans, and what they will come to at last; in short, 1. Multitudes of them *shall fall by the edge of the sword*. It is computed that in those wars of the Jews there fell by the sword above eleven hundred thousand. And the siege of Jerusalem was, in effect, a military execution. 2. The rest shall be *led away captive*, not into one nation, as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans which gave them an opportunity of

keeping together, but *into all nations*, which made it impossible for them to *correspond* with each other, much less to *incorporate*. 3. Jerusalem itself was *trodde[n] down of the Gentiles*. The Romans, when they had made themselves masters of it, laid it quite waste, as a *rebellious and bad city, hurtful to kings and provinces*, and therefore hateful to them.

V. He describes the great frights that people should generally be in. Many frightful sights shall be in the *sun, moon, and stars*, prodigies in the heavens, and here in this lower world, the *sea and the waves roaring*, with terrible storms and tempests, such as had not been known, and above the ordinary workings of natural causes. The effect of this shall be universal confusion and consternation *upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity*, v. 25. Dr. Hammond understands *by the nations*, the several governments or tetrarchies of the Jewish nation, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, these shall be brought to the last extremity. *Men's hearts shall fail them for fear*, (v. 26.) ἀποφρονταὶ ἀνθρώπων—men being quite exanimated, dispirited, un-souled, dying away for fear. Thus they are *killed all the day long*, by whom Christ's apostles were so, (Rom. 8. 36.) that is, they are all the day long in fear of being killed; sinking under that which lies upon them, and yet still trembling for fear of worse, and *looking after those things which are coming upon the world?* when judgment begins at the house of God, it will not end there; it shall be as if all the world were falling in pieces; and where can any be secure then? *The powers of heaven shall be shaken*, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble. Thus shall the present Jewish policy, religion, laws, and government, be all entirely dissolved by a series of unparalleled calamities, attended with the utmost confusion. So Dr. Clarke. But our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions, because at the end of time they shall be literally accomplished, when the *heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll*, and all their powers not only shaken, but broken, and the *earth and all the works that are therein* shall be burnt up, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 12. As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving Jews, so the great day will be to all unbelievers.

VI. He makes this to be a kind of *appearing of the Son of man*; (v. 27) *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory*. The destruction of Jerusalem was in a particular manner an act of Christ's judgment, the judgment committed to the Son of man; his religion could never be thoroughly established but by the destruction of the temple, and the abolishing of the Levitical priesthood and economy, after which even the converted Jews, and many of the Gentiles too, were still hankering, till they were destroyed; so that it might justly be looked upon as a *coming of the Son of man, in power and great glory*; yet not visibly, but in the clouds; for in executing such judgments as these, clouds and darkness are round about him. Now this was, 1. An evidence of the first coming of the Messiah; so some understand it. Then the unbelieving Jews shall be convinced, when it is too late, that Jesus was the Messiah; they that would not see him coming in the power of his grace to save them, shall be made to see him coming in the power of his wrath to destroy them; those that would not have him to reign over them, shall have him to triumph over them. 2. It was an earnest of his second coming. Then in the terrors of that day they shall see the *Son of man coming in a cloud*, and all the terrors of the last day. They shall see a specimen of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible what will that be?

VII. He encourages all the faithful disciples in reference to the terrors of that day; (v. 28.) "*When these things begin to come to pass, when Je-*

Jerusalem is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, *then do you look up*, when others are looking down, look heavenward, in faith, hope, and prayer, and *lift up your heads* with cheerfulness and confidence, *for your redemption draws nigh.*" 1. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; *then had the churches rest.* 2. When he comes to judge the world at the last day, he will *redeem* all that are his from all their grievances. And the foresight of that day is as pleasant to all good christians as it is terrible to the wicked and ungodly. Their death itself is so; when they see that day approaching, they can *lift up their heads with joy*, knowing that *their redemption draws nigh*, their removal to their Redeemer.

VIII. Here is one word of prediction, that looks further than the destruction of the Jewish nation, which is not easily understood; we have it, *v. 24.* that *Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* 1. Some understand it of what is past; so Dr. Hammond. The Gentiles, who have conquered Jerusalem, shall keep possession of it, and shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world is become christian, and then after Jerusalem is rebuilt by Adrian the emperor, with an exclusion of all the Jews from it, many of the Jews shall turn christians, shall join with the Gentile christians, to set up a church in Jerusalem, which shall flourish there for a long time. 2. Others understand it of what is yet to come; so Dr. Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other, for the most part, till the time comes when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

29. And he spake to them a parable: Behold, the fig-tree, and all the trees; 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away. 34. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 37. And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple: and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount of Olives.* 38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Here, in the close of this discourse,

I. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by, if they had an eye to the foregoing directions, with as much certainty and assurance as they could judge of the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, *v. 29—31.* As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. When we see a nation filling up the measure of their iniquity, we may conclude that their ruin is nigh: when we see the ruin of persecuting powers hastening on, we may from thence infer that *the kingdom of God is nigh at hand*, that, when the opposition given to it is removed, it shall gain ground. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons, when second causes have begun to work, so we may in the disposal of events, expect something uncommon, when God is already raised up *out of his holy habitation*; (*Zech. 2. 13.*) *then stand still and see his salvation.*

II. He charges them to look upon those things as neither *doubtful* nor *distant*, (for then they would not make a due impression on them,) but as *sure* and *very near.* The destruction of the Jewish nation, 1. *Was near*; (*v. 32.*) *This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.* There were some now alive, that should see it; some that now heard the prediction of it. 2. It was *sure*, the sentence was irreversible, it was a *consumption determined*, the decree was gone forth; (*v. 33.*) *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than any word of mine: yea, they certainly shall pass away, but my words shall not; whether they take hold or no, they will take effect, and not one of them fall to the ground,"* 1 Sam. 3. 19.

III. He cautions them against security and sensuality, by which they would disfit themselves for the trying times that were coming on, and make them to be a great surprise and terror to them; (*v. 34, 35.*) *Take heed to yourselves.* This is the word of command given to all Christ's disciples, *"Take heed to yourselves, that you be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own corruptions."* Note, We cannot be *safe*, if we be *secure*. It concerns us at all times, but especially at some times, to be very cautious. See here, 1. What our *danger* is—that *the day of death and judgment should come upon us unawares*, when we do not *expect* it, and are not *prepared* for it; lest, when we are called to meet our Lord, that be found the *furthest* thing from our thoughts, which ought always to be laid *nearest* our hearts, lest it *come upon us as a snare*; for so it will come upon the most of men, who dwell upon the earth, and mind earthly things only, and have no converse with heaven; to them it will be *as a snare*; see Eccl. 9. 12. It will be a *terror* and a *destruction* to them; it will put them into an inexpressible fright, and hold them fast for a doom yet more frightful. 2. What our *duty* is, in consideration of this danger; we must *take heed lest our hearts be overcharged*, lest they be burdened and overloaded, and so disfigured and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment. Two things we must watch against, lest our hearts be overcharged with them. (1.) The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing of ourselves in the gratifications of sense to an excess; *Take heed lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*, the immoderate use of meat and drink, which burden the heart not only with the guilt thereby contracted, but by the ill influence which such disorders of the body have upon the mind; they make men dull and lifeless to their duty, dead and listless in their duty; they stupify the conscience, and make the mind *unaffected* with those things that are most *affecting*. (2.) The inordinate pur-

suit of the good things of this world. The heart is overcharged with the *cares of this life*. The former is the snare of those that are given to their pleasures: this is the snare of the men of business, that *will be rich*. We have need to guard on both hands, not only lest at the time when death comes, but lest *at any time*, our hearts should be thus overcharged. Our caution against sin, and our care of our own souls, must be *constant*.

IV. He counsels them to prepare and get ready for this great day, v. 36. Here see, 1. What should be *our aim*—that we may be *accounted worthy to escape all those things*, that, when the judgments of God are abroad, we may be preserved from the malignity of them, that either we may not be involved in the common calamity, or it may not be that to us, that it is to others; that in the day of death we may escape the sting of it, which is the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet we must aim not only to *escape that*, but to *stand before the Son of man*; not only to stand *acquitted* before him as our Judge, (Ps. 1. 5.) to have boldness in the day of Christ, (that is supposed in our *escaping* all those things,) but to *stand before him*, to attend on him as our Master, to stand continually before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple, (Rev. 7. 15.) always to *behold his face*, as the angels, Matth. 18. 10. The saints are here said to be *accounted worthy*, as before, ch. 20. 35. God, by the good work of his grace in them, *makes them meet* for this happiness, and by the good will of his grace toward them, *accounts them worthy* of it: but, as Grotius here saith, a great part of our worthiness lies in an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness. 2. What should be our *actings* in these aims; *Watch therefore, and pray always*. Watching and praying must go together, Neh. 4. 9. Those that would escape the wrath to come, and make sure of the joys to come, must *watch and pray*, and must do it always, must make it the constant business of their lives, (1.) To keep a guard upon themselves; “Watch against sin, watch to every duty, and to the improvement of every opportunity of doing good. Be awake, and keep awake, in expectation of your Lord’s coming, that you may be in a right frame to receive him, and bid him welcome.” (2.) To keep up their communion with God; “*Pray always*; be always in an habitual disposition to that duty; keep up stated times for it, abound in it; pray upon all occasions.” Those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, that live a life of prayer in this world.

In the two last verses we have an account how Christ disposed of himself during those three or four days betwixt his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, and the night in which he was betrayed.

[1.] He was *all day teaching in the temple*. Christ preached on week-days as well as sabbath-days. He was an indefatigable Preacher, he preached in the face of opposition, and in the midst of those that he knew sought occasion against him.

[2.] At night he went out to lodge at a friend’s house, in the mount of Olives, about a mile out of town. It is probable that he had some friends in the city, that would gladly have lodged him, but he was willing to retire in the evening; out of the noise of the town, that he might have more time for secret devotion, now that his hour was at hand.

[3.] Early in the morning he was in the temple again, where he had a morning-lecture for those that were willing to attend it; and the people were forward to hear one that they saw forward to preach; (v. 38.) *They all came early in the morning*, flocking to the temple, like doves to their windows, to *hear him*, though the chief-priests and scribes did all they could to prejudice them against him. Sometimes the taste and relish which serious, honest,

plain people have of good preaching, are more to be valued and judged by than the opinion of the witty and learned; and those in authority.

CHAP. XXII.

All the evangelists, whatever they omit, give us a particular account of the death and resurrection of Christ, because he died for our sins, and rose for our justification: this evangelist, as fully as any, and with many circumstances and passages added, which we had not before. In this chapter we have, I. The plot to take Jesus, and Judas’s coming into it, v. 1. 6. II. Christ’s eating of the passover with his disciples, v. 7. 18. III. The instituting of the Lord’s supper, v. 19, 20. IV. Christ’s discourse with his disciples after supper, upon several heads, v. 21. 38. V. His agony in the garden, v. 39. 46. VI. The apprehending of him by the assistance of Judas, v. 47. 53. VII. Peter’s denying of him, v. 54. 62. VIII. The indignities done to Christ by those that had him in custody, and his trial and condemnation in the ecclesiastical court, v. 63. 71.

1. **N**OW the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover. 2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him, for they feared the people. 3. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. 5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

The *year of the redeemed* is now *come*, which had been from eternity fixed in the divine counsels, and long looked for by them that waited for the consolation of Israel; after the revolutions of many ages, it is at length *come*, Isa. 63. 4. And it is observable, it is in the very *first month* of that year that the redemption is wrought out, so much in haste was the Redeemer to perform his undertaking, so was he *straitened* till it was *accomplished*. It was in the same month, and at the same time of the month, (in the *beginning of months*, Exod. 12. 2.) that God by Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, that the Antitype might answer the type. Christ is here delivered up, *when the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh*, v. 1. About as long before that feast as they began to make preparation for it, here was preparation a making for our Passover’s being offered for us.

1. Here we have his sworn enemies contriving it; (v. 2.) *the chief priests*, men of sanctity, and the scribes, men of learning, *seeking how they might kill him*, either by force or fraud: could they have had their will, it had been soon done, but they *feared the people*, and the more, for what they now saw of their diligent attendance upon his preaching.

II. A treacherous disciple joining in with them, and coming to their assistance, Judas surnamed *Iscariot*; he is here said to be *of the number of the twelve*, that dignified, distinguished number. One would wonder that Christ, who *knew* all men, should take a traitor into *that number*; and that one of *that number*, who could not but *know Christ*, should be so base as to betray him; but Christ had wise and holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple, and how he who knew Christ so well, yet came to betray him, we are here told, v. 3. *Satan entered into Judas*. It was the devil’s work, who thought hereby to ruin Christ’s undertaking, to have broken his head; but it proved only the bruising of his heel. Whoever betrays Christ, or his truths, or ways, it

is Satan that puts him upon it. Judas knew how desirous the chief priests were to get Christ into their hands, and that they could not do it safely without the assistance of some that knew his retirements, as he did. He therefore went himself, and made the motion to them, *v. 4.* Note, It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom by the power and policy of its open enemies, or by the treachery and self-seeking of its pretended friends: nay, without the latter its enemies could not gain their point as they do. When you see Judas communing with the *chief priests*, be sure some mischief is in hatching; it is for no good that they are laying their heads together.

The issue of the treaty between them is, 1. That Judas must *betray Christ to them*, must bring them to a place where they might seize him without danger of tumult—and this they would be *glad of*. 2. They must give him a sum of money for doing it—and that he would be glad of, (*v. 5.*) *They covenanted to give him money.* When the bargain was made, Judas sought *opportunity to betray him*. Probably he slyly enquired of Peter and John, who were more intimate with their Master than he was, where he would be at such a time, and whither he would retire after the passover, and they were not sharp enough to suspect him. Somehow or other, in a little time, he gained the advantage he sought, and fixed the time and place where it might be done, *in the absence of the multitude and without tumult.*

7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, When ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water: follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

What a hopeful prospect had we of Christ's doing a great deal of good by his preaching in the temple, during the feast of unleavened bread which continued seven days, when the people were *every morning, and early in the morning*, so attentive to hear him! But here is a step put to it. He must enter upon work of another kind; in that, however, he shall do more good than in the other, for neither Christ's nor his church's suffering days are their idle, empty days.

Now here we have,

1. The preparation that was made for Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, upon the very day of unleavened bread, *when the passover must be killed* according to the law, *v. 7.* Christ was made under the law, and observed the ordinances of it, particularly that of the passover, to teach us in like manner to observe his gospel-institutions, particularly that of the Lord's supper, and not to neglect them. It is probable that he went to the temple to preach in the morning, when he sent Peter and John another way into the city to *prepare the passover*. These who have attendants about them, to do their secular business for them in a great measure, must not think that that *allows* them to be idle; it *engages* them to employ themselves more in *spiritual* business, or service to the public. He directed those whom he employed, whither they should go; (*v. 9, 10.*) *they must follow a man bearing a pitcher of water*, and he must be their guide to the house. Christ could have described the house to them, probably it was a house they knew, and he might have said no more than, Go to such a one's house, or to a house in such a street, with such a sign, &c. But he directed them thus, to teach them to depend upon the conduct of Providence, and to follow that, *step by step*. They went, not knowing *whither they went*, but *whom they followed*. Being come to the house, they must desire the master of the house to show them a room, (*v. 11.*) and he will readily do it, *v. 12.* Whether it was a friend's house, or a public house, does not appear; but the disciples found their guide, and the house and the room, just as he had said to them; (*v. 13.*) for they need not fear a disappointment, who go upon Christ's word; according to the orders given them, they got every thing in readiness for the *passover*, *v. 11.*

II. The solemnizing of the passover, according to the law. When the hour was come that they should go to supper, *he sat down*, it is likely, at the head-end of the table, and the *twelve apostles with him*, Judas not excepted; for it is possible that they whose hearts are filled with Satan, and all manner of wickedness, may yet continue a plausible profession of religion, and be found in the performance of its external services. And while it is in the heart, and does not break out into any thing scandalous, such cannot be denied the external privileges of their external profession. Though Judas has already been guilty of an *overt-act* of treason, yet, it not being publicly known, Christ admits him to sit down with the rest at the passover. Now observe,

1. How Christ *bids this passover welcome*, to teach us in like manner to welcome his passover, the Lord's supper, and to come to it with an appetite; (*v. 15.*) "*With desire I have desired, I have most earnestly desired, to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*" He knew it was to be the prologue to his sufferings, and therefore he desired it, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He *delighted* to do even this part of the *will of God* concerning him as Mediator. Shall we be *backward* to any service for him who was so *forward* in the work of our salvation? See the love he had to his disciples; he desired to eat it *with them*, that he and they might have a little

time together; themselves and none besides, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem, but on this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to *eat this passover with them before he suffered*, as if the comfort of that would carry him the more cheerfully through his sufferings, and make them the easier to him. Note, Our gospel passover, eaten by faith with Jesus Christ, will be an excellent preparation for sufferings, and trials, and death itself.

2. How Christ in it *takes his leave of all passovers*, thereby signifying his abrogating of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which that of the passover was one of the *earliest* and one of the most *eminent*; (v. 16.) "*I will not any more eat thereof, nor shall it be any more celebrated by my disciples, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*" (1.) It was fulfilled when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And therefore that type and shadow was laid aside, because now in the *kingdom of God* the substance was come, which superseded them. (2.) It was fulfilled in the *Lord's supper*, an ordinance of the gospel-kingdom, in which the passover had its accomplishment, and which the disciples, after the pouring out of the Spirit, did frequently celebrate, as we find, Acts 2. 42, 46. They ate of it, and Christ might be said to eat with them because of the spiritual communion they had with him in that ordinance. He is said to *sup with them*, and *they with him*, Rev. 3. 20. But, (3.) The complete accomplishment of that commemoration of liberty will be in the kingdom of glory, when all God's spiritual Israel shall be released from the bondage of death and sin, and be put in possession of the land of promise.

What he had said of his eating of the paschal-lamb, he repeats concerning his drinking of the *passover-wine*; the cup of *blessing*, or of thanksgiving, in which all the company pledged the Master of the feast, at the close of the passover-supper. This cup, *he took*, according to the custom, and *gave thanks* for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born, and then said, *Take this, and divide it among yourselves*, v. 17. This is not said afterward of the sacramental cup; that being, probably, of much more weight and value, being the *New Testament in his blood*, he might give that into every one's hand, to teach them to make a particular application of it to their own souls; but as for the paschal-cup which is to be abolished, it is enough to say, "*Take it, and divide it among yourselves*, do what you will with it, for we shall have no more occasion for it, v. 18. *I will not drink of the fruit of the vine any more*; I will not have it any more drunk of, *till the kingdom of God shall come*, till the Spirit be poured out, and then you shall in the *Lord's supper* commemorate a much more glorious redemption; of which both the deliverance out of Egypt and the passover-commemoration of it were types and figures. The kingdom of God is now so near being set up, that you will not need to eat or drink any more till it comes." Christ dying next day, opened it. As Christ with a great deal of pleasure took leave of all the legal feasts (which fell of course with the passover) for the evangelical ones, both spiritual and sacramental; so many good christians, when they are called to remove from the church militant to that which is triumphant, cheerfully exchange even their spiritual repasts, much more their sacramental ones, for the eternal feast.

III. The institution of the Lord's supper, v. 19, 20. The *passover* and the *deliverance* out of Egypt were *typical and prophetic signs* of a Christ to come, who should by dying deliver us from sin and death, and the tyranny of Satan; but they shall no more say, *The Lord liveth, that brought us up out of the*

land of Egypt, a much greater deliverance shall eclipse the lustre of that, and therefore the Lord's supper is instituted to be a commemorative sign or memorial of a Christ already come, that *has* by dying delivered us; and it is his death that is in a special manner set before us in that ordinance.

1. The *breaking of Christ's body*, as a *sacrifice for us*, is here commemorated by the *breaking of bread*: and the sacrifices under the law were called the *bread of our God*; (Lev. 21. 6, 8, 17.) *This is my body which is given for you*. And there is a feast upon that sacrifice instituted, in which we are to apply it to ourselves, and to take the benefit and comfort of it; this bread that was given for us, is given to us to be food to our souls, for nothing can be more *nourishing* and *satisfying* to our souls than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of our interest in that atonement; this bread that was *broken and given for us*, to satisfy for the guilt of our sins, is *broken and given to us*, to satisfy the desire of our souls. And this we do in *remembrance* of what he did for us, when he died for us, and for a *memorial* of what we *do*, in making ourselves *partakers of him*, and joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant; like the stone Joshua set up for a *witness*, Josh. 24. 27.

2. The *shedding of Christ's blood*, by which the atonement was made, (for the *blood made atonement for the soul*, Lev. 17. 11.) as represented by the wine in the cup; and that cup of wine is a sign and token of the New Testament, or new covenant, made with us. It *commemorates* the purchase of the covenant by the blood of Christ, and *confirms* the promises of the covenant, which are all *Yea* and *Amen* in him. This will be reviving and refreshing to our souls, as wine that *makes glad the heart*. In all our commemorations of the shedding of Christ's blood, we must have an eye to it as shed for us; we need it, we take hold of it, we hope to have benefit by it; *who loved me, and gave himself for me*. And in all our regards to the New Testament, we must have an eye to the *blood of Christ* which gave life and being to it, and seals to us all the promises of it. Had it not been for the blood of Christ, we had never had the New Testament; and had it not been for the New Testament, we had never known the meaning of Christ's blood shed.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors. 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath ap-

poured unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. 34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper, much of which is new here; and in St. John's gospel we shall find more that is new still. We should take example from him, to entertain and edify our family and friends with such discourse at table as is good, and to the use of edifying, which may minister grace to the hearers; but especially after we have been at the Lord's table, by christian conference to keep one another in a suitable frame. The matters Christ here discoursed of, were of weight, and to the present purpose.

1. He discoursed with them concerning him that should betray him, who was now present.

1. He signifies to them that the traitor was now among them, and one of them, *v. 21.* By the placing of this after the institution of the Lord's supper, which in Matthew and Mark is placed before it, it seems plain that Judas did receive the Lord's supper, did eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; for after the solemnity was over, Christ said, Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table. There have been those that have eaten bread with Christ, and yet have betrayed him.

2. He foretells that the treason would take effect; (*v. 22.*) Truly the Son of man goes, as it was determined; goes to the place where he will be betrayed; for he is delivered up by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, else Judas could not have delivered him up. Christ was not driven to his sufferings, but cheerfully went to them. He said, Lo, I come.

3. He threatens the traitor; Woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. Note, Neither the patience of the saints under their sufferings, nor the counsel of God concerning their sufferings, will be any excuse for those that have any hand in their sufferings, or that persecute them. Though God has determined that Christ shall be betrayed, and he himself was cheerfully submitted to it, yet Judas's sin or punishment is not at all the less.

4. He frightens the rest of the disciples into a suspicion of themselves, by saying that it was one of them, and not naming which; (*v. 23.*) They began to enquire among themselves, to interrogate themselves, to put the question to themselves, who it was that should do this thing, that could be so base to so good a Master. The inquiry was not, Is it you? or Is it such a one? but, Is it I?

II. Concerning the strife that was among them for precedency or supremacy.

1. See what the dispute was; Which of them should be accounted the greatest? Such and so many contests among the disciples for dignity and dominion before the Spirit was poured upon them, were a sad presage of the like strifes for, and affections of, supremacy in the churches, after the Spirit should be provoked to depart from them. How inconsistent is this with that in the verse before! There they were enquiring which could be the traitor, and here which should be the prince. Could such an instance of humility, and such an instance of pride and vanity, be found in the same men, so near together? This is like sweet waters and bitter, proceeding at the same place out of the same fountain. What a self-contradiction is the deceitful heart of man!

2. See what Christ said to this dispute. He was not sharp upon them, as might have been expected, (he having so often reprov'd them, for this very thing,) but mildly showed them the sin and folly of it.

(1.) This was to make themselves like the kings of the Gentiles, that affect worldly pomp, and with worldly power, *v. 25.* They exercise lordship over their subjects, and are ever and anon striving to exercise lordship too over the princes, that are about them, though as good as themselves, if they think them not so strong as themselves. Note, the exercising of lordship better becomes the kings of the Gentiles than the ministers of Christ. But observe, They that exercise authority, and take upon themselves to bear sway, and give law, they are called Benefactors—*Euergetas*: they call themselves so, and so their flatterers call them, and those that set themselves to serve their interests. It is pretended, that they have been benefactors, and upon that account they should be admitted to have rule; nay, that in exercising authority they are benefactors; however they really serve themselves, they would be thought to serve their country. One of the Ptolemies was surnamed *Euergetes*—The Benefactor. Now our Saviour, by taking notice of this, intimates, [1.] That to do good is much more honourable than to look great; for these princes that were the terror of the mighty, would not be called so, but rather the benefactors of the needy; so that, by their own confession, a benefactor to his country is much more valued than a ruler of his country. [2.] That to do good is the surest way to be great, else they that aimed to be rulers would not have been so solicitous to be called Benefactors: this therefore he would have his disciples believe, that their greatest honour would be to do all the good they could in the world. They would indeed be benefactors to the world, by bringing the gospel to it. Let them value themselves upon that title, which they would indeed be entitled to, and then they need not strive which should be the greatest, for they would all be greater; greater blessings to mankind than the kings of the earth, that exercise lordship over them. If they have that which is confessedly the greater honour of being benefactors, let them despise the lesser, of being rulers.

(2.) It was to make themselves unlike the disciples of Christ, and unlike Christ himself; (*v. 26, 27.*) Ye shall not be so. It was never intended that ye should rule any otherwise than by the power of

truth and grace, but that you should *serve*." When church-rulers affect external pomp and power, and bear up themselves by secular interests and influences, they debase their office, and it is an instance of degeneracy like that of Israel when they would have a king like the nations that were round about them, whereas the Lord was their King.

See here, [1.] What is the rule Christ gave to his disciples; He that is *greater among you*, that is *senior*, to whom precedency is due upon the account of his age, let him be as the *younger*, both in point of *lowliness of place*, (let him condescend to sit with the younger, and be free and familiar with them,) and in point of *labour and work*. We say, *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores*—Let the young work, and the aged receive their honours. But let the elder take pains as well as the younger; their age and honour, instead of warranting them to take their ease, bind them to double work. And he that is *chief*, the ἡγούμενος—the president of the college or assembly, let him be as he that serves, ὡς ὁ δουλὸς—as the *deacon*, let him stoop to the meanest and most toilsome services for the public good, if there be occasion.

[2.] What was the example which he himself gave to this rule; *Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth*? He that attendeth, or he that is attended on? Now Christ was among his disciples, just like one that waited at table; he was so far from *taking state*, or *taking his ease*, by commanding their attendance upon him, that he was ready to do any office of kindness and service for them; witness his *washing* of their feet. Shall they take upon them the form of princes, who call themselves followers of him that *took upon him the form of a servant*?

(3.) They ought not to strive for worldly honour and grandeur, because he had better honours in reserve for them, of another nature, a *kingdom*, a *feast*, a *throne*, for each of them, wherein they should be all share and share alike, and should have no occasion to strive for precedency, v. 28—30. Where observe,

[1.] The commendation Christ gives of the disciples for their faithfulness to him; and this was honour enough for them, they needed not to strive for any greater. It is spoken with an air of encomium and applause: "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, ye are they who have stood by me, and stuck to me, when others have deserted me, and turned their backs upon me." Christ had his temptations; he was despised and rejected of men, reproached and reviled, and endured the contradiction of sinners. But his disciples continued with him, and were afflicted in all his afflictions. It was but little help that they could give him, or service that they could do him; but however, he took it kindly that they *continued with him*, and he here owns their kindness, though it was by the assistance of his own grace that they did continue. Christ's disciples had been very defective in their duty, we find them guilty of many mistakes and weaknesses, they were very dull and very forgetful, and often blundered, yet their Master had passed all by, and forgotten it, does not upbraid them with their infirmities, but gives them this memorable testimonial, *Ye are they who have continued with me*. Thus does he praise at parting, to show how willing he is to make the best of those whose hearts he knows to be upright within them.

[2.] The recompense he designed them for their fidelity; *I appoint*, διατίθεμαι, *I bequeath unto you a kingdom*. Or thus, *I appoint to you, as my Father has appointed a kingdom to me, that ye may eat and drink at my table*. Understand it,

First, Of what should be done for them in this world. God gave his Son a *kingdom among men*,

the gospel-church, of which he is the living, quickening, ruling Head; this *kingdom* he *appointed* to his apostles and their successors in the ministry of the gospel, that they should enjoy the comforts and privileges of the gospel, help to communicate them to others by gospel-ordinances, sit on thrones as officers of the church, not only declaratively, but as exhortatively *judging the tribes of Israel*, that persist in their infidelity, and denouncing the wrath of God against them, and ruling the gospel-Israel, the spiritual Israel, by the instituted discipline of the church, administered with gentleness and love. This is the honour reserved for you. Or,

Secondly, Of what should be done for them in the other world; which I take to be chiefly meant. Let them go on in their services in this world, their preferences shall be in the other world. God will give them the *kingdom*, in which they shall be sure to have, 1. *The richest dainties*; for they shall *eat and drink at Christ's table in his kingdom*, of which he had spoken, v. 16, 18. They shall partake of those joys and pleasures which were the recompense of his services and sufferings. They shall have a full satisfaction of soul in the vision and fruition of God; and herein they shall have the best society, as at a feast, in the perfection of love. 2. *The highest dignities*; "You shall not only be provided for at the royal table, as Mephibosheth at David's, but you shall be preferred to the royal throne: shall sit down with me on my throne, Rev. 3. 21. In the great day you shall sit on thrones, as assessors with Christ, to approve of and applaud his judgment of the twelve tribes of Israel." If the saints shall judge the world, (1 Cor. 6. 2.) much more the church.

III. Concerning Peter's denying of him. And in this part of the discourse we may observe,

1. The general notice Christ gives to Peter of the devil's design upon him and the rest of the apostles; (v. 31.) *The Lord said, Simon, Simon, observe what I say; Satan has desired to have you, to have you all in his hands, that he may sift you as wheat*. Peter who used to be the mouth of the rest in speaking to Christ, is here made the ear of the rest; and what is designed for warning to them all, (*All you shall be offended because of me*.) is directed to Peter, because he was principally concerned, being in a particular manner struck at by the tempter; *Satan has desired to have you*. Probably, Satan had accused the disciples to God, as mercenary in following Christ, and aiming at nothing else therein but enriching and advancing themselves in this world, as he accused Job. "No," saith God, "they are honest men, and men of integrity." "Give me leave to try them," saith Satan, "and Peter particularly." He desired to have them, *that he might sift them*, that he might show them to be chaff, and not wheat. The troubles that were now coming upon them, were *sifting*, would try what there was in them; but that was not all, Satan desired to sift them by his temptations, and endeavouring by those troubles to draw them into sin; to put them into a loss and hurry, as corn when it is sifted to bring the chaff uppermost, or rather to shake out the wheat, and leave nothing but the chaff. Observe, Satan could not sift them unless God gave him leave; he desired to have them, as he begged of God a permission to try and tempt Job. Εἰς πειρασμόν—"He hath challenged you, has undertaken to prove you a company of hypocrites, and Peter especially, the forward of you." Some suggest that Satan demanded leave to sift them, as their punishment for striving who should be greatest, in which contest Peter perhaps was very warm; "Leave them to me, to sift them for it."

2. The particular encouragement he gave to Peter, in reference to this trial; *"I have prayed for thee; because, though he desires to have them all,*

he is permitted to make his strongest onset upon thee only, thou wilt be most violently assaulted; but *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, that it may not totally and finally fail." Note, (1.) If faith be kept up in an hour of temptation, though we may fall, yet we shall not be utterly cast down. Faith will quench Satan's fiery darts. (2.) Though there may be many failings in the faith of true believers, yet there shall not be a total and final failure of their faith. It is their seed, their root remaining in them. (3.) It is owing to the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ that the faith of his disciples, though sometimes sadly shaken, yet is not sunk. If they were left to themselves, they would fail; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The intercession of Christ is not only general, for all that believe, but for particular believers, I have prayed for thee, which is an encouragement for us to pray for ourselves, and an engagement upon us to pray for others too.

3. The charge he gives to Peter to help others as he should himself be helped of God; "*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*; when thou art recovered by the grace of God, and brought to repentance, do what thou canst to recover others; when thou hast found thy faith kept from failing, labour to confirm the faith of others, and to establish them; when thou hast found mercy with God thyself, encourage others to hope that they also shall find mercy." Note, (1.) Those that are fallen into sin, must be converted from it; those that have turned aside, must return; those that have left their first love, must do their first works. (2.) Those that through grace are converted from sin, must do what they can to strengthen their brethren that stand, and to prevent their falling; see Ps. 51. 11—13. 1 Tim. 1. 13.

4. Peter's declared resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever it cost him; (v. 33.) *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death*. This was a great word, and yet I believe no more than he thought at this time, and thought he should make good too. Judas never protested thus against denying Christ, though often warned of it; for his heart was as fully set in him to the evil as Peter's was against it. Note, All the true disciples of Christ sincerely desire and design to follow him, whithersoever he goes, and whithersoever he leads them, though into a prison, though out of the world.

5. Christ's express prediction of his denying him thrice; (v. 34.) "*I tell thee, Peter, (thou dost not know thine own heart, but must be left to thyself a little, that thou mayest know it, and mayest never trust to it again,) the cock shall not crow this day, before thou even deny that thou knowest me*." Note, Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and knows the evil that is in us, and will be done by us, which we ourselves do not suspect. It is well for us that Christ knows where we are weak better than we do, and therefore where to come in with grace sufficient; that he knows how far a temptation will prevail, and therefore when to say, *Hitherto shall it come, and no further*.

IV. Concerning the condition of all the disciples.

1. He appeals to them concerning what had been, v. 35. He had owned that they had been faithful servants to him, v. 28. Now he expects, at parting, that they should acknowledge that he had been a kind and careful Master to them ever since they left all to follow him; *When I sent you without purse, lacked you any thing?* (1.) He owns that he had sent them out in a very poor and bare condition, bare-foot, and no money in their purses, because they were not to go far, nor be out long; and he would thus teach them to depend upon the providence of God, and, under that, upon the kindness of their friends. If God thus sends us out into the

world, let us remember that better than we have thus begun low. (2.) Yet he will have them own that, notwithstanding this, they had lacked nothing; they then lived as plentifully and comfortably as ever; and they readily acknowledged it; "*At things, Lord, I have all, and abound*." Note, [1.] It is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and to observe how we have got through the straits and difficulties we have met with. [2.] Christ is a good Master, and his service a good service; for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will not he leave them. *Jehovah-jireh*. [3.] We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful, if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had neither dainties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contribution, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned, to their Master's honour, that it was sufficient, they had wanted nothing.

2. He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching. For,

(1.) He that was their Master, was now entering upon his suffering, which he had often foretold; (v. 37.) "*Now that which is written, must be fulfilled in me, that among the rest, He was numbered among the transgressors*; he must suffer and die as a malefactor, and in company with some of the vilest of malefactors. This is that which is yet to be accomplished, after all the rest, and then the things concerning me, the things written concerning me, will have an end; then I shall say, *It is finished*." Note, It may be the comfort of suffering Christians, as it was of a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and determined in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly determine in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and they will have an end, and will end well, everlastingly well.

(2.) They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think now to have such an easy fair life as they had had; no, the scene will alter. They must now in some degree suffer with their Master; and when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his Lord. [1.] They must not now expect that their friends would be so kind and generous to them as they had been; and therefore, *He that has a purse, let him take it*, for he may have occasion for it, and for all the good husbandry he can use. [2.] They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them than they had been, and they would need magazines as well as stores; *He that has no sword* wherewith to defend himself against robbers and assassins, (2 Cor. 11. 26.) will find a great want of it, and will be ready to wish, some time or other, that he had sold his garment, and bought one. This is intended only to show that the times will be very perilous, so that no man would think himself safe if he had not a sword by his side. But the sword of the Spirit is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. *Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves* with the same mind, (1 Pet. 4. 1.) arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no contradiction in us to it: and then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon inquire what strength they had, and find they had among them *two swords*, (v. 38.) of which one was Peter's. The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples wearing of them. But how little he would have them depend upon that, he intimates when he saith,

It is enough; which, some think, is spoken ironically; "Two swords among twelve men, you are bravely armed indeed, when our enemies are now coming out against us in great multitudes, and every one a sword!" Yet two swords are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the *Shield of their help and the Sword of their excellency*, Deut. 32. 29.

39. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed. 42. Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. 45. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

We have here the awful story of Christ's *agony in the garden*, just before he was betrayed, which was largely related by the other evangelists. In it Christ *accommodated himself* to that part of his undertaking which he was now entering upon—the making of *his soul an offering for sin*. He afflicted his own soul with grief for the sin he was to satisfy for, and an apprehension of the wrath of God to which man had by sin made himself obnoxious, which he was pleased as a Sacrifice to admit the impressions of, the consuming of a sacrifice with fire from heaven, being the surest token of its acceptance. In it Christ entered the lists with the powers of darkness, gave them all the advantages they could desire, and yet conquered them.

That which we have here in this story, which we had before, is, 1. That, when Christ went out, though it was in the night, and a long walk, yet *his disciples followed him*, eleven of them, for Judas had given them the slip. Having continued with him hitherto in his temptations, they would not leave him now. 2. That he went to the place *where he was wont* to be private, which intimates that Christ accustomed himself to retirement, was often alone, to teach us to be so, for freedom of converse with God and our own hearts. Though Christ had no convenience for retirement but a garden, yet he retired. This should particularly be our practice after we have been at the Lord's table; we have then work to do, which requires us to be private. 3. That he exhorted his disciples *to pray* that though the approaching trial could not be avoided, yet that they might not in it *enter into temptation* to sin; that when they were in the greatest fright and danger, yet they might not have any inclination to desert Christ, nor take a step towards it; "Pray that ye may be *kept from sin*." 4. That he withdrew from them, and prayed himself; he had their errands at the throne of grace, and he had his, and therefore it was fit that they should pray separately, as sometimes, when they had joint errands, they prayed together. He withdrew about a *stone's cast* fur-

ther into the garden, which some reckon about fifty or sixty paces, and there he *kneeled down*, (so it is here,) upon the bare ground; but the other evangelists say, that afterward he *fell on his face*, and there *prayed* that, if it were the will of God, this cup of suffering, this bitter cup, might be *removed from him*. This was the language of that innocent dread of suffering, which, being really and truly Man, he could not but have in his nature. 5. That he, knowing it to be his Father's will that he should suffer and die, and that, as the matter was now settled, it was necessary for our redemption and salvation, presently withdrew that petition, did not insist upon it, but resigned himself to his heavenly Father's will; "*Nevertheless not my will be done*; not the will of my human nature, but the will of God as it is written concerning me in the volume of the book, *which I delight to do*, let that be done," Ps. 40. 7. 6. That his disciples were *asleep* when he was at prayer, and when they should have been themselves praying, v. 45. When he *rose from prayer*, he *found them sleeping*, unconcerned in his sorrows: but see what a favourable construction is here put upon it, which we had not in the other evangelists—they were *sleeping for sorrow*. The great sorrow they were in upon the mournful farewells their Master had been this evening giving them, had exhausted their spirits, and made them very dull and heavy, which (it being now late) disposed them to sleep. This teaches us to make the best of our brethren's infirmities, and if there be one cause better than another, charitably impute them to that. 7. That when he awakened them, then he exhorted them to pray; (v. 46.) "*Why sleep ye? Why do ye allow yourselves to sleep? Rise and pray. Shake off your drowsiness, that ye may be fit to pray, and pray for grace*, that ye may be able to *shake off* your drowsiness." This was like the ship-master's call to Jonah in a storm; (Jon. 1. 6.) *Arise, call upon thy God*. When we find ourselves either by our outward circumstances or our inward dispositions entering into temptation, it concerns us to *rise and pray*, Lord, help me in this *time of need*.

But here are three things in this passage which we had not in the other evangelists.

I. That, when Christ was in his agony, *there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him*, v. 43. 1. It was an instance of the deep humiliation of our Lord Jesus, that he *needed* the assistance of an angel, and would *admit* it. The influence of the divine nature withdrew for the present, and then, as to his human nature, he was for a little while *lower than the angels*, and was capable of receiving help from them. 2. When he was not delivered from his sufferings, yet he was *strengthened* and supported under them, and that was *equivalent*. If God proportion the shoulders to the burden, we shall have no reason to complain, whatever he is pleased to lay upon us. David owns this a sufficient *answer to his prayer*, in the day of trouble, that God strengthened him with strength in his soul, and so does the Son of David, Ps. 138. 3. The angels ministered to the Lord Jesus in his sufferings. He could have had legions of them to rescue him; nay, this one could have done it, could have chased and conquered the whole band of men that came to take him; but he made use of his ministration only to *strengthen him*; and the very visit which this angel made him now in his grief, when his enemies were awake and his friends asleep, was such a seasonable token of the divine favour as would be a very great strengthening to him. Yet this was not all; he, probably, *said something to him, to strengthen him*; put him in mind that his sufferings were in order to his Father's glory, to his own glory, and to the salvation of those that were given him, represented to him the *joy set before him, the seed he should see*; with

these and the like suggestions he encouraged him to go on cheerfully; and what is comforting, is strengthening. Perhaps he *did something to strengthen him*, wiped away his sweat and tears, perhaps ministered some cordial to him, as after his temptation, or, it may be, took him by the arm, and helped him off the ground, or bore him up when he was ready to faint away; and in these services of the angel, the holy Spirit was *ἐνδύων δύναμιν*—*putting strength into him*; for so the word signifies. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him* indeed; yet *did he plead against him with his great power?* No, but he *put strength in him*, (Job 23. 6.) as he had promised, Ps. 89. 21. Isa. 49. 8.—50. 7.

II. That, *being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly*, v. 44. As his sorrow and trouble grew upon him, he grew more importunate in prayer; not that there was before any coldness or indifference in his prayers, but there was now a greater vehemency in them, which was expressed in his voice and gesture. Note, Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable when we are in an agony; and the stronger our agonies are, the more lively and frequent our prayers should be. Now it was that Christ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, (Heb. 5. 7.) and in his fear *wrestled*, as Jacob with the angel.

III. That, in this agony, *his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*. Sweat came in with sin, and was a branch of the curse, Gen. 3. 19. And therefore when Christ was made Sin and a Curse for us, he underwent a grievous sweat, that in the sweat of his face we might eat bread, and that he might sanctify and sweeten all our trials to us. It is some dispute among the critics, whether this sweat is only compared to drops of blood, being much thicker than drops of sweat commonly are, the pores of the body being more than ordinarily opened; or, that *real* blood out of the capillary veins mingled with it, so that it was in colour like blood, and might truly be called a *bloody sweat*; the matter is not great. Some reckon this one of the times when Christ *shed his blood* for us, for without shedding of blood there is no remission. Every pore was as it were a bleeding wound, and his blood stained all his raiment. This showed the travail of his soul. He was now abroad in the open air, in a cool season, upon the cold ground, far in the night, which, one would think, had been enough to strike in a sweat; yet now he breaks out into a sweat, which bespeaks the extremity of the agony he was in.

47. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50. And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53. When I was daily with you in the tem-

ple ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Satan, finding himself baffled in his attempt to terrify our Lord Jesus, and so to put him out of the possession of his own soul, betakes himself (according to his usual method) to force and arms, and brings a party into the field to seize him, and Satan was in them. Here is,

I. The marking of him by Judas. Here a numerous party appears, and Judas at the head of them, for he was *guide to them that took Jesus*; they knew not where to find him, but he brought them to the place: when they were there, they knew not which was he; but Judas told them that whomever he should kiss, that same was he; so he *drew near to him to kiss him*, according to the wonted freedom and familiarity which our Lord Jesus admitted his disciples to. Luke takes notice of the question Christ asked him, which we have not in the other evangelists; *Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* What! Is that the signal? v. 48. Must the Son of man be *betrayed*, as if any thing could be concealed from him, and a plot carried on against him unknown to him? Must one of his own disciples betray him, as if he had been a hard Master to them, or deserved ill at their hands? Must he be betrayed with a kiss? Must the badge of friendship be the instrument of treachery? Was ever a love-token so desecrated and abused? Note, Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed, and betrayed with a kiss, by those that profess relation to him, and an affection for him. Those do so, who, under pretence of zeal for his honour, persecute his servants, who, under the cloak of a seeming affection for the honour of free-grace, give a blow to the root of holiness and strictness of conversation. Many instances there are of Christ's being betrayed with a kiss, by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. It were well if their own consciences would put this question to them, which Christ here puts to Judas, *Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?* And will he not resent it? Will he not revenge it?

II. The effort which his disciples made for his protection; (v. 49.) *When they saw what would follow*, that those armed men were come to seize him, they said, "*Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*" Thou didst allow us to have two swords, shall we now make use of them? Never was there more occasion; and to what purpose should we have them, if we do not use them?" They asked the question, as if they would not have drawn the sword without commission from their Master, but they were in too much haste and too much heat to stay for an answer. But Peter, aiming at the head of one of the servants of the High Priest, missed his blow, and cut off his right ear. As Christ by throwing them to the ground, that came to take him, showed what he could have done, so Peter, by this exploit, showed what he could have done too in so good a cause if he had had leave. The other evangelists tell us what was the check Christ gave to Peter for it. Luke here tells us, 1. How Christ excused the blow; *Suffer ye thus far*, v. 51. Dr. Whitby thinks he said this to his enemies who came to take him, to qualify them, that they might not be provoked by it to fall upon the disciples, whom he had undertaken the preservation of; "*Pass by this injury and affront, it was without warrant from me, and there shall not be another blow struck.*" Though Christ had power to have struck them down, and struck them dead, yet he *speaks them fair*, and as it were, *begs their pardon* for an assault made upon them by one of his followers, to teach us to give good words even to our enemies. 2. How he cured the wound,

which was more than amends sufficient for the injury; *He touched his ear and healed him*; fastened his ear on again, that he might not so much as go away stigmatized, though he well deserved it. Christ hereby gave them a proof, (1.) Of his power. He that could *heal*, could *destroy* if he pleased, which should have obliged them in interest to submit to him. Had they returned the blow upon Peter, he would immediately have healed him; and what could not a small regiment do, that had such a Surgeon to it, immediately to help the *sick* and *wounded*? (2.) Of his mercy and goodness. Christ here gave an illustrious example to his own rule of *doing good to them that hate us*, as afterward he did of *praying for them that despitefully use us*. Those who render good for evil, do as Christ did. One would have thought that this generous piece of kindness should have overcome them, that such coals, heaped on their heads, should have melted them, that they could not have bound him as a Malefactor, who had approved himself such a Benefactor; but their hearts were hardened.

III. Christ's expostulation with the officers of the detachment that came to apprehend him, to show what an absurd thing it was for them to make all this rout and noise, *v. 52, 53*. Matthew relates it, as said to the *multitude*; Luke tells us that it was said to the *chief priests and captains of the temple*, who commanded the several orders of the priests, and therefore are here put between the *chief priests* and the *elders*, so that they were all ecclesiastics, retainers to the temple, who were employed in this odious piece of service; and some of the first rank too disparaged themselves so far as to be seen in it.

Now see here,

1. How Christ *reasons* with them concerning their proceedings. What occasion was there for them to come out in the dead of the night, and *with swords and staves*? (1.) They knew that he was one that would not *resist*, or raise the mob against them, he never had done any thing like that. Why then *are ye come out as against a thief*? (2.) They knew he was one that would not *abscond*, for he was daily with them in the temple, in the midst of them, and never sought to conceal himself, nor did they offer to lay hands on him. Before his hour was come, it was folly for them to think to take him; and when his hour was come, it was folly for them to make all this ado to take him.

2. How he reconciles himself to their proceedings; and this we had not before; "*But this is your hour, and the power of darkness*." How hard soever it may seem that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined; this is the hour *allowed you* to have your will against me, there is an hour *appointed me* to reckon for it. Now the *power of darkness*, Satan, *ruler of the darkness of this world*, is permitted to do his worst, to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, and I resolve to acquiesce; let him do his worst. *The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day, his hour, is coming*," Ps. 37. 13. Let this quiet us under the prevalency of the church's enemies; let it quiet us in a dying hour, that, (1.) It is but an *hour* that is permitted for the triumph of our adversary, a short time, a limited time. (2.) It is *their hour*, which is appointed them, and in which they are permitted to try their strength, that Omnipotence may be the more glorified in their fall. (3.) It is the *power of darkness* that *rides master*, and darkness must give way to light, and the power of darkness be made to truckle to the Prince of light. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be so too.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's

house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean. 60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the melancholy story of Peter's denying his Master, at the time when he was arraigned before the High Priest, with those that were of the *cabal*, that were ready to receive the prey, and to prepare the evidence of his arraignment, *as soon as it was day*, before the great Sanhedrim, *v. 66*. But notice is not taken here, as was in the other evangelists, of Christ's being now upon his examination before the High Priest, only of his being brought into the *High Priest's house*, *v. 54*. But the manner of expression is observable; they *took him*, and *led him*, and *brought him*, which methinks is like that concerning Saul, (1 Sam. 15. 13.) *He is gone about, and passed on, and gone down*; and intimates that, even when they had seized their prey, they were in confusion, and, for fear of the people, or, rather, struck with inward terror upon what they had seen and heard, they took him the furthest way about, or, rather, knew not which way they hurried him, such a hurry were they in in their own bosoms. Now observe,

1. Peter's falling. 1. It began in *sneaking*. He followed Christ when he was led away prisoner, that was well, and showed a concern for his Master; but he followed *afar off*, that he might be out of danger. He thought to trim the matter; to follow Christ, and so to satisfy his conscience, but to follow *afar off*, and so to save his reputation, and sleep in a whole skin. 2. It proceeded in keeping his distance still, and associating himself with the High Priest's servants, when he should have been at his Master's elbow. *The servants kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and sat down together*, to talk over their night-expedition. Probably, Malchus was among them, and Peter sat down among them, as if he had been one of them, at least would be thought to be so. 3. His fall itself was, disclaiming all acquaintance with Christ, and relation to him, disowning him because he was now in distress and danger. He was charged by a sorry, simple maid that belonged to the house, with being a retainer to this *Jesus*, about whom there was now so much noise. She looked wistly upon him as he sat by the fire, only because he was a stranger, and one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that at this time of night there were no neutrals there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the High Priest, she concludes

him to be one of the retinue of this Jesus, or perhaps she had been some time or other looking about her in the temple, and seen Jesus there, and Peter with him officious about him, and remembered him; and *this man was with him*, saith she. And Peter, as he had not the courage to own the charge, so he had not the wit and presence of mind to turn it off, as he might have done many ways, and therefore flat and plain denies it; *Woman, I know him not.* 4. His fall was repeated a second time; (v. 58.) *After a little while*, before he had time to recollect himself, *another saw him*, and said, "*Even thou art one of them*, slyly as thou sittest here among the High Priest's servants." *Not I*, saith Peter, *Man, I am not.* And a third time, *about the space of an hour after*, (for, saith the tempter, "When he is down, down with him; let us follow the blow, till we get him past recovery,") *another confidently affirms, strenuously asserts it, "Of a truth this fellow also was with him*, let him deny it if he can, for you may all perceive he is a Galilean." But he that has once told a lie, is strongly tempted to persist in it; the beginning of that sin is as the letting forth of water. Peter now not only denies that he is a disciple of Christ, but that he knows any thing of him; (v. 60.) "*Man, I know not what thou sayest; I never heard of this Jesus.*"

11. *Peter's getting up again.* See how happily he recovered himself, or, rather, the grace of God recovered him. See how it was brought about.

1. *The cock crew*, just as he was the third time denying that he knew Christ; and this startled him, and put him upon thinking. Note, Small accidents may have great influences.

2. *The Lord turned, and looked upon him.* This circumstance we had not in the other evangelists, but it is a very remarkable one. Christ is here called *the Lord*, for there was much of divine knowledge, power, and grace, appearing in this. Observe, Though Christ had now his back upon Peter, and was upon his trial, (when, one would think, he had something else to mind,) yet he knew all that Peter said. Note, Christ takes more notice of what we say and do than we think he does; when Peter disowned Christ, yet Christ did not disown him, though he might justly have cast him off, and never looked upon him more, but have denied him before his Father. It is well for us that Christ does not deal with us as we deal with him. Christ *looked upon Peter*, not doubting but that Peter would soon be aware of it, for he knew that, though he had denied him with his lips, yet his eye would still be toward him. Observe, Though Peter had now been guilty of a very great offence, and which was very provoking, yet Christ would not call to him, lest he should shame him or expose him; he only gave him a look which none but Peter would understand the meaning of, and it had a great deal in it. (1.) It was a *convincing* look. Peter said that he did not know Christ. Christ *turned, and looked upon him*, as if he should say, "Dost thou not know me, Peter? Look me in the face, and tell me so." (2.) It was a *chiding* look. We may suppose that he looked upon him, and *frowned*, or some way signified his displeasure. Let us think with what an angry countenance Christ justly looks upon us when we have sinned. (3.) It was an *expostulating*, upbraiding look; "What, Peter, art thou he that disownest me now, when thou shouldst come and witness for me? What, thou a disciple? Thou that wast the most forward to confess me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldst never disown me?" (4.) It was a *compassionate* look; he looked upon him with tenderness; "Poor Peter, how weak is thine heart! How art thou fallen and undone if I do not help thee!" (5.) It was a *directing* look. Christ *guided him with his eye*, gave him a wink to go out

from that sorry company, to retire, and bethink himself a little, and then he would soon see what he had to do. (6.) It was a *significant* look: it signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart, to enable him to repent; the crowing of the cock would not have brought him to repentance without this look, nor will the external means without special, efficacious grace. Power went along with this look, to change the heart of Peter, and to bring him to himself, to his right mind.

3. *Peter remembered the words of the Lord.* Note, The grace of God works in and by the word of God, brings that to mind, and sets that home upon the conscience, and so gives the soul the happy turn. *Tolle te lege—Take it up and read.*

4. *Then Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* One look from Christ melted him into tears of godly sorrow for sin. The candle was newly put out, and then a little thing lighted it again. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as he did on Peter, who had the divine seed remaining in him to work upon. It was not the look from Christ, but the grace of God with it, that recovered Peter, and brought him to rights.

63. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65. And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. 66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, 67. Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 68. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

We are here told, as before in the other gospels,

1. How our Lord Jesus was abused by the servants of the High Priest. *The objects gathered themselves together against him*, the rude and barbarous servants. They that held Jesus, that had him in custody till the court sat, they *mocked him*, and *smote him*, (v. 63.) they would not allow him to repose himself one minute, though he had had no sleep all night, nor to compose himself though he was hurried to his trial, and no time given him to prepare for it. They made sport with him; this sorrowful night to him shall be a merry night to them; and the blessed Jesus, like Samson, is made the Fool in the play. They *hood-winked* him, and then, according to the common play that young people have among them, they *struck him on the face*, and continued to do so till he named the person that smote him, (v. 64.) intending thereby an affront to his prophetic office, and that knowledge of secret things, which he was said to have. We are not told that he said *any thing*, but *bore every thing*; hell was let loose, and he suffered it to do its worst. A greater indignity could not be done to the blessed Jesus, yet this was but one instance of many; for, (v. 65.) *many other things blasphemously spake they against him.* They that

condemned him for a Blasphemer, were themselves the vilest blasphemers that ever were.

11. How he was accused and condemned by the great sanhedrim, consisting of the *elders of the people, the chief priests and the scribes*, who were all up betimes, and got together *as soon as it was day*, about five of the clock in the morning, to prosecute this matter. They were *working this evil upon their beds*, and, as soon as ever the morning was light, practised it, Mic. 2. 1. They would not have been up so early for any good work.

It is but a short account that we have here of his trial in the ecclesiastical court.

1. They ask him, *Art thou the Christ?* He was generally believed by his followers to be the Christ, but they could not prove it upon him that he had ever said so *rotidem verbis—in so many words*, and therefore urge him to own it to them, v. 67. If they had asked him this question with a willingness to admit that he was the Christ, and to receive him accordingly, if he could give sufficient proof of his being so, it had been *well*, and might have been for ever *well with them*; but they asked it with a resolution not to believe him, but a design to ensnare him.

2. He justly complained of their unfair and unjust usage of him, v. 67, 68. They all, as Jews, professed to expect the Messiah, and to expect him at *this time*; no other appeared, or had appeared, that pretended to be the Messiah, he had no competitor, nor was he likely to have any; he had given amazing proofs of a divine power going along with him, which made his claims very well worthy of a free and impartial inquiry; it had been but just for these leaders of the people, to have taken him into their council, and examined him there as a *Candidate for the Messiahship*, not at the bar as a *Criminal*; "But," saith he, (1.) "*If I tell you that I am the Christ*, and give you ever such convincing proofs of it, you are resolved that *you will not believe*. Why should the cause be brought on before you who have already prejudged it, and are resolved, right or wrong, to run it down, and to condemn it!" (2.) "*If I ask you what you have to object against the proofs I produce, you will not answer me.*" Here he refers to their silence when he put a question to them, which would have led them to own his authority, ch. 20. 5—7. They were neither fair judges, nor fair disputants; but, when they were pinched with an argument, would rather be silent than own their conviction; "*You will neither answer me, nor let me go*; if I be not the Christ, you ought to *answer* the arguments with which I prove that I am; if I be, you ought to *let me go*; but you will do neither."

3. He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their confusion, since they would not now admit the proof of it, to their conviction; (v. 69.) "*Hereafter shall the Son of man sit, and be seen to sit, on the right hand of the power of God*, and then you will not need to ask whether he be the Christ or no."

4. Hence they inferred that he set up himself as the Son of God, and asked him *whether he were so or no*; (v. 7.) "*Art thou then the Son of God?*" He called himself the *Son of man*, referring to Daniel's vision of the *Son of man* that came near before the *Ancient of days*, Dan. 7. 13, 14. But they understood so much as to know that if he was that Son of man, he was also the *Son of God*. And art thou so? By this it appears to have been the faith of the Jewish church, that the Messiah should be both *Son of man*, and *Son of God*.

5. He owns himself to be the Son of God; *Ye say that I am*; that is, "I am, as ye say." Compare Mark 14. 62. *Jesus said, I am*. This confirms Christ's testimony concerning himself, that he was the Son of God, that he stood to it, when he knew he should suffer for standing to it.

6. Upon this they ground his condemnation; (v. 71.) *What need we any further witness?* It was true, they needed not any further witness to prove that he said he was the *Son of God*, they had it from *his own mouth*; but did they not need proof that he was not so, before they condemned him as a Blasphemer for saying that he was so? Had they no apprehension that it was possible he might be so, and then what horrid guilt they should bring upon themselves in putting him to death? No, *they know not, neither will they understand*. They cannot think it possible that he should be the Messiah, though ever so evidently clothed with divine power and grace, if he appear not, as they expect, in worldly pomp and grandeur. Their eyes being blinded with the admiration of that, they rush on in this dangerous prosecution, as the horse into the battle.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter carries on and concludes the history of Christ's sufferings and death. We have here, I. His arraignment before Pilate the Roman governor, v. 1. . 5. II. His examination before Herod, who was tetrarch of Galilee, under the Romans likewise, v. 6. . 12. III. Pilate's struggle with the people to release Jesus, his repeated testimonies concerning his innocence, but his yielding at length to their importunity, and condemning him to be crucified, v. 13. . 25. IV. An account of what passed as they led him to be crucified, and his discourse to the people that followed, v. 26. . 31. V. An account of what passed at the place of execution, and the indignities done him there, v. 32. . 38. VI. The conversion of one of the thieves, as Christ was hanging on the cross, v. 39. . 43. VII. The death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, v. 44. . 49. VIII. His burial, v. 50. . 56.

1. **A**ND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him: and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Our Lord Jesus was condemned as a Blasphemer in the spiritual court, but it was the most *impotent malice* that could be that that court was actuated by; for when they had *condemned him*, they knew they could not *put him to death*, and therefore took another course.

1. They accuse him before Pilate. The *whole multitude of them arose*, when they saw they could go no further with him in their court, and *led him unto Pilate*, though it was no judgment day, no assizes or sessions, and they demand justice against him, not as a Blasphemer; (that was no crime that he took cognizance of,) but as one disaffected to the Roman government; which they in their hearts did not look upon as any crime at all, or, if it was one, they themselves were much more chargeable with it than he was; only it would serve the turn and answer the purpose of their malice: and it is observable, that that which was the *pretended crime*, for which they employed the Roman powers to destroy Christ, was the *real crime*, for which the Roman powers not long after destroyed them.

1. Here is the indictment drawn up against him, (v. 2.) in which they pretended a zeal for Cæsar, only to ingratiate themselves with Pilate, but it was all *malice* against Christ, and nothing else. They misrepresented him, (1.) As making the people *rebel against Cæsar*. It was true, and Pilate knew it, that there was a general uneasiness in the people under the Roman yoke, and they wanted nothing but an opportunity to shake it off; now they would have Pilate believe that this Jesus was active to foment that general discontent, which, if the truth was known, they themselves were the aiders and abettors of; *We have found him perverting the nation*; as if converting them to God's government were *perverting them* from the civil government; whereas nothing tends more to make men good subjects than making them Christ's faithful followers. Christ had particularly taught that they *ought to give tribute to Cæsar*, though he knew there were those that would be offended at him for it; and yet he is here falsely accused, as *forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar*. Innocency is no fence against calumny. (2.) As making himself a *Rival with Cæsar*, though the very reason why they rejected him, and would not own him to be the Messiah, was, because he did not appear in worldly pomp and power, and did not set up for a temporal Prince, nor offer to do any thing against Cæsar; yet that is it they charged him with, that he said, *He himself is Christ a King*. He did say that he was *Christ*, and if so, then a *King*, but not such a king as was ever likely to give disturbance to Cæsar. When his followers would have made him a king, (John 6. 15.) he declined it, though by the many miracles he wrought he made it appear that if he would have set up in competition with Cæsar, he would have been too hard for him.

2. His pleading to the indictment; *Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews?* v. 3. To which he answered, *Thou sayest it*; that is, "It is as thou sayest, that I am entitled to the government of the Jewish nation; but in rivalry with the scribes and Pharisees, who tyrannize over them in matters of religion, not in rivalry with Cæsar, whose government relates only to their civil interests." Christ's kingdom is wholly spiritual, and will not interfere with Cæsar's jurisdiction. Or, *Thou sayest it*; but canst thou prove it? What evidence hast thou for it? All that know him, know the contrary, that he never pretended to be the *King of the Jews*, in opposition to Cæsar as supreme, or to the governors that were sent by him, but the contrary.

3. Pilate's declaration of his innocency; (v. 4.) *He said to the chief priests, and the people that seemed to join with them in the prosecution, "I find no fault in this man."* What breaches of your law he

may have been guilty of, I am not concerned to inquire, but I find nothing proved upon him, that makes him obnoxious to our court."

4. The continued fury and outrage of the prosecutors, v. 5. Instead of being moderated by Pilate's declaration of his innocency, and considering, as they ought to do, whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, they were the more exasperated; more exceeding *fierce*. We do not find that they have any particular fact to produce, much less any evidence to prove it; but they resolve to carry it with noise and confidence, and say it, though they cannot prove it; *He stirs up the people to rebel against Cæsar, teaching throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee to this place*. He did *stir up the people*, but it was not to any thing factious or seditious, but to every thing that was virtuous and praise-worthy. He did *teach*, but they could not charge him with teaching any doctrine that tended to disturb the public peace, or make the government uneasy or jealous.

II. They accuse him before Herod.

1. Pilate removed him and his cause to Herod's court. The accusers mentioned Galilee, the northern part of Canaan. "Why," saith Pilate, "is he of that country? Is he a Galilean?" v. 6. "Yes," said they, "that is his head-quarters; there he has spent most of his time." "Let us send him to Herod then," saith Pilate, "for Herod is now in town, and it is but fit he should have cognizance of his cause, since he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction." Pilate was already sick of the cause, and desirous to rid his hands of it, and that seems to be the true reason for sending him to Herod. But God ordered it so for the more evident fulfilling of the scripture, as appears Acts 4. 26, 27. where that of David, (Ps. 2. 2.) *The kings of the earth and the rulers set themselves against the Lord and his anointed*, is expressly said to be fulfilled in Herod and Pontius Pilate.

2. Herod was very willing to have the examining of him; (v. 8.) *When he saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad*, and perhaps the more glad because he saw him a prisoner, saw him in bonds. He had heard many things of him in Galilee, where his miracles had for a great while been all the talk of the country; and he *longed to see him*, not for any affection he had for him or his doctrine, but purely out of curiosity; and it was only to gratify that, that he *hoped to have seen some miracle done by him* which would serve him to talk of as long as he lived. In order to this, he *questioned with him in many things*, that at length he might bring him to something in which he might show his power. Perhaps he pumped him concerning things *secret*, or things *to come*, or concerning his curing of diseases. But Jesus answered him *nothing*; nor would he gratify him so much as with the repetition of one miracle. The poorest beggar, that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was *never denied*; but this proud prince, that asked a miracle merely for the gratifying of his curiosity, is denied; he might have seen Christ and his wondrous works many a time in Galilee, and *would not*, and therefore it is justly said, Now he would see them, and *shall not*; they are hid from his eyes, because he knew not the day of his visitation. Herod thought, now that he had him in bonds, he might *command a miracle*, but miracles must not be made cheap, nor Omnipotence be at the beck of the greatest potentate.

3. His prosecutors appeared against him before Herod, for they were restless in the prosecution; *They stood and vehemently accused him*, (v. 10.) *impudently and boldly*, so the word signifies. They would make Herod believe that he had poisoned Galilee too with his seditious notions. Note, It is no new thing for good men and good ministers, and who are real and useful friends to the civil government,

to be falsely accused as factious and seditious, and enemies to government.

4. Herod was very *abusive* to him; He, with his *men of war*, his attendants and officers, and great men, *set him at naught*. They made nothing of him; so the word is. Horrid wickedness! To make nothing of him who made all things. They laughed at him as a *Fool*; for they knew he had wrought many miracles to befriend others, and why would he not now work one to befriend himself? Or, they laughed at him as one that had lost his power, and was become weak as other men. Herod, who had been acquainted with John Baptist, and had more knowledge of Christ too, than Pilate had, was more *abusive* to Christ than Pilate was; for knowledge without grace, does but make men the more *ingeniously* wicked. Herod arrayed Christ in a *gorgeous robe*, some gaudy, painted clothes, as a mocking; and so he taught Pilate's soldiers afterwards to do him the same indignity. He was ringleader in that abuse.

5. Herod returned him to Pilate, and it proved an occasion of the making of them friends, they having been for some time before at variance. Herod could not get sight of a miracle, but would not condemn him neither as a malefactor, and therefore *sent him again to Pilate*, (v. 11.) and so returned Pilate's civility and respect in sending the Prisoner to him; and this mutual obligation, with the messages that passed between them on this occasion, brought them to a better understanding one of another than there had been of late between them, v. 12. They had been at *enmity between themselves*, probably upon Pilate's killing the Galileans, who were Herod's subjects, (Luke 13. 1.) or some other such matter of controversy as usually occurs among princes and great men. Observe how those that quarrelled with one another, yet could unite against Christ; as Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, though divided among themselves, were confederate against the *Israel of God*, Ps. 83. 7. Christ is the great Peace-Maker; both Pilate and Herod owned his innocency, and their agreeing in that cured their disagreeing in other things.

13. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him: and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto *him*. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*. 17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20. Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go. 23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that

he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

We have here the blessed Jesus run down by the mob, and hurried to the cross in the storm of a popular noise and tumult, raised by the malice and artifice of the *chief priests*, as agents for the prince of the power of the air.

I. Pilate solemnly protests that he believes he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And if he did believe so, he ought immediately to have *discharged* him, and not only so, but to have *protected* him from the fury of the priests and rabble, and to have bound his prosecutors to their good behaviour for their insolent conduct. But, being himself a bad man, he had no kindness for Christ; and having made himself otherwise obnoxious, was afraid of displeasing either the emperor or the people; and therefore, for want of integrity, he *called together the chief priests, and rulers and people*, (whom he should have dispersed, as a *riotous and seditious assembly*, and forbid them to come near him,) and will hear what they have to say, to whom he should have turned a deaf ear, for he plainly saw what spirit actuated them; (v. 14.) "*You have brought*" (saith he) "*this man to me*, and because I have a respect for you, *I have examined him before you*, and have heard all you have to allege against him, and I can make nothing of it, *I find no fault in him*, you cannot prove the things whereof you accuse him."

II. He appeals to Herod concerning him; (v. 15.) "*I sent you to him*, who is supposed to have known more of him than I have done, and he has *sent him back*, not convicted of any thing, nor under any mark of his displeasure; in his opinion, his crimes are not capital. He has laughed at him as a weak Man, but has not stigmatized him as a dangerous man." He thought Bedlam a fitter place for him than Tyburn.

III. He purposes to release him, if they will but consent to it. He ought to have done it without asking leave of them, *Piat justitia, ruat cælum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated*. But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that, whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release him; yet, to please the people, 1. He will release him under the notion of a Malefactor, because *of necessity he must release one*; (v. 17.) so that whereas he ought to have been released by an *act of justice*, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an *act of grace*, and not be beholden to the people for it. 2. He will *chastise* him, and release him. If *no fault* be to be *found in him*, why should he be chastised? There is as much injustice in scourging as in crucifying an innocent man; nor would it be justified by pretending that this would satisfy the clamours of the people, and make *him* the Object of their pity, who was now to be the Object of their envy. We must not do evil that good may come.

IV. The people chose rather to have Barabbas released; a wretched fellow, that had nothing to recommend him to their favour but the daringness of his crimes: he was imprisoned for a *sedition made in the city*, and for *murder*, (of all crimes among men the least pardonable,) yet this was the criminal that was preferred before Christ; (v. 18, 19.) *Away with*

this man, and release unto us Barabbas. And no wonder that such a man is the favourite and darling of such a mob, he that was really seditious, rather than he that was really loyal, and falsely accused of sedition.

V. When Pilate urged the second time that Christ should be released, they cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*, v. 20, 21. They not only will have him die, but will have him die so great a death; nothing less will serve but he must be crucified; *Crucify him, crucify him*.

VI. When Pilate the third time reasoned with them, to show them the unreasonableness and injustice of it, they were the more peremptory and outrageous; (v. 22.) "*Why? What evil hath he done? Name his crime. I have found no cause of death, and you cannot say what cause of death you have found in him; and therefore if you will but speak the word, I will chastise him, and let him go.*" But popular fury, the more it is complimented, the more furious it grows; they were *instant with loud voices*, with great noises or outcries, not requesting, but *requiring that he might be crucified*; as if they had as much right, at the feast, to demand the crucifying of one that was innocent, as the release of one that was guilty.

VII. Pilate's yielding, at length, to their importunity. The voice of the people and of the chief priests prevailed and were too hard for Pilate, and overruled him to go contrary to his convictions and inclinations. He had not courage to go against so strong a stream, but *gave sentence that it should be as they required*, v. 24. Here is judgment turned away backward, and justice standing afar off, for fear of popular fury. *Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter*, Isa. 59. 14. Judgment was looked for, but behold, oppression; righteousness, but behold, a cry, Isa. 5. 7. This is repeated, v. 25. with the aggravating circumstance of the release of Barabbas; *He released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison*, who hereby would be hardened in his wickedness, and do the more mischief, because *him they had desired*, being altogether such a one as themselves, but he delivered Jesus to their will; and he could not deal more barbarously with him than to deliver him to their will, who hated him with a perfect hatred, and whose tender mercies were cruelty.

26. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. 27. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. 28. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. 29. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. 30. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice. It is strange with what expedition they went through his trial; how they could do so much work in so little time, though they had so many great men to

deal with, attendance on whom is usually a work of time. He was brought before the chief priests at break of day, (ch. 22. 66.) after that to Pilate, then to Herod, then to Pilate again; and there seems to have been a long struggle between Pilate and the people about him. He was scourged, and crowned with thorns, and contumeliously used, and all this was done in four or five hours' time, or six at most, for he was crucified between nine o'clock and twelve. Christ's persecutors resolve to lose no time, for fear lest his friends at the other end of the town should get notice of what they were doing, and should rise to rescue him. Never any one was so chased out of the world as Christ was, but so he himself said, *Yet a little while, and ye shall not see me*; a very little while indeed.

Now as they led him away to death we find,

I. One that was a *bearer*, that carried his cross, Simon by name, a Cyrenian, who, probably, was a friend of Christ, and was known to be so, and this was done to put a reproach upon him; they laid Christ's cross upon him, that he might bear it after Jesus, (v. 26.) lest Jesus should faint under it and die away, and so prevent the further instances of malice they designed. It was a pity, but a cruel pity, that gave him this ease.

II. Many that were *mourners*, true mourners, who followed him, *bewailing and lamenting him*. These were not only his friends and well-wishers, but the common people, that were not his enemies, and were moved with compassion toward him, because they had heard the fame of him, and what an excellent, useful Man he was, and had reason to think he suffered unjustly; this drew a great crowd after him, as is usual at executions, especially of those that have been persons of distinction; *A great company of people followed him*, especially of women; (v. 27.) some led by pity, others by curiosity, but they also (as well as those that were his particular friends and acquaintance) *bewailed and lamented him*. Though there were many that reproached and reviled him, yet there were some that valued him, and pitied him, and were sorry for him, and were partakers with him in his sufferings. The dying of the Lord Jesus may perhaps move natural affection in many that are strangers to devout affections; many bewail Christ, that do not believe in him and lament him, that do not love him above all.

Now here we are told what Christ said to these mourners; though one would think he should be wholly taken up with his own concern, yet he found time and heart to take cognizance of their tears. Christ *died lamented*, and has a bottle for the tears of those that lamented him. He *turned to them*, though they were strangers to him, and bid them *not weep for him, but for themselves*; he diverts their lamentation into another channel, v. 28.

I. He gives them a general direction concerning their lamentations; *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me*. Not that they were to be blamed for weeping for him, but commended rather; these hearts were hard indeed, that were not affected with such sufferings of such a person; but they must not weep only for him, (those were profitless tears that they shed for him,) but rather let them *weep for themselves and for their children*, with an eye to the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem, which some of them might live to see, and share in the calamities of, or, at least, their children would, for whom they ought to be solicitous. Note. When with an eye of faith we behold Christ crucified, we ought to weep, not for him, but for ourselves. We must not be affected with the death of Christ as with the death of a common person whose calamity we pity, or of a common friend whom we are likely to part with; the death of Christ was a thing peculiar, it was his victory and triumph over his enemies,

it was our deliverance, and the purchase of eternal life for us. And therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, that were the cause of his death; and weep for fear (such were the tears here prescribed) of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves, if we slight his love, and reject his grace, as the Jewish nation did, which brought upon them the ruin here foretold. When our dear relations and friends die in Christ, we have no reason to weep for them who have put off the burden of the flesh, are made perfect in holiness, and are entered into perfect rest and joy, but for ourselves and our children, who are left behind in a world of sins, and sorrows, and snares.

2. He gives them a particular reason why they should weep for themselves and for their children; "For behold, sad times are coming upon your city, it will be destroyed, and you will be involved in the common destruction." When Christ's own disciples sorrowed after a godly sort for his leaving them, he wiped away their tears with the promise that he would see them again, and they should rejoice, John 16. 22. But when these daughters of Jerusalem bewailed him only with a worldly sorrow, he turned their tears into another channel, and told them that they should have something given them to cry for. Let them be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, Jam. 4. 9. He had lately wept over Jerusalem himself, and now he bids them weep over it. Christ's tears should set us a weeping. Let the daughters of Zion, that own Christ for their King, rejoice in him, for he comes to save them; but let the daughters of Jerusalem, that only weep for him, but do not take him for their King, weep and tremble to think of his coming to judge them.

Now the destruction of Jerusalem is here foretold by two proverbial sayings that might then fitly be used, which both bespeak it very terrible, that what people commonly dread they would then desire, to be written childless, and to be buried alive. (1.) They would wish to be written childless. Whereas commonly those that have no children, envy those that have, as Rachel envied Leah, then those that have children, will find them such a burden in attempting to escape, and such a grief when they see them either fainting for famine or falling by the sword, that they will envy those that have none, and say, *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, that have no children to be given up to the murderer, or to be snatched out of his hands.* It would not only go ill with those who at that time were *with child, or giving suck*, as Christ had said, (Matth. 24. 19.) but it would be terrible to those whoever had had children, and suckled them, and had them now alive. See Hos. 9. 11—14. See the vanity of the creature and the uncertainty of its comforts, for such may be the changes of Providence concerning us, that those very things may become the greatest burdens, cares, and griefs to us, which we have delighted in as the greatest blessings. (2.) They would wish to be buried alive; (v. 30.) They shall begin to say to the mountains, *Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us.* This also refers to a passage in the same prophecy with the former, Hos. 10. 8. They shall wish to be hid in the darkest caves, that they might be out of the noise of these calamities. They will be willing to be sheltered upon any terms, though with the hazard of being crushed to pieces. This would be the language, especially of the great and mighty men, Rev. 6. 16. They that would not flee to Christ for refuge, and put themselves under his protection, will in vain call to hills and mountains to shelter themselves from his wrath.

3. He shows how natural it was for them to infer that desolation from his sufferings; (v. 31.) *If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Some think that this is borrowed from

Ezek. 20. 47. *The fire shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree.* These words may be applied, (1.) More particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and which the Jews by putting him to death brought upon themselves; "If they (the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) do these things upon the green tree, if they do thus abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for their so doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing! If this be their sin, what do you think will be their punishment?" Or take it thus; "If they (the Romans, their judges, and their soldiers) abuse me thus, who have given them no provocation, who am to them as a green tree, which you seem to be as much enraged at, what will they do by Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, who will be so very provoking to them, and make themselves as a dry tree, as fuel to the fire of their resentments? If God suffer those things to be done to me, what will he appoint to be done to those barren trees, of whom it hath been often said, that they should be hewn down and cast into the fire?" Matth. 3. 10.—7. 19. (2.) They may be applied more generally to all the revelations of God's wrath against sin and sinners; "If God deliver me up to such sufferings as these because I am made a Sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves?" Christ was a green Tree, fruitful and flourishing; now if such things were done to him, we may from thence infer what should have been done to the whole race of mankind, if he had not interposed, and what shall be done to those that continue dry trees, notwithstanding all that is done to make them fruitful. If God did this to the Son of his love, when he found but sin imputed to him, what shall he do to the generation of his wrath, when he finds sin reigning in them? If the Father were pleased in doing these things to the green tree, why should he be loath to do it to the dry? Note, The consideration of the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus should engage us to stand in awe of the justice of God, and to tremble before him. The best saints, compared with Christ, are dry trees; if he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer? And what then shall the damnation of sinners be?

32. And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. 35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37. And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. 38. And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40. But the

other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation! 11. And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In these verses, we have,

1. Divers passages which we had before in Matthew and Mark, concerning Christ's sufferings.

1. That there were *two others, malefactors, led with him* to the place of execution; who, it is probable, had been for some time under sentence of death, and were designed to be executed at this day, which was, probably, the pretence for making such haste in the prosecution of Christ, that he and these two malefactors might be executed together, and one solemnity might serve.

2. That he was crucified at a place called *Calvary*, *κρηνη*, the Greek name for *Golgotha*—*the place of a skull*: an ignominious place, to add to the reproach of his sufferings, but significant, for there he triumphed over death as it were upon his own dunghill. He was *crucified*; his hands and feet were nailed to the cross as it lay upon the ground; and then it was *lifted up*, and fastened into the earth, or some socket to receive it. This was a painful and shameful death above any other.

3. That he was crucified *in the midst between two thieves*, as if he had been the worst of the three; thus he was not only treated as a transgressor, but *numbered with them*, the worst of them.

4. That the soldiers who were employed in the execution, seized his garments as their fee, and divided them among themselves *by lot*; *They parted his raiment, and cast lots*; it was worth so little, that, if it were divided, it would come to next to nothing, and therefore they cast lots for it.

5. That he was reviled and reproached, and treated with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, when he was *lifted up* upon the cross. It was strange that so much barbarity should be found in the human nature; *The people stood beholding*, not at all concerned, but rather pleasing themselves with the spectacle; and *the rulers*, whom from their office one would take to be men of sense and men of honour, they stood among the rabble, and *derided him*, to set those on that were about them to do so too; and they said, *He saved others, let him save himself*. Thus is he upbraided for the good works he had done, as if it were indeed *for these* that they *crucified him*. They triumph over him as if they had conquered him, whereas he was himself then more than a conqueror; they challenge him to save himself from the cross, when he was saving others by the cross; *If he be the Christ, the chosen of God*, let him save himself. They knew that the *Christ is the chosen of God*; designed by him, and dear to him. If he, as the Christ, would deliver our nation from the Romans, (and they could not form any other idea than that, of the Messiah,) let him deliver himself from the Romans that have him now in their hands. Thus the Jewish rulers jeered him as captivated by the Romans, instead of subduing them. The Roman soldiers jeered him as the *King of the Jews*; "A people good enough for such a prince, and a prince good enough for such a people." They *mocked him*, (v. 36, 37.) they made sport with him, and made a jest of his sufferings; and when they were drinking sharp, sour wine themselves, such as was generally al-
ted them, they triumphantly

asked him if he would *pledge them*, or drink with them. And they said, *If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself*; for as the Jews persecuted him under the notion of a pretended Messiah, so the Romans under the notion of a pretended King.

6. That the superscription over his head, setting forth his crime, was, *This is the King of the Jews*, v. 38. He is put to death for pretending to be the King of the Jews; so they meant it; but God intended it to be a declaration of what he really was, notwithstanding his present disgrace: he is *the King of the Jews*, the King of the church, and his cross is the way to his crown. This was written in those that were called the *three learned languages*, the *Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew*, for these are best learned, that have learned Christ. It was written in these three languages, that it might be known and read of all men; but God designed by it to signify that the gospel of Christ should be preached to all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*, and be read in all languages. The Gentile philosophy made the Greek tongue famous, the Roman laws and government made the Latin tongue so, and the Hebrew excelled them all for the sake of the Old Testament. In these three languages is Jesus Christ *proclaimed King*. Young scholars that are taking pains at school to make themselves masters of these three languages, should aim at this, that in the use of them they may increase their acquaintance with Christ.

II. Here are two passages which we had not before, and they are very remarkable ones.

1. Christ's prayer for his enemies; (v. 34.) *Father, forgive them*. Seven remarkable words Christ spake after he was nailed to the cross, and before he died, and this is the first. One reason why he died the death of the cross was, that he might have liberty of speech to the last, and so might glorify his Father, and edify those about him. As soon as ever he was fastened to the cross, or while they were nailing him, he prayed this prayer: in which, observe,

(1.) The petition: *Father, forgive them*. One would think that he should have prayed, "Father, consume them; the Lord look upon it, and requite it." The sin they were now guilty of, might justly have been made unpardonable, and justly might they have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity. No, these are particularly *prayed for*. Now he made intercession for transgressors, as was foretold, (Isa. 53. 12.) and it is to be added to his prayer, John 17, to complete the specimen he gave of his intercession within the veil; that for saints, this for sinners. Now the sayings of Christ upon the cross as well as his sufferings had a further reach than they seemed to have. This was a mediatorial word, and explicatory of the intent and meaning of his death; "*Father forgive them, not only these, but all that shall repent, and believe the gospel*;" and he did not intend that these should be forgiven upon any other terms. "Father, that which I am now suffering and dying for, is in order to this, that poor sinners may be pardoned." Note, [1.] The great thing which Christ died to purchase and procure for us, is, the forgiveness of sin. [2.] This is that which Christ intercedes for, all that repent, and believe in the virtue of his satisfaction; his blood speaks this, *Father, forgive them*. [3.] The greatest sinners may, through Christ, upon their repentance, hope to find mercy. Father, forgive them; though they were his persecutors and murderers.

(2.) The plea; *For they know not what they do*, for, if they had known, they would not have crucified him, 1 Cor. 2. 8. There was a veil upon his glory and upon their understandings; and how could they see through two veils? They wished his blood on them and their children; but had they known what they did, they would have unwished it again.

Note, [1.] The crucifiers of Christ *know not what they do*. They that speak ill of religion, speak ill of that which they know not, and it is because they will not know it. [2.] There is a kind of ignorance that does in part excuse sin; ignorance through want of the means of knowledge, or of a capacity to receive instruction, through the infelicities of education, or inadvertency. The crucifiers of Christ were kept in ignorance by their rulers, and had prejudices against him instilled into them, so that in what they did against Christ and his doctrine they thought they did God service, John 16. 2. Such are to be pitied and prayed for. This prayer of Christ was answered not long after, when many of those that had a hand in his death, were converted by Peter's preaching.

This is written also for example to us. *First*, We must in prayer call God *Father*, and come to him with reverence and confidence, as children to a father. *Secondly*, The great thing we must beg of God, both for ourselves and others, is the forgiveness of sins. *Thirdly*, We must pray for our *enemies*, and those that hate and persecute us; must extenuate their offences, and not aggravate them, as we must our own; (*They know not what they do, peradventure it was an oversight*;) and we must be earnest with God in prayer for the forgiveness of their sins, their sins against us. This is Christ's example to his own rule, (Matth. 5. 44, 45.) *Love your enemies*; and it very much strengthens the rule, for if Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enemies can we have, which we are not obliged to *love and pray for*?

2. The conversion of the thief upon the cross, which is an illustrious instance of Christ's triumphing over principalities and powers, then when he seemed to be triumphed over by them. Christ was crucified between two thieves, and in them were represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men, to whom it would be *brought near* in the preaching of the gospel. They are all malefactors, all guilty before God. Now the cross of Christ is to some a *savour of life unto life*, to others of *death unto death*. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them that are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

(1.) Here was one of these malefactors, that was *hardened to the last*. Near to the cross of Christ, he *railed on him*, as others did; (v. 39.) he said, *If thou be the Christ*, as they say thou art, *save thyself and us*. Though he was now in pain and agony, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet that did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his fellow-sufferer. *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*. No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they irritate the corruption which, one would think, they should *mortify*. He challenges Christ to *save both himself and them*. Note, There are some that have the impudence to rail upon Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and to conclude that, if he do not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour.

(2.) Here was the other of them, that was *softened at the last*. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that, though the thieves, even they that were crucified with him, *reviled him*, which, some think, is by a figure put for one of them; but others think that they both *reviled him* at first, till the heart of one of them was wonderfully changed, and with it his language on a sudden. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a

lion disappointed of his prey. This gives no encouragement to any to put off their repentance to their death-bed, or to hope that then they shall find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure that they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure that he cannot have the advantages that this penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. He never had any offer of Christ, nor day of grace, before now: he was designed to be made a singular instance of the power of Christ's grace, now at a time when he was *crucified in weakness*. Christ, having conquered Satan in the destruction of Judas, and the preservation of Peter, erects this further trophy of his victory over him in the conversion of this malefactor, or as a specimen of what he would do.

We shall see the case to be extraordinary, if we observe,

[1.] The extraordinary operations of God's grace upon him, which appeared in what he said. Here were so many evidences given in a short time of a blessed change wrought in him, that more could not have been in so little a compass.

First, See what he said to the other malefactor, v. 40, 41. 1. He reproved him for railing on Christ, as destitute of the *fear of God*, and having no sense at all of religion; *Dost thou not fear God?* This implies that it was the fear of God which restrained him from following the multitude to do this evil. "I fear God, and therefore dare not do it; and dost not thou?" All that have their eyes opened, see this to be at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. "If thou hast any humanity in thee, thou wouldest not insult over one that is thy Fellow-sufferer; *thou art in the same condition*; thou art a *dying man* too, and therefore, whatever these wicked people do, it ill becomes thee to abuse a dying Man." 2. He owns that he deserved what was done to him; *We indeed justly*. It is probable that they both suffered for one and the same crime, and therefore he spake with the more assurance, *we receive the due reward of our deeds*. This magnifies divine grace, as acting in a distinguishing way. These two had been comrades in sin and suffering, and yet one is *saved*, and the other *perishes*; two that had gone together all along hitherto, and yet now one *taken and the other left*. He does not say, *Thou* indeed justly, but, *We*. Note, True penitents acknowledge the justice of God in all the punishments of their sin. God has *done right*, but *we have done wickedly*. 3. He believes Christ to have suffered *wrongfully*. Though he was condemned in two courts, and run upon as if he had been the worst of malefactors, yet this penitent thief is convinced, by his conduct in his sufferings, that *he has done nothing amiss*. The chief priest would have him crucified *between the malefactors, as one of them*; but this thief has more sense than they, and owns he is *none of them*, *Σοφὸν καὶ ἀνθρώπινον—nothing absurd, or unbecoming his character*. Whether he had before heard of Christ and of his wondrous works does not appear, but the Spirit of grace enlightened him with this knowledge, and enabled him to say, This man has *done nothing amiss*.

Secondly, See what he said to our Lord Jesus; (v. 42.) *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. This is the prayer of a *dying sinner* to a *dying Saviour*. It was the honour of Christ to be *thus prayed to*, though he was upon the cross reproached and reviled; it was the happiness of the thief *thus to pray*; perhaps he never prayed before, and yet now was heard, and saved at the last gasp. While there is life, there is hope; and while there is hope, there is room for prayer.

1. Observe his *faith* in this prayer. In his confession of sin, (v. 4.) he discovered *repentance toward God*. In this petition he discovered *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. He owns him to be the *Lord*, and to have a *kingdom*, and that he was going to that kingdom: that he should have authority in that kingdom, and that those should be happy whom he favours; and to *believe and confess* all this was a great thing at this time of day. Christ was now in the depth of disgrace, deserted by his own disciples, reviled by his own nation, suffering as a pretender, and not delivered by his Father. He made this profession before those prodigies happened which put honour upon his sufferings, and which startled the centurion; yet *verily we have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*. He believed *another life* after this, and desired to be happy in that life, not as the other thief, to be *saved from the cross*, but to be well done for when the cross had done its worst.

2. Observe his *humility* in this prayer. All his request is, *Lord, remember me*. He does not pray, *Lord, prefer me*, (as they did, Matth. 20. 21.) though, having the honour so as none of the disciples had, to drink of Christ's cup, and to be baptized with his baptism either on his *right hand* or *on his left* in his sufferings; when his own disciples had deserted him, he might have had some colour to ask as they did, to sit on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom; acquaintance in sufferings hath sometimes gained such a point, Jer. 52. 31, 32. But he is far from the thought of it; all he begs is, *Lord, remember me*, referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him. It is a request like that of *Joseph the chief butler*, *Think on me*, (Gen. 40. 14.) and it sped better; the chief butler forgot *Joseph*, but Christ remembered this thief.

3. There is an air of importunity and fervency in this prayer. He doth, as it were, breathe out his soul in it; "*Lord, remember me, and I have enough; I desire no more; into thy hands I commit my case.*" Note, To be remembered by Christ, now that he is in his kingdom, is what we should earnestly desire and pray for, and it will be enough to secure our welfare, living and dying. Christ is *in his kingdom*, interceding; "*Lord, remember me, and intercede for me.*" He is there, ruling; "*Lord, remember me, and rule in me by thy Spirit.*" He is there, preparing places for those that are his; "*Lord, remember me, and prepare a place for me; remember me at death, remember me in the resurrection.*" See Job 14. 13.

[2.] The extraordinary grants of Christ's favour to him; *Jesus said unto him*, in answer to his prayer, "*Verily I say unto thee, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, I say Amen to this prayer, put my fiat to it: nay, thou shalt have more than thou didst ask, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" v. 43. Observe,

First, To whom this was spoken: to the penitent thief, to him, and not to his companion. Christ upon the cross is like Christ upon the throne: for *now is the judgment of this world*, one departs with a curse, the other with a blessing. Though Christ was now himself in the greatest struggle and agony, yet he had a word of comfort to speak to a poor penitent that committed himself to him. Note, Even great sinners, if they be true penitents, shall, through Christ, obtain not only the pardon of their sins, but a place in the paradise of God, Heb. 9. 15. This magnifies the riches of free grace, that rebels and traitors shall not only be pardoned, but preferred, thus preferred.

Secondly, By whom this was spoken. Christ was another mediatorial word which Christ spake, though upon a particular occasion, yet with a general intention to explain the true intent and meaning

of his sufferings; as he died to purchase the *forgiveness of sins* for us, (v. 34.) so also to purchase *eternal life* for us. By this word we are given to understand that Jesus Christ died to *open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers*.

1. Christ here lets us know that he was going to paradise himself; to *hades—the invisible world*; his human soul was removing to the place of separate souls; not to the place of the damned, but to paradise, the place of the blessed. By this he assures us that his satisfaction was accepted, and the Father was well pleased in him, else he had not gone to paradise; that was the beginning of the joy set before him, which he comforted himself with the prospect of. He went by the cross to the crown, and we must not think of going any other way, or of being perfected but by sufferings.

2. He lets all penitent believers know that when they die they shall go to be with him there. He was now, as a Priest, purchasing this happiness for them, and is ready, as a King, to confer it upon them when they are prepared and made ready for it. See here how the happiness of heaven is set forth to us. (1.) It is *paradise*, a garden of pleasure, the *paradise of God*, (Rev. 2. 7.) alluding to the garden of Eden, in which our first parents were placed when they were innocent. In the second Adam we are restored to all we lost in the first Adam, and more, to a heavenly paradise instead of an earthly one. (2.) It is being *with Christ* there. That is the happiness of heaven, to see Christ, and sit with him, and share in his glory, John 17. 24. (3.) It is immediate upon death; *This day shalt thou be with me*; to-night, before to-morrow. *The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh*, immediately are in *joy and felicity*; the spirits of just men are immediately made perfect. Lazarus departs, and is immediately comforted; Paul departs, and is immediately with Christ, Phil. 1. 23.

44. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst. 46. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

In these verses, we have three things.

1. Christ's dying magnified by the *prodigies* that attended it: only two are here mentioned, which we had an account of before.

1. The *darkening of the sun at noon day*. It was now about the *sixth hour*, that is, according to our computation, twelve o'clock at noon; and there was a *darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour*; the sun was eclipsed, and the air exceedingly clouded at the same time; both which concurred to this thick darkness, which continued *three hours*, not *three days*, as that of Egypt did.

2. The *rending of the vail of the temple*. The

former prodigy was in the *heavens*, this in the *temple*; for both these are the houses of God, and could not but feel it when the Son of God was thus abused, and thus signify their resentment of it. By this rending of the vail was signified the taking away of the ceremonial law, which was a wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, and of all other difficulties and discouragements in our approach to God, so that now we may *come boldly to the throne of grace*.

II. Christ's dying *explained*, (v. 46.) by the words with which he breathed out his soul. Jesus *had cried with a loud voice*, when he said, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* So we are told in Matthew and Mark, and, it should seem, it was with a *loud voice* that he said this too, to show his earnestness, and that all the people might take notice of it: and this he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*.

1. He borrowed these words from his father David; (Ps. 31. 5.) not that he needed to have words put into his mouth, but he chose to make use of David's words, to show that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the Old-Testament prophets, and that he came to fulfil the scripture. Christ died with scripture in his mouth. Thus he directs us to make use of scripture-language in our addresses to God.

2. In this address to God, he calls him *Father*; when he complained of being forsaken, he cried, *Eli, Eli, My God, my God*; but to show that that dreadful agony of his soul was now over, he here calls God *Father*. When he was giving up his life and soul for us, he did for us call God *Father*, that we through him might receive the adoption of sons.

3. Christ made use of these words in a sense peculiar to himself as Mediator. He was now to *make his soul an offering for our sin*, (Isa. 53. 10.) to give *his life a ransom for many*, (Matth. 20. 28.) by the *eternal Spirit to offer himself*, Heb. 9. 14. He was himself both the Priest and the Sacrifice; our souls were forfeited, and his must go to redeem the forfeiture. The price must be paid *into the hands of God*, the Party offended by sin; to him he had undertaken to make full satisfaction. Now by these words he *offered up the Sacrifice*, did, as it were, lay his hand upon the head of it, and surrender it; *παρουσιάζω*—"I deposit it, I pay it down into thy hands. Father, accept of my life and soul instead of the lives and souls of the sinners I die for." The *animus offerentis*—the good will of the *Offerer* was requisite to the acceptance of the Offering. Now Christ here expresses his cheerful willingness to offer himself, as he had done when it was first proposed to him, (Heb. 10. 9, 10.) *Lo, I come to do thy will, by the which will we are sanctified*.

4. Christ hereby signifies his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection, by the re-union of his soul and body. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be received into paradise, and *returned* the third day. By this it appears that our Lord Jesus, as he had a *true body*, so he had a reasonable soul, which existed in a state of separation from the body, and thus he was made like unto his brethren; this soul he lodged in his Father's hand, committed it to his custody, resting in hope that it should not be left in *hades*, in its state of separation from the body, no, not so long as that the body might see corruption.

5. Christ hath hereby left us an example; hath fitted those words of David to the purpose of dying saints, and hath, as it were, sanctified them for their use. In death our great care should be about our souls, and we cannot more effectually provide for their welfare than by committing them now into the hands of God as a Father, to be sanctified and governed by his Spirit and grace, and at death by committing them into his hands to be made perfect in holiness and happiness. We must show that we

are freely willing to die, that we firmly believe another life after this, and are desirous of it, by saying, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit*.

III. Christ's dying improved by the impressions it made upon those that attended him.

1. The centurion that had command of the guard, was much affected with what he saw, v. 47. He was a Roman, a Gentile, a stranger to the consolations of Israel; and yet he *glorified God*. He never saw such amazing instances of divine power, and therefore took occasion from thence to adore God as the *Almighty*. And he bore a testimony to the patient Sufferer; "*Certainly this was a righteous Man*, and was unjustly put to death." God's manifesting of his power so much to do him honour, was a plain evidence of his innocence. His testimony in Matthew and Mark goes further; *Truly this was the Son of God*. But in his case this amounts to the same; for if he was a *righteous Man*, he said very truly when he said that *he was the Son of God*; and therefore that testimony of his concerning himself must be admitted, for if it were false, he was not a *righteous man*.

2. The disinterested spectators could not but be concerned. This is taken notice of only here; (v. 48.) *All the people that came together to that sight*, as is usual upon such occasions, *beholding the things which were done*, could not but go away very serious for the time, whatever they were when they came home; *They smote their breasts, and returned*. (1.) They laid the thing very much to heart for the present. They looked upon it as a wicked thing, to put him to death, and could not but think that some judgment of God would come upon their nation for it. Probably, those very people were of those that had cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*, and, when he was nailed to the cross, reviled and blasphemed him; but now they were so terrified with the darkness and earthquake, and the uncommon manner of his expiring, that they had not only their mouths stopped, but their consciences startled, and, in remorse for what they had done, as the publican, they *smote upon their breasts*, beat upon their own hearts, as those that had indignation at themselves. Some think that this was a happy step toward that good work which was afterward wrought upon them, when they were pricked to the heart, Acts 2. 37. (2.) Yet, it should seem, the impression soon wore off; *They smote their breasts, and returned*. They did not show any further token of respect to Christ, nor inquire more concerning him, but went home; and we have reason to fear that in a little time they quite forgot it. Thus many that see Christ evidently set forth crucified among them in the word and sacraments, are a little affected for the present, but it does not continue; they *smite their breasts*, and *return*. They see Christ's face in the glass of the ordinances and admire him; but they *go away, and straightway forget what manner of Man he is*, and what reason they have to love him.

3. His own friends and followers were forced to keep their distance, and yet got as near as they could, and durst, to see what was done; (v. 49.) *All his acquaintance that knew him*, and were known of him, *stood afar off*, for fear lest, if they had been near him, they should have been taken up as favourers of him; this was part of his sufferings, as of Job's, (ch. 19. 13.) *He has put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me*, Ps. 88. 18. And the women that followed him together from Galilee, were beholding these things, not knowing what to make of them, nor so ready as they should have been to take them for certain preludiums of his resurrection. Now was Christ *set for a Sign that should be spoken against*, as Simeon foretold, *that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed*, ch. 2. 34, 35.

50 And, behold, *there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just*: 51. (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.* 52. *This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.* 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

We have here an account of Christ's burial. For he must be brought not only to death, but to the dust of death, (Ps. 22. 15.) according to the sentence, (Gen. 3. 19.) *To the dust thou shalt return.* Observe,

1. Who buried him. His acquaintance *stood afar off*; they had neither money to bear the charge, nor courage to bear the odium, of burying him decently; but God raised up one that had both; *a man named Joseph, v. 50.* His character is, that he was *a good man, and a just*, a man of unspotted reputation for virtue and piety; not only just to all, but good to all that needed him; (and care to bury the dead, as becomes the hope of the resurrection of the dead, is one instance of goodness and beneficence;) he was a person of quality, a counsellor, a senator, a member of the sanhedrim, one of the elders of the Jewish church. Having said this of him, it was necessary to add, that though he was of that body of men who had put Christ to death, yet he *had not consented to their counsel and deed*; (v. 51.) though it was carried by the majority, yet he entered his protest against it, and followed not the multitude to do evil. Note, That evil counsel and deed shall not be reckoned our act, which we have not consented to. Nay, he not only *dissented* openly from those that were enemies to Christ, but he *consented* secretly with those that were his friends; *He himself waited for the kingdom of God*; he believed the Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected the accomplishment of them. This was the man that appears upon this occasion to have had a true respect for the Lord Jesus. Note, There are many who are hearty in Christ's interests, who, though they do not make any show in their outward profession of it, yet will be more ready to do him a piece of real service, when there is occasion, than others who make a greater figure and noise.

2. What he did toward the burying of him. (1.) *He went to Pilate, the judge that condemned him, and begged the body of Jesus*, for it was at his disposal; and though he might have raised a party sufficient to have carried off the body by violence, yet he would take the regular course, and do it peaceably. (2.) *He took it down*, it should seem, with his own hands, and *wrapped it in linen*. They tell us that it was the manner of the Jews, (and that the word here used signifies so much,) to roll the bodies of the dead as we do little children in their *swaddling clothes*; so that the piece of fine linen which he bought whole, he cut into many pieces for that purpose. It is said of Lazarus, *He was bound hand and*

foot, John 11. 44. *Grave clothes* are to the saints as *swaddling clothes*, which they shall out-grow, and put off, when they come to the perfect man.

3. Where he was buried; *in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone*, that the prison of the grave might be made strong, as the church, when she was brought into darkness, had her way *enclosed with hewn stone*, Lam. 3. 2, 9. But it was *a sepulchre in which never man before was laid*, for he was buried on such an account as never any one before him was buried, only in order to his rising again the third day by his own power; and he was to triumph over the grave so as never any man did.

4. When he was buried; (v. 54.) *on the day of the preparation, when the sabbath drew on*. This is given as a reason why they made such haste with the funeral, because the *sabbath drew on*, which required their attendance to other work, preparing for the sabbath, and going forth to welcome it. Note, Weeping must not hinder sowing. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they must apply themselves to the sanctifying of the sabbath. And when the sabbath draws on, there must be *preparation*. Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, that they may not hinder us from our sabbath-work; and our holy affections must be so excited, that they may carry us on in it.

5. Who attended the funeral; (v. 55.) not any of the disciples, but only the *women that came with him from Galilee*, (v. 55.) who, as they stood by him while he hung on the cross, so they *followed* him, all in tears, no doubt, and *beheld the sepulchre* where it was, which was the way to it, and *how his body was laid in it*. They were led to this, not by their curiosity, but by their affection to the Lord Jesus, which was *strong as death, cruel as the grave*, and which *many waters could not quench*. Here was a silent funeral, and not a solemn one, and yet *his rest was glorious*.

6. What preparation was made for the enshrouding of his body after he was buried; (v. 56.) *They returned, and prepared spices and ointments*, which was more an evidence of their love than of their faith; for had they *remembered and believed* what he had so often told them, that he should *rise again the third day*, they would have spared their cost and pains herein, as knowing that in a short time there would be a greater honour put upon his body by the glory of his resurrection, than they could put upon it with their most *precious ointments*; but, busy as they were in this preparation, they *rested on the sabbath-day*, and did none of this servile work thereon, not according to the custom of their nation, but according to the commandments of their God, which, though the day be altered, is still in full force; *Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy*.

CHAP. XXIV.

Our Lord Jesus went gloriously down to death, in spite of the malice of his enemies, who did all they could to make his death ignominious; but he rose again more gloriously; of which we have an account in this chapter; and the proofs and evidences of Christ's resurrection are more fully related by this evangelist than they were by Matthew and Mark. Here is, I. Assurance given by two angels, to the women who visited the sepulchre, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, according to his own word, which the angels refer them to, (v. 1. 7.) and the report of this to the apostles, v. 8. II. The visit which Peter made to the sepulchre, and his discoveries there, v. 12. III. Christ's conference with the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, and his making of himself known to them, v. 13. 35. IV. His appearing to the eleven disciples themselves, the same day at evening, v. 36. 48. V. The favour he gave them, his ascension into heaven, and the love and praise of his disciples whom he left behind, v. 49. 53.

1. **N**OW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning

they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them. 2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: 5. And, as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other *women* that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The manner of the re-uniting of Christ's soul and body in his resurrection, is a mystery, one of the *secret things that belong not to us*; but the *infallible proofs* of his resurrection, that he did indeed rise from the dead, and was thereby proved to be the Son of God, are *things revealed, which belong to us and to our children*; some of them we have here in these verses which relate the same story for substance that we had in Matthew and Mark.

1. We have here the affection and respect which the good women that had followed Christ, showed to him, after he was dead and buried, *v. 1*. As soon as ever they could, after the sabbath was over, they came to the sepulchre, to embalm his body, not to take it out of the linen in which Joseph had wrapped it, but to anoint the head and face, and perhaps the wounded hands and feet, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about the body; as it is usual with us to strew flowers about the dead bodies and graves of our friends, only to show our good will toward the taking off the deformity of death, if we could, and to make them somewhat the less loathsome to those that are about them. The zeal of those good women for Christ did continue; the spices which they had prepared the evening before the sabbath, at a great expense, they did not, upon the second thoughts, when they had slept upon it, dispose of otherwise, suggesting, *To what purpose is this waste?* But they brought them to the sepulchre on the morning after the sabbath, early, very early. It is a rule of charity, *Every man, according as he purpases in his heart, so let him give*, 2 Cor. 9. 7. What is prepared for Christ, let it be used for him. Notice is taken of the names of these women, *Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary*, the mother of James; grave matronly women, it should seem they were. Notice is also taken of

certain others with them, (*v. 1.*) and again, *v. 10*. These that had not joined in preparing the spices, would yet go along with them to the sepulchre; as if the number of Christ's friends increased when he was dead, John 12. 24, 32. The daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw how inquisitive the spouse was after her Beloved, were desirous to seek him with her; (Cant. 6. 1.) so were these *other women*: The zeal of some provokes others.

II. The surprise they were in, when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty; (*v. 2, 3.*) they were much perplexed at that (*v. 4.*) which they had much reason to rejoice in, that *the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre*, (by which it appeared that he had a legal discharge, and leave to come out,) and that they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, by which it appeared that he had made use of his discharge, and was come out. Note, Good christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.

III. The plain account which they had of Christ's resurrection, from two angels that appeared to them in shining garments, not only white, but bright, and casting a lustre about them; they first saw one angel without the sepulchre, who presently went in, and sat with another angel in the sepulchre, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; so the evangelists may be reconciled.

The women, when they saw the angels, were afraid lest they had some ill news for them; but, instead of inquiring of them, they bowed down their faces to the earth, to look for their dear master in the grave. They would rather find him in his grave-clothes, than angels themselves in their shining garments. A dying Jesus has more beauty in the eyes of a believer than angels themselves. These women, like the spouse, when found by the watchmen, (and angels are called *watchers*,) enter not into any other conversation with them, than, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* Now here,

1. They upbraid the women with the absurdity of the search they were making; (*v. 5.*) *Why seek ye the living among the dead?* Witness is hereby given to Christ, that he is living, of him it is witnessed, that he liveth, (Heb. 7. 8.) and it is the comfort of all the saints, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*; for because he lives we shall live also. But a reproof is given to those that look for him among the dead; among the dead heroes that the Gentiles worshipped, as if he were but like one of them, that look for him in an image, or a crucifix, the work of men's hands, or among unwritten traditions and the inventions of men. And indeed all they that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to seek the living among the dead.

2. They assure them that he is risen from the dead; (*v. 6.*) *"He is not here, but is risen"*, is risen by his own power; he has quitted his grave, to return no more to it." These angels were competent witnesses, for they had been sent express from heaven with orders for his discharge. And we are sure that their record is true; they durst not tell a lie.

3. They refer them to his own words; *Remember what he spake to you, when he was yet in Galilee*. If they had duly believed and observed the prediction of it, they would easily have believed the thing itself when it came to pass; and therefore, that the tidings might not be such a surprise to them as it seemed to be, he repeats to them what Christ had often said, in their hearing, *The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men*; and though it was done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet they that did it, were

not the less *sinful* for doing it; he told them that he *must be crucified*, surely they could not forget that which they had with so much concern seen fulfilled; and would not that bring to their mind that which always followed, *The third day he shall rise again?* Observe, These angels from heaven bring not any *new gospel*, but put them in mind, as the angels of the churches do, of the sayings of Christ, and teach them how to improve and apply them.

IV. Their satisfaction in this account, v. 8. The women seemed to acquiesce; they *remembered his words*, when they were thus put in mind of them, and concluded from thence, that if he were risen, it was no more than they had reason to expect; and now they were ashamed of the preparations they had made to embalm him on the third day, who had often said that he would on the third day rise again. Note, A reasonable remembrance of the words of Christ will help us to a right understanding of his providence.

V. The report they brought of this to the apostles; *They returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest of Christ's disciples*, v. 9. It does not appear that they were together in a body, they were *scattered every one to his own*, perhaps scarcely two or three of them together in the same lodgings, but one went to some of them, and another to others of them, so that in a little time, that morning, they got them all notice of it. But we are told (v. 11.) how the report was received; *Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not*. They thought it was only the fancy of the women, and imputed it to the power of imagination; for they also had forgotten Christ's words, and wanted to be put in mind of them, not only what he had said to them in Galilee some time ago, but what he had said very lately in the night wherein he was betrayed, *Again a little while, and ye shall see me. I will see you again*. One would be amazed at the stupidity of these disciples, who had themselves so often professed that they believed Christ to be the Son of God and the true Messiah, had been so often told that he must die, and rise again, and then enter into his glory, had seen him more than once raise the dead, that they should be so backward to believe his raising himself; surely it would seem the less strange to them, (when hereafter this complaint would justly be taken up by them,) to remember that there was a time when it might justly have been taken up against them, *Who hath believed our report?*

VI. The inquiry which Peter made hereupon, v. 12. It was Mary Magdalene that brought the report to him, as appears, John 20. 1, 2. where this story of his running to the sepulchre, is more particularly related. 1. Peter hastened to the sepulchre, upon the report; perhaps ashamed of himself, to think that Mary Magdalene should have been there before him; and yet, perhaps, he had not been so ready to go thither now, if the woman had not told him, among other things, that *the watch was fled*. Many that are *swift-footed* enough when there is no danger, are but *cow-hearted* when there is. Peter now *ran to the sepulchre*, who but the other day *ran from his Master*. 2. He looked into the sepulchre, and took notice how orderly the linen clothes in which Christ was wrapped, were taken off, and folded up, and laid by themselves, but the body gone. He was very particular in making his observations, as if he would rather credit his own eyes than the testimony of the angels. 3. He went away, as he thought, not much the wiser, *wondering in himself at that which was come to pass*. Had he remembered the words of Christ, even this was enough to satisfy him that he was risen from the dead; but, having forgotten them, he

is only amazed with the thing, and knows not what to make of it. There is many a thing puzzling and perplexing to us, which would be both plain and profitable, if we did but rightly understand the words of Christ, and had them ready to us.

13. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about threescore furlongs*. 14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19. And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. 22. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: 23. And when they found not his body, they come, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. 25. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29. But they constrained him saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31. And their eyes were opened,

and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. 34. Saying, the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35. And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

This appearance of Christ to the *two disciples* going to Emmaus, was mentioned, and but just mentioned before; (Mark 16. 12.) here it is largely related. It happened the same day that Christ rose, the first day of the new world that rose with him. One of these two disciples was *Cleopas* or *Alpheus*, said by the ancients to be the brother of Joseph, Christ's supposed father; who the other was, is not certain. Some think it was Peter; it should seem indeed that Christ did appear particularly to Peter that day, which the eleven spake of among themselves, (v. 34.) and Paul mentions, 1 Cor. 15. 5. But it could not be Peter that was one of the *two*, for he was one of the *eleven* to whom the *two* returned; and besides, we know Peter so well as to think that if he had been one of the two, he would have been the *chief speaker*, and not Cleopas. It was one of those that were associated with the eleven, mentioned v. 9.

Now in this passage of story we may observe,

I. *The walk and talk* of those two disciples; *They went to a village called Emmaus*, which is reckoned to be about two hours' walk from Jerusalem; it is here said to be about sixty furlongs, seven measured miles, v. 13. Whether they went thither upon business, or to see some friend, does not appear. I suspect that they were going homewards to Galilee, with an intention not to inquire more after this Jesus; that they were meditating a retreat, and stole away from their company without asking leave or taking leave; for the accounts brought them that morning of their Master's resurrection, seemed to them *as idle tales*; and if so, no wonder that they began to think of making the best of their way home.

But as they travelled they *talked together of all these things which had happened*, v. 14. They had not courage to *confer* of these things, and *consult* what was to be done in the present juncture at Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews; but when they were got out of the hearing of the Jews, they could talk it over with more freedom. They *talked over these things*, reasoning with themselves concerning the probabilities of Christ's resurrection, for, according as these appeared, they would either go forward, or return back to Jerusalem. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up one another's devout affections.

II. The good company they met with upon the road, when Jesus himself came, and joined himself to them; (v. 15.) *They communed together, and reasoned*, and perhaps were warm at the argument, one hoping that their Master was risen, and would set up his kingdom, the other despairing. *Jesus himself drew near*, as a stranger who seeing them travel the same way that he *went*, told them that he should be *glad of their company*.

We may observe it for our encouragement to keep up christian conference and edifying discourse among us, that where but two together are well employed in work of that kind, Christ will come to them, and make a third. When they that fear the Lord, *speak one to another*, the Lord *hearkens and hears*, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twisted in faith and love become a *threefold cord, not easily broken*, Eccl. 4. 12. They in their countenances and reasonings together were searching for Christ, comparing notes concerning him, that they might come to more knowledge of him; and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. When the spouse inquired of the watchmen concerning her Beloved, *it was but a little that she passed from them*, but she found him, Cant. 3. 4.

But though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it; (v. 16.) *Their eyes were held that they should not know him*: it should seem, there were both an alteration of the *object*, (for 't is said in Mark, that now he *appeared in another form*;) and a restraint upon the organ; for here it is said, that *their eyes were held* by a divine power; or, as some think, there was a confusion in the *medium*; the air was so disposed, that they could not discern who it was. No matter *how* it was, but *so* it was, they did not *know him*; Christ so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him and he with them; and that it might appear that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much doted upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them, and warm their hearts, by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them, and should have his grace going along with them unseen.

III. The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them, and they knew not him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in disguise, are here crossing questions.

1. Christ's first question to them is concerning *their present sadness*, which plainly appeared in their countenances; (v. 17.) *What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad?* It is a very kind and friendly inquiry. Observe,

(1.) They were *sad*; it appeared to a stranger that they were so. [1.] They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them; to *fast* when the *Bridegroom* is taken from them. [2.] Though he was risen from the dead, yet either they did not know it, or did not believe it, and so they were still in sorrow. Note, Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful even then when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them. [3.] Being sad, they had *communications one with another* concerning Christ. Note, *First*, It becomes christians to talk of Christ. Were our hearts as full of him, and of what he has done and suffered for us, as they should be, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak*, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ and his grace and love. *Secondly*, Good company and good converse are an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad they did not each one get by himself, but continued as he sent them out, two and two, for two are better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent

to the grief, may perhaps give *ease* to the grieved; and by talking it over we may talk ourselves, or our friends may talk us, into a better frame. Joint-mourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(2.) Christ came up to them, and inquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief; *What manner of communications are these?* Though Christ was now entered into his state of exaltation, yet he continued tender of his disciples, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy; *Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?* Gen. 40. 7. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us, [1.] To be *conversible*. Christ here fell into discourse with two grave, serious persons, though he was a Stranger to them, and they knew him not, and they readily embraced him. It does not become christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society. [2.] We are hereby taught to be *compassionate*. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should, like Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can; *Weep with them that weep*.

2. In answer to this, they put a question to him concerning his *strangeness*; (v. 18.) *Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days?* Observe,

(1.) Cleopas gave him a civil answer. He does not rudely ask him, "As for what we are talking of, what is that to you?" and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and to conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples; yet he was not jealous of this Stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not forward to *think evil*, no not of strangers.

(2.) He is full of Christ himself, and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too; "What! art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know what has been done to our Master there?" Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem, that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What! are they *daughters of Jerusalem*, and yet so little acquainted with Christ, as to ask, *What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?*

(3.) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him upon this subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man, to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified, should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable, These disciples that were so forward to instruct the Stranger, were instructed by him; for to him that has, and uses what he has, shall be given.

(4.) It appears, by what Cleopas says, that the death of Christ made a great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city, as not to know of it; it was all the talk of the town, and discoursed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

3. Christ, by way of reply, asked concerning their knowledge; (v. 19.) *He said unto them, What things?* thus making himself yet more a Stranger. Observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings, in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompense of it. Now that he was entering upon his glory, see with what unconcerned-

ness he looks back upon his sufferings; *What things?* He had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks, *What things?* The sorrow was forgotten, for joy that the Man-Child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in infirmities for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(2.) Those whom Christ will teach, he will first examine how far they have learned; they must tell him *what things* they know, and then he will tell them what was the meaning of these things, and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They, hereupon, give him a particular account concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, v. 19, &c.

(1.) Here is a summary of Christ's *life and character*. The things they are full of, are concerning *Jesus of Nazareth*, (so he was commonly called,) who was a *Prophet*, a Teacher come from God. He preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency toward heaven; he confirmed it, by many glorious miracles, miracles of mercy, so that he was *mighty in deed and word before God and all the people*; that is, he was both a great Favourite of Heaven and a great Blessing to this earth. He was, and appeared to be, greatly beloved of God, and much the darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are *great before all the people*, and are caressed by them, who are not so *before God*, as the Scribes and Pharisees; but Christ was mighty both in his *doctrine* and in his *doings, before God and all the people*. Those were strangers in Jerusalem, that did not know this.

(2.) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, v. 20. Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the *chief priests and our rulers*, in contempt of both, *delivered him* to the Roman power, *to be condemned to death*, and they have *crucified him*. It is strange that they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay more load upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ; but perhaps because they spake to one that was a Stranger, they thought it prudence to avoid all reflections upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(3.) Here is an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness; *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, v. 21. We are of those who not only looked upon him to be a Prophet, like Moses, but, like him, a Redeemer too; he was depended upon, and great things expected from him, by them that *looked for redemption*, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if *hope deferred makes the heart sick*, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair, which, if they had understood it aright, was the surest ground of their hope—and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus; *We trusted* (say they) *that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel*. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? So that now that that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to trust that *this is he that shall deliver Israel*; yet now they are ready to give up the cause.

(4.) Here is an account of their present amazement, with reference to his resurrection. [1.] *This is the third day* since he was crucified and died, and that was the day, when it was expected, if ever, that he should rise again, and rise in glory and outward pomp, and show himself as publicly in honour as he had been shown three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears as

we expected, to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent." [2.] They own that there was a report among them, that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to; (v. 22, 23.) "*Certain women also of our company made us astonished, (and that was all,) which were early at the sepulchre, and found the body gone, and they said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive; but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon.*" [3.] They acknowledge that some of the apostles had made a visit to the sepulchre, and found it *empty*, (v. 24.) "*But him they saw not, and therefore we have reason to fear that he is not risen, for if he were, surely he would have showed himself to them; so that upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave.*"

(5.) Our Lord Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word.

[1.] He reproves them for their incogitancy, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament; (v. 25.) "*O fools, and slow of heart to believe.*" When Christ forbade us to say to our brother, *Thou fool*, it was intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just reproofs. Christ called them *fools*, not as it signifies *wicked men*, in which sense he forbade it us, but as it signifies *weak men*. He might call them *fools*, for he *knows our foolishness*, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. They are fools, that act against their own interest; so they did, who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their *foolishness*, is, *First*, Their *slowness to believe*. Believers are branded as fools by atheists and infidels and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us that those are *fools*, who are *slow of heart to believe*, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. *Secondly*, Their slowness to believe the *writings of the prophets*. He does not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of the women and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof—their *slowness to believe* the prophets; for if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's *rising from the dead* that morning, (being the third day after his death,) as they were of the *rising of the sun*; for the *series and succession* of events as settled by *prophecy*, are no less certain and inviolable than as settled by *Providence*; were we hut more *conversant* with the scripture, and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we often *entangle* ourselves in.

[2.] He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them unapt to believe his glory, were really the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way; (v. 26.) "*Ought not the Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*" Was it not decreed, and was not that decree *declared*, that the promised Messiah must first suffer, and then reign, that he must go by his cross to his crown?" Had they never read the fifty-third of Isaiah, and the ninth of Daniel, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the *sufferings of Christ*, and the *glory that should follow*? 1 Pet. 11. The cross of Christ was it that

they could not reconcile themselves to; now here he shows them two things, which take off the offence of the cross; *First*, That the Messiah *ought to suffer* these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they were so far from ruining their expectations, that really they were the foundation of their hopes. He could not have been a *Saviour*, if he had not been a *Sufferer*. Christ's undertaking of our salvation was voluntary; but, having undertaken it, it was necessary that he should suffer and die. *Secondly*, That, when he had suffered these things, he should *enter into his glory*; which he did at his resurrection, that was his first step upward. Observe, It is called *his glory*; because he was *duly entitled* to it; and it was the glory he had before the world was; he *ought* to enter into it, for in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He *ought* to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the *reproach* of the cross is for ever *rolled away*; and we are directed to expect the crown of *thorns*, and then that of *glory*.

[3.] He expounded to them the scriptures of the Old Testament, which spake of the Messiah, and showed them how they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and now can tell them more concerning him, than they could before tell him; (v. 27.) *beginning at Moses*, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, he went in order through *all the prophets*, and *expounded to them the things concerning himself*; showing that the sufferings he had now gone through, were so far from defeating the prophecies of the scripture concerning him, that they were the accomplishment of them. He began at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have his *heel bruised*, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken. Note, *First*, There are things dispersed throughout *all the scriptures* concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to have *collected and put together*. You cannot go far in any part of scripture, but you meet with something that has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other; for he is the true *Treasure hid in the field* of the Old Testament. A golden thread of gospel-grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. There is an *eye* of that *white* to be discerned in every place. *Secondly*, The things concerning Christ need to be *expounded*. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, *except some man should guide him*; (Acts 8. 31.) for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation: but now that the veil is taken away, the New Testament expounds the Old. *Thirdly*, Jesus Christ is himself the best Expositor of scripture, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection, it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of them. Even the Apocalypse itself is but a second part of the Old-Testament prophecies, and has continually an eye to them. *If men believe not Moses and the prophets*, they are incurable. *Fourthly*, In studying the scriptures, it is good to be *methodical*, and to take them in order; for the Old-Testament light shone *gradually* to the *perfect day*, and it is good to observe how at *sundry times*, and in *divers manners*, (subsequent predictions improving and giving light to the preceding ones,) God spake to the fathers *concerning* his Son, by whom he has now *spoken* to us. Some begin their Bible at the wrong end, who study

the Revelation first; Christ has here taught us to *begin at Moses*. Thus far the conference between them.

IV. Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the Bible, which he gave them; but it is not thought fit that we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures; the disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end; but so it is; *They drew nigh to the village whither they went*; (v. 28.) where, it should seem, they determined to *take up* for that night. And now,

1. They courted his stay with them; *He made as though he would have gone further*; he did not say that he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn in to their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do unless he were invited; he would have gone further, if they had not courted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a stranger be *shy*, every one knows the meaning of it, he will not thrust himself *rudely* upon your house or company; but if you make it appear that you are freely desirous of him for your Guest or Companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation; and this was all that Christ did, when he *made as though he would have gone further*. Note, Those that should have Christ dwell with them, must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is often *found of those that seek him not*, yet those only that *seek*, can be sure to *find*; and if he seem to *draw off* from us, it is but to draw out our importunity; as here, *they constrained him*; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, *Abide with us*. Note, Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ, cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him, not only to *walk with them* all day, but to *abide with them* at night. When the day is *far spent*, and it is *towards evening*, we begin to think of retiring for our repose, and then it is proper to have our eye to Christ, and beg of him to *abide with us*; to manifest himself to us, and to fill our minds with good thoughts of him, and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity; *he went in, to tarry with them*. Thus ready is Christ to give further instructions and comforts to those who improve what they have received. He has promised that *if any man open the door*, to bid him welcome, *he will come in to him*, Rev. 3. 20.

2. He manifested himself to them, v. 30, 31. We may suppose that he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road; for thou must talk of the things of God *when thou sittest in the house as well as when thou walkest by the way*; while supper was a getting ready, (which perhaps was soon done, the provision was so small and mean,) it is probable that he entertained them with such communications as were *good*, and *to the use of edifying*; and so likewise as they *sat at meat*, his *lips fed* them. But still they little thought that it was Jesus himself that was all this while talking with them: till at length he was pleased to throw off his disguise, and then to withdraw.

(1.) They began to suspect it was he when, as they *sat down to meat*, he undertook the office of the Master of the feast, which he performed so like himself, and like what he used to do among his disciples, that by it they discerned him; *He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them*. This he did with his usual air both of authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, with the same expressions perhaps in craving a blessing, and in giving the bread to them. This was not a mira-

culous meal like that of the five loaves, nor a *sacramental meal*, like that of the eucharist, but a *common meal*; yet Christ here did the same as he did in those; to teach us to keep up our communion with God through Christ in common providences as well as in special ordinances, and to crave a blessing, and give thanks at every meal, and to see our daily bread provided for us, and broken to us, by the hand of Jesus Christ, the Master, not only of the great family, but of all our families. Wherever we *sat down to eat*, let us set Christ at the upper end of the table, take our meat as *blessed to us* by him, and *eat and drink to his glory*; and receive contentedly and thankfully what he is pleased to *carve out* to us, be the fare ever so coarse and mean; we may well receive it cheerfully, if we can by faith see it coming to us from Christ's hand, and with his blessing.

(2.) Presently *their eyes were opened*, and then they saw who it was, and *knew him* well enough; whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way, the mists were scattered, the veil taken off, and they made no question but it was their Master; he might, for wise and holy ends, put on the shape of another, but no other could put on his; and therefore it must be he. See how Christ by his Spirit and grace makes himself known to the souls of his people. [1.] He opens the scriptures to them, for they are they which testify of him to these who *search them*, and search for him in them. [2.] He meets them at his table, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and commonly there makes further discoveries of himself to them: *is known to them in breaking of bread*. But, [3.] The work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind, and causing the scales to fall off from them, as from Paul's in his conversion. If he that gives the revelation, do not give the understanding, we are in the dark still.

3. He immediately disappeared; *He vanished out of their sight, as a vapor in the wind*.—He *withdrew himself* from them: *slipt away* of a sudden, and *went out of sight*. Or, *he became not visible by them*: was made inconspicuous by them. It should seem that though Christ's body, after his resurrection, was the very *same body* in which he suffered and died, as appeared by the marks in it, yet it was so far changed, as to become either *visible* or *not visible*, as he thought fit to make it, which was a step towards its being made a *glorious body*. As soon as he had given his disciples one glimpse of him, he was gone presently; such short and transient views have we of Christ in this world, we see him, but in a little while lose the sight of him again; when we come to heaven, the vision of him will have no interruptions.

V. Here is the reflection which these disciples made upon this conference, and the report which they made of it to their brethren at Jerusalem.

1. The reflection they each of them made upon the influence which Christ's discourse had upon them: (v. 32.) *They said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us?* "I am sure mine did," saith one; "And so did mine," saith the other, "I never was so affected with any discourse in all my life." Thus do they not so much *compare notes as compare hearts*, in the review of the sermon Christ had preached to them. They found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the Preacher; it made things very plain and clear to them; and, which was more, brought a *divine heat* with a *divine light* into their souls, such as put their hearts into a glow, and kindled a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them. Now this they take notice of, for the confirming of their belief, that it was indeed, as at last they saw, *Jesus himself*, that had been talking with them all along. "What feels were we, that we were not so conscious who it was: For

none but he, no word but his, could *make our hearts burn within us* as they did; it must be he that has the key of the heart, it could be no other." See here, (1.) What *preaching* is likely to *do good*—such as Christ's was; *plain teaching*, and which is familiar and level to our capacity—he *talked with us by the way*; and *scriptural preaching*—he *opened to us the scriptures*, the scriptures relating to himself. Ministers should show people their religion in their Bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them than what is there; they must show that they make that the fountain of their knowledge, and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of those scriptures which speak of Christ, has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples, both to quicken them, and to comfort them. (2.) What *hearing* is likely to *do good*—that which makes the *heart burn*; when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts *burn within us*; when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the sparks which *fly upward* toward God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the *spirit of judgment* and the *spirit of burning*, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed."

2. The report they received of this to their brethren at Jerusalem; (v. 33.) *They rise up the same hour*, so transported with joy at the discovery Christ had made of himself to them, that they could not stay to make an end of their supper, but returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had had any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this soon banished all such thoughts out of their mind, and there needed no more to send them back to his flock. However, it should seem, they intended at least to take up their quarters to-night at Emmaus; but now that they had seen Christ, they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for the confirmation of their trembling faith, and for the comfort of their sorrowful spirits, with the *same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God*. Note, It is the duty of those to whom Christ hath manifested himself, to let others know what he has done for their souls. When thou art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthen thy brethren. These disciples were *full* of this matter themselves, and must go to their brethren, to give vent to their joys as well as to give them satisfaction that their Master was risen. Observe,

(1.) How they found them, just when they came in among them, discoursing on the same subject, and relating another proof of the resurrection of Christ. They found the eleven, and those that were their usual companions, *gathered together* late in the night, to pray together, it may be, and to consider what was to be done in this juncture; and they found them *saving* among themselves; (*ἡλιοντες*, it is the saving of the *eleven*, not of the *two*, as is plain by the original;) and when these two came in, they repeated to them with joy and triumph, *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon*, v. 34. That Peter had a sight of him before the rest of the disciples had, appears 1 Cor. 15. 5. where it is said, *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*. The angel having ordered the women to tell Peter of it particularly, (Mark 16. 7.) for his comfort, it is highly probable that our Lord Jesus did himself presently the same day appear to Peter, though we have no particular narrative of it, to *confirm the word of his messengers*. This he had related to his brethren; but observe, Peter does not here proclaim

it, and boast of it himself, (he thought that did *not* become a penitent,) but the other disciples speak of it with exultation, *The Lord is risen indeed, verily—really*; it is now past dispute; no room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared not only to the women, but to Simon.

(2.) How they seconded their evidence with an account of what they had seen; (v. 35.) *They told what things were done in the way*. The words that were spoken by Christ to them in the way, having a wonderful effect and influence upon them, are here called the *things* that were *done in the way*: for the words that Christ speaks, are not an empty sound, but *they are spirit, and they are life*, and wondrous things are *done by them, done by the way*, by the by as it were, where it is not expected. They told also how he was at length *known to them in the breaking of bread*; then when he was carving out blessings to them, God opened their eyes to discern who it was. Note, It would be of great use for the discovery and confirmation of truth, if the disciples of Christ would compare their observations and experiences, and communicate to each other what they know and have felt in themselves.

36. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, *Peace be unto you*. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, *Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?* 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his hands and his feet*. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, *Have ye here any meat?* 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them. 44. And he said unto them, *These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me*. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. 46. And said unto them, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*. 48. And ye are witnesses of these things. 49. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Five times Christ was seen the same day that he rose: by Mary Magdalene alone in the garden; (John 20. 14,) by the women, as they were going to tell the disciples; (Matth. 28. 9.) by Peter alone; by the two disciples going to Emmaus; and now at

night by the eleven; which we have an account of in these verses, as also John 20. 19. Observe,

I. The great *surprise* which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very *seasonably*, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection; *As they thus spake*, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question, whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence sufficient of their Master's resurrection or no, and how they should proceed; *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them*, and put it out of question. Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort, may expect further assurances, and that the *Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits*, (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and confirmed their testimony,) that they are the *children of God*, and risen with Christ. Observe, 1. The comfort Christ spake to them; *Peace be unto you*. This intimates in general that it was a kind visit which Christ now made them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as we deserve. They did not credit those who had seen him; therefore he comes himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredulity. He had promised that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee; but so desirous was he to see them, and satisfy them that he anticipated the appointment, and sees them at Jerusalem. Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, *Peace be to you*; not in a way of compliment, but of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he was now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their old friends, and take state upon them; but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him, and the rest for running away from him; no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them, and was reconciled to them. 2. The fright which they put themselves into upon it; (v. 37.) They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they were aware. The word used, (Matth. 14. 26.) when they said, *It is a spirit*, is *πνευμα*, it is a *spectre*, an *apparition*; but the word here used is *πνευμα*, the word that properly signifies a *spirit*; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it; yet, while we are here in this world of sense and matter, it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodes something, very extraordinary.

II. The great *satisfaction* which his discourse gave them; wherein we have,

1. The reproofs he gave them for their causeless fears; (v. 38.) *Why are ye troubled, and why do frightful thoughts arise in your hearts?* Observe here,

(1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts, our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy; sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble, without are fightings, and then within are fears. These that are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect dishonour upon

God, and create disrespect to themselves. *I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.*

(2.) That many of the troublest me thoughts with which our minds are disquieted, arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright. We forget that Christ is our *elder Brother*, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and that troubles us.

(3.) That all the troublest me thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them; and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul! Why art thou troubled?* Why do thoughts arise, that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, dishonour his duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?

2. The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silencing of their fears, by convincing them that he was not a spirit, and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine which they were to preach to the world, by giving them full satisfaction concerning his resurrection, which if not true, their faith and preaching were all vain. Two proofs he gives them.

(1.) He shows them his body, particularly his hands and his feet. They saw that he had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance of their Master; but is it not his ghost? "No," saith Christ, "*behold my hands and my feet; you see I have hands and feet*, and therefore have a true body; you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body, and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one." He lays down this principle—*that a spirit has not flesh and bones*, it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are. He does not tell us what a spirit is, (it is time enough to know that when we go to the world of spirits,) but what it is not: *It has not flesh and bones*. Now hence he infers, "*It is I myself*; whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is *I myself*, whom you have reason to rejoice in, and not to be afraid of." Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs, will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches.

He appeals to their sight, shows them his hands and his feet, which were pierced with the nails. Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself; and he was willing that they should be seen, he afterward showed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then have we to be ashamed of them, or of ours for him. As he showed his wounds here to his disciples, for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he showed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain; (Rev. 5. 6.) his blood speaks, Heb. 12. 24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he says to the Father, as here to the disciples, *Behold my hands and my feet*, Zech. 13. 6. 7.

He appeals to their touch! *Handle me, and see,*

He would not let Mary Magdalene touch him at that time, John 20. 17. But the disciples here are entrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bade them *handle him*, that they might be convinced that he was not a *spirit*. If there were really no spirits, nor apparitions of spirits, (as by this and other instances it is plain that the disciples did believe there were,) this had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them that there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted that there have been, and may be, apparitions of spirits, else what need was there of so much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many heretics in the primitive times, atheists I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a mere phantasm, which was neither really born, nor truly suffered; such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichees had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called *Δαιμόνιοι* and *Φαντασματολογία*. Blessed be God, these heresies are long since buried; and we know and are sure that Jesus Christ was no *spirit* or *apparition*, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

(2.) He *eats* with them, to show that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. St. Peter lays a great stress upon this, (Acts 10. 41.) *We did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead.*

[1.] When they *saw his hands and his feet*, yet they knew not what to say, *They believed not for joy, and wondered*, v. 41. It was their infirmity, that they *believed not*, that yet they believed not, *οὐκ ἠπίσταντο ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπιστοῦντες*—they as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the truth of Christ's resurrection, that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, *He is risen*, when he is not, as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, *He is not risen*, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, shows that when afterward they did believe it, and venture their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be.

But though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them, that they believed not: but, *First*, They *believed not for joy*, as Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore *weak*, because the love and desires are *strong*, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. *Secondly*, They *wondered*! they thought it not only *too good*, but *too great*, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

[2.] For their further conviction and encouragement, he *called for some meat*. He sat down to meat with the two disciples at Emmaus, but it is not said that he did eat with them; now lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually *eat* with them and the rest, to show how his body was really and truly *returned to life*; though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly with them, as he had done, (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life, and to die again,) because it was not agreeable to the economy of the state he was risen to.

They gave him a *piece of a broiled fish, and of a honey-comb*, v. 42. The honey-comb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land *flowing with honey*. This was mean fare; yet, if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do, because in the kingdom of

our Father they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

3. The *insight* he gave them into the word of God, which they had *heard* and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the difficulties are cleared.

(1.) He refers them to the *word* which they had *heard* from him, when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that as the angel had done; (v. 44.) *These are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you.* We should better *understand* what Christ *doth*, if we did but better *remember* what he hath *said*, and had but the art of comparing them together.

(2.) He refers them to the *word* they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to; *All things must be fulfilled which were written.* Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations—that, whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him; what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom; those God had *joined together* in the prediction, and it could not be thought that they should be *put asunder* in the event. *All things* must be fulfilled, even *the hardest*, even *the heaviest*, even *the vinegar*, he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, *It is finished*. The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them things concerning Christ: *The law of Moses*, that is, the Pentateuch, or the *five books* written by Moses; the *prophets*, containing not only the books that are purely prophetic, but those historical books that were written by prophetic men; the *Psalms* containing the other writings, which they called the *Hagiographa*. See in what various ways of writing God did of old reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for *to him bare all the prophets witness*.

(3.) By an immediate present work upon their minds, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old-Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him; (v. 45.) *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.* In his discourse with the two disciples he took the vail from off the text, by *opening* the scriptures; here he took the vail from off the hearts, by *opening* the mind. Observe here, [1.] That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that are his. He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable, how he did now after his resurrection give a *specimen* of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men; his enlightening of the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating of the active powers with a divine heat, when he made their hearts burn within them. [2.] Even good men need to have their *understandings opened*; for though they are not *darkness*, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prays, *Open mine eyes. Give me understanding.* And St. Paul, who knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more.

[3.] Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is, by *opening the understanding* to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan, as a thief and a robber climbs up some other way. [4.] The design of opening the understanding is, that we may *understand the scriptures*; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we may be wise in what is

written, and may be made *wise to salvation* by it. The Spirit in the word, and the Spirit in the heart say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn *above their Bibles* in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more *out of their Bibles*, and to grow more *ready and mighty* in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and our mistakes concerning him rectified, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

4. The instructions he gave them as *apostles*, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour, which they thought themselves quite disappointed of when he was dead. "No," saith he, "you are now to enter upon them; *ye are to be witnesses of these things*, (v. 48.) to carry the notice of them to all the world; not only to *report* them as matter of news, but to *assert* them as evidence given upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be, the casting down, and casting out, of the *prince of this world*. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear witnesses of them; go and assure the world of them; and the same Spirit that has enlightened you, shall go along with you for the enlightening of others." Now here they are told,

(1.) *What they must preach*; they must preach the gospel, must preach the *New Testament* as the full accomplishment of the *Old*, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their Bibles along with them, (especially when they preached to the Jews; nay, and Peter, in his first sermon to the Gentiles, directed them to consult the prophets, Acts 10. 43.) and must show people how it was written of old concerning the Messiah, and the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them how, upon their certain knowledge, all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

[1.] The great *gospel-truth* concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, must be *published* to the children of men; (v. 46.) *Thus it was written* in the sealed book of the divine counsels from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the Old Testament, among the things revealed; and therefore *thus it behoved Christ to suffer*, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken that no word of God fall to the ground. "Go, and tell the world," *First*, "That Christ suffered, as it was written of him. Go, preach Christ crucified, be not ashamed of his cross, not ashamed of a suffering Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it *behoved him to suffer*, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin; nay, it *became him to be perfected through sufferings*," Heb. 2. 10. *Secondly*, "That he rose from the dead on the *third day*, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the scriptures were fulfilled; (see 1 Cor. 15. 3. 4.) go, tell the world how often you saw him after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him. *Your eyes see*" (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering of himself to them was as life from the dead) "*that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you*, Gen. 45. 12. Go, and tell them, then, that he that was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave."

[2.] The great *gospel-duty* of repentance must be pressed upon the children of men. *Repentance for*

sin must be preached in *Christ's name*, and by his authority, v. 47. *All men everywhere* must be called and commanded to repent, Acts 17. 30. "Go, and tell people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expects and requires that, immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods that they have made, to the worship of the God that made them; and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh; they must turn to the service of God in Christ, must mortify all sinful habits, and forsake all sinful practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed."

[3.] The great *gospel-privilege* of the remission of sins must be *proposed* to all, and assured to all that *repent*, and *believe the gospel*. "Go, tell a guilty world, that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that an act of indemnity has passed the royal assent, which all that repent and believe shall have the benefit of, and not only be pardoned, but preferred by. Tell them that *there is hope* concerning them."

(2.) *To whom they must preach*. Whither must they carry these proposals, and how far doth their commission extend? They are here told,

[1.] That they must preach this *among all nations*. They must disperse themselves, like the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way and some another, and carry this light along with them wherever they go. The prophets had preached *repentance and remission* to the Jews, but the apostles must preach them *to all the world*. None are exempted from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to *repent*, nor are any excluded from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins, but those that by their unbelief and impenitency put a bar in their own door.

[2.] That they must *begin at Jerusalem*; there they must preach their first *gospel-sermon*; there the *gospel-church* must be first formed; there the *gospel-day* must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth, which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? *First*, Because *thus it was written*, and therefore it *behoved them to take this method*. *The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem*, Isa. 2. 3. And see Joel 2. 32.—3. 16. Obad. 21. Zech. 14. 8. *Secondly*, Because there the matters of fact, on which the gospel was founded, were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer, that it dares face those daring enemies of his, that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. "*Begin at Jerusalem*, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves disappointed." *Thirdly*, Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him, (both the rulers and the multitude,) for which that city might justly have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity; but no, so far from that, the first offer of gospel-grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

(3.) *What assistance they should have in preaching*. It is a vast undertaking that they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, especially considering the opposition this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with; if therefore they ask, *Who is sufficient for these things?* here is an answer ready. (v. 49.) *Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and ye shall be endued with power from on high*. He here assures them that in a little time the Spirit

should be poured out upon them in greater measure than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust : and therefore they must *tarry at Jerusalem*, and not enter upon it till this be done. Note, [1.] Those who *receive the Holy Ghost*, are thereby *endued with a power from on high*, a supernatural power ; a power above any of their own : it is *from on high*, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to *aim high*. [2.] Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world, as they did, if they had not been endued with such a power ; and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them. [3.] *This power from on high* was the *promise of the Father*, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And if it be the *promise of the Father*, we may be sure that the promise is *inviolable*, and the thing promised *invaluable*. [4.] Christ would not leave his disciples till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the *ascension* of Christ that there came the *descent of the Spirit*. [5.] Christ's ambassadors must stay till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials ; though, one would think, never was such haste as now for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must tarry till they be endued with power from on high, and *tarry at Jerusalem*, though a place of danger, because there this promise of the Father was to find them, Joel 2. 28.

50. And he led them out as far as to Bethany ; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy ; 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

This evangelist omits the solemn meeting between Christ and his disciples *in Galilee* ; but what he said to them there, and at other interviews, he subjoins to what he said to them at the first visit he made them on the evening of the day he rose ; and has now nothing more to account for but his ascension into heaven, which we have a very brief narrative of in these verses : in which we are told,

1. How solemnly Christ took leave of his disciples. Christ's design being to reconcile heaven and earth, and continue a Daysman between them, it was necessary that he should lay his hands on them both, and, in order thereto, that he should *pass and re-pass*. He had business to do in both worlds, and accordingly came from heaven to earth in his incarnation, to despatch his business here, having finished which, he returned to heaven, to reside there, and negotiate our affairs with the Father. Observe,

1. From whence he ascended ; from *Bethany*, near Jerusalem, adjoining to the *mount of Olives*. There he had done eminent services for his Father's glory, and there he entered upon his glory. There was the *garden*, in which his sufferings began, there he was in his agony ; and Bethany signifies the *house of sorrow*. Those that would go to heaven, must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrow, must go by agonies to their joys. The mount of Olives was pitched upon long since to be the place of Christ's ascension ; (Zech. 14. 4.) *His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*. And

here it was that a while ago he began his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, *ch. 19. 29.*

2. Who were the witnesses of his ascension ; *He led out his disciples* to see him : probably, it was very early in the morning that he ascended, before people were stirring, for he never showed himself openly to all the people after his resurrection, but only to *chosen witnesses*. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave, because his resurrection was capable of being proved by their seeing him alive afterward : but they saw him *ascend* into heaven, because they could not otherwise have an *ocular demonstration* of his ascension. They were *led out* on purpose to see him ascend ; had their eye upon him when he ascended, and were not looking another way.

3. What was the farewell he gave them ; *He lift up his hands, and blessed them*. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a blessing behind him ; *he lift up his hands*, as the High-Priest did when he blessed the people ; see Lev. 9. 22. He blessed as one having authority, commanded by the blessings which he had purchased ; he *blessed them* as Jacob blessed his sons. The apostles were now as the representatives of the twelve tribes, so that in blessing them he blessed all his spiritual Israel, and put his Father's name upon them. He blessed them as Jacob blessed his sons, and Moses the tribes, at parting, to show that, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

4. How he left them ; *While he was blessing them, he was parted from them* ; not as if he were taken away before he had said all he had to say, but to intimate that his being parted from them did not put an end to his blessing of them, for the intercession which he went to heaven to make for all his, is a continuation of that blessing. He *began* to bless them on earth, but he went to heaven to *go on* with it. Christ was now sending his apostles to preach his gospel to the world, and he gives them his blessing, not for *themselves* only, but to be conferred in his name upon *all* that should believe on him through their word, for in him *all the families of the earth were to be blessed*.

5. How his ascension is described. (1.) He was *parted from them*, was taken from their head, as Elijah from Elisha's. Note, The dearest friends must part. Those that love us, and pray for us, and instruct us, must be *parted from us*. The bodily presence of Christ himself was not to be expected always in this world ; those that knew him after the flesh, must now henceforth know him so no more. (2.) He was *carried up into heaven* ; not by force, but by his own act and deed. As he arose, so he ascended, by his own power, yet attended by angels. There needed no chariot of fire, or horses of fire, he knew the way, and, being the *Lord from heaven*, could go back himself. He ascended in a cloud, as the angel in the smoke of Manoa's sacrifice, Judg. 13. 20.

11. How cheerfully his disciples continued their attendance on him, and on God through him, even now that he was parted from them.

1. They paid their homage to him at his going away, to signify that though he was going into a far country, yet they would continue his loyal subjects that were willing to have him reign over them ; *They worshipped him*, v. 52. Note, Christ expects *adoration* from those that receive blessings from him. He *blessed them* ; in token of gratitude for which, they *worshipped him*. This fresh display of Christ's glory drew from them fresh acknowledgments and adorations of it. They knew that though he was *parted from them*, yet he could, and did, take notice of their adorations of him ; the cloud that received him out of their sight, did not put them or their services out of his sight.

2. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There they were ordered to continue till the Spirit should be poured out upon them, and thither they went accordingly, though it was into the mouth of danger. Thither they went, and there they staid with great joy. This was a wonderful change, and an effect of the opening of their understandings. When Christ told them that he must leave them, sorrow filled their hearts; yet now that they see him go, they are filled with joy, being convinced at length that it was expedient for them and for the church that he should go away, to send the Comforter. Note, The glory of Christ is the joy, the exceeding joy, of all true believers, even while they are here in this world; much more will it be so when they go to the new Jerusalem, and find him there in his glory.

3. They abounded in acts of devotion while they were in expectation of the promise of the Father, v. 55. (1.) They attended the temple-service at the hours of prayer; God had not as yet quite forsaken it, and therefore they did not. *They were continually in the temple*, as their Master was when he

was at Jerusalem. *The Lord loves the gates of Zion*, and so should we. Some think that they had their place of meeting, as disciples, in some of the chambers of the temple which belonged to some Levite that was well affected to them; but others think that it is not likely that either could be concealed from, or would be connived at by, the chief priests and rulers of the temple. (2.) Temple-sacrifices, they knew, were superseded by Christ's sacrifice, but the temple-songs they joined in. Note, While we are waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. Praising and blessing God is work that is never out of season; and nothing better prepares the mind for the receiving of the Holy Ghost than holy joy and praise. Fears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up.

The *amen* that concludes, seems to be added by the church and every believer to the reading of the gospel; signifying an assent to the truths of the gospel, and a hearty concurrence with all the disciples of Christ in praising and blessing God. *Amen*. Let him be continually praised and blessed.

AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. JOHN.

It is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of *that disciple whom Jesus loved*; one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and agony. The ancients tell us, that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say that he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the heresy of Cerinthus and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a mere Man. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his *Apocalypse*, the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those latter fathers, who say that he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was a hundred saith another of them. However, it is clear that he wrote last of the four evangelists, and, comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe, 1. That he *relates* what they had omitted; he *brings up the rear*, and his gospel is as the *rearward or gathering-host*, it gleans up what they had passed by. Thus there was a *later* collection of Solomon's wise sayings, (Prov. 25. 1.) and yet far short of what he delivered, 1 Kings 4. 32. 2. That he gives us more of the *mystery* of that which the other evangelists give us only the *history* of. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their *declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach*, Luke 1. 1. Acts 1. 1. But that being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, *John goes on to perfection*, (Heb. 6. 1.) *not laying again the foundation*, but building upon it; leading us more within the veil. Some of the ancients observe that the other evangelists wrote more of the τὰ σωματικά—the *bodily* things of Christ; but John writes of the τὰ πνευματικά—the *spiritual* things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the *key of the evangelists*. Here it is that a *door is opened in heaven*, and the first voice we hear, is, *Come up hither*; come up higher. Some of the ancients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the four evangelists, make John himself to be the *flying-eagle*, so high doth he *soar*, and so *clearly* doth he *see* into divine and heavenly things.