

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

WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST. MARK.

We have heard the evidence given in by the first witness to the doctrine and miracles of our Lord Jesus, and now here is another witness produced, who calls for our attention. The second *living creature* saith, *Come and see*, Rev. 6. 3. Now let us inquire a little,

I. Concerning *this witness*. His name is *Mark*. *Marcus* was a Roman name, and a very common one, and yet we have no reason to think, but that he was by birth a Jew; but as Saul, when he went among the nations, took the Roman name of *Paul*, so he of *Mark*, his Jewish name perhaps being *Mardocai*; so Grotius. We read of John, whose surname was *Mark*, sister's son to Barnabas, whom Paul was displeased with, (Acts 15. 37, 38.) but afterward had a great kindness for, and not only ordered the churches to receive him, (Col. 4. 10.) but sent for him to be his assistant, with this encomium, *He is profitable to me for the ministry*; (2 Tim. 4. 11.) and he reckons him among his fellow-labourers, Philem. 24. We read of Marcus whom Peter calls his *son*, he having been an instrument of his conversion; (1 Pet. 5. 13.) whether that was the same with the other, and if not, which of them was the penman of this gospel, is altogether uncertain. It is a tradition very current among the ancients, that St. Mark wrote this gospel under the direction of St. Peter, and that it was confirmed by his authority; so Hieron. Catal. Script. Eccles. *Marcus, discipulus et interpres Petri, juxta quod Petrum referentum audierat, legatus Roma à fratribus, breve scripsit evangelium—Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, being sent from Rome by the brethren, wrote a concise gospel*; and Tertullian saith, (Adv. Marcion. lib. 4. cap. 5.) *Marcus quod edidit, Petri affirmetur, cujus interpres Marcus—Mark, the interpreter of Peter, delivered in writing the things which had been preached by Peter*. But, as Dr. Whithy very well suggests, Why should we have recourse to the authority of Peter, for the support of this gospel, or to say with St. Jerom, that Peter approved of it, and recommended it by his authority to the church to be read, when, though, it is true, Mark was no apostle, yet we have all the reason in the world to think that both he and Luke were of the number of the seventy disciples, *who companied with the apostles all along*, (Acts 1. 21.) who had a commission like that of the apostles, (Luke 10. 19. compared with Mark 16. 18.) and who, it is highly probable, received the Holy Ghost when they did? Acts 1. 15.—2. 1. So that it is no diminution at all to the validity or value of this gospel, that Mark was not one of the twelve, as Matthew and John were. St. Jerom saith, that, after the writing of this gospel, he went into Egypt, and was the first that preached the gospel at Alexandria, where he founded a church, to which he was a great example of holy living. *Constituit ecclesiam tantà doctrinà et vitæ continentiâ, ut omnes sectatores Christi ad exemplum sui cogeret—He so adorned by his doctrine and his life the church which he founded, that his example influenced all the followers of Christ*.

II. Concerning *this testimony*. Mark's gospel, I. Is but short, much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles. 2. It is very much a repetition of what we had in Matthew; many remarkable circumstances being added to the stories there related, but not many new matters. When many witnesses are called to prove the same fact, upon which a judgment is to be given, it is not thought *tedious*, but highly *necessary*, that they should each of them relate it in their own words, again and again, that by the agreement of the testimony the thing may be established; and therefore we must not think this book of scripture needless, for it is written not only to confirm our belief that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, but to put us in mind of things which we have read in the foregoing gospel, that we may *give the more earnest heed to them*, lest at any time we let them slip; and even *pure minds* have need to be *thus stirred up by way of remembrance*. It was fit that such great things as these should be spoken and written once, yea twice, because man is so *unapt to perceive* them, and so *apt to forget* them. There is no ground for the tradition, that this gospel was written first in Latin, though it was written at Rome; it was written in Greek, as was St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Greek being the more universal language.

ST. MARK, I.

CHAP. I.

Mark's narrative does not take rise so early as those of Matthew and Luke do, from the birth of our Saviour, but from John's baptism, from which he soon passes to Christ's public ministry. Accordingly, in this chapter, we have, I. The office of John Baptist illustrated by the prophecy of num, (v. 1. 3.) and by the history of him, v. 4. 8. II. Christ's

baptism, and his being owned from heaven, v. 9. 11. III. His temptation, v. 12. 13. IV. His preaching, v. 14, 15, 21, 22, 38, 39. V. His calling disciples, v. 16. 20. VI. His praying, v. 35. VII. His working miracles. 1. His rebuking an unclean spirit, v. 23. 28. 2. His curing Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill of a fever, v. 29. 31. 3. His healing all that came to him, v. 32. 34. 35. 4. His cleansing a leper, v. 40. 45.

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6. And John was clothed with camels' hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. 8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

We may observe here,

I. What the New Testament is—the *divine* testament, to which we *adhere* above all that is *human*; the new testament, which we *advance* above that which was old. It is the *gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God*, v. 1. 1. It is *gospel*; it is God's word, and is *faithful and true*; see Rev. 19. 9.—21. 5.—22. 6. It is a *good word*, and well *worthy of all acceptance*; it brings us glad tidings. 2. It is the *gospel of Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour*, the Messiah promised and expected. The foregoing gospel began with the *generation of Jesus Christ*—that was but preliminary, this comes immediately to the business—the *gospel of Christ*. It is called *his*, not only because he is the *Author of it*, and it comes *from him*, but because he is the *Subject of it*, and it treats wholly *concerning him*. 3. This Jesus is the *Son of God*. That truth is the foundation on which the gospel is built, and which it is written to demonstrate; for if Jesus be not the *Son of God*, our *faith* is vain.

II. What the *reference* of the New Testament is to the Old, and its *coherence* with it. The gospel of Jesus Christ *begins*, and so we shall find it *goes on*, just as it is written in the prophets, (v. 2.) for it saith *no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come*; (Acts 26. 22.) which was most proper and powerful for the conviction of the Jews, who believed the Old-Testament prophets to be sent of God, and ought to have *evidenced* that they did so, by welcoming the accomplishment of their prophecies in *its season*; but it is of use to us all for the confirmation of our faith both in the Old Testament and in the New, for the exact harmony that there is between both, shews that they both have the same divine original.

Quotations are here borrowed from two prophecies—that of Isaiah, which was the *longest*, and that of Malachi, which was the *latest*, (and there were above three hundred years between them,) both of whom spake to the same purport concerning the *beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*, in the ministry of John.

1. Malachi, in whom we had the Old-Testament *farewell*, spake very plainly (ch. 3. 1.) concerning John Baptist, who was to give the New-Testament *welcome*. *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face*, v. 2. Christ himself had taken notice of this,

and applied it to John, (Matth. 17. 10.) who was God's messenger, sent to *prepare Christ's way*.

2. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, *begins* the evangelical part of his prophecy with this, which points to the *beginning of the gospel of Christ*; (Isa. 40. 3.) *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness*; v. 3. Matthew had taken notice of this, and applied it to John, ch. 3. 3. But from these two, put together here, we may observe, (1.) That Christ, in his gospel, *comes among us*, bringing with him a treasure of grace, and a sceptre of government. (2.) Such is the corruption of the world, that it is something to do to *make room* for him, and to remove that which gives not only *obstruction*, but *opposition*, to his progress. (3.) When God sent his Son into the world, he *took care*, and when he sends him into the heart, he *takes care*, effectual care, to *prepare his way before him*; for the designs of his grace shall not be *frustrated*; nor may any expect the comforts of that grace, but such as, by conviction of sin and humiliation for it, are *prepared* for those comforts, and disposed to receive them. (4.) When the *paths* that were *crooked* are *made straight*, (the mistakes of the judgment rectified, and the *crooked ways* of the affections,) then way is made for Christ's comforts. (5.) It is in a *wilderness*, for such this world is, that *Christ's way* is prepared, and their's that follow him, like that which Israel passed through to Canaan. (6.) The messengers of conviction and terror, that come to prepare Christ's way, are *God's messengers*, whom he sends and will own, and must be *received* as such. (7.) They that are sent to *prepare the way of the Lord*, in such a vast howling wilderness as this is, have need to *cry aloud*, and not spare, and to *lift up their voice like a trumpet*.

III. What the *beginning* of the New Testament was. The gospel began in John Baptist; for the *law and the prophets were, until John*, the only divine revelation, but then the *kingdom of God began to be preached*, Luke 16. 16. Peter begins from the *baptism of John*, Acts 1. 22. The gospel did not begin so soon as the birth of Christ, for he took time to *increase in wisdom and stature*, not so late as his entering upon his public ministry, but half a year before, when John began to preach the same doctrine that Christ afterward preached. His baptism was the dawning of the *gospel day*; for,

1. In John's way of *living* there was the beginning of a *gospel spirit*; for it bespoke great self-denial, mortification of the flesh, a holy contempt of the world, and nonconformity to it, which may truly be called the *beginning of the gospel of Christ* in any soul, v. 6. He was *clothed with camels' hair*, not with soft raiment; was girt, not with a golden, but with a *leathern girdle*; and, in contempt of dainties and delicate things, his meat was *locusts and wild honey*. Note, The more we sit loose to the body, and live above the world, the better we are prepared for Jesus Christ.

2. In John's *preaching and baptizing* there was the *beginning of the gospel doctrines and ordinances*, and the first fruits of them. (1.) He preached the *remission of sins*, which is the great gospel privilege; shewed people their *need* of it, that they were *undone* without it, and that it might be obtained. (2.) He preached *repentance*, in order to it; he told people that there must be a renovation of their hearts, and a reformation of their lives, that they must forsake their sins and turn to God, and upon those terms, and no other, their sins should be forgiven. *Repentance for the remission of sins*, was what the apostles were commissioned to *preach to all nations*, Luke 24. 47. (3.) He preached Christ, and directed his hearers to *expect him* speedily to appear, and to *expect great things* from him. The preaching of Christ is pure gospel, and that was John Baptist's preaching, v. 7, 8. Like a true gospel minister, he

preaches, [1.] The great *fire-eminence* Christ is advanced to; so high, so great, is Christ, that John, though one of the greatest that was born of women, thinks himself unworthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, even to *stoop down*, and *untie his shoes*. Thus industrious is he to give honour to him, and brings others to do so too. [2.] The great *flower* Christ is *invested with*; He comes after me in time, but he is *mightier than I*, mightier than the mighty ones of the earth, for he is able to *baptize with the Holy Ghost*; he can give the Spirit of God, and by him govern the spirits of men. (3.) The great *promise* Christ makes in his gospel to those who have repented, and have had their sins forgiven them; They shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, shall be *purified* by his graces, and *refreshed* by his comforts. And, *lastly*, All those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his institution, he *baptized with water*, as the manner of the Jews was to admit proselytes, in token of their *cleansing themselves* by repentance and reformation, (which were the duties required,) and of God's *cleansing them* both by remission and by sanctification, which were the blessings promised. Now this was afterward to be advanced into a gospel ordinance, which John's using it was a preface to.

3. In the success of John's preaching, and the disciples he admitted by baptism, there was the *beginning of a gospel church*. He *baptized in the wilderness*, and declined going into the cities; but *there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem*, inhabitants both of city and country, families of them, and *were all baptized of him*. They entered themselves his disciples, and bound themselves to his discipline; in token of which, they *confessed their sins*; he admitted them his disciples, in token of which, he *baptized* them. Here were the stamina of the gospel-church, the *dew of its youth from the womb of the morning*, Ps. 110. 3. Many of these afterward became followers of Christ, and preachers of his gospel, and this grain of mustard-seed became a *tree*.

9. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him: 11. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 12. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

We have here a brief account of Christ's baptism and temptation, which were largely related, Matt. 3. and 4.

I. His *baptism*, which was his first public appearance, after he had long lived obscurely in *Nazareth*. O how much *hidden worth* is there, which in this world is either lost in the dust of contempt and cannot be known, or wrapped up in the veil of humility and will not be known! But sooner or later it shall be known, as Christ's was.

1. See how *humbly* he owned God, by coming to be *baptized of John*; and thus it became him to *fulfil all righteousness*. Thus he *took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh*, that, though he was perfectly pure and unspotted, yet he was *washed* as if he had been *polluted*; and thus *for our sakes* he *sanctified*

himself, that we also might be sanctified, and be baptized with him, John 17. 19.

2. See how *honourably* God owned him, when he submitted to John's *baptism*. Those who *justify God*, as they are said to do, who were *baptized with the baptism of John*, he will *glorify*, Luke 7. 29, 30.

(1.) He *saw the heavens opened*; thus he was owned to be the Lord from heaven, and had a glimpse of the glory and joy that were *set before him*, and secured to him, as the recompense of his undertaking. Matthew saith, *The heavens were opened to him*. Mark saith, *He saw them opened*. Many have the heavens opened to receive them, but they do not see it; Christ had not only a clear foresight of his sufferings, but of his glory too.

(2.) He *saw the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him*. Note, Then we may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit *descending* and working upon us. God's good work in us is the surest evidence of his good will towards us, and his preparations for us. Justin Martyr says, that *when Christ was baptized, a fire was kindled in Jordan*: and it is an ancient tradition, that *a great light shone round the place*; for the Spirit brings both *light and heat*.

(3.) He heard a voice which was intended for his encouragement to proceed in his undertaking, and therefore it is here expressed as directed to him, *thou art my beloved Son*. God lets him know, [1.] That he *loved him* never the less for that *low and mean estate* to which he had *now humbled himself*; "Though thus emptied and made of no reputation, yet he is my *beloved Son* still." [2.] That he *loved him* much the more for that *glorious and kind undertaking* in which he had *now engaged himself*. God is *well pleased* in him, as Referee of all matters in controversy between him and man; and so well pleased in him, as to be well pleased *with us* in him.

II. His *temptation*. The *good Spirit* that descended upon him *led him into the wilderness*, v. 12. Paul mentions it as a proof that he had his doctrine from God, and not from man—that, as soon as he was called, he *went not to Jerusalem*, but *went into Arabia*, Gal. 1. 17. Retirement from the world is an opportunity of more free converse with God, and therefore must sometimes be chosen, for a while, even by those that are called to the greatest business. Mark observes this circumstance of his being *in the wilderness*—that he was *with the wild beasts*. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, that he was preserved from being torn in pieces by the wild beasts, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him when he was hungry. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. It was likewise an intimation to him of the inhumanity of the men of that generation, whom he was to live among—no better than *wild beasts* in the *wilderness*, nay, abundantly worse. In that wilderness,

1. The *evil spirits* were *busy with him*; he was *tempted of Satan*; not by any inward injections, (the prince of this world had *nothing in him* to fasten upon,) but by outward solicitations. Solitude often gives advantages to the tempter, therefore *two are better than one*. Christ himself was tempted, not only to teach us, that *it is no sin to be tempted*, but to direct us whither to go for succour when we are tempted, even to him that *suffered*, being *tempted*; that he might experimentally sympathize with us when we are *tempted*.

2. The *good spirits* were *busy about him*; the *angels ministered to him*, supplied him with what he needed, and dutifully attended him. Note, The ministrations of the good angels about us, is matter of great comfort in reference to the malicious designs of the evil angels against us; but much more doth it befriend us, to have the indwelling of the Spirit in our hearts, which they that have, are so *born of*

God, that, as far as they are so, *the evil one toucheth them not, much less shall he triumph over them.*

14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel. 16. Now, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: (for they were fishers.) 17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. 21. And they went into Capernaum: and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Here is,

I. A general account of Christ's preaching in Galilee. John gives an account of his preaching in Judea, before this, (*ch. 2. and 3.*) which the other evangelists had omitted, who chiefly relate what occurred in Galilee, because that was least known at Jerusalem. Observe,

1. When Jesus began to preach in Galilee; *After that John was put in prison.* When he had finished his testimony, then Jesus began his. Note, The silencing of Christ's ministers shall not be the suppressing of Christ's gospel; if some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, perhaps mightier than they, to carry on the same work.

2. What he preached; *The gospel of the kingdom of God.* Christ came to set up the kingdom of God among men, that they might be brought into subjection to it, and might obtain salvation in it; and he set it up by the preaching of his gospel, and a power going along with it.

Observe, (1.) The great truths Christ preached; *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.* This refers to the Old Testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introducing of it. They were not so well versed in those prophecies, nor did they so well observe the signs of the times, as to understand it themselves, and therefore Christ gives them notice of it; "The time prefixed is now at hand; glorious discoveries of divine light, life, and love, are now to be made, a new dispensation far more spiritual and heavenly than that which you have hitherto been under, is now to commence." Note, God keeps time; when *the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand*; for the vision is for an appointed time which will be punctually observed, though it tarry past our time.

(2.) The great duties inferred from thence. Christ gave them to understand the times, that they might know what Israel ought to do; they fondly expected the Messiah to appear in external pomp and power,

not only to free the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbours, and therefore thought, when that kingdom of God was at hand, they must prepare for war, and for victory and preferment, and great things in the world; but Christ tells them, in the prospect of that kingdom approaching, they must *repent, and believe the gospel.* They had broken the moral law, and could not be saved by a covenant of innocency, for both Jew and Gentile are concluded under guilt. They must therefore take the benefit of a covenant of grace, must submit to a remedial law, and this is it—*repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.* They had not made use of the prescribed preservatives, and therefore must have recourse to the prescribed restoratives. By repentance we must lament and forsake our sins, and by faith we must receive the forgiveness of them. By repentance we must give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we must give glory to our Redeemer who came to save us from our sins. Both these must go together: we must not think either that reforming our lives will save us without trusting in the righteousness and grace of Christ, or that trusting in Christ will save us without the reformation of our hearts and lives. Christ has joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. They will mutually assist and befriend each other. Repentance will quicken faith, and faith will make repentance evangelical; and the sincerity of both together must be evidenced by a diligent conscientious obedience to all God's commandments. Thus the preaching of the gospel began, and thus it continues; still the call is, Repent, and believe, and live a life of repentance and a life of faith.

II. Christ appearing as a Teacher, here is next his calling of his disciples, *v. 16—20.* Observe, 1. Christ will have followers. If he set up a school, he will have scholars; if he set up his standard, he will have soldiers; if he preach, he will have hearers. He has taken an effectual course to secure this; for *all that the Father has given him, shall without fail, come to him.* 2. The instruments Christ chose to employ in setting up his kingdom, were the *weak and foolish things of the world*; not called from the great sanhedrim, or the schools of the rabbins, but picked up from among the tarpaulins by the sea-side, *that the excellency of the power might appear to be wholly of God, and not at all of them.* 3. Though Christ needs not the help of man, yet he is pleased to make use of it in setting up his kingdom, that he might deal with us not in a formidable but in a familiar way, and that in his kingdom the *nobles and governors may be of ourselves,* Jer. 30. 21. 4. Christ puts honour upon those who, though mean in the world, are *diligent in their business and loving to one another*; so those were, whom Christ called. He found them employed, and employed together. *Industry and unity are good and pleasant,* and there the Lord Jesus commands the blessing, even this blessing, *Follow me.* 5. The business of ministers is to *fish for souls, and win them to Christ.* The children of men, in their natural condition, are lost, wander endlessly in the great ocean of this world, and are carried down the stream of its course and way; they are unprofitable. Like leviathan in the waters, they *play therein*; and often, like the fishes of the sea, they devour one another. Ministers, in preaching the gospel, *cast the net into the waters,* Matt. 13. 47. Some are inclosed and brought to shore, but far the greater number escape. *Fishermen* take great pains, and expose themselves to great perils, so do ministers; and they have need of wisdom. If many a draught brings home nothing, yet they must go on. 6. Those whom Christ calls, must *leave all*, to follow him; and by his grace he inclines them to do so. *Not that we must needs go*

out of the world immediately, but we must sit loose to the world, and forsake every thing that is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without prejudice to our souls. Mark takes notice of James and John, that they left not only their father, (which we had in Matthew,) but the hired servants, whom perhaps they loved as their own brethren, being their fellow-labourers and pleasant comrades; not only relations, but companions, must be left for Christ, and old acquaintance. Perhaps it is an intimation of their care for their father; they did not leave him without assistance, they left the hired servants with him. Grotius thinks it is mentioned as an evidence that their calling was gainful to them, for it was worth while to keep servants in pay, to help them in it, and their hands would be much missed, and yet they left it.

III. Here is a particular account of his preaching in Capernaum, one of the cities of Galilee; for though John Baptist chose to preach in a wilderness, and did well, and did good, yet it doth not therefore follow, that Jesus must do so too; the inclinations and opportunities of ministers may very much differ, and yet both be in the way of their duty, and both useful. Observe, 1. When Christ came into Capernaum, he straightway applied himself to his work there, and took the first opportunity of preaching the gospel. Those will think themselves concerned not to lose time, who consider what a deal of work they have to do, and what a little time to do it in. 2. Christ religiously observed the sabbath-day, though not by tying himself up to the tradition of the elders, in all the niceties of the sabbath-rest, yet (which was far better) by applying himself to, and abounding in, the sabbath-work, in order to which the sabbath-rest was instituted. 3. Sabbaths are to be sanctified in religious assemblies, if we have opportunity; it is a holy day, and must be honoured with a holy convocation; this was the good old way, Acts 13. 27.—15. 21. On the sabbath-day, τοῖς σαββάτοις—on the sabbath-days; every sabbath-day, as duly as it returned, he went into the synagogue. 4. In religious assemblies on sabbath-days, the gospel is to be preached, and those to be taught, who are willing to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. 5. Christ was a non-such Preacher; he did not preach as the scribes, who expounded the law of Moses by rote, as a school-boy says his lesson, but were neither acquainted with it, (Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was ignorant of the law,) nor affected with it; it came not from the heart, and therefore came not with authority. But Christ taught as one that had authority, as one that knew the mind of God, and was commissioned to declare it. 6. There is much in the doctrine of Christ, that is astonishing; the more we hear it, the more cause we shall see to admire it.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24. 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. 25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. 26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27. And they were all amazed, inasmuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. 28. And immedi-

ately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

As soon as Christ began to preach, he began to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; and they were such as intimated the design and tendency of his doctrine, which were to conquer Satan, and cure sick souls.

In these verses, we have,

1. Christ's casting the devil out of a man that was possessed, in the synagogue at Capernaum. This passage was not related in Matthew, but is afterward in Luke 4. 33. There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ—in an unclean spirit; for the spirit had the man in his possession, and led him captive at his will. So the whole world is said to lie ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ—in the wicked one. And some have thought it more proper to say, The body is in the soul, because it is governed by it, than the soul in the body. He was in the unclean spirit, as a man is said to be in a fever, or in a frenzy, quite overcome by it. Observe, The devil is here called an unclean spirit, because he has lost all the purity of his nature, because he acts in direct opposition to the holy Spirit of God, and because with his suggestions he pollutes the spirits of men. This man was in the synagogue; he did not come either to be taught or to be healed, but, as some think, to confront Christ and oppose him, and hinder people from believing on him. Now here we have,

1. The rage which the unclean spirit expressed at Christ; He cried out, as one in an agony, at the presence of Christ, and afraid of being dislodged; thus the devils believe and tremble, have a horror of Christ, but no hope in him, nor reverence for him. We are told what he said, v. 24. where he doth not go about to capitulate with him, or make terms, (so far was he from being in league or compact with him,) but speaks as one that knew his doom. (1.) He calls him Jesus of Nazareth; for aught that appears, he was the first that called him so, and he did it with design to possess the minds of the people with low thoughts of him, because no good thing was expected out of Nazareth; and with prejudices against him as a Deceiver, because every body knew the Messiah must be of Bethlehem. (2.) Yet a confession is extorted from him—that he is the Holy One of God, as was from the damsel that had the spirit of divination concerning the apostles—that they were the servants of the most high God, Acts 16. 16, 17. Those who have only a notion of Christ—that he is the holy one of God, and have no faith in him, or love to him, go no farther than the devil doth. (3.) He in effect acknowledgeth that Christ was too hard for him, and that he could not stand before the power of Christ; "Let us alone; for if thou take us to task, we are undone, thou canst destroy us." This is the misery of those wicked spirits, that they persist in their rebellion, and yet know it will end in their destruction. (4.) He desires to have nothing to do with Jesus Christ; for he despairs of being saved by him, and dreads being destroyed by him. "What have we to do with thee? If thou wilt let us alone, we will let thee alone." See whose language they speak, that say to the Almighty, Depart from us. This, being an unclean spirit, therefore hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a holy One; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, especially against his holiness.

2. The victory which Jesus Christ obtained over the unclean spirit; for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and so he makes it to appear; nor will he be turned back from prosecuting this war, either by his flatteries or by his menaces. It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, Let us alone; his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved; and

therefore, (1.) Jesus *commands*. As he taught, so he healed, *with authority*. Jesus *rebuked* him; he chid him and threatened him, imposed silence upon him; *Hold thy peace*; *σιωπῆσαι*—he muzzled. Christ has a muzzle for that unclean spirit when he *furrows* as well as when he *barks*; such acknowledgments of him as this was, Christ *disdains*, so far is he from *accepting* them. Some confess Christ to be the *holy One of God*, that under the cloak of that profession they may carry on malicious, mischievous designs; but their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, as it sues in his name for a license to sin: and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. But this is not all, he must not only *hold his peace*, but he must *come out of the man*; this was it he dreaded—his being restrained from doing further mischief. But, (2.) The unclean spirit *yields*, for there is no remedy; (v. 26.) He *tore* him, put him into a *strong convulsion*; that one could have thought he had been pulled in pieces; when he would not *touch* Christ, in fury at him he grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ by his grace delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without a grievous toss and tumult in the soul; for that spiteful enemy will *disquiet* those whom he cannot *destroy*. He *cried with a loud voice*, to frighten the spectators, and make himself seem terrible, as if he would have thought that though he was conquered, he was but just conquered, and that he hoped to rally again, and recover his ground.

II. The impressions which this miracle made upon the minds of the people, v. 27, 28.

1. It astonished them that saw it; *They were all amazed*. It was evident, beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed—witness the tearing of him, and the *loud voice* with which the *spirit cried*; it was evident that he was *forced out* by the authority of Christ; this was surprising to them, and put them upon considering with themselves, and inquiring of one another, "*What is this new doctrine?*" For it must certainly be of God, which is thus confirmed. He hath certainly an authority to command us, who hath ability to *command even the unclean spirits*, and they cannot resist him, but are forced to *obey him*." The Jewish exorcists pretended by charm or invocation to drive away evil spirits; but this was quite another thing, *with authority he commands them*. Surely it is our interest to make *him* our Friend, who has the control of infernal spirits.

2. It raised his reputation among all that heard it; *Immediately his fame spread abroad into the whole adjacent region of Galilee*, which was a third part of the land of Canaan. The story was presently got into every one's mouth, and people wrote it to their friends all the country over, together with the remark made upon it, *What new doctrine is this?* So that it was universally concluded, that he was a *Teacher come from God*, and under that character he shone more bright than if he had appeared in all the external pomp and power which the Jews expected their Messiah to *appear* in; and thus he *prepared his own way*, now that John, who was his harbinger, was clapped up; and the fame of this miracle spread the further, because as yet the Pharisees, who *envied* his fame, and laboured to *eclipse* it, had not advanced their blasphemous suggestion—that he *cast out devils* by compact with the *prince of the devils*.

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him

of her. 31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. 32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33. And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. 35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36. And Simon and they that were with him, followed after him. 37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. 38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

In these verses, we have,

1. A particular account of one miracle that Christ wrought, in the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever. This passage we had before in Matthew. Observe,

1. When Christ had done that which *spread his fame* throughout all parts, he did not then sit still, as some think that they may *lie in bed* when their *name is up*. No, he continued to *do good*, for that was it he aimed at, and not his own honour. Nay, those who are in reputation, had need be busy and careful to keep it up.

2. When he *came out of the synagogue*, where he had taught and healed with a divine authority, yet he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen that attended him, and did not think it below him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him.

3. He went into Peter's house, probably invited thither to such entertainment as a poor fisherman could give him, and he accepted of it. The apostles left all for Christ; so far as that what they had should not hinder them from him, yet not so, but that they might use it for him.

4. He cured his mother-in-law, who was sick. Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. Observe, How complete the cure was; when the *fever left her*, it did not as usually, leave her *weak*, but the same hand that *healed* her, *strengthened* her, so that she was able to *minister* to them; the cure is in order to that, to fit for action, that we may minister to Christ, and to those that are *his* for his sake.

II. A general account of many cures he wrought—diseases healed, devils expelled. It was at the *even of the sabbath*, when the *sun did set* or *was set*; perhaps many scrupled bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over, but their weakness therein was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Though he proved it *lawful to heal on the sabbath-days*, yet, if any stumbled at it, they were welcome at another time. Now observe,

1. How *numerous* the patients were; *All the city was gathered at the door*, as beggars for a dole. That *one cure* in the synagogue occasioned this crowding after him. Others speeding well with Christ, should quicken us in our inquiries after him.

Now the *Sun of righteousness riseth, with healing under his wings*; to him shall the *gathering of the people be*. Observe, How Christ was flocked after in a *private house*, as well as in the *synagogue*; wherever he is, there let his servants, his patients, be. And in the *evening of the sabbath*, when the public worship is over, we must continue our attendance upon Jesus Christ; he healed, as Paul preached, publicly, and from house to house.

2. How *powerful* the physician was; he healed all that were brought to him, though ever so many. Nor was it some one particular disease, that Christ set up for the cure of, but he healed those that were *sick of divers diseases*, for his word was a *panpharmacion—a salve for every sore*. And that miracle particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he repeated in the house at night; for he cast out many devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, for he made them know who he was, and that silenced them. Or, he suffered them not to say that they knew him; (so it may be read;) he would not permit any more of them to say, as they did, (*v.* 24.) *I know thee, who thou art*.

III. His retirement to his *private devotion*; (*v.* 35.) *He prayed*, prayed alone; to set us an example of secret prayer. Though as God he was *prayed to*, as man he *prayed*. Though he was glorifying God, and doing good, in his public work, yet he found time to be alone with his Father; and thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. Now observe,

1. The time when Christ prayed. (1.) It was in the morning, the morning after the sabbath-day. Note, when a sabbath-day is over and past, we must not think that we may intermit our devotion till the next sabbath; no, though we go not to the synagogue, we must go to the throne of grace, every day in the week, and the morning after the sabbath particularly, that we may preserve the good impressions of the day. This morning was the morning of the first day of the week, which afterward he sanctified, and made remarkable, by another sort of rising early. (2.) It was a great while before day. When others were asleep in their beds, he was praying, as a genuine Son of David, who seeks God early, and directs his prayer in the morning; nay, and at midnight will rise to give thanks. It has been said, *The morning is a friend to the Muses—Aurora Misis amica*; and it is no less so to the Graces. When our spirits are most fresh and lively, then we should take time for devout exercises. He that is the first and best, ought to have the first and best.

2. The place where he prayed: He departed into a solitary place, either out of town, or some remote garden or out-building. Though he was in no danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory, yet he retired, to set us an example to his own rule, *When thou prayest, enter into thy closet*. Secret prayer must be made secretly. Those that have the most business in public, and of the best kind, must sometimes be alone with God; must retire into solitude, there to converse with God, and keep up communion with him.

IV. His return to his public work. The disciples thought they were up early, but found their Master was up before them, and they inquired which way he went, followed him to his solitary place, and there found him at prayer, *v.* 36, 37. They told him that he was much wanted, that there were a great many patients waiting for him; *All men seek for thee*. They were proud that their Master was become so popular already, and would have him appear in public, yet more in that place, because it was their own city; and we are apt to be partial to the places we know and are interested in. "No," saith Christ, "Capernaum must not have the monopoly of the Messiah's preaching and miracles. *It is go into the next towns, the villages that lie*

about here, that I may preach there also, and work miracles there, for therefore came I forth, not to be constantly resident in one place, but to go about doing good." Even the inhabitants of the villages in Israel shall rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, *Judg.* 5. 11. Observe, Christ had still an eye to the end wherefore he came forth, and closely pursued that; nor will he be drawn by importunity, or the persuasions of his friends, to decline from that; for (*v.* 39.) he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and, to illustrate and confirm his doctrine, he cast out devils. Note, Christ's doctrine is Satan's destruction.

40. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. 43. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44. And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter.

We have here the story of Christ's cleansing of a leper, which we had before, *Matth.* 8. 2. It teaches us,

1. How to apply ourselves to Christ; come as this leper did, (1.) With great humility; this leper came beseeching him, and kneeling down to him; (*v.* 40.) whether giving divine honour to him as God, or rather a less degree of respect as a great prophet, it teaches us that those who would receive grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour and glory to Christ, and approach to him with humility and reverence. (2.) With a firm belief of his power; *Thou canst make me clean*. Though Christ's outward appearance was but mean, yet he had this faith in his power, which implies his belief that he was sent of God. He believes it with application, not only in general, *Thou canst do every thing*, (as *John* 11. 22.) but, *Thou canst make me clean*. Note, What we believe of the power of Christ we must bring home to our particular case; *Thou canst do this for me*. (3.) With submission to the will of Christ; *Lord, if thou wilt*. Not as if he had any doubt of Christ's readiness in general to help the distressed, but, with the modesty that became a poor petitioner, he refers his own particular case to him.

2. What to expect from Christ; that according to our faith it shall be to us. His address is not in the form of prayer, yet Christ answered it as a request. Note, Affectionate professions of faith in Christ, and resignations to him, are the most prevailing petitions for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly. (1.) Christ was moved with compassion. This is added here, in Mark, to shew that Christ's power is employed by his pity for the relief of poor souls; and that his reasons are fetched from within himself, and

we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our *misery* makes us the objects of his *mercy*. And what he doth for us he doeth with all possible tenderness. (2.) He put forth his hand, and toucheth him. He exerted his power, and directed it to this creature. In healing souls, Christ toucheth them, 1 Sam. 20. 26. When the queen toucheth the evil, she saith, *I touch, God heals*; but Christ toucheth and healeth too. (3.) He said, *I will, be thou clean*. Christ's power was put forth in and by a word, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures; *He sends his word and heals*, Ps. 107. 20. John 17. 17.—15. 3. The poor leper put an *if* upon the will of Christ; *If thou wilt*; but that doubt is soon put out of doubt, *I will*. Christ most readily wills favours to those that most readily refer themselves to his will. He was confident of Christ's power; *Thou canst make me clean*; and Christ will shew how much his power is drawn out into act by the faith of his people, and therefore speaks the word as one having authority, *Be thou clean*. And power accompanied this word, and the cure was perfect in an instant; *Immediately his leprosy vanished*, and there remained no more sign of it, v. 42.

3. *What to do, when we have received mercy from Christ*. We must with his favours receive his commands. When Christ had cured him, he strictly charged him; the word here is very significant, *καταπαύσασθαι*—*graver interminatus*—*prohibiting with threats*. I am apt to think that this refers not to the directions he gave him to conceal it, (v. 44.) for those are mentioned by themselves; but that this was such a charge as he gave to the impotent man whom he cured, John 5. 14. *Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee*; for the leprosy was ordinarily the punishment of some particular sinners, as in Miriam's, Gehazi's, and Uzziah's, case; now, when Christ healed him, he warned him, he threatened him with the fatal consequence of it if he should return to sin again. He also appointed him, (1.) *To shew himself to the priest*, that the priest by his own judgment of this leper might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, Matth. 11. 5. (2.) Till he had done that, not to say any thing of it to any man; this is an instance of the *humility* of Christ and his self-denial, that he did not seek his own honour, *did not strive or cry*, Isa. 42. 2. And it is an example to us, not to seek our own glory, Prov. 25. 27. He must not proclaim it, because that would much increase the crowd that followed Christ, which he thought was too great already; not as if he were unwilling to do good to all, to as many as came; but he would do it with as little noise as might be, would have no offence given to the government, no disturbance of the public peace, not any thing done that looked like ostentation, or an affectation of popular applause. What to think of the leper's publishing it, and blazing it abroad, I know not; the concealment of the good characters and good works of good men better become them than their friends; nor are we always bound by the modest commands of humble men. The leper ought to have observed his orders; yet, no doubt, it was with a good design that he proclaimed the cure, and it had no other ill effect than that it increased the multitudes which followed Christ, to that degree, that he could no more openly enter into the city; not upon the account of persecution, (there was no danger of that yet,) but because the crowd was so great, that the streets would not hold them, which obliged him to go into desert places, to a mountain, (ch. 3. 13.) to the sea side, ch. 4. 1. This shews how expedient it was for us, that Christ should go away and send the Comforter, for his bodily presence could be but in one place at a time; and those that came to him from every quarter, could not get near him; but by his spiritual presence

he is with his people wherever they are, and comes to them to every quarter.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's healing of a man that was sick of a palsy, v. 1. . 12. II. His calling of Matthew from the receipt of custom, and his eating, upon that occasion, with publicans and sinners, and justifying himself in so doing, v. 13. . 17. III. His justifying his disciples in not fasting so much as those of the Pharisees did, v. 18. 21. IV. His justifying of them in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day, v. 22. . 28. All which passages we had before, Matth. 9 and 12.

1. **A**ND again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them. 3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies! who can forgive sins but God only? 8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9. Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk*? 10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11. I say unto thee, *Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house*. 12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, *We never saw it on this fashion*.

Christ, having been for some time preaching about in the country, here returns to Capernaum, his head quarters, and makes his appearance there, in hopes that by this time the talk and crowd would be somewhat abated. Now observe,

I. The great resort there was to him. Though he was in the house, either Peter's house, or some lodgings of his own which he had taken, yet people came to him as soon as it was noised that he was in town; they did not stay till he appeared in the synagogue, which they might be sure he would do on the sabbath day, but straightway many were gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Shiloh is, there shall the gathering of the people be. In improving opportunities for our souls, we must take care not to lose time. One invited another, (Come, let us go see Jesus,) so that

his house could not contain his visitants. *There was no room to receive them, they were so numerous, no, not so much as about the door.* A blessed sight, to see people thus flying like a cloud to Christ's house, though it was but a poor one, and *as the doves to their windows!*

II. The good entertainment Christ gave them, the best his house would afford, and better than any other could; he *preached the word unto them, v. 2.* Many of them perhaps came only for cures, and many perhaps only for curiosity, to get a sight of him; but when he had them together he *preached to them.* Though the synagogue door was open to him at proper times, he thought it not at all amiss to preach in a house, on a week day; though some might reckon it both an improper place and an improper time. *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, Isa. 32. 20.*

III. The presenting of a poor cripple to him, to be helped by him. The patient was one *sick of the palsy*, it should seem not as that, *Matth. 8. 6. grievously tormented, but perfectly disabled, so that he was borne of four, was carried upon a bed, as if he had been upon a bier, by four persons.* It was his misery, that he needed to be so carried, and bespeaks the calamitous state of human life; it was their charity, who did so carry him, and bespeaks the compassion that is justly expected should be in the children of men toward their fellow-creatures in distress, because we know not how soon the distress may be *our own.* These kind relations or neighbours thought if they could but carry this poor man once to Christ, they should not need to carry him any more; and therefore made hard shift to get him to him; and when they could not otherwise get to him, they *uncovered the roof where he was, v. 4.* I see no necessity to conclude that Christ was preaching in an *upper room*, though in such the Jews that had stately houses, had their oratories; for then to what purpose should the crowd stand *before the door*, as wisdom's clients used to do; *Prov. 8. 34.* But I rather conjecture that the house he was in was so little and mean, (agreeable to his present state,) that it had no *upper room*, but the *ground-floor* was open to the roof: and these petitioners for the poor paralytic, resolving not to be disappointed, when they could not get through the crowd at the door, got their friend by some means or other to the roof of the house, took off some of the tiles, and so let him down upon his bed with cords into the house where Christ was preaching. This bespoke both their *faith* and their *fergency* in this address to Christ. Hereby it appeared that they were in earnest, and would not go away, nor *let Christ go without a blessing, Gen. 32. 26.*

IV. The kind word Christ said to this poor patient; *He saw their faith*; perhaps not so much his, for his distemper hindered him from the exercise of faith, but *theirs* that brought him. In curing the centurion's servant, Christ took notice of it as an instance of *his faith*, that he did not bring him to Christ, but believed he could cure him at a distance; here he commended *their faith*, because they did bring their friend through so much difficulty. Note, True faith and strong faith may work variously, conquering sometimes the objections of reason, sometimes those of sense: but it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ, however, Christ said, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.* The *compellation* is very *tender*—*Son*; intimating a fatherly care of him and concern for him. Christ owns true believers as his sons: *a son*, and yet sick of the palsy. Herein God deals with you as with his sons. *The cordial* is very rich; *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* Note, 1. Sin is the procuring cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The word of Christ was to take his thoughts off from the disease, which was the effect, and to

lead them to the sin, the cause, that he might be more concerned about that, to get that pardoned. 2. God doth *then* graciously take away the sting and malignity of sickness, when he forgives sin; recovery from sickness is *then* a mercy indeed, when way is made for it by the pardon of sin. See *Isa. 38. 17. Ps. 103. 3.* The way to remove the effect, is, to take away the cause. Pardon of sin strikes at the root of all diseases, and either cures them, or alters their property.

V. The cavil of the scribes at that which Christ said, and a demonstration of the unreasonableness of their cavil. They were expositors of the law, and their doctrine was *true*,—that it is blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin, and that it is God's prerogative, *Isa. 43. 25.* But, as is usual with such teachers their application was *false*, and was the effect of their ignorance and enmity to Christ. It is *true, None can forgive sins but God only*; but it is *false*, that therefore Christ cannot, who had abundantly proved himself to have a divine power. But Christ *perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves*: this proves him to be God, and therefore confirmed what was to be proved, that he had authority to *forgive sins*; for he *searched the heart, and knew what was in man, Rev. 2. 23.* God's royalties are inseparable, and he that could *know thoughts, could forgive sins.* This magnifies the grace of Christ, in *pardoning sin*, that he knew men's thoughts, and therefore knows more than any other can know, both of the sinfulness of their sins and the particulars of them, and yet is ready to pardon. Now he proves his power to *forgive sin*, by demonstrating his power to cure the man *sick of the palsy, v. 9—11.* He would not have pretended to do the one if he could not have done the other; that he may know that the *Son of man, the Messiah, has power on earth to forgive sin*, that I have that power. *Thou that art sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed.* Now, 1. This was a *suitable* argument in itself. He could not have cured the disease, which was the effect, if he could not have taken away the sin, which was the cause. And besides, his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning of sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned, it is healed. He that could by a word accomplish the sign, could doubtless perform the thing signified. 2. It was suited to them. These carnal Scribes would be more affected with such a suitable effect of a pardon as the cure of the disease, and be sooner convinced by it, than by any other more spiritual consequences; therefore it was proper enough to appeal, whether it is easier to say, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, or to say, *Arise and walk?* The removing of the punishment as such, was the remitting of the sin; he that could go so far in the cure no doubt could perfect it. See *Isa. 53. 24.*

VI. The cure of the sick man, and the impression it made upon the people, *v. 12.* He not only *arose* out of his bed, perfectly well, but, to show that he had perfect strength restored to him, he *took up his bed, because it lay in the way, and went forth before them all, and they were all amazed, as well they might, and glorified God, as indeed they ought; saying, "We never saw it on this fashion; never were such wonders as these done before in our time."* Note, Christ's works were without precedent. When we see what he doeth in healing souls, we must own that we *never saw the like.*

13. And he went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said

unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16. And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is,

I. Christ preaching *by the sea-side*, (v. 13.) whether he went *for room*, because he found, upon second trial, no house or street large enough to contain his auditory; but upon the strand there might come as many as would. It should seem by this, that our Lord Jesus had a strong voice, and could and did speak loud; for *wisdom crieth without* in the *places of concourse*. Wherever he goes, though it be to the sea-side, *multitudes resorted to him*. Wherever the doctrine of Christ is faithfully preached, though it be driven into corners or into deserts, we must follow it.

II. His calling Levi; the same with Matthew, who had a place in the custom-house at Capernaum, from which he was denominated a *publican*; his place fixed him by the water-side, and thither Christ went to meet with him, and to give him an effectual call. This Levi is here said to be the *son of Alphæus* or *Cleophas*, husband to that Mary who was sister or near kinswoman to the Virgin Mary; and if so, he was own brother to James the less, and Jude, and Simon the Canaanite, so that there were four brothers of them apostles. It is probable that Matthew was but a loose extravagant young man, or else, being a Jew, he would never have been a publican. However, Christ called him to *follow him*. Paul, though a Pharisee, had been one of the chief of sinners, and yet was called to be an apostle. With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, that had been a publican, became an evangelist, the *first* that put pen to paper, and the *fullest* in writing the life of Christ. Great sin and scandal, before conversion, are no bar to great gifts, graces, and advancements, after; nay, God may be the more glorified. Christ prevented him with this call; in bodily cures, ordinarily, he was *sought unto*, but in these spiritual cures, he was *found of them that sought him not*. For this is the great evil and peril of the disease of sin, that those who are under it, desire not to be *made whole*.

III. His familiar converse with *publicans and sinners*, v. 15. We are told, 1. That Christ *sat at meat in Levi's house*, who invited *him and his disciples* to the farewell feast he made to his friends, when he left all to attend on Christ: such a feast he made, as Elisha did, (1 Kings 19. 21.) to shew, not only with what cheerfulness in himself, but with what thankfulness to God, he quitted all, in compliance with Christ's call. Fitly did he make the *day of his espousals* to Christ a festival day. This was also to testify his respect to Christ, and the grateful sense he had of his kindness in snatching him from the receipt of custom, as a brand out of the burning. 2. That *many publicans and sinners sat with Christ in Levi's house*; (for *there were*

many belonging to that custom-house;) and *they followed him*. They followed Levi; so some understand it, supposing that, like Zaccheus, he was chief *among the publicans*, and was *rich*; and for that reason the inferior sort of them attended him, for what they could get. I rather take it, that they *followed Jesus* because of the report they had heard of him. They did not for *conscience sake* leave all to follow him, but for *curiosity sake* they came to Levi's feast, to see him; whatever brought them thither, they were sitting with *Jesus and his disciples*. The publicans are here and elsewhere ranked with *sinners*, the worst of *sinners*. (1.) Because commonly they *were such*; so general were the corruptions in the execution of that office, oppressing, exacting, and taking bribes or fees to extortion, and *accusing falsely*, Luke 3. 13—19. A faithful fair dealing publican was so rare, even at Rome, that one Sabmus, who kept a clean reputation in that office, was, after his death, honoured with this inscription, *καλῶς ταπεινῶντι—Here lies an honest publican*. (2.) Because the Jews had a particular antipathy to them and their office, as an affront to the liberty of their nation, and a badge of their slavery, and therefore put them into an ill name, and thought it scandalous to be seen in their company. Such as these our blessed Lord was pleased to converse with, when he appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*.

IV. The *office* which the Scribes and Pharisees took at this, v. 16. They would not come to hear him preach, which they might have been convinced and edified by; but they would come themselves to *see him* sit with publicans and sinners, which they would be provoked by. They endeavoured to put the disciples out of conceit with their Master, as a Man not of that sanctity and severe morals that became his character; and therefore put the question to them, *How is it, that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?* Note, It is no new thing for that which is both well *done* and well *designed*, to be misrepresented, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men.

V. Christ's justification of himself in it, v. 17. He stood to what he did, and would not withdraw, though the Pharisees were offended; as Peter afterward did, Gal. 2. 12. Note, Those are too tender of their own *good name*, who, to preserve it with some nice people, will decline a *good work*. Christ would not do so. They thought the publicans were to be *hated*. "Now," saith Christ, "they are to be *pitied*, they are *sick*, and need a *physician*; they are sinners, and need a *Saviour*." They thought Christ's character should separate him from them; "No," saith Christ, "my commission directs me to them; *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. If the world had been *righteous*, there had been no occasion for my coming, either to *preach* repentance, or to *purchase* remission. It is to a *sinful world* that I am sent, and therefore my business lies most with those that are the greatest sinners in it." Or thus; "I am not come to call the *righteous*, the proud Pharisees, that think themselves righteous, that ask, *Wherein shall we return?* (Mat. 3. 7.) of what shall we repent? but poor publicans, that own themselves to be sinners, and are glad to be invited and encouraged to repent." It is good dealing with those that there is hope of; now there is *more hope of a fool* than of one that is *wise in his own conceit*, Prov. 26. 12.

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19. And Jesus said unto them,

Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. 23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Christ had been put to justify himself in conversing with *publicans and sinners*: here he is put to justify his disciples; and in what they do according to his will he will justify them, and bear them out.

I. He justifies them in their *not fasting*, which was turned to their reproach by the Pharisees. Why do the Pharisees and the disciples of John fast? They *used to fast*, the Pharisees fasted *twice in the week*; (Luke 18. 12.) and probably the disciples of John did so too; and, it should seem, this very day, when Christ and his disciples were feasting in Levi's house, was their *fast-day*, for the word is *νηστεύοντες*—*they do fast, or are fasting*, which aggravated the offence. Thus apt are strict professors to make their own practice a standard, and to censure and condemn all that do not fully come up to it. They invidiously suggest, that if Christ went among sinners, to do *them good*, as he had pleaded, yet the disciples went to indulge their appetites, for they never knew what it was to fast, or to deny themselves. Note, Ill will always suspects the worst.

Two things Christ pleads in excuse of his disciples *not fasting*.

1. That these were *easy days* with them, and fasting was not so *seasonable* now as it would be hereafter, v. 19, 20. There is a time for all things. Those that enter into the married state, must expect care and *trouble in the flesh*, and yet, during the nuptial solemnity, they are merry, and think it becomes them to be so; it was very absurd for Samson's bride to *sweep before him*, during the days that the feast lasted, Judg. 14. 17. Christ and his disciples were but newly married, the Bridegroom was yet with them, the nuptials were yet in the celebrat-

ing; (Matthew's particularly;) when the Bridegroom should be removed from them to the far country, about his business, then would be a proper time to sit as a widow, in solitude and fasting.

2. That these were *early days* with them, and they were not so able for the severe exercises of religion as hereafter they would be. The Pharisees had long accustomed themselves to such austerities; and John Baptist himself came neither eating nor drinking. His disciples from the first inured themselves to hardships, and thus found it easier to bear strict and frequent fasting, but it was not so with Christ's disciples; their Master came *eating and drinking*, and had not bred them up to the difficult services of religion as yet, for it was all in good time. To put them upon such frequent fasting at first, would be a discouragement to them, and perhaps drive them off from following Christ; it would be of as ill consequence as *putting new wine into old casks*, or *sewing new cloth* to that which is worn thin and threadbare, v. 21, 22. Note, God graciously *considers the frame* of young christians, that are *weak and tender*, and so must we; nor must we expect more than the *work of the day in its day*, and that day according to the strength, because it is not in our hands to give strength according to the day. Many contract an antipathy to some kind of food, otherwise good, by being surfeited with it when they are young; so, many entertain prejudices against the exercises of devotion by being burdened with them, and *made to serve with an offering*, at their setting out. Weak christians must take heed of *over-tasking* themselves, and of making the yoke of Christ otherwise than as it is, easy, and sweet, and pleasant.

II. He justifies them in *plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day*, which, I will warrant you, a disciple of the Pharisees would not dare to have done; for it was contrary to an express tradition of their elders. In this instance, as in that before, they reflect upon the discipline of Christ's school, as if it were not so strict as that of theirs: so common it is for those who deny the *power of godliness*, to be jealous for the *form*, and censorious of those who affect not their form.

Observe, 1. What a poor breakfast Christ's disciples had on a sabbath-day morning, when they were going to church; (v. 23.) they *plucked the ears of corn*, and that was the best they had. They were so intent upon spiritual dainties, that they forgot even their *necessary food*; and the word of God was to them instead of that; and their zeal for it even *ate them up*. The Jews made it a piece of religion, to eat dainty food on sabbath-days, but the disciples were content with any thing.

2. How even this was *grudged them* by the Pharisees, upon supposition that it was not lawful to *pluck the ears of corn* on the sabbath-day, that that was as much a servile work as *reaping*; (v. 24.) *Why do they on the sabbath-day that which is not lawful?* Note, If Christ's disciples do that which is unlawful, Christ will be reflected upon, and upbraided with it, as he was here, and dishonour will redound to his name. It is observable, that when the Pharisees thought Christ did amiss, they told the disciples; (v. 16.) and now when they thought the disciples did amiss, they spake to Christ, as make-bates, that did what they could to sow discord between Christ and his disciples, and make a breach in the family.

3. How Christ defended them in what they did: (1.) By example. They had a good precedent for it in David's eating the *shew-bread*, when he was hungry, and there was no other bread to be had; (v. 25, 26.) *Have ye never read?* Note, Many of our mistakes would be rectified, and our unjust censures of others corrected, if we would but

recollect what *we have read* in the scripture; appeals to that are most convincing. "You have read that David, the man after God's own heart, *when he was hungry*, made no difficulty of eating the *show-bread*, which by the law none might eat of but the priests and their families." Note, Ritual observances must give way to moral obligations: and that may be done in a case of necessity, which otherwise may not be done. This, it is said, David did in the days of *Abiathar the High-Priest*; or just before the days of Abiathar, who immediately succeeded Abimelech his father in the pontificate, and it is probable, was at that time his father's deputy, or assistant, in the office; and he it was that escaped the massacre, and brought the ephod to David.

(2.) By argument. To reconcile them to the disciples' *plucking the ears of corn*, let them consider, [1.] Whom the sabbath was made for; (v. 27.) *it was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.* This we had not in Matthew. The sabbath is a sacred and divine institution; but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit, not as a task and a drudgery. *First*, God never designed it to be an *imposition* upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. *Man was not made for the sabbath*; for he was made a day before the sabbath was instituted. *Man was made for God*, and for his honour and service, and he must rather die than deny him; but he was not *made for the sabbath*, so as to be tied up by the law of it, from that which is necessary to the support of his life. *Secondly*, God did design it to be an *advantage* to us, and so we must make it, and improve it. He made it *for man*. 1. He had *some* regard to our *bodies* in the institution, that they might rest, and not be tired out with the constant business of this world; (Deut. 5. 14.) *that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest.* Now he that intended the *sabbath-rest* for the *repose* of our bodies, certainly never intended it should restrain us, in a case of necessity, from fetching in the necessary *supports* of the body; it must be construed so as not to contradict itself—for *edification*, and not for *destruction*. 2. He had *much more* regard to our *souls*. The sabbath was made a day of rest, only in order to its being a day of holy work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is *therefore* necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in public and in private; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies for the service of our souls in God's service, and the enabling of them to *keep pace* with them in that work. See here, (1.) What a *good Master* we serve, all whose institutions are for our own benefit, and if we be so wise as to observe them, we are *wise for ourselves*; it is not he but we, that are gainers by our service. (2.) What we should aim at in our *sabbath-work*, even the good of our own souls. If the sabbath was made for man, we should then, ask ourselves at night, "What am I the better for this sabbath-day?" (3.) What care we ought to take not to make those exercises of religion burdens to ourselves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; neither adding to the command by unreasonable strictness, nor indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command, for thereby we make those devout exercises a penance to ourselves, which otherwise would be a pleasure.

[2.] Who the sabbath was made by; (v. 28.) *The Son of man is the Lord also of the sabbath*; and therefore he will not see the kind intentions of the institution of it frustrated by your impositions. Note, The sabbath-days are *days of the Son of man*; he is the Lord of the day, and to his honour it must be observed; by him God made the worlds, and so it was by him that the sabbath was first in-

stituted; by him God gave the law at mount Sinai, and so the *fourth* commandment was *his law*; and that little alteration that was shortly to be made, by the shifting of it one day forward to the first day of the week, was to be in remembrance of *his resurrection*, and therefore the christian sabbath was to be called *the Lord's day*, (Rev. 1. 10.) the Lord Christ's day; and the *Son of man*, Christ, as Mediator, is always to be looked upon as Lord of the sabbath. This argument he largely insists upon in his own justification, when he was charged with having broken the sabbath, John 5. 16.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's healing of a man that had a withered hand, on the sabbath-day, and the combination of his enemies against him for it, v. 1. . 6. II. The universal resort of people to him from all parts, to be healed, and the relief they all found with him, v. 7. . 12. III. His ordaining of his twelve apostles to be attendants on him, and the preachers of his gospel, v. 13. . 21. IV. His answer to the blasphemous cavil of the scribes, who imputed his power to cast out devils, to a confederacy with the prince of the devils, v. 22. . 30. V. His owning of his disciples for his nearest and dearest relations, v. 31. . 35.

1. **AND** he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath-day; that they might accuse him. 3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. 7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, 8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Here, as before, we have our Lord Jesus busy at work in the *synagogue* first, and then by the *sea-side*; to teach us that his presence should not be confined either to the one or to the other, but wherever any are gathered together in his name, whether in the

synagogue or any where else, there is he in the midst of them. *In every place where he records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them; it is his will that men pray every where.* Now here we have some account of what he did.

1. When he *entered again into the synagogue*, he improved the opportunity he had there, of doing good, and having, no doubt, preached a sermon there, he wrought a miracle for the confirmation of it, or at least for the confirmation of this truth—that *it is lawful to do good on the sabbath-day.* We had the narrative, Matth. 12. 9.

1. The patient's case was piteous; he had a *withered hand*, by which he was disabled to work for his living; and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity; let those be helped, that cannot help themselves.

2. The spectators were very unkind both to the patient and to the Physician, instead of interceding for a poor neighbour, they did what they could to hinder his cure: for they intimated that if Christ cured him now on the sabbath-day, they would accuse him as a *Sabbath-breaker*. It had been very unreasonable, if they should have opposed a physician or surgeon in helping any poor body in misery, by ordinary methods; but much more absurd was it to oppose him that cured without any labour but by a word's speaking.

3. Christ dealt very fairly with the spectators, and dealt with them *first*, if possible to *prevent* the offence.

(1.) He laboured to convince their judgment. He bid the man *stand forth*, (v. 3.) that by the sight of him they might be moved with compassion toward him, and might not, for shame, account his cure a crime. And then he appeals to their own consciences; though the thing *speaks itself*, yet he is pleased to *speak it*; "*Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, as I design to do, or to do evil, as you design to do? Whether is better, to save life, or to kill?*" What fairer question could be put? And yet, because they saw it would turn against them, *they held their peace*. Note, Those are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who, when they can say nothing *against* a truth, will say nothing *to it*; and, when they cannot *resist*, yet will not *yield*.

(2.) When they rebelled against the light, he *lamented their stubbornness*; (v. 5.) *He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* The *sin* he had an eye to, was, the *hardness of their hearts*, their insensibleness of the evidence of his miracles, and their inflexible resolution to persist in unbelief. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is done amiss; but Christ looks at the *root of bitterness* in the heart, the blindness and hardness of *that*. Observe, [1.] How he was *provoked* by the sin; he looked *round upon them*; for they were so many, and had so placed themselves, that they surrounded him, and he looked *with anger*; his anger, it is probable, appeared in his countenance; his anger was, like God's, without the least *perturbation* to himself, but not without great *provocation* from us. Note, The sin of sinners is very displeasing to Jesus Christ; and the way to be angry, and not to sin, is, to be angry, as Christ was, at nothing but sin. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble to think of the anger with which he will *look round upon them shortly*, when the *great day of his wrath comes*. [2.] How he *judged* the sinners; he was *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*; as God was grieved forty years for the hardness of the hearts of their fathers in the wilderness. Note, It is a great grief to our Lord Jesus, to see sinners bent upon their own ruin, and obstinately set against the methods of their conviction and recovery, for he would not that any should perish. This is a good reason why the hardness of

our own hearts and of the hearts of others, should be a grief to us.

4. Christ dealt very kindly with the patient; he bid him *stretch forth his hand*, and it was immediately *restored*. Now, (1.) Christ has hereby taught us to go on with resolution in the way of our duty, how violent soever the opposition is, that we meet with in it. We must deny ourselves sometimes in our ease, pleasure, and convenience, rather than give offence even to those who causelessly take it, but we must not deny ourselves the satisfaction of serving God, and doing good, though offence may unjustly be taken at it. None could be more tender of giving offence than Christ; yet rather than send this poor man away uncured, he would venture offending all the Scribes and Pharisees that compassed him about. (2.) He hath hereby given us a *specimen* of the cures wrought by his grace upon *floor souls*; our hands are spiritually *withered*, the powers of our souls weakened by sin, and disabled for that which is good. The great healing-day, is the *sabbath*, and the healing-place the *synagogue*; the healing-power is that of Christ. The gospel-command is like this recorded here; and the command as rational and just, though our hands are withered, and we cannot of ourselves *stretch them forth*, we must attempt it, must, as well as we can, *lift them up* to God in prayer, *lay hold* on Christ and eternal life, and employ them in good works; and if we do our endeavour, power goes along with the word of Christ, he affects the cure. Though our hands be *withered*, yet, if we will not offer to *stretch them out*, it is our own fault that we are not healed; but if we do, and are healed, Christ and his power and grace must have all the glory.

5. The enemies of Christ dealt very barbarously with him. Such a work of *mercy* should have engaged their love to him, and such a work of *wonder* their faith in him. But, instead of that, the Pharisees, who pretended to be oracles in the church, and the Herodians, who pretended to be the supporters of the state, though of opposite interests one to another, *took counsel together against him, how they might destroy him*. Note, They that suffer for doing good, do but suffer as their Master did.

II. When he withdrew to the sea, he did go there. While his enemies sought to *destroy him*, he quitted the place; to teach us in troublous times to shift for our own safety; but see here,

1. How he was followed into his retirement. When some had such an enmity to him, that they drove him out of their country, others had such a value for him, that they followed him wherever he went; and the enmity of their leaders to Christ did not cool their respect to him. *Great multitudes* followed him from all parts of the nation; as far north, as *from Galilee*; as far south, as from Judea and Jerusalem; nay, and from Idumea; as far east, as from beyond Jordan; and west, as from about Tyre and Sidon, v. 7. 8. Observe, (1.) What induced them to follow him; it was the report they heard of the *great things he did* for all that applied themselves to him; some wished to *see* one that had done such *great things*, and others hoped he would do great things for them. Note, The consideration of the *great things* Christ has done, should engage us to *come to him*. (2.) What they followed him for; (v. 10.) They *pressed upon him, to touch him, as many as had plagues*. Diseases are here called *plagues*, *μάστιγες*—*corrections, chastisements*; so they are designed to be, to make us *smart* for our sins, that thereby we may be made *sorry* for them, and may be warned not to return to them. Those that were under these *scourings*, came to Jesus; this is the errand on which sickness is sent, to quicken us to inquire after Christ, and apply ourselves to him as our Physician. They *pressed upon him*.

each striving which should get *nearest* to him, and which should be *first served*. They *fell down before him*, (so Dr. Hammond,) as petitioners for his favour; they desired leave but to *touch him*, having faith to be healed, not only by *his touching them*, but by *their touching him*; which no doubt they had many instances of. (3.) What provision he made to be ready to attend them; (*v. 9.*) He *spake to his disciples*, who were fishermen, and had fisher-boats at command, that a *small ship should constantly wait on him*, to carry him from place to place on the same coast; that, when he had despatched the necessary business he had to do in one place, he might easily remove to another, where his presence was requisite, without pressing through the crowds of people that followed him from curiosity. Wise men, as much as they can, decline a crowd.

2. What abundance of good he did in his retirement. He did not withdraw, to be idle, nor did he send back those who rudely crowded after him when he withdrew, but took it kindly, and gave them what they came for; for he never said to any that sought him diligently, *Seek ye me in vain*. (1.) Diseases were effectually cured; He *healed many*; divers sorts of patients, ill of divers sorts of diseases; though numerous, though various, he *healed them*. (2.) Devils were effectually *conquered*; those whom unclean spirits had got possession of, *when they saw him*, trembled at his presence and they also *fell down before him*, not to supplicate his favour, but to deprecate his wrath, and by their own terrors were compelled to own that *he was the Son of God*, *v. 11.* It is said that this great truth should be denied by any of the children of men, who may have the benefit of it, when a confession of it has so often been extorted from devils, who are excluded from having benefit by it. (3.) Christ sought not applause to himself in doing those great things, for *he strictly charged* those for whom he did them, *that they should not make him known*; (*v. 12.*) that they should not be *industrious* to spread the notice of his cures, as it were by advertisements in the news-papers, but let them leave *his own works to praise him*, and let the report of them *diffuse itself*, and make its own way. Let not those that are cured, be forward to divulge it, lest it should feed their pride who are *so highly favoured*; but let the *standers-by* carry away the intelligence of it. When we do that which is *praise-worthy*, and yet covet not to be *praised of men* for it, then *the same mind is in us*, which was in *Christ Jesus*.

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth *unto him* whom he would; and they came unto him. 14. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. 15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16. And Simon he surnamed Peter: 17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is. The sons of thunder: 18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphens, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. 20. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21. And when his friends heard *of it*, they went out to lay

hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

In these verses, we have,

1. The choice Christ made of the *twelve apostles* to be his constant followers and attendants, and to be sent abroad as there was occasion, to preach the gospel. Observe,

1. The introduction to this *call* or *promotion* of disciples; He *goes up into a mountain*, and his errand thither was *to pray*. Ministers must be set apart with solemn prayer for the pouring out of the Spirit upon them; though Christ had authority to confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet, to set us an example, he prayed for them.

2. The rule he went by in his choice, and that was his own good pleasure; He *called unto him whom he would*. Not such as we would have thought *fittest to be called*, looking upon the countenance, and the height of the stature; but such as he *thought fit to call*, and determined to *make fit* for the service to which he called them; *even so*, blessed Jesus, *because it seemed good in thine eyes*. Christ calls *whom he will*; for he is a free Agent, and his grace is his own.

3. The efficacy of the call; He *called them* to separate themselves from the crowd, and stand by him, and they *came unto him*. Christ calls those who were *given him*; (John 17. 6.) and *all that the Father gave him, shall come to him*, John 6. 37. Those whom it was his *will to call*, he made *willing to come*; his *people shall be willing in the day of his power*. Perhaps they came to him readily enough, because they were in expectation of *reigning with him* in temporal pomp and power; but when afterward they were *undeceived* in that matter, yet they had such a prospect given them of better things, that they would not say they were *deceived* in their Master, nor repented their leaving all to be with him.

4. The end and intention of this call; He *ordained them*, (probably by the imposition of hands, which was a ceremony used among the Jews,) *that they should be with him* constantly, to be witnesses of his doctrine, manner of life, and patience, that they might *fully know it*, and be able to give an account of it; and especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be *with him*, to receive instructions *from him*, that they might be qualified to give instructions *to others*. It would require time to fit them for that which he designed them for; for they must be *sent forth to preach*; not to preach till they were *sent*, and not to be *sent till* by a long and intimate acquaintance with Christ they were fitted. Note, Christ's ministers must be much *with him*.

5. The power he gave them to work miracles; and hereby he put a very great honour upon them, beyond that of the great men of the earth. He ordained them to *heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils*. They showed that the power which Christ had to work these miracles, was an *original* power; that he had it not as a *Servant*, but as a *Son in his own house*, in that he could confer it upon others, and invest them with it: they have a rule in the law, *Deputatus non potest deputare*—He that is only *deputed himself, cannot depute another*; but our Lord Jesus had *life in himself*, and the Spirit without measure; for he could give this power even to the *weak and foolish things* of the world.

6. Their number and names; He *ordained twelve*, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. They are here named not just in the same order as they were in Matthew, nor by couples, as they were there; but as there, so here, Peter is put first, and Judas last. Here Matthew is put before Thomas, probably being called in that order; but in that catalogue which Matthew himself drew up, he

puts himself after Thomas : so far was he from insisting upon the precedency of his consecration. But that which Mark only takes notice of in this list of the apostles, is, that Christ called James and John *Boanerges*, which is, *The sons of thunder*; perhaps they were remarkable for a loud, commanding voice, they were thundering preachers; or, rather, it denotes the zeal and fervency of their spirits, which would make them active for God above their brethren. These two (saith Dr. Hammond) were to be special eminent ministers of the gospel, which is called a *voice shaking the earth*, Heb. 12. 26. Yet John, one of those *sons of thunder*, was full of love and tenderness, as appears by his epistles, and was the beloved disciple.

7. Their retirement with their Master, and close adherence to him; *They went into a house*. Now that this jury was impeached, they stood together, to hearken to their evidence. They went together into the house, to settle the orders of their infant-college; and now, it is likely, the bag was given to Judas, which pleased him, and made him easy.

II. The continual crowds that attended Christ's motions; (v. 20.) *The multitude cometh together again*, unsent for, and unseasonably pressing upon him, some with one errand and some with another; so that he and his disciples could not get time so much as to eat bread, much less for a set and full meal. Yet he did not shut his doors against the petitioners, but bid them welcome, and gave to each of them an answer of peace. Note, They whose hearts are enlarged in the work of God, can easily bear with great inconveniences to themselves, in the prosecution of it, and will rather lose a meal's meat at any time than slip an opportunity of doing good. It is happy when zealous hearers and zealous preachers thus meet, and encourage one another. Now the kingdom of God was preached, and men pressed into it, Luke 16. 16. This was a gale of opportunity worth improving; and the disciples might well afford to adjourn their meals, to lay hold on it. It is good striking while the iron is hot.

III. The care of his relations concerning him; (v. 21.) *When his friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they went out, to lay hold on him, and fetch him home, for they said, He is beside himself.* 1. Some understand it of an absurd preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, *He is beside himself*; either they suspected it themselves, or it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion, that he was gone distracted, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him, (John 7. 5.) and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellects, and under that pretence to take him off from his work. The prophets were called mad fellows, 2 Kings 9. 11. 2. Others understand it of a well-meaning care; and then they read *ἑξῆς*—*“He fainteth, he has no time to eat bread, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that goes out of him in his miracles; and therefore let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little breathing time.”* In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, *Master, spare thyself*. Note, They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hinderances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

22. And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness: but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Here is,

I. The impudent, impious brand which the Scribes fastened upon Christ's casting out devils, that they might evade and invalidate the conviction of it, and have a poor excuse for not yielding to it. These Scribes came down from Jerusalem, v. 22. It should seem, they came this long journey on purpose to hinder the progress of the doctrine of Christ; such pains did they take to do mischief; and, coming from Jerusalem, where were the most polite and learned Scribes, and where they had opportunity of consulting together against the Lord and his Anointed, they were in the greater capacity to do mischief; the reputation of Scribes from Jerusalem would have an influence not only upon the country-people, but upon the country-Scribes; they had never thought of this base suggestion concerning Christ's miracles till the Scribes from Jerusalem put it in their heads. They could not deny but that he cast out devils, which plainly bespake him sent of God; but they insinuated that he had Beelzebub on his side, was in league with him, and by the prince of the devils cast out devils. There is a trick in the case; Satan is not cast out, he only goes out by consent. There was nothing in the manner of Christ's casting out devils, that gave any cause to suspect this; he did it as one having authority; but so they will have it, who resolve not to believe him.

II. The rational answer which Christ gave to this objection, demonstrating the absurdity of it.

1. Satan is so subtle, that he will never voluntarily quit his possession; *If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself, and it cannot stand, v. 23—25.* He called them to him, as one desirous they should be convinced; he treated them with all the freedom, friendliness, and familiarity, that could be; he vouchsafed to reason the case with them, that every mouth may be stopped. It was plain that the doctrine of Christ made war upon the devil's kingdom, and had a direct tendency to break his power, and crush his interest in the souls of men; and it was as plain that the casting of him out of the bodies of people confirmed that doctrine, and gave it the setting on; and therefore it cannot be imagined that he should come into such a design; every one knows that Satan is no fool, nor will act so directly against his own interest.

2. Christ is so *wise*, that, being engaged in war with him, he will attack his forces wherever he meets them, whether in the bodies or souls of people, v. 27. It is plain, Christ's design is to *enter into the strong man's house*, to take possession of the interest he has in the world, and to *spoil his goods*, and convert them to his own service; and therefore it is natural to suppose that he will thus *bind the strong man*, will forbid him to *speak* when he would, and to *stay* where he would, and thus show that he has gained a victory over him.

III. The awful warning Christ gave them to take heed how they spake such dangerous words as these; however they might make light of them, as only conjectures, and the language of *free-thinking*, if they persisted in it, it would be of fatal consequence to them; it would be found a sin against the last remedy, and consequently *unpardonable*; for what could be imagined possible to bring them to repentance for their sin in blaspheming Christ, who would set aside such a *strong* conviction with such a *weak* evasion? It is true, the gospel *promiseth*, because Christ hath *purchased*, forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners, v. 28. Many of those who reviled Christ on the cross, (which was a *blaspheming of the Son of man*, aggravated to the highest degree,) found mercy, and Christ himself prayed, *Father, forgive them*; but this was *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*, for it was by the Holy Spirit that he *cast out devils*, and they said, It was *by the unclean spirit*, v. 30. By this method they would outface the conviction of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, and defeat them all, after which there remained no more proof, and therefore they should *never have forgiveness*, but were *liable to eternal damnation*. They were in imminent danger of that everlasting punishment, from which there was *no redemption*, and in which there was *no intermission*, *no remission*.

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. 32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Here is, 1. The *disrespect* which Christ's *kindred*, according to the *flesh*, showed to him, when he was preaching; (and they knew very well that he was then in his clement;) they not only *stood without*, having no desire to come in, and hear him, but they sent in a message to *call him out to them*, (v. 31, 32.) as if he must leave his work, to hearken to their *impertinences*; it is probable that they had *no business with him*, only sent for him on purpose to oblige him to *break off*; lest he should *kill himself*. He knew how far his strength would go, and preferred the salvation of souls before his own life, and soon after made it to appear with a witness; it was therefore an *idle thing* for them, under pretence of his sparing himself, to interrupt him; and it was worse, if really they had business with him, when they knew he preferred his business as a Saviour, so much before any other business.

2. The *respect* which Christ showed to his spiritual kindred upon this occasion. Now, as at other times, he put a *comparative neglect* upon his mother, which seemed purposely designed to obviate and

prevent the extravagant respect which men in after-times would be apt to pay her. *Our* respect ought to be guided and governed by Christ; now the virgin Mary, or Christ's mother, is not equalled with, but postponed to, ordinary believers, on whom Christ here puts a *superlative* honour. He looked upon those that *sat about* him, and pronounced those of them that *not only heard*, but did, the will of God, to be to him as *his mother, and sister, and brother*; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, v. 33—35. This is a good reason why we should *honour those that fear the Lord*, and choose them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in this honour. Surely it is good to be akin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and woe to these who hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are *his bone and his flesh*, every one *resembling the children of a King*; (see Judg. 8. 18, 19.) for he will with jealousy plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, I. The parable of the seed, and the four sorts of ground, (v. 1..9.) with the exposition of it, (v. 10..20.) and the application of it, v. 21..25. II. The parable of the seed growing gradually, but insensibly, v. 26..29. III. The parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and a general account of Christ's parables, v. 30..31. IV. The miracle of Christ's sudden stilling a storm at sea, v. 35..41.

1. **A**ND he began again to teach by the sea-side; and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all *these* things are done in parables: 12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their sins* should be forgiven them. 13.

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? 14. The sower soweth the word. 15. And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The foregoing chapter began with Christ's *entering into the synagogue*; (v. 1.) this chapter begins with Christ's *teaching again by the sea-side*. Thus he changed his method, that if possible all might be reached and wrought upon. To gratify the nice and more genteel sort of people that had seats, *chief seats, in the synagogue*, and did not care for hearing a sermon any where else, he did not preach always by the *sea-side*, but, having liberty, went often into the *synagogue*, and taught there; yet, to gratify the poor, the mob, that could not get room in the synagogue, he did not always preach there, but *began again to teach by the sea-side*, where they could come *within hearing*. Thus are we *debtors both to the wise and to the unwise*, Rom. 1. 14.

Here seems to be a new convenience found out, which had not been used before, though he had before preached by the sea side, (ch. 2. 13.) and that was—his standing in a ship, while his hearers stood upon the land; and that inland sea of Tiberias having no tide, there was no ebbing and flowing of the waters to disturb them. Methinks Christ's carrying his doctrine into a ship, and preaching it thence, was a presage of his sending of the gospel to the *isles of the Gentiles*, and the shipping off of the kingdom of God, (that rich cargo,) from the Jewish nation, to be sent to a people that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. Now, observe here,

1. The way of teaching that Christ used with the multitude; (v. 2.) *He taught them many things*, but it was by *parables*, or similitudes, which would tempt them to hear; for people love to be spoken to in their own language, and careless hearers will catch at a plain comparison borrowed from common things, and will retain and repeat that, when they have lost, and perhaps never took, the truth which it was designed to explain and illustrate; but, unless they would take pains to search into it, it would but amuse them; *seeing they would see, and not perceive*, (v. 12.) and so, while it gratified their curiosity, it was the punishment of their stupidity; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore justly did Christ put it into the dark lanthorn of a parable, which had a bright side toward those who applied it to them-

and were willing to be guided by it; but to those who were only willing for a season to play with it, it only gave a flash of light now and then, but sent them away in the dark. It is just with God to say of those that will not see, that they shall not see, and to hide from their eyes, who only look about them with a great deal of carelessness, and never look before them with any concern upon the things that belong to their peace.

The way of expounding that he used with his disciples; When he was alone by himself, not only the twelve, but others that were about him with the twelve, took the opportunity to ask him the meaning of the parables, v. 10. They found it good to be about Christ; the nearer him the better; good to be with the twelve, to be conversant with those that are intimate with him. And he told them what a distinguishing favour it was to them, that they were made acquainted with the *mystery of the kingdom of God*, v. 11. *The secret of the Lord was with them*. That instructed them, which others were only amused with, and they were made to increase in knowledge by every parable, and understood more of the way and method in which Christ designed to set up his kingdom in the world, while others were dismissed, never the wiser. Note, Those who know the *mystery of the kingdom of heaven*, must acknowledge that it is given to them; they receive both the light and the sight from Jesus Christ, who, after his resurrection, both opened the scriptures, and opened the understanding, Luke 24. 27—45.

In particular, we have here,

1. The parable of the sower, as we had it, Matth. 13. 3, &c. He begins (v. 3.) with, *Hearken*, and concludes (v. 9.) with, *He that hath ears to hear let him hear*. Note, The words of Christ demand attention, and those who speak from him may command it, and should stir it up; even that which as yet we do not thoroughly understand, or not rightly, we must carefully attend to, believing it to be both intelligible and weighty, that at length we may understand it; we shall find more in Christ's sayings than at first there seemed to be.

2. The exposition of it to the disciples. Here is a question Christ put to them before he expounded it, which we had not in Matthew; (v. 13.) *Know ye not this parable? Know ye not the meaning of it? How then will ye know all parables?* (1.) "If ye know not this, which is so plain, how will ye understand other parables, which will be more dark and obscure? If ye are gravelled and run aground with this, which speaks so plainly the different success of the word preached upon those that hear it, which ye yourselves may see easily, how will ye understand the parables which hereafter will speak of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, which is a thing ye have yet no idea of?" Note, This should quicken us both to prayer and pains that we may get knowledge—that there are a great many things which we are concerned to know; and if we understand not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we master those that are more difficult? *Vita brevis, ars longa—Life is short, art is long*. If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, and run us down, then how shall we contend with horses? Jer. 12. 5. (2.) "If ye know not this, which is intended for your direction in hearing the word, that ye may profit by it, how shall ye profit by what ye are further to hear? This parable is to teach you to be attentive to the word, and affected with it, that you may understand it. If ye receive not this, ye will not know how to use the key by which ye must be let into all the rest." If we understand not the rules we are to observe, in order to our profiting by the word, how shall we profit by any other rules? Observe, Before Christ expounds the parable, [1.] He shews them how sad their case was, who were

not let into the meaning of the doctrine of Christ; *To you it is given, but not to them.* Note, It will help us to put a value upon the privileges we enjoy, as disciples of Christ, to consider the deplorable state of those who want such privileges, especially that they are out of the ordinary way of conversion; *lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them, v. 12.* Those only who are converted have their sins forgiven them: and it is the misery of unconverted souls, that they lie under unforgotten guilt. [2.] He shews them what a shame it was that they needed such particular explanations of the word they heard, and did not apprehend it at first. Those that would improve in knowledge, must be made sensible of their ignorance.

Having thus prepared them for it, he gives them the interpretation of the parable of the sower, as we had it before in Matthew. Let us only observe here,

First, That, in the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all promiscuously; *The sower soweth the word, (v. 14.)* sows it at a venture, *beside all waters,* upon all sorts of ground, (Isa. 32. 20.) not knowing where it will light, or what fruit it will bring forth. He *scatters* it, in order to the increase of it. Christ was a while *sowing* himself, when he went about teaching and preaching; now he sends his ministers, and sows by their hand. Ministers are sowers; they have need of the skill and discretion of the husbandmen; (Isa. 28. 24—26.) they must not observe winds and clouds, (Eccl. 11. 4, 6,) and must look up to God, who *gives seed to the sower,* 2 Cor. 1. 10.

Secondly, That, of the many that hear the word of the gospel, and read it, and are conversant with it, there are, comparatively, but few that receive it, so as to bring forth the fruits of it; here is but one in four that comes to good. It is sad to think how much of the precious seed of the word of God is lost, and *sown in vain*; but there is a day coming when *lost sermons* must be accounted for. Many, that have heard Christ himself *preach in their streets,* will hereafter be bidden to depart from him; those therefore who place all their religion in hearing, as if that alone would save them, do but deceive themselves, and build their hope upon the sand, Jam. 1. 22.

Thirdly, Many are much affected with the word for the present, who yet receive no abiding benefit by it. The motions of soul they have, answerable to what they hear, are but a mere flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot. We read of hypocrites, that they *delight to know God's ways*; (Isa. 58. 2.) of Herod, that he heard John gladly; (*ch. 6. 20.*) of others, that they *rejoiced in his light*; (John 5. 35.) of those to whom Ezekiel was a *lovely song,* (Ezek. 33. 32.) and those represented here by the stony ground received the word *with gladness,* and yet came to nothing.

Fourthly, The reason why the word doth not leave commanding, abiding, impressions upon the minds of the people, is, because their hearts are not duly disposed and prepared to receive it; the fault is in themselves, not in the word; some are careless forgetful hearers, and these get *no good at all* by the word; it comes in at one ear, and goes out at the other; others have their convictions overpowered by their corruptions, and they lose the good impressions the word has made upon them, so that they get *no abiding* good by it.

Fifthly, The devil is very busy about loose, careless hearers, as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground; when the heart, like the *highway,* is unploughed, unhumbled, when it *lies common,* to be trodden on by every passenger, as their's that are great company keepers, then the devil is *like the fowls*; he comes swiftly, and carries away the word ere we are aware. When, therefore, these fowls come down upon the sacrifices, we

should take care, as *Abram* did, to *drive them away*; (Gen. 15. 21) that, though we cannot keep them from hovering over our heads, we may not let them nestle in our hearts.

Sixthly, Many that are not openly *scandalized*, so as to throw off their profession, as they on the stony ground did, yet have the efficacy of it secretly *choked* and stilled, so that it comes to nothing; they continue in a barren, hypocritical profession, which brings nothing to pass, and so go down as certainly, though more plausibly, to hell.

Seventhly, Impressions that are not *deep*, will not be *durable*, but will wear off in suffering, trying times; like footsteps on the sand of the sea, which are gone the next high tide of persecution; when *that* iniquity doth abound, the love of many to the ways of God waxeth cold; many that keep their profession in fair days, lose it in a storm; and do as those that go to sea only for pleasure, come back again when the wind rises. It is the ruin of hypocrites, that they *have no root*; they do not act from a living fixed principle; they do not mind *heart-work*, and without that religion is nothing; for he is the Christian, that is *one inwardly*.

Eighthly, Many are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by their abundance of the world. Many a good lesson of humility, charity, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, is choked and lost by that prevailing complacency in the world, which *they* are apt to have on whom it smiles. Thus many professors, that otherwise might have come to something, prove like Pharaoh's *lean kine and thin ears*.

Ninthly, Those that are not incumbered with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may yet lose the benefit of their profession by the *lusts of other things*; this is added here in Mark, *by the desires which are about other things,* (so Dr. Hammond,) an inordinate appetite toward those things that are pleasing to sense or to the fancy. Those that have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by an indulgence of the body.

Tenthly, Fruit is the thing that God expects and requires from those that enjoy the gospel: fruit according to the *seed*; a temper of mind, and a course of life, agreeable to the gospel; Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. This is *fruit*, and it will abound to our account.

Lastly, No good fruit is to be expected but from good seed. If the seed be sown on *good ground*, if the heart be humble, and holy, and heavenly, there will be *good fruit*, and it will *abound* sometimes even to a *hundred fold*, such a crop as Isaac reaped, Gen. 26. 12.

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22. For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. 23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. 26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. 30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31. *It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. 33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.*

The lessons which our Saviour designs to teach us here, by parables and figurative expressions, are these:

1. That those who *are good*, ought to consider the obligations they are under to *do good*; that is, as in the parable before, to *bring forth fruit*. God expects a grateful return of his gifts to us, and a useful improvement of his gifts in us; for, (v. 21.) *Is a candle brought, to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? No, but that it may be set on a candlestick.* The apostles were ordained to receive the gospel, not for themselves only, but for the good of others, to communicate it to them. All Christians, as they have *received the gift*, must *minister the same*. Note, 1. Gifts and graces make a man as a *candle*, the *candle of the Lord*, (Prov. 20. 27.) lighted by the Father of lights; the most eminent are but *candles*, poor lights, compared with the *Sun of righteousness*. A candle gives light but a *little way*, and but a *little while*, and is easily blown out, and continually burning down and wasting. 2. Many, who are *lighted as candles*, put themselves *under a bed, or under a bushel*: they do not *manifest* grace themselves, nor *minister* grace to others; they have estates, and do no good with them; have their limbs and senses, wit and learning, perhaps, but nobody is the better for them; they have spiritual gifts, but do not use them; like a taper in an urn, they burn to themselves. 3. Those who are *lighted as candles*, should set themselves *on a candlestick*, that is, should improve all opportunities of doing good, as those that were made for the glory of God, and the service of the communities they are members of; we are not born for ourselves.

The reason given for this, is, because *there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested*, which *should not be made manifest*, (so it might better be read,) v. 22. There is no treasure of gifts and graces lodged in any but with design to be communicated; nor was the gospel made a *secret* to the apostles, to be concealed, but that it should *come abroad*, and be divulged to all the world. Though Christ expounded the parables to his disciples privately, yet it was with design to make them the more publicly useful; they were *taught*, that they might teach; and it is a general rule, that *the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, not himself only, but others also.

II. It concerns those who hear the word of the gospel, to *mark* what they hear, and to *make a good use* of it, because their *weal* or *woe* depends upon it; what he had said before he saith again, *If any man hath*

ears to hear, let him hear, v. 23. Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added, (v. 24.) *Take heed what ye hear*, and give a due regard to that which ye do hear; *Consider what ye hear*, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear doth us no good, unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others, must themselves be very observant of the things of God; must take notice of the message they are to deliver, that they may be exact. We must likewise *take heed what ye hear*, by *proving* all things, that we may *hold fast that which is good*. We must be *cautious*, and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us. So Dr. Hammond explains these words, "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.* If ye be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful Master to you: *with the upright he will show himself upright.*"

2. As we improve the talents we are intrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have, for the glory of God and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow, as stock in trade doth by being turned; *Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given*, v. 25. If the disciples *deliver* that to the church, which they have *received of the Lord*, they shall be *led more into the secret of the Lord*. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised: and God has promised to bless the *hand of the diligent*.

3. If we do not use, we lose, what we have; *From him that hath not, that doeth no good with what he hath, and so hath it in vain, is as if he had it not, shall be taken even that he hath.* Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces *rust* for want of *wearing*.

III. The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, doth by degrees produce wonderful effects, but without noise; (v. 26, &c.) *So is the kingdom of God*; so is the gospel, when it is sown, and received, as seed in good ground.

1. It will *come up*; though it seems lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed *cast into the ground will spring*. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself, as the *wisdom from above* doth in a *good conversation*. After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface of it altered! How gay and pleasant doth it look, when it is covered with green!

2. The husbandman cannot describe how it comes up; it is one of the mysteries of nature; It *springs and grows up, he knows not how*, v. 27. He sees it has grown, but he cannot tell in what manner it grew, or what was the cause and method of its growth. Thus we know not how the Spirit by the word makes a change in the heart, any more than we can account for the blowing of the wind, which we hear the sound of, but cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; how *God manifested in the flesh* came to be *believed on in the world*, 1 Tim. 3. 16.

3. The husbandman, when he hath sown the seed, doth nothing toward the springing of it up; *He sleeps, and rises, night and day*; goes to sleep at night, gets up in the morning, and perhaps never so much as thinks of the corn he hath sown, or ever looks upon it, but follows his pleasures or other business, and yet the *earth brings forth fruit of itself*, according to the ordinary course of nature, and by the concurring power of the God of nature. Thus the *word of grace*, when it is received in faith, is in the heart a *word of grace*, and the preachers contribute nothing to it. The Spirit of God is carrying

it on when *they sleep*, and can do no business, (Job 33. 15, 16.) or when they rise to go about other business. The prophets do not *live for ever*; but the word which they preach, is doing its work, when they are in their graves, Zech. 1. 5, 6. The dew by which the seed is brought up, *tarieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men*, Mic. 5. 7.

4. It grows gradually; *first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*, v. 28. When it is sprung up, it will go forward; nature will have its course, and so will grace. Christ's interest, both in the world and in the heart, is, and will be, a *growing* interest; and though the *beginning be small, the latter end will greatly increase*. Though thou sowest not that body that shall be, but *bare grain*, yet God will give to every seed its own body; though at first it is but a tender *blade*, which the frost may nip, or the foot may crush, yet it will increase to the *ear*, to the *full corn in the ear*. *Natura nil facit per saltum—Nature does nothing abruptly*. God carries on his work insensibly and without noise, but insuperably and without fail.

5. It comes to perfection at last; (v. 29.) *When the fruit is brought forth*, that is, when it is *ripe*, and ready to be delivered into the owner's hand; then he *puts in the sickle*. This intimates, (1.) That Christ *now accepts* the services which are done to him by an honest heart from a good principle: from the fruit of the gospel taking place and working in the soul, Christ *gathers in* a harvest of honour to himself. See John 4. 35. (2.) That he will reward them in eternal life. When those that receive the gospel aright, have finished their course, the harvest comes, when they shall be gathered as *wheat into God's barn*, (Matth. 13. 30.) as a shock of corn in his *season*.

IV. The work of grace is small in its beginnings, but comes to be great and considerable at last; (v. 30—32.) "*Wherunto shall I liken the kingdom of God, as now to be set up by the Messiah? How shall I make you to understand the designed method of it?*" Christ speaks as one considering and consulting with himself, how to illustrate it with an apt similitude; *With what comparison shall we compare it?* Shall we fetch it from the motions of the sun, or the revolutions of the moon? No, the comparison is borrowed from this earth, it is like a *grain of mustard-seed*; he had compared it before to *seed sown*, here to *that seed*, intending thereby to show,

1. That the beginnings of the *gospel-kingdom* would be very small, like that which is *one of the least of all seeds*. When a christian church was *sown in the earth* for God, it was all contained in one room, and the *number of the names* was but 120, (Acts 1. 15.) as the children of Israel, when they went down into Egypt, were but seventy souls. The work of grace in the soul, is, at first, but the *day of small things*; a *cloud no bigger than a man's hand*. Never were there such great things undertaken by such an inconsiderable handful, as that of the discipling of the nations by the ministry of the apostles; nor a work that was to end in such great glory, as the work of grace raised from such weak and unlikely beginnings. *Who hath begotten me these?*

2. That the perfection of it will be very great; *When it grows up, it becomes greater than all herbs*. The gospel-kingdom in the world, shall increase and spread to the remotest nations of the earth, and shall continue to the last ages of time. The church hath *shot out great branches*, strong ones, spreading far, and fruitful. The *work of grace* in the soul has mighty products, now while it is in its growth; but what will it be, when it is perfected in heaven? The difference between a *grain of mustard seed* and a *great tree*, is nothing to that between a *young convert* on earth and a *glorified saint* in heaven. See John 12. 24

After these parables thus specified, the historian concludes with this general account of Christ's preaching—that *with many such parables he spake the word unto them*; (v. 33.) probably designing to refer us to the larger account of the parables of this kind, which we had before, Matth. 13. He spake in parables, *as they were able to hear them*: he fetched his comparisons from those things that were familiar to them, and level to their capacity, and delivered them in plain expressions, in condescension to their capacity; though he did not let them into the *mystery* of the parables, yet his manner of expression was easy, and such as they might hereafter recollect to their edification. But, for the present, *without a parable spake he not unto them*, v. 34. The glory of the Lord was covered with a cloud, and God speaks to us in the language of the *sons of men*, that, though not *at first*, yet *by degrees*, we may understand his meaning; the disciples themselves understood those sayings of Christ afterward, which at first they did not rightly take the sense of. But these parables he *expounded to them, when they were alone*. We cannot but wish we had had that exposition, as we had of the parable of the sower; but it was not so needful; because, when the church should be enlarged, that would *expound* these parables to us, without any more ado.

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships. 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? 41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

This miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his disciples, in stilling the storm, we had before, (Matth. 8. 23, &c.) but it is here more fully related Observe,

1. It was the *same day* that he preached out of a ship, *when the even was come*, v. 35. When he had *labouring in the word and doctrine* all day, instead of reposing himself, he *exposed* himself, to teach us not to think of a constant remaining rest till we come to heaven. The end of a toil may perhaps be but the beginning of a toss. But observe, the ship that Christ made his pulpit, is taken under his special protection, and, though in danger, cannot sink. What is used for Christ, he will take particular care of.

2. He himself proposed putting to sea at night, because he would lose no time; *Let us pass over to the other side*; for we shall find, in the next chapter, he has work to do there. Christ went about doing good, and no difficulties in his way should hinder him; thus industrious we should be in serving him and our generation according to his will.

3. They did not put to sea, till *they had sent away the multitude*, that is, had given to each of them that which they came for, and answered all their requests; for he sent none home, complaining that they had attended him *in vain*. Or, They sent them away *with a solemn blessing*; for Christ came into the world, not only to pronounce, but to *command*, and to *give*, the blessing.

4. They took him *even as he was*, that is, in the same dress that he was in when he preached, without any cloak to throw over him, which he ought to have had, to keep him *warm*, when he went to sea at night, especially after preaching. We must not hence infer that we may be careless of our health, but we may learn hence not to be over-nice and solicitous about the body.

5. The storm was so great, that the ship was *full of water*, (v. 37.) not by springing a leak, but perhaps partly with the shower, for the word here used signifies a *tempest of wind with rain*; however, the ship being little, the waves beat into it so that *it was full*. Note, It is no new thing for that ship to be greatly hurried and endangered, in which Christ and his disciples, Christ and his name and gospel, are embarked.

6. There were *with him other little ships*, which, no doubt, shared in the distress and danger. Probably, those *little ships* carried those who were desirous to go along with Christ, for the benefit of his preaching and miracles on the other side. The *multitude went away* when he put to sea, but some there were, that would venture upon the water with him. Those follow the Lamb aright, that follow him *wherever he goes*. And those that hope for a happiness in Christ, must be willing to take their lot with him, and run the same risks that he runs. One may boldly and cheerfully put to sea in Christ's company, yea, though we foresee a storm.

7. Christ was asleep in this storm; and here we are told that it was in the *hinder part of the ship*, the pilot's place: he lay at the helm, to intimate that, as Mr. George Herbert expresses it,

When winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,
Even when the boat seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of his art;
Though he may close his eyes, yet not his heart.

He had a *pillow* there, such a one as a fisherman's ship would furnish him with. And he *slept*, to try the faith of his disciples, and to stir up prayer: upon the trial, their faith appeared *weak*, and their prayers *strong*. Note, Sometimes when the church is in a storm, Christ seems as if he were asleep, unconcerned in the troubles of his people, and regardless of their prayers, and doth not presently appear for their relief. *Verily he is a God that hideth himself*, Isa. 45. 15. But, as when he tarrys, he doth not tarry, (Hab. 2. 3.) so when he sleeps, he doth not sleep; the Keeper of Israel doth not so much as slumber; (Ps. 121. 3, 4.) he slept, but his heart was awake, as the spouse, Cant. 5. 2.

8. His disciples encouraged themselves with their having his presence, and thought it the best way to improve that, and appeal to that, and ply the oar of prayer rather than their other oars. Their confidence lay in this, that they had their Master with them; and the ship that has Christ in it, though it may be *tossed*, cannot *sink*; the bush that has God in it, though it may *burn*, shall not *consume*. Cæsar encouraged the master of the ship, that had him on board, with this, *Cæsarem vehis; et fortunam Cæsaris*—*Thou hast Cæsar on board, and Cæsar's fortune*. They *awoke Christ*. Had not the necessity of the case called for it, they would not have *stirred up, or awoken*, their Master, *till he had pleased*; (Cant. 2. 7.) but they knew he would *forgive them this wrong*. When Christ seems as if he slept

in a storm, he is awaked by the prayers of his people; when we know not what to do, our eye must be to him; (2 Chron. 20. 12.) we may be at our wits' end, but not at our faith's end, while we have such a Saviour to go to. Their address to Christ is here expressed very emphatically; *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* I confess this sounds somewhat harsh, rather like chiding him for sleeping than begging him to awake. I know no excuse for it, but the great familiarity which he was pleased to admit them into, and the freedom he allowed them; and the present distress they were in, which put them into such a fright, that they knew not what they said. *They do Christ a deal of wrong* who suspect him to be *careless* of his people in distress. The matter is not so; he is not willing that any should perish, much less any of his little ones, Matth. 18. 14.

9. The word of command with which Christ rebuked the storm, we have here, and had not in Matthew, v. 39. He says, *Peace, be still*—*ἄνεμα, ἠσυχίωσθε*—*be silent, be dumb*. Let not the wind any longer roar, nor the sea rage. Thus he *stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves*; a particular emphasis is laid upon the noisiness of them, Ps. 65. 7. and 93. 3, 4. The noise is threatening and terrifying; let us hear no more of it. This is, (1.) A word of command to us; when our wicked hearts are *like the troubled sea which cannot rest*; (Isa. 57. 20.) when our passions are up, and are unruly, let us think we hear the law of Christ, saying, *Be silent, be dumb*. Think not confusedly, speak not unadvisedly; but *be still*. (2.) A word of comfort to us, that, be the storm of trouble ever so loud, ever so strong, Jesus Christ can lay it with a word's speaking. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, Christ can *create the fruit of the lips, peace*. If he say, *Peace, be still*, there is a *great calm* presently. It is spoken of as God's prerogative to command the seas, Jer. 31. 35. By this therefore Christ proves himself to be God. He that made the seas, can make them *quiet*.

10. The reproof Christ gave them for their fears, is here carried further than in Matthew. There it is, *Why are ye fearful?* Here, *Why are ye so fearful?* Though there may be cause for some fear, yet not for fear to such a degree as this. There it is, *O ye of little faith*. Here it is, *How is it that ye have no faith?* Not that the disciples were without faith. No, they believed that *Jesus is the Christ the Son of God*; but at this time their fears prevailed so that they seemed to *have no faith* at all. It was out of the way, when they had occasion for it, and so it was as if they had not had it. "*How is it, that in this matter ye have no faith, that ye think I would not come in with seasonable and effectual relief?*" Those may suspect their faith, who can entertain such a thought as that Christ *careth not* though his *people perish*, and Christ justly takes it ill.

Lastly, The impression this miracle made upon the disciples, is here differently expressed. In Matthew it is said, *The men marvelled*; here it is said, *They feared greatly*. They *feared a great fear*; so the original reads it. Now their fear was rectified by their faith. When they feared the winds and the seas, it was for want of the reverence they ought to have had for Christ. But, now that they saw a demonstration of his power over them, they *feared them less, and him more*. They *feared* lest they had offended Christ by their unbelieving fears; and therefore studied now to give him honour. They had *feared* the power and wrath of the Creator in the storm, and that fear had torment and amazement in it; but now they feared the power and grace of the Redeemer in the calm; they *feared the Lord and his goodness*; and it had pleasure and

satisfaction in it, and by it they gave glory to Christ, as Jonah's mariners, who, when the sea ceased from her raging, feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, Jon. 1. 16. This sacrifice they offered to the honour of Christ; they said, *What manner of man is this? Surely more than a man, for even the winds and the seas obey him.*

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's casting of the legion of devils out of the man possessed, and suffering of them to enter into the swine, v. 1. .20. II. Christ's healing of the woman with the bloody issue, in the way as he was going to raise Jairus's daughter to life, v. 21. .43. These three miracles we had the story of before, (Matth. 8. 28, &c. and Matth. 9. 18, &c.) but more fully related here.

1. **A**ND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3. Who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *thou* Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit. 9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. 10. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. 14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told *it* in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16. And they that saw *it* told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17.

And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

We have here an instance of Christ's dispossessing the strong man armed, and disposing of him as he pleased, to make it appear that he was *stronger than he*. This he did when he was come to the *other side*, whither he went through a storm; his business there was to rescue this poor creature out of the hands of Satan, and when he had done that, he returned. Thus he came from heaven to earth, and returned, in a storm, to redeem a remnant of mankind out of the hands of the devil, though but a *little remnant*, and did not think his pains *ill bestowed*.

In Matthew, they were said to be *two* possessed with devils; here it is said to be a *man* possessed with an unclean spirit. If there were *two*, there was one, and Mark doth not say that there was *but one*; so that this difference cannot give us any just offence; it is probable that one of them was much more remarkable than the other, and said what was said. Now, observe here,

I. The miserable condition that this poor creature was in; he was under the power of an *unclean spirit*, the devil got possession of him, and the effect of it was not, as in many, a silent melancholy, but a raging frenzy; he was raving mad; his condition seems to have been worse than any of the possessed that were Christ's patients.

1. He had *his dwelling among the tombs*, among the graves of dead people. Their tombs were out of the cities, in *desolate places*; (Job 3. 14.) which gave the devil great advantage: for *woe to him that is alone*. Perhaps the devil drove him to the tombs, to make people fancy that the souls of the dead were turned into devils, and did what mischief was done, so to excuse themselves from it. The touch of a grave was polluting, Numb. 19. 16. The *unclean spirit* drives people into that company that is *defiling*, and so keeps possession of them. Christ, by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, *saves the living from among the dead*.

2. He was very strong and ungovernable; *No man could bind him*, as it is requisite, both for their own good, and for the safety of others, that those who are distracted should be. Not only cords would not hold him, but *chains*, and *fetters of iron* would not, v. 3, 4. Very deplorable is the case of such as *need to be thus bound*, and of all miserable people in this world they are most to be pitied; but his case was worst of all, in whom the devil was so strong, that he could not be bound. This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; those *children of disobedience*, in whom that unclean spirit works. Some notoriously wilful sinners are like this madman; all are herein *like the horse and the mule*, that they need to be held in with bit and bridle; but some are like the *wild ass*, that will not be so held. The commands and curses of the law are as *chains and fetters*, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they *break those hands in sunder*, and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.

3. He was a terror and torment to himself and to

all about him, v. 5. The devil is a *cruel* master to those that are *led captive* by him, a perfect tyrant; this wretched creature was *night and day in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones*, either bemoaning his own deplorable case, or in a rage and indignation against Heaven. Men in frenzies often wound and destroy themselves; what is a man when reason is dethroned, and Satan enthroned? The worshippers of Baal in their fury *cut themselves*, like this madman in his. The voice of God is, *Do thyself no harm*; the voice of Satan is, *Do thyself all the harm thou canst*; yet God's word is despised, and Satan's regarded. Perhaps his *cutting of himself with stones* was only cutting his feet with the sharp stones he run barefoot upon.

II. His application to Christ; (v. 6.) *When he saw Jesus afar off, coming ashore, he ran, and worshipped him.* He usually *ran upon* others with rage, but he *ran* to Christ with reverence. That was done by an invisible hand of Christ, which could not be done with chains and fetters; his fury was all on a sudden curbed. Even the devil, in this poor creature, was forced to tremble before Christ, and bow to him; or, rather, the poor man came, and worshipped Christ, in a sense of the need he had of his help, the power of Satan in and over him being, for this instant, suspended.

III. The word of command Christ gave to the unclean spirit, to quit his possession; (v. 8.) *Come out of him, thou unclean spirit.* He made the man desirous to be relieved, when he enabled him to *run, and worship him*, and then put forth his power for his relief. If Christ *work in us* heartily to pray for a deliverance from Satan, he will work for us that deliverance. Here is an instance of the power and authority with which Christ *commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him*, ch. 1. 27. He said, *Come out of the man.* The design of Christ's gospel is to *expel* unclean spirits out of the souls of people; "*Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit*, that the Holy Spirit may enter, may take possession of the heart, and have dominion in it."

IV. The dread which the devil had of Christ. *The man ran, and worshipped Christ*; but it was the devil in the man that *cried with a loud voice*, (making use of the poor man's tongue,) *What have I to do with thee?* v. 7. Just as that other unclean spirit, ch. 1. 24. 1. He calls God the *most high God*, above all other gods. By the name *Eliou—the most High*, God was *known* among the Phœnicians, and the other nations that bordered upon Israel; and by that name the devil calls him. 2. He owns Jesus to be the *Son of God*. Note, It is no strange thing to hear the best words drop from the worst mouths. There is such a way of saying this as none can attain to but *by the Holy Ghost*; (1 Cor. 12. 3.) yet it may be said, after a sort, by the *unclean spirit*. There is no judging of men by their loose sayings; but by their fruits ye shall know them. Piety from the teeth outward is an easy thing. The most fair-spoken hypocrite cannot say better than to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet that the devil did. 3. He disowns any design against Christ; "*What have I to do with thee?* I have no need of thee, I pretend to none; I desire to have nothing to do with thee; I cannot stand before thee, and would not fall." 4. He deprecates his wrath; I *adjure thee*, that is, "I earnestly beseech thee, by all that is sacred, I beg of thee, for God's sake, by whose permission I have got possession of this man, that though thou drive me out hence, yet that thou *torment me not*, that thou do not restrain me from doing mischief somewhere else; though I know I am *sentenced*, yet let me not be *sent* to the chains of darkness, or hindered from going to and fro, to *devour*."

V. The account Christ took from this unclean

spirit of his name. This we had not in Matthew Christ asked him, *What is thy name?* Not but that Christ could call all the *fallen stars*, as well as the *morning stars*, by their names; but he demands this, that the standers-by might be affected with the vast numbers and power of those malignant infernal spirits, as they had reason to be, when the answer was, *My name is Legion, for we are many; a legion of soldiers* among the Romans consisted, some say, of six thousand men, others, of twelve thousand and five hundred; but the number of a legion with them, like that of a regiment with us, was not always the same. Now, this intimates, that the devils, the infernal powers, are, 1. *Military powers*; a legion is a number of soldiers in arms. The devils war against God and his glory, Christ and his gospel, men and their holiness and happiness. They are such as we are to *resist*, and *wrestle against*, Eph. 6. 12. 2. That they are *numerous*, *he owns*, or rather *he boasts*—*We are many*; as if he hoped to be *too many* for Christ himself to deal with. What multitudes of apostate spirits were there, and all enemies to God and man; when here were a legion posted to keep garrison in one poor, wretched creature, against Christ! Many there are that rise up against us. 3. That they are *unanimous*; there are *many devils*, and yet but *one legion*, engaged in the same wicked cause; and therefore that cavil of the Pharisees, which supposed Satan to cast out Satan, and to be divided against himself, was altogether groundless. It was not *one* of this legion that betrayed the rest, for they all said, as one man, *What have I to do with thee?* 4. That they are very *powerful*; who can stand before a *legion*? We are not a match for our spiritual enemies, in our own strength; but *in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, we shall be able to *stand against them*, though there are legions of them. 5. That there is *order* among them, as there is in a *legion*; there are *principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world*, which supposes that there are those of a lower rank; the *devil* and his angels; the *dragon* and his; the prince of the devils and his subjects; which makes those enemies the more formidable.

VI. The request of this legion, that Christ would suffer them to go into a herd of swine that was *feeding nigh unto the mountains*, (v. 11.) these mountains which the demoniaes haunted, v. 5. Their request was, 1. That he *would not send them away out of the country*, (v. 10.) not only that he would not *commit them, or confine them*, to their infernal prison, and so *torment them before the time*, but that he would not *banish them that country*, as justly he might, because in this poor man they had been such a terror to it, and done so much mischief. They seem to have had a particular affection for *that country*, or, rather, a particular spite to it; and to have liberty to *walk to and fro through* the rest of the *earth*, will not serve, (Job 1. 7.) unless the *range of those mountains* be allowed them for their pasture, Job 39. 8. But why would they abide in *that country*? Grotius saith, Because in *that country* there were many *apostate Jews*, who had thrown themselves out of the covenant of God, and had thereby given Satan power over them. And some suggest, that, having by experience got the knowledge of the dispositions and manners of the people of that country, they could the more effectually do them mischief by their temptations. 2. That he would suffer them to *enter into the swine*, by destroying which, they hoped to do more mischief to the souls of all the people in the country, than they could by entering into the body of any particular person, which therefore they did not ask leave to do, for they knew Christ would not grant it.

VII. The permission Christ gave them to enter

into the swine, and the immediate destruction of the swine thereby; *He gave them leave*, (v. 13.) he did not forbid or restrain them, he let them do as they had a mind. Thus he would let the Gadarenes see what powerful spiteful enemies devils are, that they might thereby be induced to make him their Friend, who alone was able to control and conquer them, and had made it appear that he was so. Immediately the *unclean spirits entered into the swine*, which by the law were unclean creatures, and naturally love to wallow in the mire, the fittest place for them. Those that, like the swine, delight in the mire of sensual lusts, are fit habitations for Satan, and are, like Babylon, the *hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*, (Rev. 18. 2.) as pure souls are habitations of the Holy Spirit. The consequence of the devils entering into the swine, was, that they all *ran mad presently*, and ran headlong into the adjoining sea, where they were all drowned, to the number of *two thousand*. The man they possessed did only *cut himself*, for God had said, *He is in your hands, only save his life*. But thereby it appeared, that, if he had not been so restrained, the poor man would have *drowned himself*. See how much we are indebted to the providence of God, and the ministration of good angels, for our preservation from malignant spirits.

VIII. The report of all this dispersed through the country immediately. They that *fed the swine* hastened to the owners, to give an account of their charge, v. 14. This drew the people together, to see what was done; and, 1. When they saw how wonderfully the poor man was cured, they hence conceived a *veneration for Christ*, v. 15. They saw him that was *possessed with the devil*, and knew him well enough by the same token, that they had many a time been frightened at the sight of him; and were now as much surprised to see him *sitting clothed, and in his right mind*; when Satan was cast out, he came to himself, and was his own man presently. Note, Those who are grave and sober, and live by rule and with consideration, thereby make it appear, that by the power of Christ the devil's power is broken in their souls. The sight of this *made them afraid*; it astonished them, and forced them to own the power of Christ, and that he is *worthy to be feared*. But, 2. When they found that their swine were lost, they thence conceived a *dislike of Christ*, and wished to have rather his room than his company; they prayed him to *depart out of their coasts*, for they think not any good he can do them sufficient to make them amends for the loss of so many swine, fat swine, it may be, and ready for the market. Now the devils had what they would have; for by no handle do these evil spirits more effectually manage sinful souls than by that of the love of the world. They were afraid of some further punishment, if Christ should tarry among them, whereas, if they would but part with their sins, he had life and happiness for them; but, being loath to quit either their sins or their swine, they chose rather to abandon their Saviour. Thus *they do, who, rather than let go a base lust, will throw away their interest in Christ, and their expectations from him*. They should rather have argued, "If he had such power as this over devils and all creatures, it is good having him our Friend; if the devils have leave to tarry in our country, (v. 10.) let us entreat him to tarry in it too, who alone can control them." But, instead of this, they wished him further off. Such strange misconstructions do carnal hearts make of the just judgments of God; instead of being by them driven to him as they ought, they set him at so much a greater distance; though he hath said, *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*, Jer. 25. 6.

IX. An account of the conduct of the poor man that was delivered, after his deliverance. 1. He *desired that he might go along with Christ*, (v. 18.) perhaps for fear lest the evil spirit should again seize him; or, rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among these heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. 2. Christ *would not suffer him to go with him*, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for him to do; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what *great things the Lord hath done for him*, the Lord Jesus had done; that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice rather of Christ's *pity* than of his *power*, for that is it which especially he glories in; he must tell them what *compassion* the Lord had had on him in his misery. 3. The man, in the transport of joy, proclaimed, all the country over, what *great things Jesus had done for him*, v. 20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified and they edified. And see what was the effect of it; *All men did marvel*, but few went any further. Many that cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, *wonder after him*.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. 22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: *I pray thee*, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24. And *Jesus* went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. 25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27. When she had heard of *Jesus*, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28. For she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague. 30. And *Jesus*, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou who touched me? 32. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith

bath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

The Gadarenes having desired Christ to leave their country, he did not stay to trouble them long, but presently went by water, as he came back, *to the other side*; (v. 21.) and there *much people gathered to him*. Note, If there be some that reject Christ, yet there are others that receive him, and bid him welcome. A despised gospel will *cross the water*, and go where it will have better entertainment. Now, among the many that applied themselves to him,

I. Here is one, that comes *openly to beg a cure* for a sick child; and it is no less a person than one of the *rulers of the synagogue*, one that resided in the synagogue-worship, or, as some think, one of the judges of the consistory-court, which was in every city, consisting of *twenty-three*. He was not named in Matthew, he is here, *Jairus*, or *Jair*, Judg. 10. 3. He addressed himself to Christ, though a ruler, with great humility and reverence; *When he saw him, he fell at his feet*, giving honour to him as one really greater than he appeared to be; and with great importunity, *he besought him greatly*, as one in earnest, as one that not only valued the mercy he came for, but that knew he could obtain it no where else. The case is this, He has a *little daughter*, about twelve years old, the darling of the family, and she *was a dying*: but he believes that if Christ will come, and *lay his hands upon her*, she will return even from the gates of the grave. He said, at first, when he came, *She lies a dying*; (so Mark;) but afterward, upon fresh information sent him, he saith, *She is even now dead*; (so Matthew;) but he still prosecutes his suit; See Luke 8. 42, 49. Christ readily agreed, and went with him, v. 24.

II. Here is another, that comes *clandestinely to steal a cure* (if I may say so) for herself; and she got the relief she prayed for. This cure was wrought *by the way*, as he was going to raise the ruler's daughter, and was followed by a crowd. See how Christ improved his time, and lost none of the precious moments of it. Many of his discourses, and some of his miracles, are dated *by the way-side*; we should be doing good, not only when we *sit in the house*, but when we *walk by the way*, Deut. 6. 7. Now, observe,

1. The piteous case of this poor woman. She had a constant *issue of blood* upon her, for *twelve years*, which had thrown her, no doubt, into great weakness, had imbittered the comfort of her life, and threatened to be her death in a little time. She had had the best advice of physicians, that she could get, and had made use of the many medicines and methods they prescribed: as long as she had any thing to give them, they had kept her in hopes that they could cure her; but now that she had spent all that she had among them, they gave her up as incurable. See here, (1.) That skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for life and health: she spent all she had upon physicians. (2.) It is ill with those patients, whose physicians are their worst disease; who *suffer* by their physicians, instead of being relieved by them. (3.) Those that are not *bettered* by medicines, commonly *grow worse*, and the disease gets the more ground. (4.) It is usual with people not to apply themselves to Christ, till they have tried in vain all other helpers, and find them, as certainly they will, *physicians of no value*. And he will be found a *sure Refuge*, even to those who make him their *last Refuge*.

2. The strong faith that she had in the power of Christ to heal her; she said within herself, though it doth not appear that she was encouraged by any preceding instance to say it, *If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole*, v. 28. She believed that

he cured, not as a Prophet, by virtue *derived* from God, but as the Son of God, by a virtue *inherent* in himself. Her case was such as she could not in modesty tell him publicly, as others did their grievances, and therefore a private cure was that she wished for, and her faith was suited to her case.

3. The wonderful effect produced by it; *She came in the crowd behind him*, and with much adoget to *touch his garment* and immediately she felt the cure wrought, v. 29. The flux of blood was *dried up*, and she felt herself perfectly well all over her, as well as ever she was in her life, in an instant; by this it appears that the cure was altogether miraculous; for those that in such cases are cured by natural means, recover their strength slowly, and gradually, and not *per saltum—all at once*; but *as for God, his work is perfect*. Note, Those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, that bloody issue, cannot but experience in themselves an universal change for the better.

4. Christ's inquiry after his concealed patient, and the encouragement he gave her, upon the discovery of her; Christ *knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him*, v. 30. He knew it not by any deficiency of spirits, through the exhausting of this virtue, but rather by an agility of spirits, in the exerting of it, and the innate and inseparable pleasure he had in doing good. And being desirous to see his patient, he asked, not in displeasure, as one affronted, but in tenderness, as one concerned, *Who touched my clothes?* The disciples, not without a show of rudeness and indecency, almost ridiculed his question; (v. 31.) *The multitudes throng thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?* As if it had been an improper question. Christ passed by the affront, and *looks round to see her that had done this thing*; not that he might *blame* her for her presumption, but that he might *commend and encourage* her faith, and by his own act and deed might *warrant and confirm* the cure, and *ratify* to her that which she had *superstitiously* obtained. He needed not that any should inform him, for he had presently his eye upon her. Note, As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith, are known to the Lord Jesus, and are under his eye. If believers derive virtue from Christ ever so closely, he knows it, and is pleased with it. The poor woman hereupon presented herself to the Lord Jesus, (v. 33.) *fearing and trembling*, not knowing how he would take it. Note, Christ's patients are often trembling, when they have reason to be triumphing. She might have come boldly, *knowing what was done in her*; yet *knowing that, she fears and trembles*. It was a *surprise*, and was not yet, as it should have been a *pleasing surprise*. However, *she fell down before him*. Note, There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble, than to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus; to humble themselves before him, and refer themselves to him. And she *told him all the truth*. Note, We must not be ashamed to own the secret transactions between Christ and our souls; but, when called to it, mention, to his praise, and the encouragement of others, what he has done for our souls, and the experience we have had of *healing virtue* derived from him. And the consideration of this, that nothing can be hid from Christ, should engage us to confess all to him. See what an encouraging word he gave her; (v. 34.) *Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole*. Note, Christ puts honour upon faith, because faith gives honour to Christ. But see how *what is done by faith* on earth, is ratified in heaven; Christ saith, *Be whole of thy disease*. Note, If our faith sets the seal of its *amen* to the power and promise of God, saying, "So it is, and so let it be to me;" God's grace will set the seal of its *amen* to the prayers and hopes of faith, saying, "So be it, and so it shall be to thee." And therefore, "Go in peace; be well

satisfied that thy cure is honestly come by, is effectually wrought, and take the comfort of it." Note, They that by faith are healed of their spiritual diseases, have reason to go in peace.

35. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, *certain* which said, thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth: 40. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, *Talitha cumi*; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise. 42. And straightway the damsel arose and walked: for she was of the age of twelve years: and they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Diseases and deaths came into the world by the sin and disobedience of the first Adam; but by the grace of the second Adam both are conquered. Christ, having healed an incurable disease, here goes on to triumph over death, as in the beginning of the chapter he had triumphed over an outrageous devil.

I. The melancholy news is brought to Jairus, that his daughter is dead, and therefore if Christ be as other physicians, he comes too late. While there is life, there is hope, and room for the use of means; but when life is gone, it is past recall; *Why troublest thou the Master any further?* v. 25. Ordinarily, the proper thought in this case, is, "The matter is determined, the will of God is done, and I submit, I acquiesce; *The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. While the child was alive I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell but God will yet be gracious to me, and the child shall live? But now that it is dead, wherefore should I weep? I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me.*" With such words we should quiet ourselves at such a time, that our souls may be as a child that is weaned from his mother: but here the case was extraordinary; the death of the child doth not, as usually, put an end to the narrative.

II. Christ encourageth the afflicted father yet to hope that his application to Christ on the behalf of his child should not be in vain. Christ had stayed to work a cure by the way, but he shall be no sufferer by that, nor loser by the gain of others; *Be not afraid, only believe.* We may suppose Jairus at a pause, whether he should ask Christ to go on or

no; but have we not as much occasion for the grace of God and his consolations, and consequently of the prayers of our ministers and christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is? Christ therefore soon determines this matter; "*Be not afraid* that my coming will be to no purpose, only believe that I will make it turn to a good account." Note, 1. We must not despair concerning our relations that are dead, nor sorrow for them as those that have no hope. See what is said to Rachel, who refused to be comforted concerning her children, upon the presumption that they were not; *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, that thy children shall come again.* Jer. 31. 16, 17. Therefore fear not, faint not. 2. Faith is the only remedy against disquieting grief and fear at such a time: let that silence them, *Only believe.* Keep up a confidence in Christ, and a dependence upon him, and he will do what is for the best. Believe the resurrection, and then be not afraid.

III. He went with a select company to the house where the dead child was. He had, by the crowd that attended him, given advantage to the poor woman he last healed, and, having done that, now he shook off the crowd, and suffered no man to follow him, (to follow with him, so the word is,) but his three bosom-disciples, Peter and James, and John; a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle, but not such a number as that his taking them with him might look like vain-glory.

IV. He raised the dead child to life; the circumstances of the narrative here, are much the same as we had them in Matthew; only here we may observe.

1. That the child was extremely well beloved, for the relations and neighbours wept and wailed greatly. It is very afflictive when that which is come forth like a flower, is so soon cut down, and withereth before it is grown up; when that grieves us, of which we said, *This same shall comfort us.*

2. That it was evident beyond dispute, that the child was really and truly dead. Their laughing Christ to scorn, for saying, *She is not dead, but sleepeth,* though highly reprehensible, serves for the proof of this.

3. That Christ put those out as unworthy to be witnesses of the miracle, who were noisy in their sorrow, and were so ignorant in the things of God, as not to understand him when he spake of death as a sleep, or so scornful, as to ridicule him for it.

4. That he took the parents of the child to be witnesses of the miracle, because in it he had an eye to their faith, and designed it for their comfort, who were the true, for they were the silent, mourners.

5. That Christ raised the child to life by a word of power, which is recorded here, and recorded in Syriac, the language in which Christ spake, for the greater certainty of the thing; *Talitha, cumi; Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.* Dr. Lightfoot saith, It was customary with the Jews, when they gave physic to one that was sick, to say, *Arise from thy disease*; meaning, *We wish thou mayest arise*; but to one that was dead, Christ said, *Arise from the dead*; meaning, *I command that thou arise*; nay, there is more in it—the dead have not power to arise, therefore power goes along with this word, to make it effectual. *Da quod jubes, & jube quod vis—Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.* Christ works while he commands, and works by the command, and therefore may command what he pleaseth, even the dead to arise. Such is the gospel-call to those that are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more rise from that death by their own power, than this child could; and yet that word, *Awake and arise from the dead,* is neither vain, nor in vain, when it follows immediately,

Christ shall give thee life, Eph. 5. 14. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given. *I said unto thee, Live*, Ezek. 16. 6.

6. That the damsel, as soon as life returned, *arose and walked*, v. 42. Spiritual life will appear by our *rising* from the bed of sloth and carelessness, and our *walking* in a religious conversation, our *walking up and down* in Christ's name and strength; even from those that are *of the age of twelve years*, it may be expected that they should walk as those whom Christ has *raised to life*, otherwise than in the native *vanity of their minds*.

7. That all who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle, and him that wrought it; *They were astonished with a great astonishment*. They could not but acknowledge that there was something in it extraordinary and very great, and yet they knew not what to make of it, or to infer from it. Their wonder should have worked forward to a lively faith, but it rested in a *stupor or astonishment*.

8. That Christ endeavoured to conceal it; *He charged them straitly that no man should know it*. It was sufficiently known to a competent number, but he would not have it as yet *proclaimed* any further; because his own resurrection was to be the great instance of his power over death, and therefore the divulging of other instances must be reserved till that great proof was given; let one part of the evidence be kept private, till the other part, on which the main stress lies, be made ready.

9. That Christ took care something should be *given her to eat*. By this it appeared that she was raised not only to life, but to a good state of health, that she had an appetite to her meat; even the newborn babes in Christ's house desire the sincere milk, 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. And it is observable, that, as Christ, when at first he had made man, presently provided food for him, and food out of the earth of which he was made, (Gen. 1. 29.) so now when he had given a new life, he took care that something should be given to eat; for if he had given *life*, he may be trusted to give *livelihood*, because *the life is more than meat*, Matth. 6. 25. Where Christ hath given *spiritual life*, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will *never forsake*, or be wanting to, the *work of his own hands*.

CHAP. VI.

A great variety of observable passages we have, in this chapter, concerning our Lord Jesus, the substance of all which we had before in Matthew, but divers circumstances we have, which we did not there meet with. Here is, I. Christ contemned by his countrymen, because he was one of them, and they knew, or thought they knew, his original, v. 1. . 6. II. The just power he gave his apostles over unclean spirits, and an account given of their negotiation, v. 7. . 13. III. A strange notion which Herod and others had of Christ, upon which occasion we have the story of the martyrdom of John Baptist, v. 14. . 29. IV. Christ's retirement into a desert place with his disciples; the crowds that followed him thither to receive instruction from him; and his feeding five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes, v. 30. . 44. V. Christ's walking upon the sea to his disciples, and the abundance of cures he wrought on the other side the water, v. 45. . 56.

1. **A**ND he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. 2. And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3. Is not this the carpenter,

the Son of Mary, the brother of James, and of Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Here,

I. Christ makes a visit to *his own country*, the place not of his birth, but of his education; that was *Nazareth*, where his relations were. He had been in danger of his life among them, (Luke 4. 29.) and yet he came among them again; so strangely doth he wait to be gracious, and seek the salvation of his enemies. Thither he went, though it was into danger, *his disciples followed him*; (v. 1.) for they had left all, to follow him whithersoever he went.

II. There he *preached* in their *synagogue*, on the *sabbath-day*, v. 2. It seems, there was not such flocking to him there as in other places, so that he had no opportunity of preaching till they came together on the sabbath-day; and then he expounded a portion of scripture with great clearness. In religious assemblies, on sabbath-days, the word of God is to be preached according to Christ's example. We give *glory* to God by receiving instruction from him.

III. They could not but own that which was very honourable concerning him. 1. That he spake with great *wisdom*, and that that wisdom was *given to him*, for they knew he had no learned education. 2. That he did *mighty works*, did them with his own hand, for the confirming of the doctrine he taught. They acknowledged the two great proofs of the divine original of his gospel—the *divine wisdom* that appeared in the contrivance of it, and the *divine power* that was exerted for the ratifying and recommending of it; and yet, though they could not deny the premises, they would not admit the conclusion.

IV. They studied to disparage him, and to raise prejudices in the minds of people against him, notwithstanding. All this *wisdom*, and all these *mighty works*, shall be of no account, because he had had a home education, had never travelled, nor been at any university, or bred up at the feet of any of their doctors; (v. 3.) *Is not this the carpenter?* In Matthew they upbraid him with being the carpenter's son, his supposed father Joseph being of that trade. But, it seems, they could say further, *Is not this the carpenter?* Our Lord Jesus, it is probable, employing himself in that business with his father, before he entered upon his public ministry, at least, sometimes in journey-work. 1. He would thus *humble himself*, and make himself of no reputation, as one that had taken upon him the form of a servant, and came to minister. Thus low did our Redeemer stoop, when he came to redeem us out of our low estate. 2. He would thus teach us to *abhor idleness*, and to find *ourselves something to do* in this world; and rather to take up with mean and laborious employments, and such as no more is to be got by than a bare livelihood, than indulge ourselves in sloth. Nothing is more pernicious for young people than to get a *habit of sauntering*. The Jews had a good rule for this—that their young men, who were designed for scholars, were yet bred in to some trade, as Paul was a tent-maker, that they might

have some business to fill up their time with, and, if need were, to get their bread with. 3. He would thus put an honour upon despised mechanics, and encourage those who eat the labour of their hands, though great men look upon them with contempt.

Another thing they upbraided him with, was, the meanness of his relations; "*He is the son of Mary; his brethren and sisters are here with us; we know his family and kindred;*" and therefore, though they were astonished at his doctrine, (v. 2.) yet they were offended at his person, (v. 3.) were prejudiced against him, and looked upon him with contempt; and for that reason would not receive his doctrine, though ever so well recommended. May we think that if they had not known his pedigree, but he had dropped among them from the clouds, without father, without mother, and without descent, they would have entertained him with any more respect? Truly, no; for in Judea, where this was not known, that was made an objection against him; (John 9. 29.) *As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.* Obstinate unbelief will never want excuses.

V. Let us see how Christ bore this contempt.

1. He partly *excused it*, as a common thing, and what might be expected, though not reasonably or justly; (v. 4.) *A prophet is not despised any where but in his own country.* Some exceptions there may be to this rule, doubtless many have got over this prejudice, but ordinarily it holds good, that ministers are seldom so acceptable and successful in their own country as among strangers; *familiarity* in the younger years breeds a contempt, the advancement of one that was an inferior begets *envy*, and men will hardly set those among the guides of their souls, whose fathers they were ready to set with the dogs of their flock; in such a case, therefore, it must not be thought hard, if it is common treatment, it was Christ's, and *wisdom is profitable to direct to other soil.*

2. He did *some good* among them, notwithstanding the slights they put upon him, for he is kind even to the evil and unthankful; *He laid his hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them.* Note, It is generous, and becoming the followers of Christ, to content themselves with the pleasure and satisfaction of doing good, though they be unjustly denied the praise of it.

3. Yet he *could there do* no such mighty works, at least, not so many as in other places, because of the unbelief that prevailed among the people, by reason of the prejudices which their leaders instilled into them against Christ, v. 5. It is a strange expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of omnipotence itself; he *would have done* as many miracles there as he had done elsewhere, but he could not, because people would not make application to him, nor sue for his favours; he could have wrought them, but they forfeited the honour of having them wrought for them. Note, By unbelief and contempt of Christ, men stop the current of his favours to them, and put a bar in their own door.

4. He *marvelled because of their unbelief*, v. 6. We never find Christ wondering but at the *faith* of the Gentiles that were strangers, as the *centurion*, (Matth. 8. 10.) and the woman of Samaria, and at the unbelief of Jews that were his own countrymen. Note, The unbelief of those that enjoy the means of grace, is a most amazing thing.

5. He *went round about the villages, teaching.* If we cannot do good where we would, we must do it where we can, and be glad if we may have any opportunity, though but in the villages, of serving Christ and souls. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country villages, where there is less wealth, and pomp, and mirth, and subtlety, than in the populous cities.

7. And he *callesth unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power *over unclean spirits*; 8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: 9. But *be shod* with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Here is,

1. The commission given to the twelve apostles to preach and work miracles; it is the same which we had more largely, Matth. 10. Mark doth not name them here, as Matthew doth, because he had named them before, when they were first called into fellowship with him, *ch. 3. 16.* Hitherto they had been conversant with Christ, and had sitted at his feet, had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles; and now he determines to make some use of them; they *received*, that they might *give*, had *learned*, that they might *teach*; and therefore now he *began to send them forth.* They must not always be studying in the academy, to get knowledge, but they must preach in the country, to do good with the knowledge they have got. Though they were not as yet so well accomplished as they were to be, yet, according to their present ability and capacity, they must be set to work, and make further improvements afterward. Now, observe here,

1. That Christ sent them forth *by two and two*; this Mark takes notice of. They went two and two to a place, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established; and that they might be company for one another when they were among strangers, and might strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts, one of another; might help one another if any thing should be amiss, and keep one another in countenance. Every common soldier has his comrade; and it is an approved maxim, *Two are better than one.* Christ would thus teach his ministers to associate, and both lend and borrow help.

2. That he *gave them power over unclean spirits.* He commissioned them to attack the devil's kingdom, and empowered them, as a specimen of their breaking his interest in the souls of men by their doctrine, to cast him out of the bodies of those that were possessed. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that they cured diseases, and cast out devils, by the Spirit, but preached that only which they had learned from the mouth of Christ.

3. That he *commanded them not to take provisions* along with them, neither *victuals* nor *money*, that they might appear, wherever they came, to be poor men, men not of this world, and therefore might, with the better grace, call people off from it to another world. When afterward he bid them *take hurse and scrip*, (Luke 22. 36.) that did not in-

timate (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that his care of them was abated from what it had been; but that they should meet with worse times, and worse entertainment, than they met with at their first mission. In Matthew and Luke they are forbidden to *take staves* with them, that is, fighting staves; but here in Mark they are bid to take nothing save a *staff only*, that is, a walking staff, such as pilgrims carried. They must not put on *shoes*, but *sandals only*, which were only the soles of shoes tied under their feet, or like pumps, or slippers; they must go in the readiest plainest dress they could, and must not so much as have *two coats*; for their stay abroad would be short, they must return before winter, and what they wanted, those they preached to would cheerfully accommodate them with.

4. He directed them, whatever city they came to, to make that house their head-quarters, which happened to be their first quarters; (v. 10.) "*There abide till ye depart from that place.* And since ye know ye come on an errand sufficient to make you welcome, have that charity for your friends that first invited you, as to believe they do not think you hurrhensome."

5. He pronounces a very heavy doom upon those that rejected the gospel they preached; (v. 11.) "*Whosoever shall not receive you, or will not so much as hear you, depart thence, (if one will not, another will,) and shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.* Let them know that they have had a fair offer of life and happiness made them, witness that dust; but that, since they have refused it, they cannot expect ever to have another; let them take up with their own dust, for so shall their doom be." That dust, like the dust of Egypt, (Exod. 9. 9.) shall turn into a plague to them; and their condemnation, in the great day, will be more intolerable than *that of Sodom*: for the angels were sent to Sodom, and were abused there; yet that would not bring on so great a guilt, and so great a ruin, as the contempt and abuse of the apostles of Christ, who bring with them the offers of gospel grace.

11. The apostles' actings, in pursuance of their commission. Though they were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no secular advantage by it, yet, in obedience to their Master's order, and in dependence upon his strength, they *went out* as Abraham, not knowing whither they went. Observe here,

1. The doctrine they preached; *They preached that men should repent*; (v. 12.) that they should change their minds, and reform their lives, in consideration of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, The great design of gospel preachers, and the great tendency of gospel preaching, should be, to bring people to repentance, to a *new heart* and a *new way*. They did not amuse people with curious speculations, but told them that they must repent of their sins and turn to God.

2. The miracles they wrought. The power Christ gave them *over unclean spirits* was not ineffectual, nor did they receive it in vain, but used it, for they *cast out many devils*; (v. 13.) and they *anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*. Some think this oil was used *medicinally*, according to the custom of the Jews; but I rather think it was used as a *sign of miraculous healing*, by the appointment of Christ, though not mentioned; and it was afterward used by those *elders of the church*, to whom, *by the Spirit*, was given the *gift of healing*, Jam. 5.

14. It is certain here, and therefore probable there, that *anointing the sick with oil*, is appropriated to that extraordinary power which is long ceased, and therefore that sign must cease with it.

14. And king Herod heard of him; (for

his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16. But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. 17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; 22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. 26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Here is,

1. The wild notions that the people had concerning our Lord Jesus, v. 15. His own countrymen could believe nothing great concerning him, because they knew his poor kindred; but others, that were not under the power of that prejudice against him, were yet willing to believe any thing rather than the truth—that he was the Son of God, and the true Messiah: they said, He is Elias, whom they expected; or, *He is a Prophet*, one of the Old Testament prophets raised to life, and returned to this world; or, *as one of the prophets*, a prophet now

newly raised up, equal to those under the Old Testament.

II. The opinion of Herod concerning him. He heard of *his name* and fame, of what he said, and what he did; and he said, "It is certainly John Baptist, *v. 14*. As sure as we are here, *It is John whom I beheaded, v. 16*. He is risen from the dead; and though while he was with us *he did no miracle*, yet, having removed for a while to another world, he is come again with greater power, and *now mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.*"

Note, 1. Where there is an *idle faith*, there is commonly a *working fancy*. The people said, It is a prophet risen from the dead; Herod said, It is John Baptist risen from the dead. It seems by this, that the *rising of a prophet from the dead*, to do *mighty works*, was a thing expected, and was thought neither impossible nor improbable, and it was now readily suspected when it was *not true*; but afterward, when it *was true* concerning Christ, and a truth undeniably evidenced, yet then it was obstinately gainsaid and denied. Those who most wilfully disbelieve the truth, are commonly most credulous of errors and fancies.

2. They who fight against the cause of God, will find themselves baffled, even when they think themselves conquerors; they cannot gain their point, for the word of the Lord endures for ever. They who rejoiced when the witnesses were slain, fretted as much when, in three or four days, they *rose again* in their successors, Rev. 11. 10, 11. The impenitent, unreformed sinner, that escapeth the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay.

3. A guilty conscience needs no accuser or tormentor but itself. Herod charges himself with the murder of John, which perhaps no one else dare charge him with; *I beheaded him*; and the terror of it made him imagine that Christ was John risen. He feared John while he lived, and now, when he thought he had got clear of him, fears him ten times worse when he is dead. One might as well be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience; those, therefore, who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undefiled conscience, Acts 24. 16.

4. There may be the terrors of strong conviction, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion. This Herod, who had this notion concerning Christ, afterward sought to kill him, (Luke 13. 31.) and did set him at nought; (Luke 23. 11.) so that he will not be persuaded, though it be *by one risen from the dead*; no, not by a John the Baptist risen from the dead.

III. A narrative of Herod's putting John Baptist to death, which is brought in upon this occasion, as it was in Matthew. And here we may observe,

1. The great value and veneration which Herod had sometime had for John Baptist, which is related only by this evangelist, *v. 20*. Here we see what a great way a man may go toward grace and glory, and yet come short of both, and perish eternally.

(1.) He *feared John*, knowing that he was a *just man, and a holy*. It is possible that a man may have a great reverence for good men, and especially for good ministers, yea, and for that in them that is good, and yet himself be a bad man. Observe, [1.] John was a *just man, and a holy*; to make a complete good man, both justice and holiness are necessary; holiness toward God, and justice toward men. John was mortified to this world, and so was a good friend both to justice and holiness. [2.] Herod knew this, not only by common fame, but by personal acquaintance with him. Those that have but little justice and holiness themselves, may yet discern it with respect in others. And, [3.] He therefore *feared* him, he honoured him. Holiness and justice command veneration, and many that are

not good themselves, have respect for those that are.

(2.) He *observed* him; he sheltered him from the malice of his enemies; (so some understand it;) or, rather, he had a regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him that was praiseworthy, and commended him in the hearing of those about him; he made it appear that he observed what John said and did.

(3.) He *heard him* preach; which was great condescension, considering how mean John's appearance was. To hear Christ himself preach in our streets, will be but a poor plea in the great day, Luke 13. 26.

(4.) He *did many of those things* which John, in his preaching, taught him. He was not only a *hearer of the word*, but in part a *doer of the work*. Some sins which John, in his preaching, reproved, he forsook, and some duties he bound himself to; but it will not suffice to do *many things*, unless we have respect to all the commandments.

(5.) He *heard him gladly*. He did not hear him with terror as Felix heard Paul, but heard him with pleasure. There is a flashy joy, which a hypocrite may have in hearing the word; Ezekiel was to his hearers a *lovely song*; (Ezek. 33. 32.) and the *stone ground received the word with joy*, Luke 8. 13.

2. John's faithfulness to Herod, in telling him of his faults. Herod had married his brother Philip's wife, *v. 17*. All the country, no doubt, cried shame on him for it, and reproached him for it; but John *reproved him*, told him plainly, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*. This was Herod's own iniquity, which he could not leave when he did many things that John taught him; and therefore John tells him of this particularly. Though he were a king, he would not spare him, any more than Elijah did Ahab, when he said, *Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?* Though John had an interest in him, and he might fear this plaudering would destroy his interest, yet he reproved him; for *faithful are the wounds of a friend*; (Prov. 27. 6.) and though there are some swine that will *turn again, and rend those that cast pearls* before them, yet, ordinarily, *he that rebuketh a man*, (if the person reproved has any thing of the understanding of a man,) *afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue*, Prov. 28. 23. Though it was dangerous to offend Herod, and much more to offend Herodias, yet John would run the hazard rather than be wanting in his duty. Note, Those ministers that would be found faithful in the work of God, must not be afraid of the face of man. If we seek to please men, further than is for their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.

3. The malice which Herodias bore to John for this; (*v. 19*.) She *had a quarrel with him, and would have killed him*; but when she could not obtain that, she got him committed to prison, *v. 17*. Herod respected him, till he touched him in his Herodias. Many that pretend to honour prophesying, are for smooth things only, and love good preaching, if it keep far enough from their beloved sin; but if that be touched, they cannot bear it. We marvel if the world hate those who testify of it that its works are evil. But it is better that sinners persecute ministers now for their faithfulness, than curse them eternally for their unfaithfulness.

4. The plot laid to take off John's head. I am apt to think that Herod was himself in the plot, notwithstanding his pretences to be displeased and surprised, and that the thing was concerted between him and Herodias; for it is said to be *when a convenient day was come*, (*v. 21*.) fit for such a purpose. (1.) There must be a ball at court, upon the king's birth-day, and a supper prepared for *his lords, high captains, and chief estates of the land*. (2.) To grace

the solemnity, the daughter of Herodias must *dance* publicly, and Herod must take on him to be wonderfully charmed with her dancing; and if he be, they that *sit with him*, cannot but, in compliment to him, be so too. (3.) The king hereupon must make her an extravagant promise, to give her *whatever she would ask*, even to the *half of the kingdom*; and yet, that, if rightly understood, would not have reached the end designed, for John Baptist's head was worth more than his *whole kingdom*. This promise is bound with an oath, that no room might be left to fly off from it; *He sware to her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give*. I can scarcely think he would have made such an unlimited promise, but that he knew what she would ask. (4.) She, being instructed by Herodias her mother, asked the *head of John Baptist*; and she must have it brought her *in a charger*, as a pretty thing for her to play with; (v. 24, 25.) and there must be no delay, no time lost, she must have it *by and by*. (5.) Herod granted it, and the execution was done immediately, while the company were together, which we can scarcely think the king would have done, if he had not determined the matter before. But he takes on him, [1.] To be very backward to it, and that he would not for all the world have done it, if he had not been surprised into such a promise; *The king was exceeding sorry*, that is, he seemed to be so, he said he was so, he looked as if he had been so; but it was all sham and grimace, he was really pleased that he had found a pretence to get John out of the way. *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare—The man who cannot dissemble, knows not how to reign*. And yet he was not without sorrow for it; he could not do it but with great regret and reluctancy; natural conscience will not suffer men to sin easily; the very commission of it is vexatious; what then will the reflection upon it be? [2.] He takes on him to be very sensible of the obligation of his oath; whereas if the damsel had asked but a fourth part of his kingdom, I doubt not but he would have found out a way to evade his oath. The promise was rashly made, and could not bind him to do an unrighteous thing. Sinful oaths must be repented of, and therefore not performed; for repentance is the undoing of what we have done amiss, as far as is in our power. When Theodosius the emperor was urged by a suitor with a *promise*, he answered, *I said it, but did not promise it if it be unjust*. If we may suppose that Herod knew nothing of the design when he made that rash promise, it is probable that he was hurried into the doing of it by those about him, only to carry on the humour; for he did it *for their sakes who sat with him*, whose company he was proud of, and therefore would do any thing to gratify them. Thus do princes make themselves slaves to those whose respect they covet, and both value and secure themselves by. None of Herod's subjects stood in more awe of him than he did of his *lords, high captains, and chief estates*. The king sent an *executioner*, a soldier of his guard. Bloody tyrants have executioners ready to obey their most cruel and unrighteous decrees. Thus Saul has a *Doeg* at hand, to *fall upon the priests of the Lord*, when his own footmen declined it.

5. The effect of this, is, (1.) That Herod's wicked court is *all in triumph*, because this prophet tormented them; the head is made a present of *to the damsel*, and by her to her *mother*, v. 28. (2.) That John Baptist's sacred college is *all in tears*; the disciples of John little thought of this; but, when they *heard of it*, they came, and took up the neglected *corpse*, and *laid it in a tomb*; where Herod, if he had pleased, might have found it, when he frightened himself with the fancy that John Baptist was *risen from the dead*.

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. 34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. 35. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. 37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42. And they did all eat, and were filled. 43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

In these verses, we have,

I. The return to Christ of the apostles whom he had sent forth, (v. 7.) to preach, and work miracles. They had dispersed themselves into several quarters of the country for some time, but when they had made good their several appointments, by consent they *gathered themselves together*, to compare notes, and came to Jesus, to the Centre of their unity, to give him an account of what they had done pursuant to their commission: as the servant that was sent to invite to the feast, and had received answers from the guests, came, and *shewed his lord all these things*, so did the apostles here; they *told him all things*, both *what they had done*, and *what they had taught*. Ministers are accountable both for what they *do*, and for what they *teach*; and must both watch over their own souls, and watch for

the souls of others, as those that must *give account*, Heb. 13. 17. Let them not either *do* any thing, or *teach* any thing, but what they are willing should be related and repeated to the Lord Jesus. It is a comfort to faithful ministers, when they can appeal to Christ concerning their doctrine and manner of life, both which, perhaps, have been misrepresented by men; and he gives them leave to be free with him, and to lay open their case before him, to *tell him all things*, what treatment they have met with, what success, and what disappointment.

II. The tender care Christ took for their repose, after the fatigue they had; (v. 31.) *He said unto them*, perceiving them to be almost spent, and out of breath, *Come ye yourselves apart, into a desert place, and rest awhile*. It should seem that John's disciples came to Christ with the mournful tidings of their master's death, much about the same time that his own disciples came to him with the report of their negotiation. Note, Christ takes cognizance of the *frights* of some, and the *toils* of others, of his disciples, and provides suitable relief for both, rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. With what kindness and compassion doth Christ say to them, *Come, and rest!* Note, The most active servants of Christ cannot be always upon the stretch of business, but have bodies that require some relaxation, some breathing time; we shall not be able to serve God without ceasing, day and night, till we come to heaven, where they *never rest* from praising him, Rev. 4. 8. And the Lord is for the body, considers its frame, and not only allows it time for rest, but puts it in mind of resting. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers. Return to thy rest*. And those that work diligently and faithfully, may cheerfully retire to rest. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*. But observe, 1. Christ calls them to come *themselves apart*; for, if they had any body with them, they would have something to say, or something to do, for their good; if they must *rest*, they must be *alone*. 2. He invites them not to some pleasant country-seat, where there were fine buildings and fine gardens, but *into a desert place*, where the accommodations were very poor, and which was fitted by nature only, and not by art, for quietness and rest. But it was of a piece with all the other circumstances he was in; no wonder that he who had but a ship for his preaching place, had but a desert for his resting place. 3. He calls them only to rest *a while*; they must not expect to rest *long*, only to *get breath*, and then to go to work again. There is *no remaining rest* for the people of God till they come to heaven. 4. The reason given for this, is, not so much because they had been in *constant work*, but because they now were in a *constant hurry*; so that they had not their work in any order; *for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat*. Let but proper time be set, and kept, for every thing, and a great deal of work may be done with a great deal of ease; but if people be continually coming and going, and no rule or method be observed, a little work will not be done without a deal of trouble. 5. They withdrew, accordingly, *by ship*; not crossing the water, but making a coasting voyage to the desert of Bethsaida, v. 32. Going *by water* was much less toilsome than going *by land* would have been. They went away *privately*, that they might be by themselves. The most public persons cannot but wish to be private sometimes.

III. The diligence of the people to follow him. It was rude to do so, when he and his disciples were desirous, for such good reason, to *retire*; and yet they are not blamed for it, nor bid to go back, but bid welcome. Note, A failure in good manners will easily be excused in those who follow Christ, if

it be but made up in a fulness of good affections. They followed him of their own accord, without being called upon. Here is no time set, no meeting appointed, no bell tolled; yet they thus fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows. They followed him *out of the cities*, quitted their houses and shops, their callings and affairs, to hear him preach. They followed him *afoot*, though he was gone by sea, and so, to try them, seemed to put a slight upon them, and to endeavour to shake them off; yet they stuck to him. They *ran afoot*, and made such haste, that they *out-went* the disciples, and *came together* to him with an appetite to the word of God. Nay, they followed him, though it was into a *desert place*, despicable and inconvenient. The presence of Christ will turn a wilderness into a paradise.

IV. The entertainment Christ gave them; (v. 34.) *When he saw much people*, instead of being moved with displeasure, because they disturbed him when he desired to be private, as many a man, many a good man, would have been, he was *moved with compassion toward them*, and looked upon them with concern, because they were *as sheep having no shepherd*, they seemed to be well-inclined, and manageable as sheep, and willing to be taught, but they had *no shepherd*, none to lead and guide them in the right way, none to feed them with good doctrine: and therefore, in compassion to them, he not only *healed their sick*, as it is in Matthew, but he *taught them many things*, and we may be sure that they were all true and good, and fit for them to learn.

V. The provision he made for them all; all his hearers he generously made his guests, and treated them at a *splendid* entertainment: so it might truly be called, because a *miraculous* one.

1. The disciples moved that they should be *sent home*. When the *day was now far spent*, and night drew on, they said, *This is a desert place, and much time is now passed; send them away to buy bread*, v. 35, 36. This the disciples suggested to Christ; but we do not find that the multitude themselves did. They did not say, *Send us away*, (though they could not but be hungry,) for they *esteemed the words of Christ's mouth more than their necessary food*, and forgot themselves when they were hearing him; and the disciples thought it would be a kindness to them to dismiss them. Note, Willing minds will do more, and hold out longer, in that which is good, than one would expect from them.

2. Christ ordered that they should all be fed; (v. 37.) *Give ye them to eat*. Though their crowding after him and his disciples hindered them from eating, (v. 31.) yet he would not *therefore*, to be even with them, send them away fasting, but, to teach us to be kind to those who are rude to us, he ordered provision to be made for them; that bread which Christ and his disciples took with them into the desert, that they might make a quiet meal of it for themselves, he will have them to partake of. Thus was he given to hospitality. They attended on the spiritual food of his word, and then he took care that they should not want corporal food. The way of duty, as it is the way of safety, so it is the way to supply. Let God alone to fill the pools with rain from heaven, and so to make a well, even in the valley of Baca, for those that are going Zion-ward, from strength to strength, Ps. 84. 6, 7. Providence, not *tempted*, but *duly trusted*, never yet failed any of God's faithful servants, but has refreshed many with seasonable and surprising relief. It has often been seen in the *mount of the Lord, Jehovah-jireh*, that *the Lord will provide* for those that wait on him.

3. The disciples objected against it as impracticable; *Shall we go, and buy two hundred penny-*

worth of bread, and give them to eat? Thus, through the weakness of their faith, instead of waiting for directions from Christ, they perplex the cause with projects of their own. It was a question whether they had two hundred pence with them, and whether the country would, of a sudden, afford so much bread, if they had; and whether that would suffice so great a company; but thus Moses objected, (Numb. 11. 22.) *Shall the flocks or herds be slain for them?* Christ would let them see their folly in forecasting for themselves, that they might put the greater value upon his provision for them.

4. Christ effected it, to universal satisfaction. They had brought with them *five loaves*, for the victualling of their ship, and *two fishes*, perhaps, they caught as they came along; and that is the bill of fare. This was but a little for Christ and his disciples, and yet this they must give away, as the widow her *two mites*, and as the churches of Macedonia's *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*. We often find Christ entertained at other people's tables, dining with one friend, and supping with another; but here we have him supping a great many at his own charge, which shews that, when others ministered to him of their substance, it was not because he could not supply himself otherwise; (if he were hungry, he needed not tell them;) but it was a piece of humiliation, that he was pleased to submit to, nor was it agreeable to the intention of miracles, that he should work them for himself. Observe,

(1.) The provision was *ordinary*. Here were no rarities, no varieties, though Christ, if he had pleased, could have furnished his table with them; but thus he would teach us to be content with food convenient for us, and not to be desirous of dainties. If we have for necessity, it is no matter though we have not for delicacy and curiosity. God, in love, gives *meat for our hunger*; but, in wrath, gives *meat for our lusts*, Ps. 78. 18. The promise to them that fear the Lord, is, that verily they shall be fed; he doth not say, *They shall be fasted*. If Christ and his disciples took up with mean things, surely we may.

(2.) The guests were *orderly*; for they *sat down by companies upon the green grass*, (v. 39.) they *sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties*, (v. 40.) that the provision might be more easily and regularly be distributed among them; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. Thus care was taken that every one should have enough, and none be overlooked, nor any have more than was fitting.

(3.) A blessing was craved upon the meat; *He looked up to heaven, and blessed*. Christ did not call one of his disciples to crave a blessing, but did it himself; (v. 41.) and by virtue of this blessing the bread strangely multiplied, and so did the fishes, for they *did all eat, and were filled*, though they were to the number of *five thousand*, v. 42, 44. This miracle was significant, and shews that Christ came into the world to be the great Feeder as well as the great Healer; not only to restore, but to preserve and nourish, spiritual life; and in him there is enough for all that come to him, enough to fill the soul, to fill the treasures; none are sent empty away from Christ, but those that come to him full of themselves.

(4.) Care was taken of the fragments that remained, with which they filled *twelve baskets*. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he would hereby teach us, not to make waste of any of God's good creatures; remembering how many there are that do want, and that we know not but we may some time or other want such fragments as we throw away.

45. And straightway he constrained his

disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. 46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. 47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52. For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. 53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, 55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

This passage of story we had, Matth. 14. 22, &c. only what was there related concerning Peter, is omitted here. Here we have,

I. The dispersing of the assembly; Christ *constrained his disciples* to go before by ship to Bethsaida, intending to follow them, as they supposed, by land. The people were loath to scatter, so that it cost him some time and pains to send them away. For now that they had got a good supper, they were in no haste to leave him. But as long as we are here in this world, we have no continuing city, no, not communion with Christ. The everlasting feast is reserved for the future state.

II. Christ departed *into a mountain, to pray*. Observe, 1. He *prayed*; though he had so much preaching work upon his hands, yet he was much in prayer; he prayed often, and prayed long, which is an encouragement to us to depend upon the intercession he is making for us at the right hand of the Father, that *continual* intercession. 2. He went *alone*, to pray; though he needed not to retire for the avoiding either of discretion or of ostentation, yet, to set us an example, and to encourage us in our *secret* addresses to God, he prayed *alone*, and, for want of a closet, went up into a mountain, to pray. A good man is never less alone than when alone with God.

III. The disciples were in distress at sea; *The wind was contrary*, (v. 48.) so that they *toiled in rowing*, and could not get forward. This was a spe

cin:u of the hardships they were to expect, when hereafter he should send them abroad to preach the gospel; it would be like sending them to sea at this time with the *wind in their teeth*; they must expect to toil in rowing, they must work hard to strive against so strong a stream; they must likewise expect to be tossed with waves, to be prosecuted by their enemies; and by exposing them now he intended to train them up for such difficulties, that they might learn to *endure hardness*. The church is often like a ship at sea, *tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; we may have Christ for us, and yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount, interceding for them.

IV. Christ made them a kind visit upon the water. He could have checked the winds, where he was, or have sent an angel to their relief; but he chose to help them in the most endearing manner possible, and therefore came to them himself.

1. He did not come till the *fourth watch of the night*, not till after three o'clock in the morning; but then he came. Note, If Christ's visits of his people be deferred long, yet at length he will come; and their extremity in his opportunity to appear for them is so much the more seasonable. Though the salvation tarry, yet we must wait for it; *at the end it shall speak*, in the fourth watch of the night, *and not lie*.

2. He came, walking upon the waters. The sea was now tossed with waves, and yet Christ came, walking upon it; for though the *floods lift up their voice, the Lord on high is mightier*, Ps. 93. 3, 4. No difficulties can obstruct Christ's gracious appearances for his people, when the set time is come. He will either find, or force, a way through the most tempestuous sea, for their deliverance, Ps. 42. 7, 8.

3. He *would have passed by them*; that is, he set his face, and steered his course, as if he would have gone further, and took no notice of them; this he did, to awaken them to call to him. Note, Providence, when it is acting designedly and directly for the succour of God's people, yet sometimes seems as if it were *giving them the go-by*, and regarded not their case. They thought that *he would*, but we may be sure that he would not, *have passed by them*.

4. They were frightened at the sight of him, supposing him to have been an apparition; *They all saw him, and were troubled*, (v. 50.) thinking it had been some dæmon, or evil genius, that haunted them, and raised this storm. We often perplex and frighten ourselves with phantasms, the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.

5. He encouraged them, and silenced their fears, by making himself known to them; *he talked familiarly with them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid*. Note, (1.) We know not Christ till he is pleased to reveal himself to us; "*It is I; I your Master, I your Friend, I your Redeemer and Saviour. It is I, that came to a troublesome earth, and now to a tempestuous sea, to look after you.*" (2.) The knowledge of Christ, as he is in himself, and near to us, is enough to make the disciples of Christ cheerful even in a storm, and no longer fearful. *If it be so, why am I thus?* If it is Christ that is with thee, *be of good cheer, be not afraid*. Our fears are soon satisfied, if our mistakes he but rectified, especially our mistakes concerning Christ. See Gen. 21. 19. 2 Kings 6. 15—17. Christ's presence with us, in a stormy day, is enough to make us of good cheer, though clouds and darkness be round about us. He said, *It is I*. He doth not tell them who he was, (there was no occasion,) they knew his voice, as the sheep know the voice of their own shepherd, John 10. 4. How readily doth the spouse say, once and

again, *It is the voice of my Beloved!* Cant. 2. 8.—5. 2. He said, *It is I*—*I am he*; or, *I am*; it is God's name, when he comes to deliver Israel, Exod. 3. 14. So it is Christ's, now that he comes to deliver his disciples. When Christ said to those that came to apprehend him by force, *I am he*, they were struck down by it, John 18. 6. When he saith to those that come to apprehend him by faith, *I am he*, they are raised up by it, and comforted.

6. He *went up to them into the ship*, embarked in the same bottom with them, and so made them perfectly easy. Let them but have their Master with them, and all is well. And as soon as he was come into the ship, *the wind ceased*. In the former storm that they were in, it is said, *He arose, and rebuked the winds, and said to the sea, Peace, be still*; (ch. 4. 39.) but here we read of no such formal command given, only the wind ceased all of a sudden. Note, Our Lord Jesus will be sure to do his own work always effectually, though not always alike solemnly, and with observation. Though we hear not the command given, yet, if thus the wind cease, and we have the comfort of a calm, say, It is because Christ is in the ship, and his decree is gone forth *or ever we are aware*, Cant. 6. 12. When we come with Christ to heaven, the wind ceaseth presently; there are no storms in the upper region.

7. They were more surprised and astonished at this miracle than did become them, and there was that at the bottom of their astonishment, which was really culpable; *They were sore amazed in themselves*, were in a perfect ecstasy; as if it were a new and unaccountable thing, as if Christ had never done the like before, and they had no reason to expect he should do it now; they ought to admire the power of Christ, and to be confirmed hereby in their belief of his being the Son of God; but why all this confusion about it? It was because they *considered not the miracle of the loaves*; had they given that its due weight, they would not have been so much surprised at this; for his multiplying the bread was as great an instance of his power as his walking on the water. They were strangely stupid and unthinking, and their heart was hardened, or else they would not have thought it a thing incredible that Christ should command a calm. It is for want of a right understanding of Christ's former works, that we are transported at the thought of his present works, as if there never were the like before.

V. When they came to the land of Gennesaret, which lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, the people bid them very welcome; *The men of that place presently knew Jesus*, (v. 54.) and knew what mighty works he did wherever he came, what a universal Healer he was; they knew likewise that he used to stay but a little while at a place, and therefore they were concerned to improve the opportunity of this kind visit which he made them; *They ran through that whole region round about, with all possible expedition, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick*, and not able to go themselves; there was no danger of their getting cold when they hoped to get a cure, v. 55. Let him go where he would, he was crowded with patients—in the towns, in the cities, in the villages about the cities; they *laid the sick in the streets*, to be in his way, and begged leave for them to touch if it were but the *border of his garment*, as the woman with the bloody issue did, by whom, it should seem, this method of application was first brought in; *and as many as touched were made whole*. We do not find that they were desirous to be taught by him, only to be healed. If ministers could now cure people's bodily diseases, what multitudes would attend them? But it is sad to think how much more concerned the most of men are about their bodies than about their souls.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's dispute with the Scribes and Pharisees about eating meat with unwashed hands; v. 1. . . 13. and the needful instructions he gave to the people upon that occasion, and further explained to his disciples, v. 14. . . 23. II. His curing of the woman of Canaan's daughter that was possessed, v. 24. . . 30. III. The relief of a man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, v. 31. . . 37.

I. **T**HEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the Scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault. 3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, *as* the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. 5. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? 6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. 7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. 8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. 12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13. Making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. 14. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: 15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without

understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders 22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

One great design of Christ's coming, was, to set aside the ceremonial law which God made, and to put an end to it: to make way for which, he begins with the ceremonial law which men had made, and added to the law of God's making, and discharges his disciples from the obligation of that; which here he doth fully, upon occasion of the offence which the Pharisees took at them for the violation of it. These Pharisees and Scribes, with whom he had this argument, are said to *come from Jerusalem* down to Galilee—fourscore or a hundred miles, to pick quarrels with our Saviour there, where they supposed him to have the greatest interest and reputation. Had they come so far to be taught by him, their zeal had been commendable; but to come so far to oppose him, and to check the progress of his gospel, was great wickedness. It should seem that the Scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem pretended not only to a pre-eminence above, but to an authority over, the country clergy, and therefore kept up their visitations, and sent inquisitors among them, as they did to John when he appeared, John 1. 19.

Now, in this passage, we may observe,

I. What the tradition of the elders was; by it all were enjoined to *wash their hands* before meat; a cleanly custom, and no harm in it; and yet as such to be over-nice in it discovers too great a care about the body, which is *of the earth*: but they placed religion in it, and would not leave it indifferent, as it was in its own nature; people were at their liberty to do it or not to do it; but they interposed their authority, and commanded all to do it, upon pain of excommunication; this they kept up as a *tradition of the elders*. The Papists pretend to a zeal for the authority and antiquity of the church and its canons, and talk much of councils and fathers, when really it is nothing but a zeal for their own wealth, interest, and dominion, that governs them; and so it was with the Pharisees.

We have here an account of the practice of the Pharisees and *all the Jews*, v. 3, 4. 1. They *washed their hands oft*; they washed them, *πυγῶν*; the critics find a great deal of work about that word, some making it to denote the frequency of their washing; (so we render it;) others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands; they washed with great care, they washed their hands *to their wrists*; (so some;) they lifted up their hands when they were wet, that the water might run *to their elbows*. 2. They particularly washed before they *ate bread*; that is, before they sat down to a solemn meal; for that was the rule; they must be sure to wash before they eat the bread on which they begged a blessing. "Whosoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, *Blessed be he that produceth bread*, must wash his hands before and after," or else he was thought to be de

filed. 3. They took special care, when they came in *from the markets*, to wash their hands; from the *judgement-halls*, so some; it signifies any place of concourse where there were people of all sorts; and, it might be supposed, some heathen or Jews under a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted; saying, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou*, Isa. 65. 5. They say, The rule of the rabbins was—That, if they washed their hands well in the morning, the first thing they did, it would serve for all day, provided they kept alone; but, if they went into company, they must not, at their return, either eat or pray till they had washed their hands; thus the elders gained a reputation among the people for sanctity, and thus they exercised and kept up an authority over their consciences. 4. They added to this the washing of *cups*, and *spits*, and *brazen vessels*, which they suspected had been made use of by heathens, or persons polluted; nay, and the very *tables* on which they ate their meat. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed; but they *added* to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions as much as of God's institutions.

II. What the practice of Christ's disciples was; they knew what the law was, and the common usage; but they understood themselves so well, that they would not be bound up by it; they ate bread with *defiled*, that is, with *unwashed hands*, v. 2. Eating with *unwashed hands*, they called eating with *defiled hands*; thus men keep up their superstitious vanities by putting every thing into an ill name that contradicts them. The disciples knew (it is probable) that the Pharisees had their eye upon them, and yet they would not humour them by a compliance with their traditions, but took their liberty as at other times, and ate bread with *unwashed hands*; and herein their *righteousness*, however it might seem to come short, did really *exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, Matth. 5. 20.

III. The offence which the Pharisees took at this; They *found fault*; (v. 2.) they censured them as profane, and men of a loose conversation, or rather as men that would not submit to the power of the church, to decree rites and ceremonies, and were therefore rebellious, factious, and schismatical. They brought a complaint against them to their Master, expecting that he should check them, and order them to conform; for they that are fond of their own inventions and impositions, are commonly ready to appeal to Christ, as if he should countenance them, and as if his authority must interpose for the enforcing of them, and the rebuking of those that do not comply with them. They do not ask, Why do not thy disciples *do as we do*? (Though that was it they meant, *coveting* to make themselves the standard.) But why do not they *walk according to the tradition of the elders*? v. 5. To which it was easy to answer, that, by receiving the doctrine of Christ, they had *more understanding than all their teachers*, yea, *more than the ancients*. Ps. 119. 99, 100.

IV. Christ's vindication of them; in which,

1. He argues with the Pharisees concerning the authority by which this ceremony was imposed; and *they* were the fittest to be discoursed with, concerning that, who were the great sticklers for it: but this he did not speak of publicly to the multitude, (as appears by his *calling the people* to him, v. 14.) lest he should have seemed to stir them up to faction and discontent at their governors; but addressed it as a reproof to the persons concerned: for the rule is, *Suum cuique—Let every one have his own*.

(1.) He reproves them for their hypocrisy in pretending to honour God, when really they had no such design in their religious observances; (v. 6, 7.)

They honour me with their lips, they pretend it is for the glory of God that they impose those things, to distinguish themselves from the heathen; but really *their heart is far from God*, and is governed by nothing but ambition and covetousness. They would be thought hereby to appropriate themselves as a holy people to the Lord their God, when really it is the farthest thing from their thought. They rested in the outside of all their religious exercises, and their hearts were not right with God in them, and this was worshipping God in vain; for neither was he pleased with such sham devotions, nor were they profited by them.

(2.) He reproves them for placing religion in the inventions and injunctions of their elders and rulers; *They taught for doctrines the traditions of men*. When they should have been pressing upon people the great principles of religion, they were enforcing the canons of their church, and judged of people's being Jews or no, according as they did, or did not, conform to them, without any consideration had, whether they lived in obedience to God's laws or no. It was true there were *divers washings* imposed by the law of Moses, (Heb. 9. 10.) which were intended to signify that inward purification of the heart from worldly fleshly lusts, which God requires as absolutely necessary to our communion with him; but instead of providing the substance they presumptuously added to the ceremony, and were very nice in *washing spits and cups*; and observe, he adds, *Many other such like things ye do*, v. 8. Note, Superstition is an endless thing. If one human invention and institution be admitted, though seemingly ever so innocent, as this of washing hands, *behold, a troth comes*, a door is opened for *many other such things*.

(3.) He reproves them for *laying aside the commandment of God*, and overlooking that, not urging that in their preaching, and in their discipline coniving at the violation of that, as if that were no longer of force, v. 8. Note, It is the mischief of impositions, that too often they who are zealous for them, have little zeal for the essential duties of religion, but can contentedly see them laid aside. Nay, they *rejected the commandment of God*, v. 9. *Ye do fairly disannul and abolish the commandment of God*; and even by your traditions *make the word of God of no effect*, v. 13. God's statutes shall not only *lie forgotten*, as antiquated obsolete laws, but they shall in effect *stand repealed*, that their traditions may take place. They were intrusted to expound the law, and to enforce it; and under pretence of using that power, they violated the law, and dissolved the bonds of it; destroying the text with the comment.

This he gives them a particular instance of, and a flagrant one—God commanded children to *honour their parents*, not only by the law of Moses, but, antecedent to that, by the law of nature; and *whoso revileth, or speaketh evil of, father or mother, let him die the death*, v. 4. Hence it is easy to infer, that it is the duty of children, if their parents be poor, to relieve them, according to their ability; and if those children are worthy to die, that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man will but conform himself, in all points, to the tradition of the elders, they will find him out an expedient by which he may be discharged from this obligation, v. 11. If his parents be in want, and he has wherewithal to help them, but has no mind to do it, let him swear by the *Corban*, that is, by the *gold of the temple*, and the *gift upon the altar*, that his parents shall not be profited by him, that he will not relieve them; and, if they ask any thing of him, let him tell them this, and it is enough; as if by the obligation of this wicked vow he had discharged himself from the obligation of God's holy law; thus

Dr. Hammond understands it: and it is said to be an ancient canon of the rabbins, That vows take place in things commanded by the law, as well as in things indifferent; so that, if a man makes a vow which cannot be ratified without breaking a commandment, the vow must be ratified, and the commandment violated; so Dr. Whitby. Such doctrine as this the Papists teach, discharging children from all obligation to their parents by their monastic vows, and their entrance into religion, as they call it. He concludes, *And many such like things do ye.* Where will men stop, when once they have made the word of God give way to their tradition? These eager imposers of such ceremonies, at first only *made light* of God's commandments, in *comparison* with their traditions, but afterward *made void* God's commandments, if they stood in *competition* with them. All this, in effect, Isaiah prophesied of them; what he said of the hypocrites of his own day, was applicable to the Scribes and Pharisees, v. 6. Note, When we see, and complain of, the wickedness of the present times, yet we do not *inquire wisely* of that matter, if we say, that all the *former days were better than these*, Eccl. 7. 10. The worst of hypocrites and evil doers have had their predecessors.

2. He instructs the people concerning the principles upon which this ceremony was grounded. It was requisite that this part of his discourse should be public, for it related to daily practice, and was designed to rectify a great mistake which the people were led into by their elders; he therefore *called the people unto him*, (v. 14.) and bid them *hear and understand*. Note, It is not enough for the common people to *hear*, but they must *understand* what they hear. When Christ would run down the tradition of the Pharisees about washing before meat, he strikes at the opinion which was the root of it. Note, Corrupt customs are best cured by rectifying corrupt notions.

Now that which he goes about to set them right in, is, what the pollution is, which we are in danger of being damaged by, v. 15. (1.) Not by the *meat we eat*, though it be eaten with unwashen hands; that is but from without, and goes through a man. But, (2.) It is by the breaking out of the corruption that is in our hearts; the mind and conscience are defiled, guilt is contracted, and we become odious in the sight of God, by that which *comes out* of us; our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, these defile us, and these only. Our care must therefore be, to *wash our hearts from wickedness*.

3. He gives his disciples, in private, an explication of the instructions he gave the people. They *asked him*, when they had him by himself, *concerning the parable*; (v. 17.) for to them, it seems, it was a parable. Now, in answer to their inquiry, (1.) He reproves their dulness; "*Are ye so without understanding also?* Are ye dull also, as dull as the people that *cannot understand*, as dull as the Pharisees that *will not?* Are ye so dull?" He doth not expect they should understand every thing; "But are you so weak as not to understand this?" (2.) He explains this truth to them, that they might *perceive it*, and then they would *believe it*, for it carried its own evidence along with it. Some truths prove themselves, if they be but rightly explained and apprehended. If we understand the spiritual nature of God and of his law, and what it is that is offensive to him, and disfits us for communion with him, we shall soon perceive, [1.] That that which we eat and drink cannot defile us, so as to call for any religious washing; it *goes into the stomach*, and passes the several digestions and secretions that nature has appointed, and what there may be in it that is defiling, is voided and gone; *meats for the belly, and the belly for meats*, but *God shall destroy both it and them*. But, [2.] It is that which *comes*

out from the heart, the corrupt heart, that defiles us. As by the ceremonial law, whatsoever (almost) comes out of a man, defiles him, (Lev. 15. 2. Deut. 23. 13.) so what comes out from the *mind* of a man, is that which defiles him before God, and calls for a religious washing; (v. 21.) *From within, out of the heart of men*, which they boast of the *goodness* of, and think is the best part of them, thence that which defiles, proceeds, thence comes all the mischief. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them. Divers particulars are specified, as in Matthew; we had one there, which is not here, and that is, *false witness bearing*; but *seven* are mentioned here, to be added to those we had there. *First, Covetousnesses*; for it is plural; *πλεονεξία*—*immoderate desires* of more of the wealth of the world, and the gratifications of sense, and still more, still crying, *Give, give*. Hence we read of a heart *exercised with covetous practices*, 2 Pet. 2. 14. *Secondly, Wickedness*, *πονηρία*; malice, hatred, and ill-will, a desire to do mischief, and a delight in mischief done. *Thirdly, Deceit*; which is wickedness covered and disguised, that it may be the more securely and effectually committed. *Fourthly, Lasciviousness*; that filthiness and foolish talking which the apostle condemns; the eye full of adultery, and all wanton dalliances. *Fifthly, The evil eye*; the envious eye, and the covetous eye, grudging others the good we give them, or do for them, (Prov. 23. 6.) or grieving at the good they do or enjoy. *Sixthly, Pride*—*επιφυσία*; exalting ourselves in our own conceit above others, and looking down with scorn and contempt upon others. *Seventhly, Foolishness*—*ἀσπουδία*; imprudence, inconsideration; some understand it especially of vain-glorious boasting, which St. Paul calls *foolishness*, (2 Cor. 11. 1, 19.) because it is here joined with *pride*; I rather take it for that rashness in speaking and acting, which is the cause of so much evil. *Ill-thinking* is put first, as that which is the spring of all our commissions, and *unthinking* put last, as that which is the spring of all our omissions. Of all these he concludes, (v. 23.) 1. That they *come from within*, from the corrupt nature, the carnal mind, the evil treasure in the heart; justly it is said, that the *inward part is very wickedness*, it must needs be so, when all this comes from within. 2. That they *defile the man*; they render a man unfit for communion with God, they bring a stain upon the conscience; and, if not mortified and rooted out, will shut men out of the new Jerusalem, into which no *unclean thing shall enter*.

24. And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know *it*: but he could not be hid. 25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. 28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29. And he said unto her, For this saying go

thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

See here,

I. How *humbly* Christ was pleased to *conceal himself*. Never man was so cried up as he was in Galilee, and therefore, to teach us, though not to decline any opportunity of doing good, yet not to be fond of popular applause, he rose from thence, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where he was little known; and there he entered, not into a synagogue, or place of concourse, but into a private house, and he would have no man know it; because it was foretold concerning him, *He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets*. Not but that he was willing to preach and heal here as well as in other places, but for this he would be sought unto. Note, As there is a time to appear, so there is a time to retire. Or, he would not be known because he was upon the borders of Tyre and Sidon, among Gentiles, to whom he would not be so forward to shew himself as to the tribes of Israel, whose Glory he was to be.

II. How *graciously* he was pleased to *manifest himself*, notwithstanding. Though he would not carry on a harvest of miraculous cures into those parts, yet, it should seem, he came on purpose to drop a handful, to let fall this one which we have here an account of. *He could not be hid*; for, though a candle may be put under a bushel the sun cannot. Christ was too well known to be long *incognito*—*hid*, any where; the oil of gladness which he was anointed with, like the ointment of the right hand, would betray itself, and fill the house with its odours. Those that had only heard his fame, could not converse with him, but they would soon say, "This must be Jesus." Now observe,

1. The application made to him by a poor woman in distress and trouble. She was a Gentile, a Greek, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, an alien to the covenant of promise; she was by extraction a Syrophenician, and not in any degree proselyted to the Jewish religion; she had a daughter, a young daughter, that was possessed with the devil. How many and grievous are the calamities that young children are subject to! Her address was, (1.) Very humble, pressing, and importunate; *She heard of him, and came, and fell at his feet*. Note, Those that would obtain mercy from Christ, must throw themselves at his feet; must refer themselves to him, humble themselves before him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him. Christ never put any from him that fell at his feet, which a poor trembling soul may do that has not boldness and confidence to throw itself into his arms. (2.) It was very particular; she tells him what she wanted. Christ gave poor supplicants leave to be thus free with him; she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter, v. 26. Note, The greatest blessing we can ask of Christ for our children, is, that he would break the power of Satan, that is, the power of sin, in their souls; and particularly, that he would cast forth the *unclean spirit*, that they may be temples of the Holy Ghost, and he may dwell in them.

2. The discouragement he gave to this address; (v. 27.) He said unto her, "Let the children first be filled; let the Jews have all the miracles wrought for them, that they have occasion for, who are in a particular manner God's chosen people; and let not that which was intended for them, be thrown to those who are not of God's family, and who have not that knowledge of him, and interest in him, which they have, and who are as dogs in compari-

son of them, vile and profane, and who are as dogs to them, snarling at them, spiteful towards them, and ready to worry them." Note, Where Christ knows the faith of poor supplicants to be strong, he sometimes delights to try it, and put it to the stretch. But his saying, *Let the children first be filled*, intimates that there was mercy in reserve for the Gentiles, and not far off; for the Jews began already to be surfeited with the gospel of Christ, and some of them had desired him to depart out of their coasts. The children began to play with their meat, and their leavings, their loathings, would be a feast for the Gentiles. The apostles went by this rule, *Let the children first be filled*, let the Jews have the first offer; and if their full souls loath this honey-comb, *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles!*

3. The turn she gave to this word of Christ, which made against her, and her improvement of it, to make for her, v. 28. She said, "Yes, Lord, I own it is true that the children's bread ought not to be cast to the dogs; but they were never denied the crumbs of that bread, nay, it belongs to them, and they are allowed a place under the table, that they may be ready to receive them. I ask not for a loaf, no, nor for a morsel, only for a crumb; do not refuse me that." This she speaks, not as undervaluing the mercy, or making light of it in itself, but magnifying the abundance of miraculous cures with which she heard the Jews were feasted, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Gentiles do not come in crowds, as the Jews do; *I come alone*. Perhaps she heard of Christ's feeding five thousand lately at once, after which, even when they had gathered up the fragments, there could not but be some crumbs left for the dogs.

4. The grant Christ, thereupon, made of her request. Is she thus humble, thus earnest? For this saying, *Go thy way*, thou shalt have what thou earnest for, *the devil is gone out of thy daughter*, v. 29. This encourages us to pray and not to faint, to continue instant in prayer, not doubting but to prevail at last; the vision, at the end, shall speak, and not lie. Christ's saying that it was done, did it effectually, as at other times, his saying, *Let it be done*; for, (v. 30.) she came to her house, depending upon the word of Christ, that her daughter was healed, and so she found it, *the devil was gone out*. Note, Christ can conquer Satan at a distance; and it was not only when the demoniacs saw him, that they yielded to his power, (as ch. 3. 11.) but when they saw him not, for the Spirit of the Lord is not bound, or bounded. She found her daughter not in any toss or agitation, but very quietly laid on the bed, and reposing herself; waiting for her mother's return, to rejoice with her, that she was so finely well.

31. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; 34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published

it; 37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Our Lord Jesus seldom staid long in a place, for he knew where his work lay, and attended the changes of it. When he had cured the woman of Canaan's daughter, he had done what he had to do in that place, and therefore presently left those parts, and returned to the sea of Galilee, whereabout his usual residence was; yet he did not come directly thither, but fetched a compass through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis, which lay mostly on the other side Jordan; such long walks did our Lord Jesus take, when he went about doing good.

Now here we have the story of a cure that Christ wrought, which is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it is of one that was deaf and dumb.

I. His case was sad, v. 32. There were those that brought to him one that was deaf; some think, born deaf, and then he must be dumb of course; others think, that by some distemper or disaster he was become deaf, or, at least, thick of hearing; and he had an impediment in his speech. He was *μωλωλαρος*; some think that he was quite dumb; and others, that he could not speak but with great difficulty to himself, and so as scarcely to be understood by those that heard him. He was *tongue-tied*, so that he was perfectly unfit for conversation, and deprived both of the pleasure and of the profit of it; he had not the satisfaction either of hearing other people talk, or of telling his own mind. Let us take occasion from hence to give thanks to God for preserving to us the sense of hearing, especially that we may be capable of hearing the word of God, and the faculty of speech, especially that we may be capable of speaking God's praises; and let us look with compassion upon those that are deaf or dumb, and treat them with great tenderness. They that brought this poor man to Christ, besought him that he would put his hand upon him, as the prophets did upon those whom they blessed in the name of the Lord. It is not said, They besought him to cure him, but to put his hand upon him, to take cognizance of his case, and put forth his power to do to him as he pleased.

II. His cure was solemn, and some of the circumstances of it were singular.

1. Christ took him aside from the multitude, v. 33. Ordinarily, he wrought his miracles publicly before all the people, to shew that they would bear the strictest scrutiny and inspection; but this he did privately, to shew that he did not seek his own glory, and to teach us to avoid every thing that savours of ostentation. Let us learn of Christ to be humble, and to do good where no eye sees, but his that is all eye.

2. He used more significant actions, in the doing of this cure, than usual. (1.) He put his fingers into his ears, as if he would syringe them, and fetch out that which stopped them up. (2.) He spit upon his own finger, and then touched his tongue, as if he would moisten his mouth, and so loosen that with which his tongue was tied; these were no causes that could in the least contribute to his cure, but only signs of the exerting of that power which Christ had in himself to cure him, for the encouraging of his faith and their's that brought him. The application was all from himself, it was his own fingers that he put into his ears, and his own spittle that he put upon his tongue; for he alone heals.

3. He looked up to heaven, to give his Father the praise of what he did; for he sought his praise, and did his will, and, as Mediator, acted in dependence on him and with an eye to him. Thus he signified

that it was by a divine power, a power he had as the Lord from heaven, and brought with him thence, that he did this; for the hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord has made, and can remake even both of them. He also hereby directed his patient, who could see, though he could not hear, to look up to heaven for relief. Moses with his stammering tongue is directed to look that way; (Exod. 4. 11.) *Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or blind? Have not I the Lord?*

4. He sighed; not as if he found any difficulty in working this miracle, or obtaining power to do it from his Father; but thus he expressed his pity of the miseries of human life, and his sympathy with the afflicted in their afflictions, as one that was himself touched with the feeling of their infirmities. And as to this man, he sighed, not because he was loath to do him this kindness, or did it with reluctance; but because of the many temptations which he would be exposed to, and the sins he would be in danger of, the tongue-sins, after the restoring of his speech to him which before he was free from. He had better be tongue-tied still, unless he have grace to keep his tongue as with a bridle, Ps. 39. 1.

5. He said, *Ephphatha?* that is, *Be opened*. This was nothing that looked like spell or charm, such as they used who had familiar spirits, who peeped and muttered, Isa. 8. 19. Christ speaks as one having authority, and power went along with the word. *Be opened*, served both parts of the cure; "Let the ears be opened, let the lips be opened, let him hear and speak freely, and let the restraint he taken off;" and the effect was answerable; (v. 35.) *Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue loosed*, and all was well: and happy he who, as soon as he had his hearing and speech, had the blessed Jesus so near him, to converse with.

Now this cure was, (1.) A proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for it was foretold that by his power the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb should be made to sing, Isa. 35. 5, 6. (2.) It was a specimen of the operations of his gospel upon the minds of men. The great command of the gospel, and grace of Christ to poor sinners, is *Ephphatha—Be opened*. Grotius applies it thus, that the internal impediments of the mind are removed by the Spirit of Christ, as those bodily impediments were by the word of his power. He opens the heart, as he did Lydia's, and thereby opens the ear to receive the word of God, and opens the mouth in prayer and praises.

6. He ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very public. (1.) It was his humility, that he charged them they should tell no man, v. 36. Most men will proclaim their own goodness, or, at least, desire that others should proclaim it; but Christ, though he was himself in no danger of being puffed up with it, knowing that we are, would thus set us an example of self-denial, as in other things, so especially in praise and applause. We should take pleasure in doing good, but not in its being known. (2.) It was their zeal, that, though he charged them to say nothing of it, yet they published it, before Christ would have had it published. But they meant honestly, and therefore it is to be reckoned rather an act of indiscretion than an act of disobedience, v. 37. But they that told it, and the that heard it, were beyond measure astonished, *ὑπερμετρος*—more than above measure; they were exceedingly affected with it, and this was said by every body, it was the common verdict, *He has done all things well*; (v. 37.) whereas there were those that hated and persecuted him as an Evil-doer, they are ready to witness for him, not only that he has done no evil, but that he has done a great deal of good, and has done it well, modestly and humbly,

and very devoutly, and all gratis, *without money, and without price*, which added much to the lustre of his good works. He *maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak*; and that is well, it is well for them, it is well for their relations, to whom they had been a burthen; and therefore *they* are inexcusable who speak ill of him.

CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's miraculous feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes, v. 1. . 9. II. His refusing to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven, v. 10. . 13. III. His cautioning his disciples to take heed of the leaven of Pharisaism and Herodianism, v. 14. . 21. IV. His giving of sight to a blind man at Bethesda, v. 22. . 26. V. Peter's confession of him, v. 27. . 30. VI. The notice he gave his disciples of his own approaching sufferings, (v. 31. . 33.) and the warning he gave them to prepare for sufferings likewise, v. 31. . 38.

I. **I**N those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3. And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness! 5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

We had the story of a miracle very like this before, in this gospel, (*ch.* 6. 35.) and of this same miracle: (*Matth.* 15. 32.) and here is little or no addition or alteration as to the circumstances. Yet observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus was greatly followed; *The multitude was very great*; (v. 1.) notwithstanding the wicked arts of the Scribes and Pharisees to blemish him, and to blast his interest, the common people, who had more honesty, and therefore more true wisdom, than their leaders, kept up their high thoughts of him. We may suppose that this multitude were generally of the meaner sort of people, with such Christ conversed, and was familiar; for thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and thus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace.

2. Those that followed him underwent a great deal of difficulty in following him; *They were with him three days, and had nothing to eat*, that was hard service. Never let the Pharisee say, that *Christ's disciples fast not*. There were those, probably, that brought some food with them from home; but by this time it was all spent, and they

had a great way home; and yet they *continued* with Christ, and did not speak of leaving him till he spake of dismissing them. Note, True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. They that have a full feast for their souls, may be content with slender provisions for their bodies. It was an old saying among the Puritans, *Brown bread and the gospel are good fare*.

3. As Christ has a *compassion* for all that are in wants and straits, so he has a special *concern* for those that are reduced to straits by their zeal and diligence in attending on him. Christ said, *I have compassion on the multitude*. Whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, the humble Jesus looked upon with pity and tenderness; and thus must we *honour all men*. But that which he chiefly considers, is, *They have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat*. Whatever losses we sustain, or hardships we go through, for Christ's sake, and in love to him, he will take care that they shall be made up to us one way or other. *They that seek the Lord shall not long want any good thing*. Ps. 34. 10. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith, (v. 3.) *If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way*, for hunger. Christ knows and considers our frame; and he is for the body, if with it we glorify him, *verily we shall be fed*. He considered that *many of them came from far*, and had a great way home. When we see *multitudes* attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, Rev. 2. 13. Christ would by no means have them go home fasting, for it is not his manner to send those *empty* away from him, that in a right manner attend on him.

4. The doubts of Christians are sometimes made to work for the magnifying of the power of Christ. The disciples could not imagine whence so many men should be *satisfied with bread* here in this wilderness, v. 4. That therefore must needs be *wonderful*, and appear so much the more so, which the disciples looked upon as *impossible*.

5. Christ's time to act for the relief of his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity; when they were ready to *faint*, Christ provided for them. That he might not invite them to follow him for the *loaves*, he did not supply them but when they were utterly reduced, and then he *sent them away*.

6. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible, and to evidence that, Christ *repeated* this miracle, to shew that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are renewed, as our wants and necessities are. In the former miracle, Christ used all the bread he had, which was *five loaves*, and fed all the guests he had, which were *five thousand*, and so he did now; though he might have said, "If five loaves would feed five thousand, four may feed four thousand;" he took all the seven loaves, and fed with them the four thousand; for he would teach us to take things as they are, and accommodate ourselves to them; to use what we have, and make the best of that which is. Here it was, as in the dispensing of the manna, *He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack*.

7. In our Father's house, in our Master's house, *there is bread enough, and to spare*; there is a fulness in Christ, which he communicates to all that passes through his hands; so that from it we receive, and *grace for grace*, John 1. 16. Those need not fear wanting, that have Christ to live upon.

8. It is good for those that follow Christ, *to keep together*; these followers of Christ continued in a body, *four thousand* of them together, and Christ fed them all. Christ's sheep must abide by the

flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came in the parts of Dalmanutha. 11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation. 13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. 14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have no bread.* 17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? 18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? 19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. 20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Still Christ is upon motion; now he visits the parts of Dalmanutha, that no corner of the land of Israel might say that they had not had his presence with them. He came thither *by ship*; (v. 13.) but meeting with occasions of dispute there, and not with opportunities of doing good, he *entered into the ship again*, (v. 13.) and came back. In these verses we are told,

1. How he refused to gratify the Pharisees, who challenged him to give them a *sign from heaven*. They came forth on purpose to *question with him*; not to propose questions to him, that they might earn of him, but to cross question with him, that they might ensnare him.

1. They demanded of him a *sign from heaven*, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and were more capable of being examined and inquired into, were not sufficient. There was a sign *from heaven* at his baptism, in the descent of the dove, and the voice; (Matth. 3. 16, 17.) it was public enough; and, if they had attended John's baptism as they ought to have done, they might themselves have seen it. Afterward, when he was nailed to the cross, they prescribed a new sign; *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him*; thus obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though ever so unreasonable. They demanded this sign, *tempting him*; not in hopes that he would give it them, that they might be satisfied, but in hopes that he would not, that they might imagine themselves to have a pretence for their infidelity.

2. He denied them their demand; He *sighed deeply in his spirit*, (v. 12.) He *groaned*, (so some,) being grieved for the *hardness of their hearts*, and the little influence that his preaching and miracles had had upon them. Note, The infidelity of those that had long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him, that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. (1.) He expostulates with them upon this demand; *Why doth this generation seek after a sign*; this generation, that is so unworthy to have the gospel brought to it, and to have any sign accompanying it; *this generation*, that so greedily swallows the tradition of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all; *this generation*, into which, by the calculating of the times prefixed in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive that the coming of the Messiah must fall; *this generation*, that has had such plenty of sensible and merciful signs given them in the cure of their sick? What an absurdity is it for them to desire a sign! (2.) He refuses to answer their demand; *Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign, no such sign, be given to this generation*. When God spake to particular persons in a particular case, out of the road of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks in general to all, as in the law and gospel, sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* He denied them, and then *left them*, as men not fit to be talked with; if they will not be convinced, they shall not; leave them to their strong delusions.

II. How he warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Observe here,

1. What the caution was; (v. 15.) "*Take heed, beware, lest ye partake of the leaven of the Pharisees, lest ye embrace the tradition of the elders, which they are so wedded to, lest ye be proud, and hypocritical, and ceremonious, like them.*" Matthew adds, *and of the Sadducees*; Mark adds, *and of Herod*; whence some gather, that Herod and his courtiers were generally Sadducees, that is, Deists, men of no religion. Others give this sense, The Pharisees demanded a *sign from heaven*; and Herod was long *desirous* to see some miracle wrought by Christ, (Luke 23. 8.) such as he should prescribe, so that the leaven of both was the same; they were unsatisfied with the signs they had, and would have others of their own devising; "*Take heed of this leaven,*" (saith Christ,) "*be convinced by the miracles ye have seen, and covet not to see more.*"

2. How they misunderstood this caution. It seems, at their putting to sea this time, they had *forgotten to take bread*, and had *not in their ship more than one loaf*, v. 14. When therefore Christ bid them *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*, they understood it as an intimation to them, not to apply themselves to any of the Pharisees for relief, when they came to the other side, for they had lately been offended at them for eating with *unwashed hands*. They *reasoned among themselves*, what should be the meaning of this caution, and concluded, "*It is because we have no bread*"; he saith this, to reproach us for being so careless as to go to sea, and go among strangers, with but one loaf of bread; he doth, in effect, tell us, we must be brought to *short allowance*, and must eat our bread by weight." They *reasoned it*—*διελογήσαντο*, they *disputed* about it; one said, "It was owing to you;" and the other said, "It was owing to you, that we are so ill provided for this voyage." Thus distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

3. The reproof Christ gave them for their uneasiness in this matter; as it argued a disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the

abundant experience they had had of it. The reproof is given with some warmth, for he knew their hearts, and knew they needed to be thus soundly chidden; "*Perceive ye not yet, neither understand, that which you have had so many demonstrations of? Have ye your hearts yet hardened, so as that nothing will make any impression upon them, or bring them to compliance with your Master's designs? Having eyes, see ye not that which is plain before your eyes? Having ears, hear ye not that which you have been so often told? How strangely stupid and senseless are ye? Do ye not remember that which was done but the other day, when I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, and soon after, the seven loaves among the four thousand? Do ye not remember how many baskets full ye took up of the fragments? "*" Yes, they did remember, and could tell that they took up *twelve* baskets full one time, and *seven* another; "*Why then,*" saith he, "*how is it that ye do not understand? As if he that multiplied five loaves, and seven, could not multiply one."*" They seemed to suspect that that one was not matter enough to work upon, if he should have a mind to entertain his hearers a third time: and if that was their thought, it was indeed a very senseless one, as if it were not all alike to the Lord, to save by many or few, and as easy to make one loaf to feed five thousand as five. It was therefore proper to remind them, not only of the sufficiency, but of the overplus, of the former meals; and justly were they chidden for not understanding what Christ therein designed, and what they from thence might have learned. Note, (1.) The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him, which is therefore very provoking to the Lord Jesus. (2.) Our not understanding of the true intent and meaning of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering of them. (3.) We are therefore overwhelmed with present cares and distrusters, because we do not understand, and remember, what we have known and seen of the power and goodness of our Lord Jesus. It would be a great support to us, to consider the days of old, and we are wanting both to God and ourselves if we do not. (4.) When we thus forget the works of God, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ doth his disciples here; "*Am I thus without understanding? How is it that my heart is thus hardened? "*

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. 23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. 24. And he looked up, and said, I see men, as trees, walking. 25. After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This cure is related only by this evangelist, and there is something singular in the circumstances.

I. Here is a *blind man* brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him, v. 22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him—they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those

that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

II. Here is Christ *leading* this blind man, v. 23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which bespeaks his wonderful condescension) he himself *took him by the hand, and led him*, to teach us to be as Job was, *eyes to the blind*, Job 29. 15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him *out of the town*. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the *mighty works* that had in *vain* been done *in her*, (Matth. 11. 21.) and was telling her in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man *out of the town*, that he might have a larger prospect in the *open fields*, to try his sight with, than he could have in the *close streets*.

III. Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to *preach the recovering of sight to the blind*, (Luke 4. 18.) and to *give what he preached*. In this cure we may observe, 1. That Christ used a *sign*; he *spat on his eyes*, (spat into them, so some,) and *put his hand upon him*. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his *unbelief*. And this spittle signified the *eye-salve* wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Rev. 3. 18. 2. That the cure was wrought *gradually*, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He *asked him if he saw aught*, v. 23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he *looked up*; so far he *recovered his sight*, that he could open his eyes, and he said, *I see men as trees walking*; he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than that he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but *could not discern the form thereof*, Job 4. 16. But, 3. It was soon completed; Christ never doth *his work* by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, *It is finished*. He *put his hands again upon his eyes*, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he *saw every man clearly*, v. 25. Now Christ took this way, (1.) Because he would not *tie himself to a method*, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by *rote*, as I may say, and in a *road*, but *varied* as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an *implicit faith*. (2.) Because it should be to the patient *according to his faith*; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him, doubting. (3.) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are *spiritually blind*; at first, their knowledge is confused, they *see men as trees walking*; but, like the light of the morning, it *shines more and more to the perfect day*, and then they *see all things clearly*, Prov. 4. 18. Let us inquire, then, if we *see aught* of those things which *faith* is the *substance and evidence* of; and if through grace we see *any thing* of them, we may hope that we shall see yet *more and more*, for Jesus Christ will *perfect* for ever those that are *sanctified*.

IV. The directions Christ gave the man he had cured, not to *tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida*, nor so much as to *go into the town*, where, probably, there were some expecting him to come back, who had

seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eye-witnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him; let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not shew so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to *any in the town*. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges, by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are *hid from her eyes*. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cesarea-Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, one of the prophets. 29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. 31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. 34. And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

We have read a great deal of the doctrine Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought, which were many, and strange, and well-attested, of various kinds, and wrought in several places, to the astonishment of the multitudes that were eye-witnesses of them. It is now time for us to pause a little, and to consider what these things mean; the wondrous works which Christ then forbade the publishing of, being recorded in these sacred writings, are thereby published to all the world, to us, to all ages; now

what shall we think of them? Is the record of those things designed only for an amusement, or to furnish us with matter for discourse? No, certainly *these things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*; (John 20. 31.) and this discourse which Christ had with his disciples, will assist us in making the necessary reflections upon the miracles of Christ, and a right use of them. Three things we are here taught to infer from the miracles Christ wrought.

I. They *prove* that he is *the true Messiah*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world: this the works he did witnessed concerning him; and this his disciples, who were the eye-witnesses of those works, here profess their belief of; which cannot but be a satisfaction to us in making the same inference from them.

1. Christ inquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him; *Who do men say that I am?* v. 27. Note, Though it is a small thing for us to be judged of man, yet it may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us, not that we may seek our own glory, but that we may hear of our faults. Christ asked them, not that he might be informed, but that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

2. The account they gave him, was such as plainly intimated the *high opinion* the people had of him. Though they came short of the truth, yet they were convinced by his miracles that he was an Extraordinary Person, sent from the invisible world with a divine commission. It is probable that they would have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, if they had not been possessed by their teachers with a notion that the Messiah must be a temporal Prince, appearing in external pomp and power, which the figure Christ made would not comport with; yet (whatever the Pharisees said, whose copyhold was touched by the strictness and spirituality of his doctrine) none of the people said that he was a Deceiver, but some said that *he was John Baptist*, others *Elias*, others *one of the prophets*, v. 28. All agreed that he was *one risen from the dead*.

3. The account they gave him of their own sentiments concerning him, intimated their abundant satisfaction in him, and in their having left all to follow him, which now, after some time of trial, they see no reason to repent; *But who say ye that I am?* To this they have an answer ready, *Thou art the Christ*, the Messiah often promised, and long expected, v. 29. To be a Christian indeed, is, sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain; but for the present they must keep it secret, (v. 30.) till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it, by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost; and then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts 2. 36.

II. These miracles of Christ *take off the offence of the cross*, and assure us that Christ was, in it, not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now that the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, which Christ now *begins* to give them notice of, v. 31.

1. Christ taught his disciples that he must *suffer many things*. Though they had got over the vulgar error of the Messiah's being a temporal Prince, so far as to believe their Master to be the Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they retained it, so far as to expect that he would *shortly* appear in outward pomp and grandeur, and *restore the kingdom of Israel*; and therefore, to rectify that mistake, Christ here gives them a prospect of the contrary, that he must be *rejected of the elders*, and

the chief priests, and the scribes, who, they expected, should be brought to own and prefer him; that, instead of being crowned, he must be killed, he must be crucified, and after three days he must rise again to a heavenly life, and to be no more in this world. This he spake openly, (v. 32.) *παρρησιας*. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in ambiguous expressions. The disciples might easily understand it, if they had not been very much under the power of prejudice; or, it intimates that he spoke it cheerfully, and without any terror, and would have them to hear it so: he spake that saying boldly, as one that not only knew he must suffer and die, but was resolved he would, and made it his own act and deed.

2. Peter opposed it; He took him, and began to rebuke him. Here Peter shewed more love than discretion, a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not according to knowledge. He took him—*πρὸς αὐτὸν ἄρπασεν*. He took hold of him, as it were to stop and hinder him, took him in his arms, and embraced him; (so some understand it;) he fell on his neck, as impatient to hear that his dear Master should suffer such hard things; or, he took him aside privately, and began to rebuke him. This was not the language of the least authority, but of the greatest affection, of that jealousy for the welfare of those we love, which is strong as death. Our Lord Jesus allowed his disciples to be free with him, but Peter here took too great a liberty.

3. Christ checked him for his opposition; (v. 33.) He turned about, as one offended, and looked on his disciples, to see if the rest of them were of the same mind, and concurred with Peter in this, that, if they did, they might take the reproof to themselves, which he was now about to give to Peter; and he said, *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Peter little thought to have had such a sharp rebuke for such a kind dissuasive, but perhaps expected as much commendation now for his love as he had lately had for his faith. Note, Christ sees that amiss in what we say or do, which we ourselves are not aware of, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not. (1.) Peter spake as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the purposes and counsels of God. When he saw such proofs, as he every day saw, of the power of Christ, he might conclude that he could not be compelled to suffer; the most potent enemies could not overpower him whom diseases and deaths, whom winds, and waves, and devils themselves, were forced to obey and yield to; and when he saw so much of the wisdom of Christ every day, he might conclude that he would not choose to suffer but for some very great and glorious purposes; and therefore he ought not thus to have contradicted him, but to have acquiesced. He looked upon his death only as a martyrdom, like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if either he would take a little care not to provoke the chief priests, or to keep out of the way; but he knew not that the thing was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and so must bring many sons to glory. Note, The wisdom of man is perfect folly, when it pretends to give measures to the divine counsels. The cross of Christ, the greatest instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness. (2.) Peter spake as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the nature of Christ's kingdom; he took it to be temporal and human, whereas it is spiritual and divine. Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men; *ὁ σαρρῆν*—thou mindest not; so the word is rendered, Rom. 8. 5. Peter seemed to mind more the things that relate to the lower

world, and the life that now is, than those which relate to the upper world, and the life to come. Minding the things of men more than the things of God, our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the things of God, and his glory and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; and it will appear in suffering times, those times of temptation, when those, in whom the things of men have the ascendant, are in danger of falling off. *Νὺν σαφῆς*—Thou art not wise (so it may be read) in the things of God, but in the things of men. It is important to consider in what generation we appear wise in, Luke 16. 8. It seems polley to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is fleshly wisdom, (2 Cor. 1. 12.) and it will be folly in the end.

III. These miracles of Christ should engage us all to follow him, whatever it cost us, not only as they were confirmations of his mission, but as they were explications of his design, and the tendency of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating, that, by his Spirit, he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, leprous, diseased, possessed, souls, which he did for the bodies of those many who in those distresses applied themselves to him. Frequent notice had been taken of the great flocking that there was to him for help in various cases: now this is written, that we may believe that he is the great physician of souls, and may become his patients, and submit to his regimen; and here he tells us upon what terms we may be admitted; and he called all the people to him, to hear this, who modestly stood at some distance when he was in private conversation with his disciples. This is that which all are concerned to know, and consider, if they expect Christ should heal their souls.

1. They must not be indulgent of the ease of the body; for, (v. 34.) "Whosoever will come after me for spiritual cures, as these people do for bodily cures, let him deny himself, and live a life of self denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; let him not pretend to be his own physician, but renounce all confidence in himself and his own righteousness and strength, and let him take up his cross, conforming himself to the pattern of a crucified Jesus, and accommodating himself to the will of God in all the afflictions he lies under; and thus let him continue to follow me;" as many of those did whom Christ healed. Those that will be Christ's patients must attend on him, converse with him, receive instruction and reproof from him, as those did that followed him, and must resolve they will never forsake him.

2. They must not be solicitous, nor not for the life of the body, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ, v. 35. Are we invited by the words and works of Christ to follow him? Let us sit down, and count the cost, whether we can prefer our advantages by Christ before life itself, whether we can bear to think of losing our life for Christ's sake and the gospel's. When the devil is drawing away disciples and servants after him, he conceals the worst of it, tells them only of the pleasure, but nothing of the peril, of his service; *Ye shall not surely die*; but what there is of trouble and danger in the service of Christ, he tells us of it before, tells us we shall suffer, perhaps we shall die, in the cause; and represents the discouragements not less, but greater, than commonly they prove, that it may appear he deals fairly with us, and is not afraid that we should know the worst; because the advantages of his service abundantly suffice to balance the discouragements, if we will but impartially set the one over against the other. In short,

(1.) We must not dread the loss of our lives, provided it be in the cause of Christ; (v. 35.) *Whosoever will save his life, by declining Christ, and refusing to*

come to him, or by disowning and denying him after he has in profession come to Christ, he shall *lose it*, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his spiritual life, and all his hopes of eternal life; such a bad bargain will he make for himself. But whosoever *shall lose his life*, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down, when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall *save it*, he shall be an unspeakable gainer; for the loss of his life shall be made up to him in a better life. It is looked upon to be some kind of recompense to those who lose their lives in the service of their prince and country, to have their memories honoured and their families provided for; but what is that to the recompense which Christ makes in eternal life to all that die for him?

(2.) We must *dread the loss of our souls*, yea, though we should *gain the whole world* by it; (v. 36, 37.) *For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in it, by denying Christ, and lose his own soul?* "True it is," said Bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, "that *life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet.*" As the happiness of heaven, with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world, *in sin*, is not sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul *by sin*.

What that is that men do, to *save their lives and gain the world*, he tells us, (v. 38.) and of what fatal consequences it will be to them; *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed.* Something like this we had, Matth. 10. 33. But it is here expressed more fully. Note, [1.] The disadvantage that the cause of Christ labours under in this world, is, that it is to be owned and professed in an *adulterous and sinful generation*; such the generation of mankind is, gone a whoring from God, in the impure embraces of the world and the flesh, lying in wickedness; some ages, some places, are more especially adulterous and sinful, as that was in which Christ lived; in such a *generation* the cause of Christ is opposed and run down, and those that own it are exposed to reproach and contempt, and every where ridiculed and *spoken against*. [2.] There are many, who, though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, are *ashamed of it*, because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are *ashamed of their relation to Christ, and ashamed of the credit* they cannot but give to *his words*; they cannot bear to be frowned upon and despised, and therefore throw off their profession, and go down the stream of a prevailing apostacy. [3.] There is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible; when the Son of man comes in the *glory of his Father with his holy angels*, as the true Shechinah, the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the Lord of angels. [4.] Those that are ashamed of Christ in this world where he is despised, he will be ashamed of in that world where he is eternally adored. *They shall not share with him in his glory then, that were not willing to share with him in his disgrace now.*

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, v. 1. 13. II. His casting of the devil out of a child, when the disciples could not do it, v. 14. 29. III. His prediction of his own sufferings and death, v. 30. 32. IV. The check he gave to his disciples for disputing who should be greatest; (v. 33. 37.) and to John for rebuking one who cast out devils in Christ's name, and did not follow with them, v. 38. 41. V. Christ's discourse with his disciples of the danger of offending one of his little ones, (v. 42.)

and of indulging that in ourselves, which is an offence and an occasion of sin to us; (v. 43. 50.) most of which passages we had before, Matth. 17. and 18.

1. **A**ND he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. 2. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5. And Peter answered and said to 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. 6. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. 11. And they asked him, saying, Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come? 12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 13. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Here is,

I. A prediction of Christ's kingdom now near approaching, v. 1. That which is foretold, is, 1. That the *kingdom of God would come*, and would come so as to be *seen*: the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up in the world by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, which stood in the way of it; this was the restoring of the kingdom of God among men, which had been in a manner lost by the woeful degeneracy both of Jews and Gentiles. 2. That it would come *with power*, so as to make its own way, and bear down the opposition that was given to it. It came *with power*, when vengeance was taken on the Jews for crucifying Christ, and when it conquered the idolatry of the Gentile world. 3. That it would come while some now *present were alive*; There are some *standing here, that shall not taste of death, till they see it*; this speaks the same with Matth. 24. 34. *This generation shall not pass, till*

all those things be fulfilled. Those that were standing here with Christ should see it, when the others could not discern it to be the kingdom of God, for it came not with observation.

11. A specimen of that kingdom in the transfiguration of Christ, *six days* after Christ spake that prediction. He had begun to give notice to his disciples of his death and sufferings; and, to prevent their offence at that, he gives them this glimpse of his glory, to shew that his sufferings were voluntary, and what a virtue the dignity and glory of his person would put into them, and to prevent the *offence of the cross.*

1. It was on the top of a *high mountain*, like the converse Moses had with God, which was on the top of Mount Sinai, and his prospect of Canaan from the top of Mount Pisgah. Tradition saith, It was on the top of mount Tabor that Christ was transfigured; and if so, the scripture was fulfilled, *Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name*, Ps. 89. 12, 13. Dr. Lightfoot, observing that the last place where we find Christ, was in the coasts of Casarea Philippi, which was far from mount Tabor, rather thinks it was a high mountain which Josephus speaks of, near Casarea.

2. The witnesses of it were Peter, James, and John; these were the *three* that were to *bear record on earth*, answering to Moses, Elias, and the *voice from heaven*, the three that were to bear record from above. Christ did not take all the disciples with him, because the thing was to be kept very private. As there are distinguishing favours which are given to disciples, and not to the world, so there are to some disciples, and not to others. All the saints are a people *near to Christ*, but some lie in his bosom. James was the first of all the twelve that died for Christ, and John survived them all, to be the last eye-witness of this glory; he bore record; (John 1. 14.) *He saw his glory*; and so did Peter, 2 Pet. 1. 16—18.

3. The manner of it; *He was transfigured before them*; he appeared in another manner than he used to do. This was a change of the accidents, the substance remaining the same, and it was a miracle. But transubstantiation, the change of the substance, all the accidents remaining the same, is not a miracle, but a fraud and imposture, such a work as Christ never wrought. See what a great change human bodies are capable of, when God is pleased to put an honour upon them, as he will upon the bodies of the saints, at the resurrection. He was transfigured *before them*; the change, it is probable, was *gradual*, from glory to glory, so that the disciples, who had their eye upon him all the while, had the clearest and most certain evidence they could have, that this glorious appearance was no other than the blessed Jesus himself, and there was no illusion in it. John seems to refer to this, (1 John 1. 1.) when he speaks of the *word of life*, as that which they had seen with their eyes and looked upon. His raiment became *shining*; so that, though, probably, it was sad-coloured, if not black, yet it was now *exceeding white as snow*, beyond that the fuller's art could do toward whitening it.

4. His companions in this glory were Moses and Elias; (v. 4.) They appeared *talking with him*, and to *teach* him, but to *testify* to him, and to be *taught* by him; by which it appears that there are converse and intercourse between glorified saints, they have ways of talking one with another, which we understand not. Moses and Elias lived at a great distance of time one from another, but that breaks no squares in heaven, where the *first shall be last, and the last first*, that is, all one in Christ.

5. The great delight that the disciples took in seeing this sight, and hearing this discourse, is expressed by Peter, the mouth of the rest; *He said, Master,*

it is good for us to be here, v. 5. Though Christ was transfigured, and was in discourse with Moses and Elias, yet he gave Peter leave to speak to him, and to be as free with him as he used to be. Note, Our Lord Jesus, in his exaltation and glory, doth not at all abate of his condescending kindness to his people. Many when they are in their greatness, oblige their friends to keep their distance; but even to the glorified Jesus true believers have access with boldness, and freedom of speech with him. Even in this heavenly discourse there was room for Peter to put in a word; and this it is, "*Lord, it is good to be here, it is good for us to be here*; here *let us make tabernacles*; let this be our rest for ever." Note, Gracious souls reckon it *good to be* in communion with Christ, good to be near him, good to be *in the mount* with him, though it be a cold and solitary place; it is good to be here retired from the world, and alone with Christ: and if it is good to be with Christ transfigured only upon a mountain with Moses and Elias, how good will it be to be with Christ glorified in heaven with all the saints? But observe, While Peter was for staying here, he forgot what need there was of the presence of Christ, and the preaching of his apostles, among the people. At this very time, the other disciples wanted them greatly, v. 14. Note, When it is well with us, we are apt to be mindless of others, and in the fulness of our enjoyments to forget the *necessities* of our brethren; it was a weakness in Peter to prefer private communion with God before public usefulness. Paul is willing to *abide in the flesh*, rather than depart to the mountain of glory, (though that be far better,) when he sees it needful for the church, Phil. 1. 24, 25. Peter talked of making three distinct tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and Christ, which was not well contrived; for such a perfect harmony there is between the law, the prophets, and the gospel, that one tabernacle will hold them all; they dwell together in unity. But whatever was incongruous in what he said, he may be excused, for they were all *sore afraid*; and he, for his part, *wist not what to say*, (v. 6.) not knowing what would be the end thereof.

6. The voice that came from heaven, was an attestation of Christ's mediatorship, v. 7. *There was a cloud that overshadowed them*, and was a shelter to them. Peter had talked of making tabernacles for Christ and his friends; but *while he yet spake*, see how his project was superseded; this cloud was unto them instead of tabernacles, for their shelter; (Isa. 4. 5.) while he *spake* of his tabernacles, God created his tabernacle *not made with hands*. Now out of this cloud (which was but a shade to the *excellent glory* Peter speaks of, whence *this voice* came) it was said, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*. God owns him, and accepts him, as his beloved Son, and is ready to accept of us in him; we must then own and accept him as our beloved Saviour, and must give up ourselves to be ruled by him.

7. The vision, being designed only to introduce this voice, when that was delivered, disappeared; (v. 8.) *Suddenly when they had looked round about*, as men amazed to see where they were, all was gone, *they saw no man any more*. Elias and Moses were vanished out of sight, and Jesus only remained with them, and he not transfigured, but as he used to be. Note, Christ doth not leave the soul, when extraordinary joys and comforts leave it. Though more sensible and ravishing communications may be withdrawn, Christ's disciples have, and shall have, his ordinary presence with them always, even to the end of the world, and that is it we must depend upon. Let us thank God for *daily bread*, and not expect a continual feast on this side heaven.

8. We have here the discourse between Christ and his disciples, as they came down from the mount, (1.) He charged them to keep this matter very

private, till he was *risen from the dead*, which would complete the proof of his divine mission, and then this must be produced with the rest of the evidence, v. 9. And besides, he, being now in a state of humiliation, would have nothing publicly taken notice of, that might seem disagreeable to such a state; for to that he would in every thing accommodate himself. This enjoining of silence to the disciples, would likewise be of use to them, to prevent their boasting of the intimacy they were to be admitted to, that they might not be *puffed up* with the *abundance of the revelations*. It is a mortification to a man, to be tied up from telling of his advancements, and may help to hide pride from him.

(2.) The disciples were at a loss what the *rising from the dead* should mean; they could not form any notion of the Messiah's dying, (Luke 18. 34.) and therefore were willing to think that the *rising* he speaks of, was figurative, his rising from his present mean and low estate to the dignity and dominion they were in expectation of. But if so, here is another thing that embarrasses them; (v. 11.) *Why say the Scribes*, that before the appearing of the Messiah in his glory, according to the order settled in the prophecies of the Old Testament, *Elias must first come?* But Elias was gone, and Moses too. Now that which raised this difficulty, was, that the Scribes taught them to expect the person of Elias, whereas the prophecy intended one *in the spirit and power of Elias*. Note, The misunderstanding of scripture is a great prejudice to the entertainment of truth.

(3.) Christ gave them a key to the prophecy concerning Elias; (v. 12, 13.) "It is indeed prophesied that Elias will come, and will *restore all things*, and set them to rights; and (though you will not understand it) it is also prophesied of the *Son of man*, that he must *suffer many things*, and be *set at nought*, must be a *Reproach of men*, and despised of the people; and though the Scribes do not tell you so, the *scriptures* do, and you have as much reason to expect that as the other, and should not *make so strange* of it; but as to Elias, I tell you *he is come*; and if you consider a little, you will understand whom I mean, it is one to whom they have *done whatsoever they listed*;" which was very applicable to the ill usage they had given John Baptist. Many of the ancients, and the Popish writers generally, think, that beside the coming of John Baptist in the spirit of Elias, himself in his own person is to be expected, with Enoch, before the second appearance of Christ, where the prophecy of Malachi will have a more full accomplishment than it had in John Baptist. But it is a groundless fancy; the true Elias, as well as the true Messiah promised, is come, and we are to look for *no other*. These words as *it is written* of him, refer not to their *doing to him whatever they listed*, (that comes in a parenthesis,) but only to his coming. He is come, and hath been, and done, according as was *written of him*.

14. And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the Scribes questioning with them. 15. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him. 16. And he asked the Scribes, What question ye with them? 17. And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: 18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he tear-eth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I

spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19. He answereth him and saith, O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. 20. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child: 22. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth. 24. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and saith with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, Come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26. And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him; and he was as one dead, insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose. 28. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29. And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devil out of a child, somewhat more fully related than it was, Matt. 17. 14, &c. Observe here,

1. Christ's return to his disciples, and the perplexity he found them in. He laid aside his robes of glory, and came to look after his family, and to inquire what was become of them. Christ's glory above does not make him forget the concerns of his church below, which he visits in *great humility*, v. 14. And he came very seasonably, when the disciples were embarrassed and run aground; the scribes, who were sworn enemies both to him and them, had gained an advantage against them. A child possessed with a devil was brought to them, and they could not cast out the devil, whereupon the scribes insulted over them, and reflected upon their Master, and triumphed as if the day were their own. He *found the scribes questioning with them*, in the hearing of the multitude, some of whom perhaps began to be shocked by it. Thus Moses, when he came down from the mount, found the camp of Israel in great disorder; so soon were Christ and Moses missed. Christ's return was very welcome, no doubt, to the disciples, and *unwelcome* to the scribes. But particular notice is taken of its being very surprising to the people, who perhaps were ready to say, *As for this Jesus, we wot not what is become of him*; but when they beheld him coming to them again, they were *greatly amazed*; (some copies add, *καὶ ἐξοβλήσαντες*—and they were afraid;) and *running to him*, (some copies, for *προσπύχοντες*, read *προσχαίροντες*—congratulating him, or bidding him welcome,) they saluted him. It is easy to give a

reason why they should be glad to see him; but why were they *amazed, greatly amazed*, when they beheld him? Probably, there might remain something unusual in his countenance; as Moses's *face shone* when he came down from the mount, which made the people *afraid to come nigh him*, Exod. 34. 30. So perhaps did Christ's face, in some measure; at least, instead of seeming *fatigued*, there appeared a wonderful briskness and sprightliness in his looks, which *amazed* them.

II. The case which perplexed the disciples, brought before him. He asked the scribes, who, he knew, were always *veracious* to his disciples, and *teazing* them upon every occasion, "*What question ye with them? What is the quarrel now?*" The scribes made no answer, for they were confounded at his presence; the disciples made none, for they were comforted, and now left all to him. But the father of the child opened the case, *v. 17, 18.* 1. His child is possessed with a *dumb spirit*: he has the falling-sickness, and in his fits is *speechless*; his case is very sad, for, wheresoever the fit takes him, the spirit *tears him*, throws him into such violent convulsions as almost pull him to pieces; and, which is very grievous to himself, and frightful to those about him, he *foams at the mouth*, and *gnashes with his teeth*, as one in pain and great misery; and though the fits go off presently, yet they leave him so weak, that he *pines away*, is worn to a skeleton; his flesh is *dried away*; so the word signifies, Ps. 102. 3—5. This was a constant affliction to a tender father. 2. The disciples cannot give him any relief; "*I desired they would cast him out*, as they had done many, and they would willingly have done it, but *they could not*; and therefore thou couldst never have come in better time; *Master, I have brought him to thee.*"

III. The rebuke he gave to them all; (*v. 19.*) *O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?* Dr. Hammond understands this as spoken to the disciples, reproving them for not exerting the power he had given them, and because they did not *fast and pray*, as in some cases he had directed them to do. But Dr. Whithy takes it as a rebuke to the scribes, who gloried in this disappointment that the disciples met with, and hoped to run them down with it. Then he calls a *faithless generation*, and speaks as one weary of *being with them*, and of *bearing with them*. We never hear him complaining, "*How long shall I be in this low condition, and suffer that?*" But, "*How long shall I be among these faithless people, and suffer them?*"

IV. The deplorable condition that the child was actually in, when he was brought to Christ, and the doleful representation which the father made of it. When the child saw Christ, he fell into a fit; *The spirit straightway tore him, boiled within him, troubled him*; (so Dr. Hammond;) as if the devil would set Christ at defiance, and hoped to be too hard for him too, and to keep possession in spite of him. The child *fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming*. We may put another construction upon it—that the devil raged, and had so much the greater wrath, because he *knew that his time was short*, Rev. 12. 12. Christ asked, *How long since this came to him?* And, it seems, the disease was of long standing; it came to him *of a child*, (*v. 21.*) which made the case the more sad, and the cure the more difficult. We are all by nature *children of disobedience*, and in such the evil spirit *works*, and has done so from our childhood; for *foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*, and nothing but the mighty grace of Christ can cast it out.

V. The pressing instances which the father of the child makes with Christ for a cure; (*v. 22.*) *Offentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters,*

to destroy him. Note, The devil aims at the ruin of those in whom he rules and works, and seeks *whom he may devour*. But *if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us*. The leper was confident of Christ's power, but put an *if* upon his will; (*Matt. 8. 2.*) *If thou wilt, thou canst*. This poor man referred himself to his good-will, but put an *if* upon his power, because his disciples, who cast out devils *in his name*, had been non-plussed in this case. Thus Christ suffers in his honour by the difficulties and follies of his disciples.

VI. The answer Christ gave to his address; (*v. 23.*) *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth*. Here, 1. He tacitly checks the weakness of his faith. The sufferer put it upon Christ's power, *If thou canst do any thing*, and reflected on the want of power in the disciples; but Christ turns it upon him, and puts him upon questioning his own faith, and will have him impute the disappointment to the want of that; *If thou canst believe*. 2. He graciously encourages the strength of his desire; "*All things are possible*, will appear possible to him that believes the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible;" or, "*That shall be done by the grace of God, for them that believe in the promise of God, which seemed utterly impossible.*" Note, In dealing with Christ, very much is put upon our believing, and very much promised to it. *Canst thou believe? Darest thou believe? Art thou willing to venture thy all in the hands of Christ? To venture all thy spiritual concerns with him, and all thy temporal concerns for him? Canst thou find in thy heart to do this? If so, it is not impossible, but that, though thou hast been a great sinner, thou mayest be reconciled; though thou art very mean and unworthy, thou mayest get to heaven.* *If thou canst believe*, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and that, weak as thou art, thou mayest be able to hold out to the end.

VII. The profession of faith which the poor man made, hereupon; (*v. 24.*) He cried out; "*Lord, I believe*; I am fully persuaded both of thy power and of thy pity; my cure shall not be prevented by the want of faith; *Lord, I believe.*" He adds a prayer for grace to enable him more firmly to rely upon the assurances he had of the ability and willingness of Christ to save; *help thou my unbelief*. Note, 1. Even those who through grace can say, *Lord, I believe*, have reason to complain of their unbelief; that they cannot so readily apply to themselves, and their own case, the word of Christ as they should, nor so cheerfully depend upon it. 2. Those that complain of unbelief, must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it, and his grace shall be *sufficient for them*. "*Help mine unbelief*, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it; help out what is wanting in my faith with thy grace, the strength of which is perfected in our weakness."

VIII. The cure of the child, and the conquest of this raging devil in the child. Christ *saw the people come running together*, expecting to see the issue of this trial of skill, and therefore kept them in suspense no longer, but *rebuked the foul spirit; the unclean spirit*, so it should be rendered, as in other places. Observe, 1. What the charge was which Christ gave to this unclean spirit; "*Thou dumb and deaf spirit, that makest the poor child dumb and deaf, and shalt thyself be made to bear thy doom, and not be able to say any thing against it, Come out of him immediately, and enter no more into him.* Let him not only be brought out of this fit, but let his fits never return." Note, Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually. Satan may go out himself, and yet recover possession; but if Christ cast him out, he will keep him out. 2. How the un

clean spirit took it; he grew yet more outrageous, he *cried*, and *rent him sore*, gave him such a twitch at parting, that he was *as one dead*; so loath was he to quit his hold, so exasperated at the superior power of Christ, so malicious to the child, and so desirous was he to kill him. *Many said, He is dead.* Thus the toss that a soul is in at the breaking of Satan's power in it, may perhaps be frightful for the present, but opens the door to lasting comfort. 3. How the child was perfectly restored; (v. 27.) *Jesus took him by the hand, κρατῆρας—took fast hold of him*, and strongly bore him up, and he arose and recovered, and all was well.

IX. The reason he gave to the disciples why they could not cast out this devil. They *inquired* of him privately *why they could not*, that wherein they were defective might be made up another time, and they might not be again thus publicly shamed; and he told them, (v. 29.) *This kind can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting.* Whatever other difference there really might be, none appears between this and other kinds, but that the unclean spirit had had possession of this poor patient *from a child*, and that strengthened his interest, and confirmed his hold. When *vicious habits* are rooted by long usage, and begin to plead prescription, like chronic diseases they are *hardly cured*. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin?* The disciples must not think to do their work always with a like ease; some services call them to take more than ordinary pains: but Christ can do that with a word's speaking, which they must prevail for the doing of by *prayer and fasting*.

30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. 33. And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be the greatest*. 35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37. Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. 38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. 39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40. For he that is not against us is on our part.

Here,

I. Christ foretells his own approaching sufferings. He *passed through Galilee* with more expedition than usual, and *would not that any man should know it*; (v. 30.) because he had done many mighty and good works among them in vain, they shall not be invited to see them, and have the benefit of them, as they have been. The time of his sufferings drew nigh, and therefore he was willing to be private awhile, and to converse only with his disciples, to prepare them for the approaching trial, v. 31. He said to them, *The Son of man is delivered* by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God *into the hands of men*, (v. 31.) and *they shall kill him*. Had he been delivered into the hands of devils, and they had worried him, it had not been so strange; but that *men*, who have *reason*, and should have *love*, that they should be thus spiteful to the *Son of man*, who came to redeem and save them, is unaccountable. But still it is observable that when Christ spake of his death, he always spake of his resurrection, which took away the reproach of it from himself, and should have taken away the grief of it from his disciples. But they *understood not that saying*, v. 32. The words were plain enough, but they could not be reconciled to the thing, and therefore would suppose them to have some mystical meaning which they did not understand, and they were *afraid to ask him*; not because he was difficult of access, or stern to those who consulted him, but either because they were loath to know the truth, or because they expected to be chidden for their backwardness to receive it. Many remain ignorant because they are ashamed to inquire.

II. He rebukes his disciples for magnifying themselves. When he came to Capernaum, he privately asked his disciples what it was that they *disputed among themselves by the way?* v. 33. He knew very well what the dispute was, but he would know it *from them*, and would have them to confess their fault and folly in it. Note, 1. We must all expect to be called to an account by our Lord Jesus, concerning what passes while we are in the way in this state of passage and probation. 2. We must in a particular manner be called to an account about our discourses among ourselves; for by our words we must be justified or condemned. 3. As our other discourses among ourselves by the way, so especially our disputes, will be all called over again, and we shall be called to an account about them. 4. Of all disputes, Christ will be sure to reckon with his disciples for their disputes about precedence and superiority: that was the subject of the debate here, *who should be the greatest*, v. 34. Nothing could be more contrary to the two great laws of Christ's kingdom, lessons of his school, and instructions of his example, which are *humility and love*, than *desiring preferment* in the world, and *disputing* about it. This ill temper he took all occasions to check, both because it arose from a mistaken notion of his kingdom, as if it were of this world, and because it tended so directly to the debasing of the honour, and the corrupting of the purity, of his gospel, and he foresaw, would be so much the bane of the church.

Now, (1.) They were willing to *cover this fault*, (v. 34.) they *held their peace*. As they would not *ask*, (v. 32.) because they were ashamed to own their ignorance, so here they would not *answer*, because they were ashamed to own their pride. (2.) He was willing to *amend this fault* in them, and to bring them to a better temper; and therefore *sat down*, that he might have a solemn and full discourse with them about this matter; he *called the twelve to him*, and told them, [1.] That ambition, and affectation of dignity and dominion, instead of gaining them preferment in his kingdom, would but

postpone their preferment; *If any man desire, and aim to be first, he shall be last*; he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and men's pride shall bring them low. [2.] That there is no preferment to be had under him, but an opportunity for, and an obligation to, so much the more labour and condescension; *If any man desire to be first*, when he is so, he must be much the more busy and serviceable to every body. *He that desires the office of a bishop, desires a good work*, for he must, as St. Paul did, labour the more abundantly, and make himself the *servant of all*. [3.] That those who are most humble and self-denying, do most resemble Christ, and shall be most tenderly owned by him. This he taught them by a sign; *He took a child in his arms*, that had nothing of pride and ambition in it. "Look you," saith he; "*whosoever shall receive one like this child, receives me*." Those of a humble meek mild disposition are such as I will own and countenance, and encourage every body else to do so too, and will take what is done to them as done to myself; and so will my Father too, for he who thus *receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*, and it shall be placed to his account, and repaid with interest."

III. He rebukes them for *vilifying all but themselves*, while they are striving which of them should be greatest, they will not allow those who are not in communion with them to be any thing. Observe,

1. The account which John gave him of the restraint they had laid upon one from making use of the name of Christ, because he was not of their society. Though they were ashamed to own their contests for preferment, they seem to boast of this exercise of their authority, and expected their Master would not only justify them in it, but commend them for it; and hoped he would not blame them for desiring to be great, when they would thus use their power for the maintaining of the honour of the sacred college. *Master*, saith John, *we saw one casting out devils in thy name, but he followeth not us*, v. 38. (1.) It was strange that one who was not a professed disciple and follower of Christ should yet have power to *cast out devils* in his name, for that seemed to be peculiar to those whom he called, *ch. 6, 7*. But some think that he was a disciple of John, who made use of the name of the Messiah, not as come, but as near at hand, not knowing that Jesus was he. It should rather seem that he made use of the name of Jesus, believing him to be the Christ, as the other apostles did. And why might not he receive that power from Christ, whose *Spirit*, like the wind, *blows where it listeth*, without such an outward call as the apostles had? And perhaps there were many more such. Christ's grace is not tied to the visible church. (2.) It was strange that one who *cast out devils* in the name of Christ, did not join himself to the apostles, and follow Christ with them, but should continue to act in *separation* from them. I know of nothing that could hinder him from following them, unless because he was loath to leave all to follow them; and if so, that was an ill principle. The thing did not look well, and therefore the disciples *forbade him* to make use of Christ's name as they did, unless he would follow him as they did. This was like the motion Joshua made concerning Eldad and Medad, that prophesied in the camp, and went not up with the rest to the door of the tabernacle; "*My lord Moses, forbid them*; (Numb. 11. 28.) restrain them, silence them, for it is a schism." Thus apt are we to imagine that those do not follow Christ at all, who do not follow him *with us*, and that those do nothing well, who do not just as we do. But the *Lord knows them that are his*, however they are dispersed; and this instance gives us a needful caution, to take heed lest we be carried, by an excess of zeal for the unity of the church, and for that which we are sure is right and good, to oppose

that which yet may tend to the enlargement of the church, and the advancement of its true interests, another way.

2. The rebuke he gave them for this; (v. 39.) *Jesus said*, "*Forbid him not*, nor any other that do likewise." This was like the check Moses gave to Joshua; *Enrust thou for my sake?* Note, That which is good, and doeth good, must not be prohibited, though there may be some defect or irregularity in the manner of doing it, *Casting out devils*, and so destroying Satan's kingdom, doing this *in Christ's name*, and so owning him to be sent of God, and giving honour to him as the Fountain of grace, and preaching down sin, and preaching up Christ, are good things, very good things, which ought not to be forbidden to any, merely because they *follow not with us*. If Christ be preached, Paul therein doth, and will, rejoice, though he be eclipsed by it, Phil. 1. 18. Two reasons Christ gives why such should not be forbidden. (1.) Because we cannot suppose that any man, who makes use of Christ's name in working miracles, should blaspheme his name, as the Scribes and Pharisees did. There were those indeed that did *in Christ's name cast out devils*, and yet in other respects were *workers of iniquity*; but they did not *speak evil of Christ*. (2.) Because those that differed in communion, while they agreed to fight against Satan under the banner of Christ, ought to look upon one another as on the same side, notwithstanding that difference. *He that is not against us, is on our part*. As to the great controversy between Christ and Beelzebub, he had said, *He that is not with me is against me*, Matth. 12. 30. He that will not own Christ, owns Satan. But among those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances, that follow him, though *not with us*, we must reckon, that, though these differ from us, they are not against us, and therefore are *on our part*, and we must not be any hinderance to their usefulness.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. 43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?

Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Here,

1. Christ promiseth a reward to all those that are any way kind to his disciples; (v. 41.) "*Whosoever shall give you a cup of water, when you need it, and it will be a refreshment to you, because ye belong to Christ, and are of his family, he shall not lose his reward.*" Note, 1. It is the honour and happiness of Christians, that they *belong to Christ*, they have joined themselves to him, and are owned by him; they wear his livery as retainers to his family; nay, they are more nearly related, they are *members of his body*. 2. They who belong to Christ may sometimes be reduced to such straits as to be glad of a *cup of cold water*. 3. The relieving of Christ's poor, in their distresses, is a good deed, and will turn to a good account; he accepts it, and will reward it. 4. What kindness is done to Christ's poor, must be done them *for his sake, and because they belong to him*; for that is it that sanctifies the kindness, and puts a value upon it in the sight of God. 5. This is a reason why we must not discontinue and discourage those who are serving the interests of Christ's kingdom, though they are not in every thing of our mind and way. It comes in here as a reason why those must not be hindered, that cast out devils in Christ's name, though they did not follow him; for (as Dr. Hammond paraphraseth it,) "It is not only the great eminent performances which are done by you my constant attendants and disciples, that are accepted by me, but every the least degree of sincere faith and Christian performance, proportionable but to the expressing the least kindness, as giving a cup of water to a disciple of mine for being such, shall be accepted and rewarded." If Christ reckons kindnesses to us services to him, we ought to reckon services to him kindnesses to us, and to encourage them, though done by those that follow not with us.

II. He threatens those that *offend his little ones*, that wilfully are the occasion of sin or trouble to them, v. 42. Whosoever shall grieve any true Christians, though they be of the weakest, shall oppose their *entrance into the ways of God*, or discourage and obstruct their *progress* in those ways, shall either restrain them from doing good, or draw them in to commit sin, it were *better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea*; his punishment will be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul more terrible than such a death and ruin of his body would be. See Matth. 18. 6.

III. He warns all his followers to take heed of ruining their own souls. This charity must begin at home; if we must take heed of doing any thing to hinder others from good, and to occasion their sin, much more careful must we be to avoid every thing that will take us off from our duty, or lead us to sin; and that which doth so we must part with, though it be ever so dear to us. This we had twice in Matthew, *ch. 5. 29, 30.* and *ch. 18. 8, 9.* It is here urged somewhat more largely and pressingly; certainly this requires our serious regard, which is so much insisted upon. Observe,

1. The ease supposed, that our own *hand, or eye, or foot, offends us*; that the impure *corruption* we indulge is as dear to us as an eye or a hand; or that that which is to us as an eye or a hand is become an invisible *temptation* to sin, or *occasion* of it. Suppose the beloved is become a sin, or the sin a beloved. Suppose we cannot keep that which is dear to us, but it will be a snare and a stumbling-block; suppose we must part with it, or part with Christ and a good conscience.

2. The duty prescribed in that case; *Pluck out the*

eye, cut off the hand and foot, mortify the darling lust, kill it, crucify it, starve it, make no provision for it. Let the idols that have been *delectable* things be cast away as *detestable* things; keep at a distance from that which is a temptation, though ever so pleasing. It is necessary that the part which is gangrened should be taken off for the preservation of the whole. *Immedicabile vulnus ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur*—The part that is incurably wounded must be cut off, lest the parts that are sound be corrupted. We must put ourselves to pain, that we may not bring ourselves to ruin; self must be denied, that it may not be destroyed.

3. The necessity of doing this. The flesh must be mortified, that we may *enter into life*, (v. 43, 45.) into the kingdom of God, v. 47. Though, by abandoning sin, we may, for the present, feel ourselves as if we were *halt and maimed*, (it may seem to be a force put upon ourselves, and may create us some uneasiness,) yet it is *for life*; and all that men have they will give for their lives: it is for a *kingdom, the kingdom of God*, which we cannot otherwise obtain; these *halts and maims* will be the *marks of the Lord Jesus*, will be in that kingdom *scars of honour*.

4. The danger of not doing this. The matter is brought to this issue, that either sin must die, or we must die. If we will lay this *Delilah* in our bosom, it will betray us; if we be *ruled by sin*, we shall inevitably be *ruined* by it; if we must keep our *two hands, and two eyes, and two feet*, we must with them be *cast into hell*. Our Saviour often pressed our duty upon us, from the consideration of the torments of hell, which we run ourselves into if we continue in sin. With what an emphasis of terror are those words repeated three times here, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!* The words are quoted from Isa. 66. 24. (1.) The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the *worm that dieth not*; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. *Son, remember*, will set this worm a gnawing; and how terribly will it bite with that word, (Prov. 5. 12, 23.) *How have I hated instruction!* The soul that is food to this worm dies not; and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternity accusing, condemning, and upbraiding, themselves with their own follies, which, how much soever they are now in love with them, will at the last *bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder*. (2.) The wrath of God fastening upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the *fire that is not quenched*; for it is the wrath of the living God, the eternal God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. There are no operations of the Spirit of grace upon the souls of damned sinners, and therefore there is nothing to alter the nature of the fuel, which must remain for ever combustible; nor is there any application of the merit of Christ to them, and therefore there is nothing to appease or quench the violence of the fire. Dr. Whitby shews that the eternity of the torments of hell was not only the constant faith of the Christian church, but had been so of the Jewish church. Josephus says, The Pharisees held that the souls of the wicked were to be *punished with perpetual punishment*; and that there was appointed for them a *perpetual prison*. And Philo saith, The punishment of the wicked is to *live for ever dying, and to be for ever in pains and griefs that never cease*.

The two last verses are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; for every one in general, or rather every one of them that are cast into hell, shall be *salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt*. Therefore

have salt in yourselves. [1.] It was appointed by the law of Moses, that every sacrifice should be *salted with salt*, not to preserve it, (for it was to be immediately consumed,) but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, Lev. 2. 13. [2.] The nature of man, being *corrupt*, and as such being called *flesh*, (Gen. 6. 3. Ps. 78. 39.) some way or other must be *salted*, in order to its being a sacrifice to God. The *salt*ing of fish (and I think of other things) they call the *curing* of it. [3.] Our chief concern is, to present ourselves *living sacrifices* to the grace of God, (Rom. 12. 1.) and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be *salted with salt*, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the *offering up* or *sacrificing* of the Gentiles, is said to be *acceptable*, being *sanctified by the Holy Ghost*, as the sacrifices were *salted*, Rom. 15. 16. [4.] Those that have the salt of grace must make it appear that they have it; that they *have salt in themselves*, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and every thing in the soul that tends to *putrefaction*, and would *offend* our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our *speech* must be *always with grace* seasoned with this salt, that no *corrupt communication* may proceed out of our mouth, but we may loath it as much as we would to put putrid meat into our mouths. [5.] As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be at *peace one with another*. [6.] We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must always retain the relish and savour of it; for if this salt *lose its saltness*, if a Christian revolt from his Christianity, if he lose the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him, or *where-with will we season him?* This was said, Matth. 5. 13. [7.] Those that present not themselves *living sacrifices* to God's grace, shall be made for ever *doing* sacrifices to his justice, and, since they would not give honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; they would not be *salted with the salt* of divine grace, would not admit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be *salted with fire*; coals of fire shall be *scattered* upon them, (Ezek. 10. 2.) as salt upon the meat, and *brimstone*, (Job 18. 15.) as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom; the pleasures they had lived in, *shall eat their flesh*, as it were *fire*, Jam. 5. 3. The pain of mortifying the flesh now is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than *salt*ing with *burning*. And since he had said, that the *fire of hell shall not be quenched*, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God it shall be made to last always; for those that are *cast into hell*, will find the fire to have not only the *corroding* quality of salt, but its *preserving* quality; whence it is used to signify that which is *lasting*; a covenant of salt is a *perpetual* covenant, and Lot's wife being turned into a *pillar of salt*, made her a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, let us, knowing this *terror of the Lord*, be *persuaded* to do it.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's dispute with the Pharisees concerning divorce, v. 1. 12. II. The kind enter-

tainment he gave to the little children that were brought to him to be blessed, v. 13. 16. III. His trial of the rich man that inquired what he must do to get to heaven, v. 17. 22. IV. His discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, concerning the peril of riches, (v. 23. 27.) and the advantage of being impoverished for his sake, v. 28. 31. V. The repeated notice he gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, v. 32. 34. VI. The counsel he gave to James and John, to think of suffering with him, rather than of reigning with him, v. 35. 45. VII. The cure of Bartimeus, a poor blind man, v. 46. 52. All which passages of story we had the substance of before, Matth. 19. and 20.

1. **A**ND he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea; and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. 2. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. 3. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4. And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. 5. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8. And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. 10. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. 11. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Our Lord Jesus was an itinerant Preacher; did not continue long in a place, for the whole land of Canaan was his parish, or diocess, and therefore he would visit every part of it, and give instructions to those in the remotest corners of it. Here we have him in the *coasts* of Judea, by the further side of Jordan eastward, as we found him, not long since, in the utmost borders westward, near Tyre and Sidon. Thus was his circuit like that of the sun, from whose light and heat nothing is hid. Now here we have him,

I. *Resorted to* by the *people*, v. 1. Wherever he was, they flocked after him in crowds; they came to him *again*, as they had done, when he had formerly been in these parts, and, *as he was wont, he taught them again*. Note, Preaching was Christ's constant practice; it was what he was used to, and, wherever he came, he did *as he was wont*. In Matthew it is said, *He healed them*; here it is said, *He taught them*: his cures were to confirm his doctrine, and to recommend it, and his doctrine was to explain his cures, and illustrate them. His *teaching* was *healing* to poor souls. He *taught them again*. Note, Even those whom Christ hath taught, have need to be taught *again*. Such is the fulness of the Christian doctrine, that there is still more to be learned; and such our forgetfulness that we need to be minded of what we do know.

II. We have him *disputed with* by the Pharisees, who envied the progress of his spiritual arms, and did all they could to obstruct and oppose it; to divert him, to perplex him, and to prejudice the people against him.

Here is, 1. A question they started concerning divorce; (*v. 2.*) *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* This was a good question, if it had been well put, and with a humble desire to know the mind of God in this matter; but they proposed it, *tempting him*, seeking an occasion against him, and an opportunity to expose him, which side soever he should take of the question. Ministers must stand upon their guard, lest, under pretence of being advised with, they be ensnared.

2. Christ's reply to them with a question; (*v. 3.*) *What did Moses command you?* This he asked them, to testify his respect to the law of Moses, and to shew that he came not to destroy it; and to engage them to a universal impartial respect for Moses's writings, and to compare one part of them with another.

3. The fair account they gave of what they found in the law of Moses, expressly concerning divorce, *v. 4.* Christ asked, *What did Moses command you?* They own that Moses only *suffered or permitted*, a man to write his wife a *bill of divorce*, and to put *her away*, *Dent. 24. 1.* "If you *will* do it, you must do it *in writing*, delivered into her own hand, and so put her away, and never return to her again."

4. The answer that Christ gave to their question, in which he abides by the doctrine he had formerly laid down in this case, (*Matth. 5. 32.*) *That whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.* And, to clear this, he here shews,

(1.) That the reason why Moses, in his *law*, permitted divorce, was such, as that they ought not to make use of that permission; for it was only *for the hardness of their hearts*, (*v. 5.*) lest, if they were not permitted to divorce their wives, they should murder them; so that none must put away their wives but such as are willing to own that their hearts were so hard as to need this permission.

(2.) That the account which Moses, in this *history*, gives of the institution of marriage, affords such a reason against divorce, as amounts to a prohibition of it. So that if the question be, *What did Moses command?* (*v. 3.*) it must be answered, "Though by a temporary proviso he allowed divorce to the Jews, yet by an eternal reason he forbade it to all the children of Adam and Eve, and that is it which we must abide by."

Moses tells us, [1.] That God made man *male and female*, one male, and one female; so that *Adam could not* put away his wife and take another, for there was no other to take, which was an intimation to all his sons, that they *must not*. [2.] When this male and this female were, by the ordinance of God, joined together in holy marriage, the law was, That a man must *leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife*; (*v. 7.*) which intimates not only the nearness of the relation, but the perpetuity of it; he shall so cleave to his wife as not to be separated from her. [3.] The result of the relation is, That, though they are *two*, yet they are *one*, they are *one flesh*, *v. 8.* The union between them is the most intimate that can be, and, as Dr. Hammond expresses it, a sacred thing that must not be violated. [4.] God himself has *joined them together*; he has not only, as Creator, fitted them to be comforts and helps meet for each other, but he has, in wisdom and goodness, appointed them, who are thus joined together, to live together in love till death parts them. Marriage is not an invention of men, but a divine institution, therefore is to be religiously observed, and the more, because it is a figure of the

mystical inseparable union between Christ and his church.

Now from all this he infers, that men ought not to *put their wives asunder* from them, whom God has put so near to them. The bond which God himself has tied, is not to be lightly untied. They who are for divorcing their wives for every offence, would do well to consider what would become of them, if God should in like manner deal with them. See *Isa. 50. 1. Jer. 3. 1.*

5. Christ's discourse with his disciples, in private, about this matter, *v. 10, 11.* It was an advantage to them, that they had opportunity of personal converse with Christ, not only about gospel-mysteries, but about moral duties, for their further satisfaction. No more is here related of this private conference, than the law Christ laid down in this case—That it is adultery for a man to put away his wife, and marry another; it is adultery *against the wife* he puts away, it is a wrong to her, and a breach of his contract with her, *v. 11.* He adds, *If a woman shall put away her husband*, that is, elope from him, leave him by consent, and *be married to another*, she *commits adultery*, (*v. 12.*) and it will be no excuse at all for her, to say, that it was with the consent of her husband. Wisdom and grace, holiness and love, reigning in the heart, will make those commands easy, which to the carnal mind may be as a heavy yoke.

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them

14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

It is looked upon as the indication of a kind and tender disposition, to take notice of little children, and this was remarkable in our Lord Jesus; which is an encouragement not only to little children to apply themselves to Christ when they are very young, but to grown people, who are conscious to themselves of weakness and childishness, and of being, through manifold infirmities, helpless and useless, like little children. Here we have,

1. Little children brought to Christ, *v. 13.* Their parents, or whoever they were that had the nursing of them, brought them to him, that he should *touch them*, in token of his commanding and conferring a blessing on them. It doth not appear that they needed any bodily *cure*, nor were they capable of being *taught*; but it seems, 1. They that had the care of them were mostly concerned *about their souls*, their better part, which ought to be the principal care of all parents for their children; for that is the principal part, and it is well with them, if it be well with their souls. 2. They believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good; and therefore to him they bring them, that he might *touch* them, knowing that he could reach their hearts, when nothing their parents could say to them, or do for them, would reach them. We may present our children to Christ, now that he is in heaven, for from thence he can reach them with his blessing, and therein we may act faith upon the fulness and extent of his grace, the kind intimations he hath always given of favour to the seed of the faithful, the tenor of the covenant with Abraham, and

the promise to us and to our children, especially that great promise of pouring his Spirit upon our seed, and his blessing upon our offspring, Isa. 44. 3.

II. The discouragement which the disciples gave to the bringing of children to Christ; *They rebuked them that brought them*; as if they had been sure that they knew their Master's mind in this matter, whereas he had lately cautioned them not to despise the little ones.

III. The encouragement Christ gave to it. 1. He took it very ill that his disciples should keep them off; *When he saw it, he was much displeas'd*, v. 14. "What do you mean? Will you hinder me from doing good, from doing good to the rising generation, to the lambs of the flock?" Christ is very angry with his own disciples, if they discountenance any in coming to him themselves, or in bringing their children to him. 2. He ordered that they should be brought to him, and nothing said or done to hinder them; suffer little children, as soon as they are capable, to come to me, to offer up their supplications to me, and to receive instructions from me. Little children are welcome betimes to the throne of grace with their Hosannas. 3. He owned them as members of his church, as they had been of the Jewish church. He came to set up the kingdom of God among men, and took this occasion to declare that that kingdom admitted little children to be the subjects of it, and gave them a title to the privileges of subjects. Nay, the kingdom of God is to be kept up by such: they must be taken in when they are little children, that they may be secured for hereafter, to bear up the name of Christ. 4. That there must be something of the temper and disposition of little children found in all that Christ will own and bless. We must receive the kingdom of God as little children; (v. 15.) that is, We must stand affected to Christ and his grace, as little children do to their parents, nurses, and teachers. We must be inquisitive, as children, must learn as children, (that is the learning age,) and in learning must believe, *Opteret discitent credere—A learner must believe.* The mind of a child is white paper, (*tabula rasa—*a *me blank,*) you may write upon it what you will; such must our minds be to the pen of the blessed Spirit. Children are under government; so must we be. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* We must receive the kingdom of God as the child Samuel did, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Little children depend upon their parent's wisdom and care, are carried in their arms, go where they send them, and take what they provide for them; and thus must we receive the kingdom of God, with an humble resignation of our ourselves to Jesus Christ, and an easy dependence upon him, both for strength and righteousness, for tuition, provision, and a portion. 5. He received the children, and gave them what was desired; (v. 16.) *He took them up in his arms*, in token of his affectionate concern for them; *put his hands upon them*, as was desired, and blessed them. See how he outdid the desires of these parents; they begged he would touch them, but he did more. (1.) *He took them in his arms.* Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 40. 11.) *He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom.* Time was, when Christ himself was taken up in old Simeon's arms, Luke 2. 28. And now he took up these children, not complaining of the burthen, (as Moses did, when he was bid to carry Israel, that peevish child, in his bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, Numb. 11. 12.) but pleased with it. If we in a right manner bring our children to Christ, he will take them up, not only in the arms of his power and providence, but in the arms of his pity and grace; (as Ezek. 16. 8.) underneath them are the everlasting arms. (2.) *He put his hands upon them*, denoting

the bestowing of his Spirit upon them, (for that is the hand of the Lord,) and his setting them apart for himself. (3.) *He blessed them* with the spiritual blessings he came to give. Our children are happy, if they have but the Mediator's blessing for their portion. It is true, we do not read that he baptized these children, baptism was not fully settled as the door of admission into the church, till after Christ's resurrection; but he asserted their visible church-membership, and by another sign bestowed those blessings upon them, which are now appointed to be convey'd and confer'd by baptism, the seal of the promise, which is to us and to our children.

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *There is none good but one, that is, God.* 19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. 28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's. 30. But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions: and in the world to come eternal life. 31. But

many *that are first shall be last; and the last first.*

Here is,

I. A *hospitable meeting* between Christ and a *young man*; such he is said to be, (Matth. 19. 20—22.) and a *ruler*, (Luke 18. 18.) a person of quality. Some circumstances here are, which we had not in Matthew, which make his address to Christ very promising.

1. He came *running* to Christ, which was an indication of his humility; he laid aside the gravity and grandeur of a ruler, when he came to Christ: thus too he manifested his earnestness and importunity; he *ran* as one *in haste*, and longing to be in conversation with Christ. He had now an opportunity of consulting this great Prophet, in the things that belonged to his peace, and he would not let slip the opportunity.

2. He came to him when he was *in the way*, in the midst of company: he did not insist upon a private conference with him by night, as Nicodemus did, though like him he was a ruler, but *when he shall find him without*, will embrace that opportunity of advising with him, and *not be ashamed*, Cant. 8. 1.

3. He *kneeled to him*, in token of the great value and veneration he had for him, as a Teacher come from God, and his earnest desire to be taught by him. He bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus, as one that would not only *do obedience* to him now, but would *yield obedience* to him always; he *bowed the knee*, as one that meant to *bow the soul* to him.

4. His address to him was serious and weighty; *Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Eternal life was an article of his creed, though then denied by the Sadducees, a prevailing party; he thinks it a thing possible, that he may *inherit eternal life*, looking upon it not only as set before us, but as offered to us; he asks, What he shall do now, that he may be happy for ever! Most men inquire for good to be *had* in this world, (Ps. 4. 6.) *any good*; he asks for *good to be done* in this world, in order to the enjoyment of the greatest good in the other world; not, Who will make us to see good? But, "Who will make us to do good?" He inquires for *happiness* in the way of *duty*; the *summum bonum*—chief good which Solomon was in quest of was that *good for the sons of men which they should do*, Eccl. 2. 3. Now this was, (1.) A very serious question in itself; it was about eternal things, and his own concern in those things. Note, *Then* there begins to be some hope of people, when they begin to inquire solicitously, what they shall do to get to heaven. (2.) It was proposed to a right Person, one that was every way fit to answer it, being himself *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, the true way to life, to eternal life; who came *from heaven*, on purpose, first to *lay open for us*, and then to *lay open to us*; first to make, and then to make known, the way to heaven. Note, Those who would know what they shall do to be saved, must apply themselves to Christ, and inquire of him; it is peculiar to the Christian religion, both to shew eternal life, and to shew the way to it. (3.) It was proposed with a good design—to be instructed. We find this same question put by a lawyer, not *kneeling*, but standing up, (Luke 10. 25.) with a bad design, to pick quarrels with him; he *tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do?* It is not so much the good words, as the good intention of them, that Christ looks at.

5. Christ encouraged this address, (1.) *By assisting his faith, v. 17.* He called him *good Master*; Christ would have him mean thereby, that he looked upon him to be God, since there is none good but one, that is God, who is one, and his name one, Zech. 14. 9. Our English word, *God*, doubtless hath affinity with *good*; as the Hebrews name God

by his power, *Elohim, the strong God*; so we by his goodness, the *good God*. (2.) By directing his practice; (v. 19.) *Keep the commandments*; and thou *knowest* what they are. He mentions the six commandments of the second table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbour; he inverts the order, putting the seventh commandment before the sixth, to intimate that *adultery* is a sin no less heinous than *murder* itself. The fifth commandment is here put last, as that which should especially be remembered and observed, to keep us to all the rest. Instead of the tenth commandment, *Thou shalt not covet*, our Saviour here puts, *Defraud not*. *Μη ωστεραποις*—that is, saith Dr. Hammond, "Thou shalt rest contented with thy own, and not seek to increase it by the diminution of other men's." It is a rule of justice not to advance or enrich ourselves by doing wrong or injury to any other.

6. The young man bid fair for heaven, having been free from any open gross violations of the divine commands. Thus far he was able to say in some measure, (v. 20.) *Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* He thought he had, and his neighbours thought so too. Note, Ignorance of the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, makes people think themselves in a better condition than really they are. Paul was alive *without the law*. But when he saw that to be *spiritual*, he saw himself to be *carnal*, Rom. 7. 9, 14. However, he that could say he was free from scandalous sin, went further than many in the way to eternal life. But though we know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified.

7. Christ had a kindness for him; *Jesus beholding him, loved him, v. 21.* He was pleased to find that he had lived offensively, and pleased to see that he was inquisitive how to live better than so. Christ particularly *loves* to see young people, and rich people, *asking the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward.*

II. Here is a *sorrowful parting* between Christ and this young man.

1. Christ gave him a command of trial, by which it would appear whether he did in sincerity aim at eternal life, and press towards it: he seemed to have his heart much upon it, and, if so, he is what he should be; but has he indeed his heart upon it? Bring him to the touchstone. (1.) Can he find in his heart to *part with his riches* for the service of Christ? He hath a good estate, and now, shortly, at the first founding of the Christian church, the necessity of the case will require that those who have *lands, sell them, and lay the money at the apostles' feet*; and how will he dispense with that? Acts 4. 34. After a while, tribulation and persecution will arise, because of the word; and he must be forced to sell his estate, or have it taken from him, and how will he like that? Let him know the worst now; if he will not come up to these terms, let him quit his pretensions; as good at first as at last. "Sell whatsoever thou hast over and above what is necessary for thy support:" probably, he had no family to provide for; let him therefore be a *father to the poor* and make them his heirs. Every man, according to his ability, must relieve the poor, and be content, when there is occasion, to straiten himself to do it. Worldly wealth is given us, not only as *maintenance* to bear our charges through this world, according to our place in it, but as a *talent* to be used and employed for the glory of our great Master in the world who hath so ordered it, that the poor we should have always with us as his receivers. (2.) Can he find in his heart to go through the hardest costliest services he may be called to as a disciple of Christ, and depend upon him for a recompense *in heaven*? He asks Christ what he shall do, more than he has done, to obtain *eternal life*; and Christ puts it to him,

whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for, eternal life, that he seems to have. Doth he readily believe there is a treasure in heaven sufficient to make up all he can leave, or lose, or lay out, for Christ? Is he willing to deal with Christ upon trust? Can he give him credit for all he is worth; and be willing to bear a present cross, in expectation of a future crown?

2. Upon this he flew off; (v. 22.) *He was sad at that saying*; was sorry that he could not be a follower of Christ, upon any easier terms than leaving all to follow him; that he could not *lay hold* on eternal life, and *keep hold* of his temporal possessions too. But, since he could not come up to the terms of discipleship, he was so fair as not to pretend to it; *He went away grieved*. Here appeared the truth of that, (Matth. 6. 24.) *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*; while he held to mammon, he did in effect *despise* Christ, as all those do who prefer the world before him. He bids for what he has a mind for in the market, yet goes away grieved, and leaves it, because he cannot have it at his own price. Two words to a bargain. Motions are not marriages. That which ruined this young man, was, *he had great possessions*: thus the *prosperity of fools destroys them*, and those who spend their days in wealth, are tempted to say to God, *Depart from us*; or to their hearts, *Depart from God*.

III. Here is Christ's discourse with his disciples. We are tempted to wish that Christ had *mollified* that saying which frightened this young gentleman from following him, and, by any explanation, taken off the harshness of it: but he knew all men's hearts; he would not court him to be his follower, because he was a *rich man* and a ruler; but, if he will go, let him go. Christ will keep no man against his will; and therefore we do not find that Christ called him back, but took this occasion to instruct his disciples in two things.

1. The difficulty of the salvation of those who have an abundance of this world; because there are few, who have *a deal to leave*, that can be *persuaded* to leave it for Christ, or to lay it out in doing good.

(1.) Christ asserts this here; *He looked about upon his disciples*, because he would have them all take notice of what he said, that by it they might have their judgments rightly informed, and their mistakes rectified, concerning worldly wealth, which they were apt to over-rate; *How hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God?* v. 23. They have many temptations to grapple with, and many difficulties to get over, which lie not in the way of poor people. But he explains himself, v. 24. where he calls the disciples *children*, because as such they should be *taught* by him, and *portioned* by him with better things than this young man left Christ to cleave to; and whereas he had said, *How hardly will those that have riches get to heaven!* here he tells them, that the danger arose not so much from their *having* riches as from the *trusting* to them, and placing their confidence in them, expecting protection, provision, and a portion, from them; saying that to *their gold*, which they should say only to their God, *Thou art my hope*, Job 31. 24. They that have such a value as this for the wealth of the world, will never be brought to put a right value upon Christ and his grace. They that *have* ever so much riches, but do not *trust* in them, that see the vanity of them, and their utter insufficiency to make a soul happy, have got over the difficulty, and can easily part with them for Christ: but they that have ever so little, if they set their hearts upon that little, and place their happiness in it, it will keep them from Christ. He enforces this assertion with, v. 25. *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, that trusts in riches, or inclines to do so, to enter into the king-*

dom of God. The disproportion here seems so great, (though the more so, the more it answers the intention,) that some have laboured to bring the camel and the eye of the needle a little nearer together. [1.] Some imagine there might be some wicket gate, or door, to Jerusalem, commonly known by the name of *the needle's eye*, for its straitness, through which a camel could not be got, unless he were unloaded, and made to kneel, as those camels, Gen. 24. 11. So a rich man cannot get to heaven, unless he be willing to part with the burthen of his worldly wealth, and stoop to the duties of a humble religion, and so enter in *at the strait gate*. [2.] Others suggest that the word we translate a *camel*, sometimes signifies a *cable rope*, which, though not to be got through a needle's eye, yet is of greater affinity to it. A rich man, compared with the poor, is as a cable to a single thread, stronger, but not so pliable, and it will not go through the *needle's eye*, unless it be untwisted. So the rich man must be loosed and disentangled from his riches, and then there is some hope of him, that thread by thread he may be got through the eye of the needle, otherwise he is good for nothing but to cast anchor in the earth.

(2.) This truth was very surprising to the disciples; *They were astonished at his words*, v. 24. *They were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved?* They knew what were generally the sentiments of the Jewish teachers—that the Spirit of God chooses to reside upon rich men: nay, they knew what abundance of promises there were, in the Old Testament, of temporal good things; they knew likewise that all either are rich, or fain would be so, and that they who are rich have so much the larger opportunities of doing good, and therefore were amazed to hear that it should be so hard for rich people to go to heaven.

(3.) Christ reconciled them to it, by referring it to the almighty power of God, to help even rich people over the difficulties that lie in the way of their salvation; (v. 23.) *He looked upon them*, to engage their attention, and said, *With men it is impossible*; rich people cannot by their own skill or resolution get over these difficulties, but the grace of God can do it, for *with him all things are possible*. If *the righteous scarcely are saved*, much more may we say so of the *rich*; and therefore, when any get to heaven, they must give all the glory to God, who worketh in them *both to will and to do*.

2. The greatness of the salvation of those that have but a little of this world, and leave it for Christ. This he speaks of, upon occasion of Peter's mentioning what he and the rest of the disciples had left to follow him; *Behold*, (saith he,) *we have left all, to follow thee*, v. 28. "You have *done well*," saith Christ, "and it will prove in the end that you have done well *for yourselves*; you shall be abundantly recompensed, and not only you shall be *reimbursed*, who have left but a little, but those that have ever so much, though it were so much as this young man had, that could not persuade himself to quit it for Christ; yet they shall have much more than an equivalent for it. (1.) The loss is supposed to be very great; he specifies, [1.] *Worldly wealth*; *houses* are here put first, and *lands* last. If a man quit his *house*, which should be for his habitation, and his *land*, which should be for his maintenance, and so make himself a beggar and an outcast, this has been the choice of suffering saints; "Farewell houses and lands, though ever so convenient and desirable, though the inheritance of fathers, for the house which is from heaven, and the inheritance of the saints in light, where are many mansions." [2.] Dear relations, *father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters*; in these, as much as in

any temporal blessing, the comfort of life is bound up; (without these, the world would be a wilderness;) yet, when we must either forsake these, or Christ, we must remember, that we stand in nearer relation to Christ than we do to any creature; and therefore, to keep in with him, we must be content to break with all the world, and say to father and mother, as Levi did, *I have not known you*. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy, is, when his love to Christ comes to stand in competition with a love that is lawful, nay, that is his duty. It is easy to such a one to forsake a *lust* for Christ, for he hath that within him that rises against it; but to forsake a *father, a brother, a wife*, for Christ, that is, to forsake those whom he knows he must love, is hard. And yet he must do so, rather than deny or disown Christ. Thus great is the loss supposed to be; but it is *for Christ's sake*, that he may be honoured, and the *gospel's*, that that may be promoted and propagated. It is not the *suffering*, but the *cause*, that makes the *martyr*. And therefore, (2.) The advantage will be great. [1.] *They shall receive a hundred-fold in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters; not in specie, but that which is equivalent.* He shall have abundance of comfort while he lives, sufficient to make up all his losses; his relation to Christ, his communion with his saints, and his title to eternal life, shall be to him *brethren, and sisters, and houses*, and all. God's providence gave Job double to what he had had, but suffering Christians shall have a *hundred-fold* in the comforts of the Spirit, sweetening their creature-comforts. But observe, It is added here in Mark, *with persecutions*. Even when they are gainers by Christ, let them still expect to be sufferers for him; and not to be out of the reach of persecution, till they come to heaven. Nay, The *persecutions* seem to come in here among the *receivings*, in this present time; for unto you it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to *suffer for his name*; yet this is not all, [2.] *They shall have eternal life in the world to come*. If they receive a hundred-fold in this world, one would think they should not be encouraged to expect any more. Yet, as if that were a small matter, they shall have *life eternal* into the bargain; which is more than ten thousand-fold, ten thousand times told, for all their losses. But because they talked so much, and really more than became them, of *leaving all* for Christ, he tells them, though they were *first called*, that there should be disciples called after them, that should be preferred before them; as St. Paul, who was one *born out of due time*, and yet laboured more abundantly than all the rest of the apostles, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Then the *first* were *last*, and the last *first*.

32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, 33. *Saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: 34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. 35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we

shall desire. 36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39. And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it shall be given* to them for whom it is prepared. 41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: 44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here is,

1. Christ's prediction of his own sufferings; this string he harped much upon, though in the ears of his disciples it sounded very harsh and unpleasing.

1. See here how bold he was; when they were going up to Jerusalem, *Jesus went before them*, as the *Captain of our salvation*, that was now to be *made perfect through sufferings*, v. 32. Thus he shewed himself forward to go on with his undertaking, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Now that the time was at hand, he said, *Lo, I come*; so far was he from *drawing back*, that now, more than ever, he *pressed forward*. *Jesus went before them, and they were amazed*. They began now to consider what imminent danger they ran themselves into, when they went to Jerusalem; how very malicious the Sanhedrim, which sat there, was against their Master and them; and they were ready to tremble at the thought of it. To hearten them, therefore, Christ *went before them*. "Come," saith he, "surely you will venture where your Master ventures." Note, When we see ourselves entering upon sufferings, it is encouraging to see our Master go before us. Or, *He went before them, and therefore they were amazed*, they admired to see with what cheerfulness and alacrity he went on, though he knew he was going to suffer and die. Note, Christ's courage and constancy in going on with his undertaking for our salvation, are, and will be, the wonder of all his disciples.

2. See here how timorous and faint-hearted his disciples were; *As they followed, they were afraid*, afraid for themselves, as being apprehensive of their own danger; and justly might they be *ashamed* of their being thus *afraid*. Their Master's courage should have put spirit into them.

3. See here what method he took to silence their fears. He did not go about to make the matter better than it was, nor to feed them with hopes that he might escape the storm, but told them *again*, what he had often told them before, the *things that should happen to him*. He knew the worst of it, and therefore went on thus boldly, and he will let them know the worst of it. Come, *be not afraid*; for, (1.) There is no remedy, the matter is determined, and cannot be avoided. (2.) It is only the *Son of man* that shall suffer; their time of suffering was not at hand, he will now provide for their security. (3.) He *shall rise again*; the issue of his sufferings will be glorious to himself, and advantageous to all that are his, v. 33, 34. The method and particulars of Christ's sufferings are more largely foretold here than in any other of the predictions—that he shall first be delivered up by Judas to the *chief priests and the Scribes*; that they shall condemn him to death, but, not having power to put him to death, shall *deliver him to the Gentiles*, to the Roman powers, and they shall *mock him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and kill him*. Christ had a perfect foresight, not only of his own death, but of all the aggravating circumstances of it; and yet he thus went forth to meet it.

II. The check he gave to two of his disciples for their ambitious request. This story is much the same here as we had it in Matth. 20. 20. Only there they are said to have made their request by their mother, here they are said to make it themselves; she introduced them, and presented their petition, and then they seconded it, and assented to it.

Note, 1. As, on the one hand, there are some that do not *use*, so, on the other hand, there are some that *abuse*, the great encouragements Christ has given us in prayer. He hath said, *Ask, and it shall be given you*; and it is a commendable faith to ask for the great things he has promised; but it was a culpable presumption in these disciples to make such a boundless demand upon their Master; *We would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire*. We had much better leave it to him to do for us what he sees fit, and he will do more than we can desire, Eph. 3. 20.

2. We must be cautious how we make general promises. Christ would not engage to do for them whatever they desired, but would know from them what it was they did desire; *What would ye that I should do for you?* He would have them go on with their suit, that they might be made ashamed of it.

3. Many have been led into a snare by false notions of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of *this world*, and like the kingdoms of the potentates of this world. James and John conclude, If Christ *rise again*, he must be a king, and if he be a king, his apostles must be peers, and one of these would willingly be the *Primus par regni*—*The first peer of the realm*, and the other next him, like Joseph in Pharaoh's court, or Daniel in Darius's.

4. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many a time been dazzled. Whereas to *be good* should be more our care than to *look great*, or to have the pre-eminence.

5. Our weakness and short-sightedness appear as much in our prayers as in any thing. We cannot order our speech, when we speak to God, by reason of darkness, both concerning him and concerning ourselves. It is folly to *prescribe* to God, and wisdom to *subscribe*.

6. It is the will of Christ that we should prepare for sufferings, and leave it to him to recompense us for them. He needs not be put in mind, as Ahasuerus did, of the services of his people, nor can he forget their *work of faith and labour of love*. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him, and then we may trust

him to provide in the best manner how we shall reign with him, and when, and where, and what, the degrees of our glory shall be.

III. The check he gave to the rest of the disciples, for their uneasiness at it; *They began to be much displeas'd, to have indignation about James and John*, v. 41. They were angry at them for affecting precedency, not because it did so ill become the disciples of Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it himself. When the Cyne trampled on Alexander's foot-cloth, with *Calco Justum Alexandri*—*Now I tread on Alexander's pride*, he was seasonably checked with *Sed majori justu*—*But with greater pride of thine own*. So these discovered their own ambition, in their displeasure at the ambition of James and John; and Christ took this occasion to warn them against it, and all their successors in the ministry of the gospel, v. 42, 43. He *called them to him* in a familiar way, to give them an example of condescension, then when he was reproving their ambition, and to teach them never to bid their disciples keep their distance. He shews them,

1. That dominion was generally *abused in the world*; (v. 42.) *They that seem to rule over the Gentiles*, that have the name and title of rulers, *they exercise lordship over them*, that is all they study and aim at, not so much to protect them, and provide for their welfare, as to *exercise authority upon them*; they will be obeyed, aim to be arbitrary, and to have their will in every thing. *Sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*—*Thus I will, thus I command; my good pleasure is my law*. Their care is, what they shall get by their subjects to support their own pomp and grandeur, not what they shall do for them.

2. That therefore it ought not to be admitted into the church; "*It shall not be so among you*; those that shall be put under your charge, must be as sheep under the charge of the *shepherd*, who is to tend them and feed them, and be a servant to them, not as horses under the command of the driver, that works them and beats them, and gets his penny-worths out of them. He that affects to be great and chief, that thrusts himself into a secular dignity and dominion, *he shall be servant of all*, he shall be mean and contemptible in the eyes of all that are wise and good; *he that exalteth himself shall be abas'd*." Or rather, "He that would be *truly* great and chief, he must lay out himself to do good to all, must stoop to the meanest services, and labour in the hardest services. Those not only shall be most *honoured* hereafter, but are most *honourable* now, who are most useful." To convince them of this, he sets before them his own example; (v. 45.) "*The Son of man* submits first to the greatest hardships and hazards, and then enters into his glory, and can you expect to come to it any other way; or to have more ease and honour than he has? (1.) He takes upon him the *form of a servant*, comes not to be *ministered to*, and waited upon, but to *minister*, and wait to be gracious. (2.) He becomes *obedient to death*, and to its dominion, for he *gives his life a ransom for many*; did he die for the benefit of good people, and shall not we study to live for their benefit?"

46. And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, Blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the high-way side, begging. 47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 48. And many charg'd him that he should hold his peace: but

he cried the more a great deal, *Thou son of David, have mercy on me.* 49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

This passage of story agrees with that, Matth. 20. 29, &c. Only that there we were told of *two* blind men; here, and Luke 18. 35. only of *one*; but if there were *two*, there was *one*. This one is named here, being a *blind beggar that was much talked of*; he was called *Bartheus*, that is, the *son of Timeus*; which, some think, signifies *the son of a blind man*; he was the blind son of a blind father, which made the case the worse, and the cure the more wonderful, and the more proper to typify the spiritual cures wrought by the grace of Christ, on those that not only are born blind, but are born of those that are blind.

I. This blind man sat *begging*; as they do with us. Note, Those who by the providence of God are disabled to get a livelihood by their own labour, and have not any other way of subsisting, are the most proper objects of charity; and particular care ought to be taken of them.

II. He cried out to the Lord Jesus for *mercy*; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.* Misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the *Son of David*, of whom it was foretold, that, when he should come to save us, *the eyes of the blind should be opened*, Isa. 35. 5. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should have an eye to him as the promised Messiah, the Trustee of mercy and grace.

III. Christ encouraged him to hope that he should find mercy; for he *stood still, and commanded him to be call'd*. We must never reckon it a hinderance to us in our way, to *stand still*, when it is to do a good work. Those about him, who had discouraged him at first, perhaps were now the persons that signified to him the gracious call of Christ; "*Be of good comfort, rise, he calls thee*; and if he call thee, he will cure thee." Note, The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that we shall speed well if we come to him, and shall have what we come for. Let the guilty, the empty, the tempted, the hungry, the naked, be of good comfort, for he *calls them* to be pardoned, to be supplied, to be succoured, to be filled, to be clothed, to have all that done for them which their case calls for.

IV. The poor man, hereupon, made the best of his way to Christ; He *cast away his loose upper garment*, and came to Jesus; (*v.* 50.) he cast away every thing that might be in danger of throwing him down, or might any way hinder him in coming to Christ, or retard his motion. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must strip themselves of all conceit of that, and must free themselves from *every weight*, and the sin that, like long garments, doth *most easily beset them*, Heb. 12. 1.

V. The particular favour he begged, was, that

his eyes might be opened; so that he might be able to work for his living, and might be no longer burthensome to others. It is a very desirable thing to be in a capacity of earning our own bread; and, where God has given men their limbs and senses, it is a shame for men, by their foolishness and slothfulness, to make themselves, in effect, *blind and lame*.

VI. This favour he received; his eyes were opened; (*v.* 52.) and two things Mark here adds, which intimate, 1. How Christ made a double favour to him, by putting the honour of it upon his faith; "*Thy faith has made thee whole*; faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; not thy impotency, but *thy faith*, setting Christ on work, or rather Christ setting thy faith on work." Those supplies are most comfortable, that are fetched in by our faith. 2. How he made it a double favour to himself; When he had *received his sight*, he *followed Jesus by the way*. By this he made it appear that he was thoroughly cured, that he no more needed one to lead him, but could go himself; and by this he evidenced the grateful sense he had of Christ's kindness to him, that, when he had his sight, he made this use of it. It is not enough to *come to Christ* for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may do honour to him, and receive instruction from him. Those that have spiritual eye-sight, see that beauty in Christ, that will effectually draw them to *run after him*.

CHAP. XI.

We are now come to the Passion Week, the week in which Christ died, and the great occurrences of that week. I. Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, *v.* 1. . 11. II. His cursing of the barren fig-tree, *v.* 12. . 14. III. His driving of those out of the temple, that turned it into an exchange, *v.* 15. . 19. IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning the power of faith and efficacy of prayer, on occasion of the withering of the fig-tree he cursed, *v.* 20. . 26. V. His reply to those who questioned his authority, *v.* 27. . 33.

1. **AND** when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*. 3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. 8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. 9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that

cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. 11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the even-tide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

We have here the story of the public entry Christ made into Jerusalem, four or five days before his death. And he came into town thus remarkably, 1. To shew that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem. He did not steal into the city *incognito*, as one that durst not shew his face, no, they needed not send spies to search for him, he comes in with observation. This would be an encouragement to his disciples that were timorous, and cowed at the thought of their enemies' power and rage; let them see how bravely their Master sets them all at defiance. 2. To shew that he was not cast down or disquieted at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings. He came, not only publicly, but cheerfully, and with acclamations of joy. Though he was now but taking the field, and *girding on the harness*, yet, being fully assured of a complete victory, he thus triumphs as though he had it put off.

I. The *outside* of this triumph was very mean; he rode upon an *ass's colt*, which being an *ass*, looked contemptible, and made no figure; and being but a *colt*, *whereon never man sat*, we may suppose, was rough and untriumphed, and not only so, but rude and ungovernable, and would disturb and disgrace the solemnity. This *colt* was borrowed too. Christ went upon the water in a *borrowed* boat, ate the passover in a *borrowed* chamber, was buried in a *borrowed* sepulchre, and here rode on a *borrowed* ass. Let not Christians scorn to be beholden one to another, and, when need is, to go a borrowing, for our Master did not. He had no rich trappings; they threw their clothes upon the colt, and so he *sat upon him*, v. 7. The persons that attended were mean people; and all the show they could make, was, by *spreading their garments in the way*, and *strawing branches of trees in the way*, (v. 8.) as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation; even when he would be taken notice of, he would be taken notice of for his meanness; and they are instructions to us, not to *mind high things*, but to *condescend to them of low estate*. How ill doth it become Christians to *take state*, when Christ was so far from affecting it!

II. The *inside* of this triumph was very great; not only as it was the fulfilling of the scripture, (which is not taken notice of here, as it was in Matthew,) but as there were several rays of Christ's glory shining forth in the midst of all this meanness. 1. Christ shewed his knowledge of things distant, and his power over the wills of men, when he sent his disciples for the colt, v. 1—4. By this it appears that he can *do every thing*, and *no thought can be withholden from him*. 2. He shewed his dominion over the *creatures* in riding on a colt that *was never backed*. The subjection of the inferior part of the creation to man is spoken of, (Ps. 8. 5, 6.) with application to Christ; (Ps. 8. 5, 6. compared with Heb. 2. 8.) for to him it is owing, and to his mediation, that we have any remaining benefit by the grant God made to man, of a sovereignty in this lower world, Gen. 1. 28. And perhaps Christ, in riding the ass's colt, would give a shadow of his power over the spirit of man, who is born as *the wild ass's colt*, Job 11. 12. 3. The colt was brought from a place *where two ways met*, (v. 4.) as if Christ would shew that he came to direct those into the right way, who had *two ways* before them, and were in danger of taking the wrong. 4.

Christ received the joyful *hosannas* of the people; that is, both the *welcome* they gave him, and their *good wishes* to the prosperity of his kingdom, v. 9. It was God that put it into the hearts of these people to cry *Hosanna*, who were not by art and management brought to it, as those were, who afterward cried, *Crucify, crucify*. Christ reckens himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour beyond their own inclinations.

(1.) They *welcomed his person*; (v. 9.) *Blessed is he that cometh*, the *ερχομενος*, *he that should come*, so often promised, so long expected; he comes in the name of the Lord, as God's Ambassador to the world; *Blessed be he*: let him have our applauses, and best affections; he is a *blessed Saviour*, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be he that sent him. Let him be *blessed in the name of the Lord*, and let all nations and ages call him *Blessed*, and think and speak highly and honourably of him.

(2.) They *wished well to his interest*, v. 10. They believed that, mean a figure as he made, he had a *kingdom*, which should shortly be set up in the world, that it was the kingdom of their father David, (that father of his country,) the kingdom promised to him and his seed for ever; a kingdom that came in the name of the Lord, supported by a divine authority. *Blessed be this kingdom*; let it take place, let it get ground, let it come in the power of it, and let all opposing rule, principality, and power, be put down; let it go on *conquering, and to conquer*. *Hosanna* to this kingdom; prosperity be to it; all happiness attend it. The proper signification of *hosanna* is that which we find, Rev. 7. 10. *Salvation to our God, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb*; success to religion, both *natural and revealed*. *Hosanna in the highest*. Praises be to our God, who is in the *highest heavens* over all, God blessed for ever; or, Let him be praised by his angels, that are in the *highest heavens*, let our *hosannas* be an echo to their's.

Christ, thus *attended*, thus *applauded*, came into the city, and went directly to the temple. Here was no banquet of wine prepared for his entertainment, nor the least refreshment; but he immediately applied himself to his work, for that was his *meat and drink*. He went to the temple, that the scripture might be fulfilled; "*The Lord, whom we seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, without sending any immediate notice before him; he shall surprise you with a day of visitation, for he shall be like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap*," Mal. 3. 1—3. He came to the temple, and took a view of the present state of it, v. 11. He *looked round about upon all things*, but as yet said nothing. He saw many disorders there, but *kept silence*, Ps. 50. 21. Though he intended to suppress them, he would not go about the doing of it all on a sudden, lest he should seem to have done it *rashly*; he let things be as they were for this night, intending the next morning to apply himself to the necessary reformation, and to take the day before him. We may be confident that God sees all the wickedness that is in the world, though he do not presently reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ, having made his remarks upon what he saw in the temple, retired in the evening to a friend's house at Bethany, because there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected, as designed to head a faction.

12. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found

nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. 15. And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. 19. And when even was come, he went out of the city. 20. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. 22. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Here is,

1. Christ's cursing of the fruitless fig-tree. He had a convenient resting place at Bethany, and therefore thither he went at resting time; but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither therefore he returned in the morning, at working time; and so intent was he upon his work, that he went out from Bethany without breakfast, which, before he was gone far, he found the want of, and was hungry, (v. 12.) for he was subject to all the sinless infirmities of our nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a fig tree, which he saw at some distance, which being well adorned with green leaves, he hoped to find enriched with some sort of fruit. But he found nothing but leaves; he hoped to find some fruit, for the time of gathering in figs, though it was near, yet was not yet; so that it could not be pretended that it had had fruit, but that it was gathered and gone; for the season had not yet arrived. Or, He found none, for indeed it was not a season of figs, it was no good fig year. But this was worse than any other fig tree, for there was not so much as one

fig to be found upon it, though it was so full of leaves. However, Christ was willing to make an example of it, not to the trees, but to the men, of that generation, and therefore cursed it with that curse which is the reverse of the first blessing, *Be fruitful*; he said unto it, *Never let any man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever*, v. 14. *Sweetness and good fruit* are, in Jotham's parable, the honour of the fig tree, (Judg. 9. 11.) and its serviceableness therein to man, preferable to the preferment of being promoted over the trees; now to be deprived of that, was a grievous curse. This was intended to be a type and figure of the doom passed upon the Jewish church, to which he came, *seeking fruit, but found none*; (Luke 13. 6, 7.) and though it was not, according to the doom in the parable, immediately cut down, yet, according to this in the history, *blindness and hardness* befell them, (Rom. 11. 8, 25.) so that they were from henceforth *good for nothing*. The disciples heard what sentence Christ passed on this tree, and took notice of it. Woes from Christ's mouth are to be observed and kept in mind, as well as blessings.

11. His clearing of the temple of the market people that frequented it, and of those that made it a thoroughfare. We do not find that Christ met with food elsewhere, when he missed of it on the fig tree; but the zeal of God's house so ate him up, and made him forget himself, that he came, hungry as he was, to Jerusalem, and went straight to the temple, and began to reform those abuses which the day before he had marked out; to shew, that, when the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, (Rom. 11. 26.) and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, to *destroy* the temple, but to purify and refine it, and reduce his church to its primitive rectitude.

1. He cast out the buyers and sellers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers, (and threw the money to the ground, the fitter place for it,) and threw down the seats of them that sold doves. This he did as one having authority, as a *Son in his own house*. The filth of the daughter of Zion is purged away, not by might, nor by power, but by the *spirit of judgment*; and the *spirit of burning*. And he did it without opposition; for what he did was manifested to be right and good, even in the consciences of those that had connived at it, and countenanced it, because they got money by it. Note, It may be some encouragement to zealous reformers, that frequently the purging out of corruptions, and the correcting of abuses, prove an easier piece of work than was apprehended. Prudent attempts sometimes prove successful beyond expectation, and there are not those lions found in the way, that were feared to be.

2. He would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, through the temple, or any of the courts of it, because it was the nearer way, and would save them the labour of going about, v. 16. The Jews owned that it was one of the instances of honour due to the temple, not to make the mountain of the house, or the court of the Gentiles, a road, or common passage, or to come into it with any bundle.

3. He gave a good reason for this; because it was written, *My house shall be called of all nations, The house of prayer*, v. 17. So it is written, Isa. 56. 7. It shall pass among all people under that character. *It shall be the house of prayer to all nations*; it was so in the first institution of it; when Solomon dedicated it, it was with an eye to the sons of the strangers, 1 Kings 8. 41. And it was prophesied that it should be yet more so. Christ will have the temple, as a type of the gospel church, to be, (1.) *A house of prayer*. After he had turned out the oxen and doves, which were things for sacrifice, he re-

vived the appointment of it as a *house of prayer*, to teach us, that, when all sacrifices and offerings should be abolished, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should continue and remain for ever. (2.) That it should be so to *all nations*, and not to the people of the Jews only; for *whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*, though not of the seed of Jacob, according to the flesh. It was therefore insufferable for them to *make it a den of thieves*, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have invited to it. When Christ drove out the buyers and sellers at the beginning of his ministry, he only charged them with making the temple a house of merchandise; (John 2. 16.) but now he chargeth them with making it a *den of thieves*, because since then they had twice gone about to stone him in the temple, (John 8. 59.—10. 31.) or because the traders there were grown notorious for cheating their customers, and imposing upon the ignorance and necessity of the country people, which is no better than down-right thievery. Those that suffer vain worldly thoughts to lodge within them when they are at their devotions, turn the *house of prayer* into a *house of merchandise*; but they that make long prayers, for a pretence to devour widows' houses, turn it into a *den of thieves*.

4. The scribes and the chief priests were extremely nettled at this, v. 18. They hated him, and hated to be reformed by him; and yet they *feared him*, lest he should next overthrow their seats, and expel them, being conscious to themselves of the profaning and abusing of their power. They found that he had a great interest, that *all the people were astonished at his doctrine*, and that every thing he said was an oracle and a law to them; and what durst he not attempt, what could he not effect, being thus supported? They therefore sought, not how they might make their peace with him, but *how they might destroy him*. A desperate attempt, and which, one would think, they themselves could not but fear was *fighting against God*. But they care not what they do, to support their own power and grandeur.

III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of the fig tree's withering away, which he had cursed. At *even*, as usual, he *went out of the city*, (v. 19.) to Bethany; but it is probable that it was in the dark, so that they could not see the fig tree; but the next morning, as they *passed by*, they observed the *fig tree dried up from the roots*, v. 20. More is included many times in Christ's curses than is expressed, as appears by the effects of them. The curse was no more than that it should never bear fruit again, but the effect goes further, *it is dried up from the roots*. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to cheat people. Now observe,

1. How the disciples were affected with it. Peter remembered Christ's words, and said, with surprise, *Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away*, v. 21. Note, Christ's curses have wonderful effects, and make those to wither presently, that flourish like the green bay tree. *Those whom he curseth, they are cursed indeed*. This represented the character and state of the Jewish church; which, from henceforward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but for fuel only. The first establishment of the Levitical priesthood was ratified and confirmed by the miracle of a *dru rod*, which in *one night* budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds, (Numb. 17. 8.) a happy omen of the fruitfulness and flourishing of that priesthood. And now, by a contrary miracle, the expiration of that priesthood was signified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarcely credible that the Jews, who had been so

long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how that *fig tree* should *so soon wither away*; but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him.

2. The good instructions Christ gave them from it; for of *those* even this *withered tree* was *fruitful*.

(1.) Christ teacheth them from hence to *pray in Faith*; (v. 22.) *Have faith in God*. They admired the power of Christ's word of command; "Why," saith Christ, "a lively active faith would put as great a power into your prayers, v. 23, 24. *Whosoever shall say to this mountain, this mount of Olives, Be removed, and be cast into the sea*; if he has but any word of God, general or particular, to build his faith upon, and if he *shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith*, according to the warrant he has from what God hath said, *shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith*." Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore, (v. 24.) "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and he that has power to give them saith, *Ye shall have them*. I say unto you, *Ye shall*," v. 24. *Verily I say unto you, Ye shall*," v. 23. Now this is to be applied, [1.] To that *faith of miracles* which the apostles and first preachers of the gospel were endued with, which did wonders in *things natural*, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils; these were, in effect, the removing of mountains. The apostle speaks of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, 1 Cor. 13. 2. [2.] It may be applied to that *miracle of faith*, which all true Christians are endued with, which doeth wonders in *things spiritual*. *It justifies us*, (Rom. 5. 1.) and so removes mountains of guilt, and casts them into the depths of the sea, never to rise up in judgment against us, Mic. 7. 19. *It purifies the heart*, (Acts 15. 9.) and so removes mountains of corruption, and makes them plain before the grace of God, Zech. 4. 7. It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet lives; by faith we set the Lord always before us, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds; and this is effectual to remove mountains, for at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, the mountains were not only moved, but removed, Ps. 114. 6, 7.

(2.) To this is added here that necessary qualification of the prevailing prayer, that we freely forgive those who have been any way injurious to us, and be in charity with all men; (v. 25, 26.) *When ye stand praying, forgive*. Note, Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; hence they called their prayers their *standings*; when they would say how the world was kept up by prayer, they expressed it thus, *Stationibus stat mundus*—*The world is upheld by standings*. But the primitive christians generally used the more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling, especially on fasting days, though not on Lord's days. When we are at prayer, we must remember to pray for others, particularly for our enemies, and those that have wronged us; now we cannot pray sincerely that God would do them good, if we bear malice to them, and wish them ill. If we have injured others before we pray, we must go and *be reconciled to them*, Matth. 5. 23. But if they have injured us, we go a nearer way to work, and must immediately from our hearts *forgive* them. [1.] Because this is a *good step* towards obtaining the pardon of our own sins: *Forgive, that your Father may forgive you*; that is, "that you may be qualified to receive forgiveness, that he may forgive you with-

out injury to his honour, as it would be, if he should suffer those to have such benefit by his mercy, as are so far from being conformable to the pattern of it." [2.] Because the want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining of the pardon of our sins; "If ye do not forgive those who have injured you, if ye hate their persons, bear them a grudge, meditate revenge, and take all occasions to speak ill of them, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This ought to be remembered in prayer, because one great errand we have to the throne of grace, is, to pray for the pardon of our sins: and care about it ought to be our daily care, because prayer is a part of our daily work. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design to engage his disciples to love one another.

27. And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28. And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32. But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. 33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

We have here Christ examined by the great Sanhedrim concerning his authority; for they claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to him when he was walking in the temple, not for his diversion, but teaching the people, first one company and then another. The Peripatetic philosophers were so called from the custom they had of walking when they taught. The cloisters, or piazzas, in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose. The great men were vexed to see him followed and heard with attention, and therefore came to him with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him at the bar with this question, *By what authority dost thou these things?* v. 28. Now observe,

I. How they designed hereby to run him aground, and to embarrass him. If they could make it out before the people, that he had not a legal mission, that he was not duly ordained though he was ever so well qualified, and preached ever so profitably and well, they would tell the people that they ought not to hear him. This they made the last refuge of an obstinate unbelief; because they were resolved not to receive his doctrine, they were resolved to find some flaw or other in his commission, and will conclude it invalid, if it be not produced and ratified in their court. Thus the Papists resolve their controversy with us very much into the mission of our ministers, and if they have but any pretence to overthrow that, they think they have gained their point, though we have the scripture ever so much on our side. But this is indeed a question, which all that

act either as magistrates or as ministers, ought to be furnished with a good answer to, and often put to themselves, *By what authority do I these things?* For how can men preach except they be sent? Or how can they act with comfort, or confidence, or hope of success, except they be authorized? Jer. 33. 32.

II. How he effectually run them aground, and embarrassed them, with this question, "What are your thoughts concerning the baptism of John? Was it from heaven, or of men?" By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? Answer me, v. 30. Deal fairly and ingenuously, and give a categorical answer, one way or the other." By the resolving of their question into this, our Saviour intimates how near akin the doctrine and baptism were to John's; they had the same original, and the same design and tendency—to introduce the gospel-kingdom. Christ might with better grace put this question to them, because they had sent a committee of their own house to examine John, John 1. 19. "Now," saith Christ, "what was the result of your inquiries concerning him?" They knew what they thought of this question; they could not but think that John Baptist was a man sent of God. But the difficulty was, what they should say to it now. Men that oblige not themselves to speak as they think, (which is a certain rule,) cannot avoid perplexing themselves thus.

1. If they own the baptism of John to be from heaven, as really it was, they shame themselves; for Christ will presently turn it upon them, *Why did ye not then believe him, and receive his baptism?* They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so, because they had an art of stifling and silencing them, and because what conscience said, though it might gall and grate them a little, would not shame them; and then they would do well enough, who looked no further than Saul's care, when he was convicted, *Honour me now before this people*, 1 Sam. 15. 30.

2. If they say, "It is of men, he was not sent of God, but his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own," they expose themselves, the people will be ready to do them a mischief, or at least clamour upon them; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed, and therefore they could not bear that he should be reflected on. Note, There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects but wicked rulers likewise are liable to, which God makes use of as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress violence, that it shall not all ways grow up into a rod of wickedness. Now by this dilemma to which Christ brought them, (1.) They were confounded and baffled, and forced to make a dishonourable retreat; to pretend ignorance—*We cannot tell*, (and that was mortification enough to those proud men,) but really to discover the greatest malice and wilfulness. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well-doing—*put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*, 1 Pet. 2. 15. (2.) Christ came off with honour, and justified himself in refusing to give them an answer to their imperious demand; *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*. They did not deserve to be told; for it was plain that they corrupted not for truth, but victory; nor did he need so tell them; for the works which he did, told them plainly that he had authority from God to do what he did; since no man could do those miracles which he did, unless God were with him. Let them wait but three or four days, and his resurrection shall tell them who gave him his authority, for by that he will be declared to be the Son of God with power, as by their rejecting of him, notwithstanding, they will be declared to be the enemies of God.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, representing the sin and ruin of the Jewish church, v. 1. . 12. II. Christ's silencing of those who thought to ensnare him with a question about paying tribute to Caesar, v. 13. . 17. III. His silencing of the Sadducees, who attempted to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, v. 18. . 27. IV. His conference with a scribe about the first and great command of the law, v. 28. . 34. V. His puzzling of the Scribes with a question about Christ's being the Son of David, v. 35. . 37. VI. The caution he gave the people, to take heed of the Scribes, v. 38. . 40. VII. His commendation of the poor widow that cast her two mites into the treasury, v. 41. . 44.

1. **A**ND he began to speak unto them by a parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10. And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Christ had formerly in parables shewed how he designed to set up the gospel church; now he begins in parables to shew how he would lay aside the Jewish church, which it might have been grafted into the stock of, but was built upon the ruins of. This parable we had just as we have it here, Matth. 21. 33. We may observe here,

I. They that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, have a vineyard let out to them, which is capable of great improvement, and from the occupiers of which rent is justly expected. When God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel, (Ps. 147. 19.) when he set up his temple among them, his priesthood, and his other ordinances, then he let out to them the vineyard he had planted; which he hedged, and in which he built a tower, v. 1. Members of the church are

God's tenants, and they have both a good landlord and a good bargain, and may live well upon it, if it be not their own fault.

II. Those whom God lets out his vineyard to, he sends his servants to, to put them in mind of his just expectations from them, v. 2. He was not *hasty* in his demands, nor *high*, for he did not send for the rent till they could make it, *at the season*; nor did he put them to the trouble of making money of it, but was willing to take it *in specie*.

III. It is sad to think what base usage God's faithful ministers had met with, in all ages, from those that have enjoyed the privileges of the church, and have not brought forth fruit answerable. The Old-Testament prophets were persecuted even by those that went under the name of the Old-Testament church. They *beat them*, and *sent them empty away*; (v. 3.) that was bad; they *wounded them*, and *sent them away shamefully entreated*; (v. 4.) that was worse; nay, at length, they came to such a pitch of wickedness, that they *killed them*, v. 5.

IV. It was no wonder, if those who abused the prophets, abused Christ himself. God did at length send them his Son, his *well-beloved*; it was therefore so much the greater kindness in him to send him; as in Jacob to send Joseph to visit his brethren, Gen. 37. 14. And it might be expected, that he whom their Master *loved*, they also should respect and love; (v. 6.) "*They will reverence my son*, and, in reverence to him, will pay their rent." But, instead of *reverencing* him, because he was the son and heir, they *therefore* hated him, v. 7. Because Christ, in calling to repentance and reformation, made his demands with more authority than the prophets had done, they were the more enraged against him, and determined to put him to death, that they might engross all church power to themselves, and that all the respect and obedience of the people might be paid to them only; "*The inheritance shall be our's*, we will be lords paramount, and bear all the sway." There is an *inheritance*, which, if they had duly *reverenced the Son*, might have been theirs, a heavenly inheritance; but they slighted that, and would have their inheritance in the wealth, and pomp, and powers, of this world. So they *took him*, and *killed him*; they had not done it yet, but they would do it in a little time; and they *cast him out of the vineyard*, they refused to admit his gospel when he was gone; it would by no means agree with their scheme, and so they threw it out with disdain and detestation.

V. For such sinful, shameful doings, nothing can be expected but a fearful doom; (v. 9.) *What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?* It is easy to say what, for nothing could be done more provoking.

1. He will *come*, and *destroy the husbandmen*, whom he would have saved. When they only denied the fruit, he did not *distrain* upon them for the rent, nor *disseize* them, and *dispossess* them for *non-payment*; but when they killed his servants, and his Son, he determined to destroy them; and this was fulfilled when Jerusalem was laid waste, and the Jewish nation extirpated, and made a desolation.

2. He will *give the vineyard to others*. If he have not the rent from them, he will have it from another people, for God will be no Loser by any. This was fulfilled in the taking in of the Gentiles, and the abundance of fruit which the *gospel brought forth in all the world*, Col. 1. 6. Note, If some, from whom we expected well, prove bad, it doth not follow but that others will be better. Christ encouraged himself with this in his undertaking; *Though Israel be not gathered*, not gathered to him, but gathered against him, *yet shall I be glorious*, (Isa. 49. 5, 6.) as a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*.

3. Their opposition to Christ's exaltation shall be no obstruction to it; (v. 10, 11.) *The stone which*

the builders rejected, notwithstanding that, is become the *Head of the corner*, is highly advanced as the *Head-stone*, and of necessary use and influence as the *Corner-stone*. God will set Christ as his *King* upon his *holy hill of Zion*, in spite of their project, who would *break his bands asunder*. And all the world shall see and own this to be the *Lord's doing*, in justice to the Jews, and in compassion to the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ *was the Lord's doing*, and it is his *doing* to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there; and if it be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes.

Now, what effect had this parable upon the chief priests and scribes, whose conviction was designed by it? They knew *he spake this parable against them*, v. 12. They could not but see their own faces in the glass of it; and, one would think, it shewed them their sin so very heinous, and their ruin so certain and great, that it should have frightened them into a compliance with Christ and his gospel, should have prevailed to bring them to repentance, at least, to make them desist from their malicious purpose against him; but, instead of that, (1.) They *sought to lay hold on him*, and make him their prisoner immediately, and so to fulfil what he had just now said they would do to him, v. 8. (2.) Nothing restrained them from it but the awe they stood in of the people; they did not *reverence* Christ, nor had any *fear of God* before their eyes, but were afraid, if they should publicly lay hold on Christ, the mob would rise, and lay hold on them, and rescue him. (3.) They *left him, and went their way*; if they could not do hurt to him, they resolved he should not do good to them, and therefore they got out of the hearing of his powerful preaching, *lest they should be converted and healed*. Note, If men's prejudices be not conquered by the evidence of truth, they are but confirmed; and if the corruptions of the heart be not subdued by faithful reproofs, they are but enraged and exasperated. If the gospel be not a *savour of life unto life*, it will be a *savour of death unto death*.

13. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. 14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? 15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. 16. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. 17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

When the enemies of Christ, who thirsted for his blood, could not find occasion against him from what he said against them, they tried to ensnare him, by putting questions to him. Here we have him tempted, or attempted rather, with a question about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar. We had this narrative, Matth. 22. 15.

I. The persons they employed, were, the *Pharisees* and the *Herodians*, men that in this matter were contrary to one another, and yet concurred

against Christ, v. 13. The Pharisees were great sticklers for the liberty of the Jews, and, if he should say, It is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, they would incense the common people against him, and the Herodians would, underhand, assist them in it. The Herodians were great sticklers for the Roman power, and if he should discountenance the paying of tribute to Cæsar, they would incense the governor against him, yea, and the Pharisees, against their own principles, would join with them in it. It is no new thing for those that are at variance in other things, to join in a confederacy against Christ.

II. The pretence they made, was, that they desired him to resolve them a case of conscience, which was of great importance in the present juncture; and they take on them to have a high opinion of his ability to resolve it, v. 14. They complimented him at a high rate, called him *Master*, owned him for a Teacher of the way of God, a Teacher of it *in truth*, one who taught what was good, and upon principles of truth, who would not be brought by smiles or frowns to depart a step from the rules of equity and goodness; "*Thou carest for no man, nor regardest the person of men, thou art not afraid of offending either the jealous prince, on one hand, or the jealous people on the other; thou art right, and always in the right, and dost in a right manner declare good and evil, truth and falsehood.*" If they spake as they thought concerning Christ, when they said, *We know that thou art right*, their persecuting of him, and putting of him to death, as a Deceiver, was a sin against knowledge; they knew him, and yet crucified him. However, a man's testimony shall be taken most strongly against himself, and *out of their own mouths are they judged*; they knew that he taught the way of God in truth, and yet rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The professions and pretences of hypocrites will be produced in evidence against them, and they will be self-condemned. But if they did not know or believe it, they *lied unto God with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue*.

III. The question they put, was, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?* They would be thought desirous to know their duty. *As a nation that did righteousness, they ask of God the ordinances of justice*, when really they desired nothing but to know what he would say, in hopes that, which side soever he took of the question, they might take occasion from it to accuse him. Nothing is more likely to ensnare ministers, than bringing them to meddle with controversies about civil rights, and to settle land-marks between the prince and the subject, which is fit should be done, while it is not at all fit that they should have the doing of it. They seemed to refer the determining of this matter to Christ; and he indeed was fit to determine it, for *by him kings reign, and princes decree justice*; they put the question fairly, *Shall we give, or shall we not give?* They seemed resolved to stand to his award; "*If thou sayest that we must pay tribute, we will do it, though we be made beggars by it. If thou sayest that we must not, we will not, though we be made traitors for it.*" Many seem desirous to know their duty, who are no ways disposed to do it; as those proud men, Jer. 42. 20.

IV. Christ determined the question, and evaded the snare, by referring them to their national concessions already made, by which they were precluded from disputing this matter, v. 15—17. He *knew their hypocrisy*, the malice that was in their hearts against him, while *with their mouth they shewed all this love*. Hypocrisy, though ever so artfully managed, cannot be concealed from the Lord Jesus. He sees the *potsherd* that is covered with the *silver dross*. He knew they intended to ensnare him, and therefore contrived the matter so

as to ensnare them, and to oblige them, by their own words, to do what they were unwilling to do, which way, to pay their taxes honestly and quietly, and yet at the same time to screen himself against their exceptions. He made them acknowledge, that the current money of their nation was Roman money, had the emperor's image on one side, and his *superscription* on the reverse; and if so, 1. *Cæsar* might command their money for the public benefit, because he has the custody and conduct of the state, wherein he ought to have his charges borne; *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*. The circulation of the money is from him, as the fountain, and therefore it must return to him. As far as it is *his*, so far it must be rendered to him; and how far it is *his*, and may be commanded by him, is to be judged by the constitution of the government, according as it is, and hath settled the prerogative of the prince and the property of the subject. 2. *Cæsar* might not command their consciences, nor did he pretend to it; he offered not to make any alteration in their religion. "Pay your tribute, therefore, without murmuring or disputing, but be sure to render to God the things that are God's." Perhaps he referred to the parable he had just now put forth, in which he had condemned them for not rendering the fruits to the Lord of the vineyard, v. 2. Many, that seem careful to give to men their due, are in no care to give to God the glory due to his name; whereas our hearts and best affections are as much due to him as ever rent was to a landlord, or tribute to a prince. All that heard Christ, marvelled at the discretion of his answer, and how ingeniously he avoided the snare; but I doubt none were brought by it, as they ought to be, to render to God themselves and their devotions. Many will commend the wit of a sermon, that will not be commanded by the divine laws of a sermon.

13. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage: but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Sadducees, who were the deists of that age, here attack our Lord Jesus, it should seem, not as the Scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, with any malicious design upon his person; they were not bigots and persecutors, but sceptics and infidels, and their design was upon his doctrine, to hinder the spreading of that: they denied that there was any resurrection, any world of spirits, any state of rewards and punishments on the other side death: now those great and fundamental truths which they denied, Christ had made it his business to establish and prove, and had carried the notion of them much further than ever it was before carried; and therefore they set themselves to perplex his doctrine.

I. See here the method they take to entangle it; they quote the ancient law, by which, if a man died without issue, his brother was obliged to marry his widow, v. 19. They suppose a case to happen, that, according to that law, seven brothers were successively the husbands of one woman, v. 20. Probably, these Sadducees, according to their wonted profaneness, intended hereby to ridicule that law, and so to bring the whole frame of the Mosaic institution into contempt, as absurd and inconvenient in the practice of it. Those who deny divine truths, commonly set themselves to disparage divine laws and ordinances. But this was only by the by; their design was to expose the doctrine of the resurrection; for they suppose, that, if there be a future state, it must be such a one as this, and then the doctrine, they think, is clogged either with this invincible absurdity, that a woman in that state must have seven husbands, or else with this insolvable difficulty, whose wife she must be. See with what subtlety these heretics undermine the truth; they do not deny it, nor say, *There can be no resurrection*; nay, they do not seem to doubt of it, nor say, *If there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be?* (as the devil to Christ, *If thou be the Son of God*;) But, as though these beasts of the field were more subtle than the serpent himself, they pretend to own the truth, as if they were not Sadducees, no, not they; Who said that they denied the resurrection? They take it for granted that there is a resurrection, and would be thought to desire instruction concerning it, when really they are designing to give it a fatal stab, and think that they shall do it. Note, It is the common artifice of heretics and Sadducees to perplex and entangle the truth, which they have not the impudence to deny.

II. See here the method Christ takes to clear and establish this truth, which they attempted to darken, and give a shock to. This was a matter of moment, and therefore Christ does not pass it over lightly, but enlarges upon it, that, if they should not be reclaimed, yet others might be confirmed.

I. He charges the Sadducees with error, and charges that upon their ignorance. They who banter the doctrine of the resurrection, as some do in our age, would be thought the only knowing men, because the only *free-thinkers*, when really they are the fools in Israel, and the most enslaved and prejudiced thinkers in the world. "Do ye not therefore err? Ye cannot but be sensible of it yourselves, and that the cause of your error is." (1.) Because ye do not know the scriptures. Not but that the Sadducees had read the scriptures, and perhaps were ready in them; yet they might be truly said not to know the scriptures, because they did not know the sense and meaning of them, but put false constructions upon them; or they did not receive the scriptures as the word of God, but set up their own corrupt reasonings in opposition to the scriptures, and would believe nothing but what they could see. Note, A right knowledge of the scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preservative against error. Keep the truth, the scripture-

truth, and it shall keep thee. (2.) Because ye *know not the power of God*. They could not but know that God is almighty, but they would not apply that doctrine to this matter, but gave up the truth to the objections of the impossibility of it, which would all have been answered, if they had but stuck to the doctrine of God's omnipotence, to which *nothing is impossible*. This therefore which God hath spoken once, we are concerned to hear twice, to hear and believe, to hear and apply—that *power belongs to God*, Ps. 62. 10. Rom. 4. 19—21. The same power that made soul and body, and preserved them while they were together, can preserve the body safe, and the soul active, when they are parted, and can unite them together again; for, *behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened*. The power of God, seen in the return of the spring, (Ps. 104. 30.) in the reviving of the corn, (John 12. 24.) in the restoring of an abject people to their prosperity, (Ezek. 37. 12—14.) in the raising of so many to life, miraculously, both in the Old Testament and in the New, and especially in the resurrection of Christ, (Eph. 1. 19, 20.) are all earnest of our resurrection by the same power; (Phil. 3. 21.) *according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*.

2. He sets aside all the force of their objection, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light; (v. 25.) *When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. It is a folly to ask, *Whose wife shall she be of the seven?* For, the relation between husband and wife, though instituted in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. Turks and infidels expect sensual pleasures in their fool's paradise, but Christians *know better things—that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; (1 Cor. 15. 50.) and *expect better things—even a full satisfaction in God's love and likeness*; (Ps. 17. 14, 15.) they are *as the angels of God in heaven*, and we know that they have neither wives nor children. It is no wonder if we confound ourselves with endless absurdities, when we measure our ideas of the world of spirits by the affairs of this world of sense.

III. He builds the doctrine of the future state, and of the blessedness of the righteous in that state, upon the covenant of God with Abraham, which God was pleased to own, being after Abraham's death, v. 26, 27. He appeals to the scriptures; *Have ye not read in the book of Moses?* We have some advantage in dealing with those that have read the scriptures, though many that have read them *wrest them*, as these Sadducees did, to their own destruction. Now, that which he refers them to, is, what God said to Moses at the bush, *I am the God of Abraham*; not only, *I was so*, but *I am so*; I am the Portion and Happiness of Abraham, a God all sufficient to him. Note, It is absurd to think that God's relation to Abraham should be continued, and thus solemnly recognised, if Abraham was annihilated, or that the *living God* should be the Portion and Happiness of a man that is dead, and must be for ever so; and therefore you must conclude, 1. That Abraham's soul exists, and acts in a state of separation from the body. 2. That therefore, some time or other, the body must rise again; for there is such an innate inclination in a human soul towards its body, as would make a total and everlasting separation inconsistent with the ease and repose, much more with the bliss and joy, of those souls that have the Lord for their God. Upon the whole matter, he concludes, *Ye therefore do greatly err*. Those that deny the resurrection, greatly err, and ought to be told so.

28. And one of the Scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, *Which is the first command-*

ment of all? 29. And Jesus answered him, *The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord*: 30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31. And the second *is like, namely, this*, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: there is none other commandment greater than these. 32. And the Scribe said unto him, *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he*. 33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his neighbour as himself*, is more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

The Scribes and Pharisees were (however bad otherwise) enemies to the Sadducees; now one would have expected that, when they heard Christ argue so well against the Sadducees, they should have countenanced him, as they did Paul when he appeared against the Sadducees; (Acts 23. 9.) but it had not that effect; because he did not fall in with them in the ceremonials of religion, his agreeing with them in the essentials, gained him no manner of respect with them. Only we have here an account of *one of them*, a Scribe, who had so much civility in him as to take notice of Christ's answer to the Sadducees, and to own that he had *answered well*, and much to the purpose; (v. 28.) and we have reason to hope that he did not join with the other Scribes, in persecuting Christ; for here we have his application to Christ for instruction, and it was such as became him; not tempting Christ, but desiring to improve his acquaintance with him.

I. He inquired, *Which is the first commandment of all?* (v. 28.) He doth not mean the first in order, but the first in *weight and dignity*; "Which is that command which we ought to have in a special manner an eye to, and our obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest? Not that any commandment of God is little, (they are all the commands of a great God,) but some are greater than others, moral precepts than rituals, and of some we may say, They are the *greatest of all*."

II. Christ gave him a direct answer to this inquiry, v. 29—31. Those that sincerely desire to be instructed concerning their duty, Christ will *guide in judgment, and teach his way*. He tells him,

1. That the great commandment of all, which is indeed inclusive of all, is, that of *loving God with all our hearts*; (1.) Where this is the commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul; the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. (2.) Where this is not, nothing else that is good, is done, or done aright, or accepted, or done long. Loving God with all our heart, will effectually take us off from, and arm us against, all those things that are rivals with him for the throne in our souls, and will engage us to every thing by which he may be honoured, and with which he will be pleased; and no commandment will be grievous where this principle commands, and has the ascendant.

Now here in Mark, our Saviour prefixes to this command the great doctrinal truth upon which it is built; (v. 29.) *Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord*; and we firmly believe this, it will follow, that we shall love him *with all our heart*. He is Jehovah, who has all amiable perfections in himself, he is *our God*, to whom we stand related and obliged, and therefore we ought to *love him*, to set our affections on him, let out our desire toward him, and take a delight in him; and he is *one Lord*, therefore he must be loved with our *whole heart*; he has the sole *right to us*, and therefore ought to have the sole *possession of us*. If he be one, our hearts must be one with him, and since there is no God besides, no rival must be admitted with him upon the throne.

2. That the second great commandment is to *love our neighbour as ourselves*, (v. 31.) as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances, and we must show it by *doing as we would be done by*. As we must therefore love God better than ourselves, because he is Jehovah, a Being infinitely better than we are, and must love him with *all our heart*, because he is *one Lord*, and there is no other like him; so we must *love our neighbour as ourselves*, because he is of the same nature with ourselves; our hearts are fashioned alike, and my neighbour and myself are of one body, of one society, that of the world of mankind; and if a fellow-Christian, and of the same sacred society, the obligation is the stronger. *Has not one God created us?* Mal. 2. 10. *Has not one Christ redeemed us?* Well might Christ say, *There is no other commandment greater than these*; for in these all the law is fulfilled, and if we make conscience of obedience to these, all other instances of obedience will follow of course.

III. The Scribe consented to what Christ said, and descanted upon it, v. 32, 33. 1. He commends Christ's decision of this question; *Well, Master, thou hast said the truth*. Christ's assertions needed not the Scribe's attestations; but this Scribe, being a man in authority, thought it would put some reputation upon what Christ said, to have it commended by him; and it shall be brought in evidence against those who persecuted Christ, as a Deceiver, that one of themselves, even a Scribe of their own, confessed that he *said the truth*, and said it *well*. And thus we must subscribe to Christ's sayings, must set our seal that they are true. 2. He comments upon it. Christ had quoted that great doctrine, *That the Lord our God is one Lord*; and this he not only assented to, but added, "*There is none other but he*; and therefore we must have no other God besides." This excludes all rivals with him, and secures the throne in the heart entire for him. Christ had laid down that great law, of loving God *with all our heart*; and this also he explains—that it is loving him *with the understanding*, as those that know what abundant reason we have to love him. Our love to God, as it must be an *entire*, so it must be an *intelligent* love; we must love him with *all the understanding*, ἐν ὅλῳ τοῦ νοῦ ἡμῶν—*out of the whole understanding*; our rational powers and faculties must all be set on work to lead out the affections of our souls toward God. Christ had said, "To love God and our neighbour is the greatest commandment of all;" "Yea," saith the Scribe, "it is better, it is *more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, more acceptable to God, and will turn to a better account to ourselves." There were those who held, that the law of *sacrifices* was the *greatest commandment* of all; but this Scribe readily agreed with our Saviour in this—that the law of love to God and our neighbour is greater than that of *sacrifice*, even than those *whole-burnt-offerings*, which were intended purely for the honour of God.

IV. Christ approved of what he said, and encouraged him to proceed in his inquiries of him, v. 34.

1. He owned that he understood well, as far as he went; so far, so good. *Jesus saw that he answered discreetly*, and was the more pleased with it, because he had of late met with so many even of the Scribes, men of letters, that answered *indiscreetly*, as those that had *no understanding*, nor desired to have any. He answered *σοφῶς*—*as one that had a mind*; as a rational, intelligent man, as one that had his wits about him; as one whose reason was not blinded, whose judgment was not biassed, and whose forethought was not fettered, by the prejudices which other Scribes were so much under the power of. He answered as one that allowed himself liberty and leisure to consider, and as one that had considered. 2. He owned that he stood fair for a further advance; "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*, the Kingdom of grace and glory; thou art in a likely way to be a Christian, a disciple of Christ. For the doctrine of Christ insists most upon these things, and is designed, and has a tendency direct, to bring thee to this." Note, There is hope of those who make a good use of the light they have, and go as far as that will carry them, that by the grace of God they will be led further, by the clearer discoveries God has to make to them. What became of this Scribe we are not told, but would willingly hope that he took the hint Christ hereby gave him, and that, having been told by him, so much to his satisfaction, what was the great commandment of the law, he proceeded to inquire of him, or his apostles, what was the great commandment of the gospel too. Yet, if he did not, but took up here, and went no further, we are not to think it strange; for there are many who are *not far from the kingdom of God*, and yet never come thither. Now, one would think, this should have invited many to consult him; but it had a contrary effect; *No man after that durst ask him any question*; every thing he said was spoken with such authority and majesty, that every one stood in awe of him; those that desired to *learn*, were *ashamed* to ask, and those that designed to *caril*, were *afraid* to ask.

35. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? 36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he *then* his Son? And the common people heard him gladly. 38. And he said unto them in his doctrine. Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the market places, 39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at least: 40. Which devour widows' houses. and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Here,

I. Christ shows the people how weak and defective the scribes were in their preaching, and how unable to solve the difficulties that occurred in the scriptures of the Old Testament, which they undertook to expound. Of this he gives an instance, which is not so fully related here as it was in Matthew. Christ was *teaching in the temple*: many things he said which were not written; but notice is taken of this, because it will stir us up to inquire *concerning Christ*, and to inquire of *him*; for none

an have the right knowledge of him, but from *himself*; it is not to be had from *the scribes*, for they will soon be run aground.

1. They told the people that the Messiah was to be the *Son of David*, (v. 35.) and they were in the right; he was not only to descend from his loins, but to fill his throne; (Luke 1. 32.) *The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David*. The scripture said it often, but the people took it at what the scribes said; whereas the truths of God should rather be quoted from our Bibles than from our ministers, for there is the original of them. *Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ—The waters are sweetest when drawn immediately from their source*.

2. Yet they could not tell them how, notwithstanding that it was very proper for David, in spirit, the spirit of prophecy, to call him *his Lord*, as he doth, Ps. 110. 1. They had taught the people that concerning the Messiah, which would be for the honour of their nation—that he should be a branch of their royal family; but they had not taken care to teach them that which was for the honour of the Messiah himself—that he should be the Son of God, and, as such, and not otherwise, *David's Lord*. Thus they held the truth in unrighteousness, and were *partial* in the gospel, as well as in the law, of the Old Testament. They were able to say it, and prove it—that Christ was to be David's Son; but if any should object, *How then doth David himself call him Lord?* they would not know how to avoid the force of the objection. Note, Those are unworthy to sit in Moses's seat, who, though they are able to preach the truth, are not in some measure able to defend it when they have preached it, and to convince gainsayers.

Now, this galled the scribes, to have their ignorance thus exposed, and, no doubt, incensed them more against Christ; but the *common people heard him gladly*, v. 37. What he preached was surprising and affecting; and though it reflected upon the scribes, it was instructive to them, and they had never heard such preaching. Probably there was something more than ordinarily commanding and charming in his voice and way of delivery, which recommended him to the affections of the common people; for we do not find that any were wrought upon to believe in him, and to follow him, but he was to them as a *lovely song of one that could play well on an instrument*; as Ezekiel was to his hearers, Ezek. 33. 32. And perhaps some of these cried, *Crucify him*, as Herod heard John Baptist gladly, and yet cut off his head.

II. He cautions the people to take heed of suffering themselves to be imposed upon by the scribes, and of being infected with their pride and hypocrisy; *He said unto them in his doctrine, "Beware of the scribes; (v. 38.) stand upon your guard, that you neither imbibe their peculiar opinions, nor the opinions of the people concerning them. The charge is long, as drawn up against them in the parallel place; (Matth. 23.) it is here contracted.*

1. They affect to appear *very great*; for they go in *long clothing*, with vestures *down to their feet*, and in those they walk *about the streets*, as princes, or judges, or gentlemen of the long robe. Their going in such clothing was not sinful, but their *loving* to go in it, priding themselves in it, valuing themselves on it, commanding respect by it, saying to their long clothes, as Saul to Samuel, *Honour me now before this people*, this was a product of pride. Christ would have his disciples go with *their loins girt*.

2. They affect to appear *very good*; for they pray, they make *long prayers*, as if they were very intimate with Heaven, and had a deal of business there. They took care it should be known that they prayed, that they prayed long, which, some

think, intimates that they prayed not for themselves only, but for others, and therein were very particular and very large; this they did for a *pretence*, that they might seem to love prayer, not only for God's sake, whom hereby they pretended to glorify but for their neighbour's sake, whom hereby they pretended to be serviceable to.

3. They herein aimed to *advance* themselves they coveted applause, and were fond of it; they loved *salutations in the market-places*, and the *chief seats in the synagogues*, and the *uppermost rooms at feasts*; these pleased a vain fancy; to have these given them, they thought, expressed the value they had for them, who did know them, and gained them respect from those who did not.

4. They herein aimed to *enrich* themselves. They *devoured widows' houses*, made themselves masters of their estates by some trick or other; it was to screen themselves from the suspicion of dishonesty, that they put on the mask of piety; and, that they might not be thought as bad as the worst, they were studious to seem as good as the best. Let fraud and oppression be thought the worse of for their having *profaned* and *disgraced* long prayers; but let not prayers, no, nor *long prayers*, be thought the worse of, if made in humility and sincerity, for their having been by some thus abused. But, as iniquity, thus disguised with a shew of piety, is *double iniquity*, so its doom will be doubly heavy; *These shall receive greater damnation*; greater than those that live without prayer, greater than they should have received for the wrong done to the poor widows, if it had not been thus disguised. Note, The damnation of hypocrites will be, of all others, the greatest damnation.

41. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. 44. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast *two mites* into the treasury, which our Saviour, busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

I. There was a *public fund* for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which distributions were made; a poor's box, and this in *the temple*; for works of charity and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor: and we often find *prayers* and *alms* in conjunction, as Acts 20. 1, 2. It is good to erect public receptacles of charity for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to *lay by as God has prospered them*, (1 Cor. 16. 2.) that they may have something ready to give when an object of charity offers itself, which is before dedicated to such uses.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye upon it; *He sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into it*; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which was

cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally or sparingly; whether cheerfully or with reluctance and ill-will: nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

III. He saw *many that were rich, cast in much*; and it was a good sight to see rich people charitable, to see *many* rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in *much*. Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich, to say, that they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves, that require so much, they ought to inquire them out, and to *devise liberal things*.

IV. There was a *poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing*; (v. 42.) and our Lord Jesus highly commended her; *called his disciples to him, and bid them take notice of it*; (v. 43.) told them that she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarcely enough for herself; it was *all her living*, all she had to live upon for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did *cast in of their abundance*, but she of *her want*, v. 44. Now many would have been ready to censure this *poor widow*, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for herself? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the *treasury* to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her! and yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore we are sure that she did very well and wisely. If Christ saith, *Well-done*, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must hence learn, 1. That *giving alms*, is an excellent, good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world. 2. Those that have but a *little*, ought to give alms out of *their little*. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, must give to those that need, Eph. 4. 28. 3. It is very good for us to straiten and deny ourselves, that we may be able to give more to the poor; to deny ourselves not only superfluities, but even conveniences, for the sake of charity. We should in many cases pinch ourselves, that we may supply the necessities of others; this is loving our neighbours as ourselves. 4. Public charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation public blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our *quota* to them. 5. Though we can give but a *little* in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires *according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not*? two mites shall be put upon the score, and brought to account, if given in a right manner, as if it had been two pounds. 6. It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only to our *power*, but *beyond our power*, as the Macedonian churches,

whose *deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality*, 2 Cor. 8. 2, 3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision; as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, *this is thank-worthy*.

CHAP. XIII.

We have here the substance of that prophetic sermon which our Lord Jesus preached, pointing at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consummation of all things; it was one of the last of his sermons, and not ad populum—to the people, but ad clerum—to the clergy; it was private, preached only to four of his disciples, with whom his secret was. Here is, I. The occasion of his prediction—his disciples' admiring of the buildings of the temple, (x. 1, 2.) and their inquiry concerning the time of the dissolution of them, v. 3. 4. II. The predictions themselves. 1. Of the rise of deceivers, v. 5, 6, 21. . . 23. 2. Of the wars of the nations, v. 7, 8. 3. Of the persecution of christians, v. 9. . . 13. 4. Of the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 14. . . 20. 5. Of the end of the world, v. 24. . . 27. III. Some general intimations concerning the time of them, v. 28. . . 32. IV. Some practical inferences from all, v. 33. . . 37.

1. **AND** as he went out of the temple, **AND** one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here*? 2. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4. Tell us, when shall these things be? And what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

We may here see,

I. How apt many of Christ's own disciples are to idolize things that look *great*, and have been long looked upon as *sacred*. They had heard Christ complain of those who had made the temple a *den of thieves*; and yet, when he quitted it, for the wickedness that remained in it, they court him to be as much in love as they were with the stately structure and adorning of it. One of them said to him, "Look, Master, *what manner of stones, and what buildings are here*, v. 1. We never saw the like in Galilee; O do not leave this fine place."

II. How little Christ values external pomp, where there is not real purity; "*Seest thou these great buildings*," (saith Christ,) "and admirest thou them? I tell thee, The time is at hand when *there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*," v. 2. And the sumptuousness of the fabric shall be no security to it, no, nor move any compassion in the Lord Jesus towards it. He looks with *pity* upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, for on them he has put a great value; but we do not find him look with any pity upon the ruin of a magnificent house, when he is driven out of it by sin, for that is of small value with him. With what little concern doth he say, *Not one stone shall be left on another*? Much of the strength of the temple lay in the largeness of the stones, and if these be thrown down, no footstep, no remembrance, of it will remain. While any part remained standing, there might be some hopes of the repair of it; but what hope is there, when not one stone is left upon another?

III. How natural it is to us to desire to know things to come, and the times of them; more inquisitive we are apt to be about that than about our duty. His disciples knew not how to *digest* this doctrine of the

ruin of the temple, which they thought must be their Master's royal palace, and in which they expected their preferment, and to have the posts of honour; and therefore they were in pain till they got him alone, and got more out of him concerning this matter. As he was returning to Bethany, therefore, he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, where he had a full view of it; and there four of them agreed to ask him privately, what he meant by the destroying of the temple, which they understood no more than they did the predictions of his own death, so inconsistent was it with their scheme. Probably, though these four proposed the question, yet Christ's discourse, in answer to it, was in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, yet privately, that is, apart from the multitude. Their inquiry is, *When shall these things be?* They will not question, at least not seem to question, whether they shall be or no, (for their Master has said that they shall,) but are willing to hope it is a great way off. Yet they ask not precisely the day and year, (therein they were modest,) but say, "Tell us what shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled? What presages shall there be of them, and how may we prognosticate their approach?"

5. And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. 8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. 9. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Our Lord Jesus, in reply to their question, sets himself, not so much to satisfy their curiosity, as to direct their consciences; leaves them still in the dark concerning the times and seasons, which the Father has kept in his own power, and which it was not for them to know; but gives them the cautions which were needful, with reference to the events that should now shortly come to pass.

I. They must take heed that they be not deceived by the seducers and impostors that should now short-

ly arise; (v. 5, 6.) "Take heed lest any man deceive you, lest, having found the true Messiah, you lose him again in the crowd of pretenders, or be inveigled to embrace others in rivalry with him. Many shall come in my name, (not in the name of Jesus,) but saying, I am Christ, and so claiming the dignities which I only am entitled to." After the Jews had rejected the true Christ, they were imposed upon, and so exposed by many false Christs, but never before; those false Christs deceived many; Therefore take heed lest they deceive you. Note, When many are deceived, we should thereby be awakened to look to ourselves.

II. They must take heed that they be not disturbed, at the noise of wars, which they should be alarmed with, v. 7, 8. Sin introduced wars, and they come from men's lusts. But at some times the nations are more distracted and wasted with wars than at other times; so it shall be now; Christ was born into the world when there was a general peace, but soon after he went out of the world there were general wars; Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And what will become of them then who are to preach the gospel to every nation? *Inter arma, silent leges—Amidst the clash of arms, the voice of law is not heard.* "But be not troubled at it." 1. "Let it be no surprise to you; you are bid to expect it, and such things must needs be, for God has appointed them, in order to the further accomplishment of his purposes, and by the wars of the Jews" (which Josephus has given us a large account of) "God will punish the wickedness of the Jews." 2. "Let it be no terror to you, as if your interest were in danger of being overthrown, or your work obstructed by these wars; you have no concern in them, and therefore need not be apprehensive of any damage by them." Note, Those that despise the smiles of the world, and do not court and covet them, may despise the frowns of the world, and need not fear them. If we seek not to rise with them that rise in the world, why should we dread falling with them that fall in the world? 3. "Let it not be looked upon as an omen of the approaching period of the world, for the end is not yet, v. 7. Think not that these wars will bring the world to a period; no, there are other intermediate counsels to be fulfilled betwixt that end, and the end of all things, which are designed to prepare you for the end, but not to hasten it out of due time." 4. "Let it not be looked upon, as if in them God had done his worst; no, he has more arrows in his quiver, and they are ordained against the persecutors; be not troubled at the wars you shall hear of, for they are but the beginnings of sorrows, and therefore, instead of being disturbed at them, you ought to prepare for worse; for there shall also be earthquakes in divers places, which shall bury multitudes in the ruins of their own houses, and there shall be famines, by which many of the poor shall perish for want of bread, and troubles and commotions; so that there shall be no peace to him that goes out, or comes in. The world shall be full of troubles, but be not ye troubled; without are fightings, within are fears, but fear not ye their fear." Note, The disciples of Christ, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy a holy security and serenity of mind, when all about them is in the greatest disorder.

III. They must take heed that they be not drawn away from Christ, and from their duty to him, by the sufferings they should meet with for Christ's sake. Again, he saith, "Take heed to yourselves, v. 9. Though you may escape the sword of war, better than some of your neighbours, because you interest not yourselves in the public quarrels, yet be not secure; you will be exposed to the sword of justice more than others, and the parties that contend with one another will unite against you. Take heed

therefore, lest you *deceive* yourselves with the hopes of outward prosperity, and such a temporal kingdom as you have been dreaming of, when it is *through many tribulations that you must enter into the kingdom of God*. Take heed lest you needlessly expose yourselves to trouble, and pull it upon your own head. *Take heed* what you say and do, for you will have many eyes upon you." Observe,

1. What the trouble is which they must expect. (1.) They shall be *hated of all men*; trouble enough! The thoughts of *being hated* are grievous to a tender spirit, and the fruits of that hatred must needs be a constant vexation; those that are *malicious* will be *mischievous*. It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were *hated*, but for Christ's name's sake, because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them, because he loved them.

(2.) Their own *relations* shall *betray* them, those to whom they were most nearly allied, and on whom therefore they depended for protection; "They shall *betray* you, shall inform against you, and be your prosecutors." If a father has a child that is a Christian, he shall become void of natural affection, it shall all be swallowed up in bigotry, and he shall betray his own child to the persecutors, as if he were a worshipper of other gods, Deut. 13. 6.

(3.) Their *church-rulers* shall inflict their *condemns* upon them; "You shall be *delivered up* to the great Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, and to the inferior courts and consistories in other cities, and shall be *beaten in the synagogues*, with forty stripes at a time, as offenders against the law which was read in the synagogue." It is no new thing for the church's artillery, through the treachery of its officers, to be turned against some of its best friends.

(4.) *Governors and kings* shall use their power against them. Because the Jews have not power to put them to death, they shall incite the Roman powers against them, as they did Herod against James and Peter: and they shall *cause you to be put to death*, as enemies to the empire. They must resist unto blood, and still resist.

2. What they shall have to comfort themselves with, in the midst of these great and sore troubles.

(1.) That the work they were called to should be carried on and prosper, notwithstanding all this opposition which they should meet with in it; (v. 10.) "The *gospel* shall, for all this, be *published among all nations*, and, before the destruction of Jerusalem, the *sound* of it shall *go forth into all the earth*; not only through all the nation of the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth." It is comfort to those who suffer for the gospel, that, though they may be crushed and borne down, the gospel cannot; it shall keep its ground, and carry the day.

(2.) That their sufferings, instead of obstructing their work, should forward it; "Your being *brought before governors and kings* shall be for a *testimony to them*; (so some read it, v. 9.) it shall give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those before whom you are brought as criminals, to whom otherwise you could not have access." Thus St. Paul's being brought before Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Nero, was a testimony to them concerning Christ and his gospel. Or, as we read it, It shall be for a *testimony against them*, against both the judges and the prosecutors, who pursue those with the utmost rage that appear, upon examination, to be not only innocent, but excellent persons. The gospel is a testimony to us concerning Christ and heaven; if we receive it, it will be a testimony for us, it will justify and save us; if not, it will be a testimony *against* us in the great day.

(3.) That, when they were brought before kings

and governors for Christ's sake, they should have special assistance from heaven, to bleed Christ's cause and their own; (v. 11.) "Take no thought *before-hand what ye shall speak*, be not solicitous how to address yourselves to great men, so as to obtain their favour; your cause is just and glorious, and needs not to be supported by premeditated speeches and harangues; but *whatsoever shall be given you in that hour*, whatsoever shall be suggested to you, and put into your minds, and into your mouths," (*pre renata—on the spur of the occasion,*) "that *speak ye*, and fear not the success of it, because it is *off-hand*, for it is not ye that *speak*, purely by the strength of your own wisdom, consideration, and resolution, but it is the *Holy Ghost*." Note, Those whom Christ calls out to be advocates for him, shall be furnished with full instructions; and when we are engaged in the service of Christ, we may depend upon the aids of the Spirit of Christ.

(4.) That heaven at last would *make amends for all*; "You will meet with a great deal of hardship in your way, but have a good heart on it, your warfare will be accomplished, and your testimony finished, and *he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved*." v. 13. Perseverance gains the crown. The salvation here promised is more than a deliverance from evil, it is an everlasting blessedness, which shall be an abundant recompence for all their services and sufferings. All this we have, Matth. 10. 17, &c.

14. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: 15. And let him that is on the house-top not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. 19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, unto this time, neither shall be. 20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. 21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there; believe him not: 22. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Jews, in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, were hastening their own ruin apace, both efficiently and meritoriously were setting both God and man against them; see 1 Thess. 2. 15. Now here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them within less than forty years after this: we had it before, Matth. 24. 15, &c. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning it.

1. That the Roman *armies* should make a descent

upon Judea, and invest Jerusalem, the holy city. These were the *abomination of desolation*, which the Jews did *abominate*, and by which they should be made *desolate*. The country of thine enemy is called *the land which thou abhorrest*, Isa. 7. 16. Therefore it was an abomination, because it brought with it nothing but desolation. They had rejected Christ as an *Abomination*, who would have been their *Salvation*; and now God brought upon them an abomination that would be their *desolation*, thus spoken of by Daniel the prophet, (ch. 9. 27.) as that by which this sacrifice and offering should be made to cease. This army stood *where it ought not*, in and about the *holy city*, which the heathen ought not to have approached, nor should have been suffered to do, if Jerusalem had not first profaned the crown of their holiness. This the church complains of, Lam. 1. 10. *The heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into the congregation*; but sin made the breach, at which the glory went out, and the abomination of desolation broke in, and *stood where it ought not*. Now, let him that readeth this, understand it, and endeavour to take it right. Prophecies should not be too plain, and yet intelligible to those that search them; and they are best understood by comparing them first with one another, and at last with the event.

2. That when the Roman army should come into the country, there would be no safety any where but by quitting the country, and that with all possible expedition; it will be in vain to *fight*, the enemies will be too hard for them; in vain to *abscond*, the enemies will find them out; and in vain to *capitulate*, the enemies will give them no quarter; a man cannot have so much as his life given him for a prey, but by *fleeing to the mountains* out of Judea; and let him take the first alarm, and make the best of his way. If he be *on the house-top*, trying from thence to discover the motions of the enemy, and spies them coming, let him not go down, to take any thing out of the house, for it will occasion his losing of time, which is more precious than his best goods, and will but encumber him, and embarrass his flight. If he be in the field, and there discover the approach of the enemy, let him get away as he is, and not *turn back again, to take up his garment*, v. 16. If he can save his life, let him reckon it a good bargain, though he can save nothing else, and be thankful to God, that, though he is cut short, he is not cut off.

3. That it would go very hard at that time with poor mothers and nurses; (v. 17.) "*Woe to them that are with child*, that dare not go into strange places, that cannot shift for themselves, nor make haste, as others can. And *woe to them that give suck*, that know not how either to leave the tender infants behind them, or to carry them along with them." Such is the vanity of the creature, that the time may often be, when the greatest comforts may prove the greatest burthens. It would likewise be very uncomfortable, if they should be forced to flee in the winter, (v. 18.) when the weather and ways were bad, when the roads will be scarcely passable, especially in those mountains to which they must flee. If there be no remedy but that trouble must come, yet we may desire and pray that, if it be God's will, the circumstances of it may be so ordered as to be a mitigation of the trouble; and when things are bad, we ought to consider they might have been worse. It is bad to be forced to flee, but it would have been worse if it had been in the winter.

4. That throughout all the country of the Jews, there should be such destruction and desolation made, as could not be paralleled in any history; (v. 19.) *In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of time*; that is, of the creation which God created, for time and the creation are of

equal date, *unto this day, neither shall be to the end of time*; such a complication of miseries, and of such continuance. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was very terrible, but this exceeded it. It threatened a universal slaughter of all the people of the Jews; so barbarously did they devour one another, and the Romans devour them all, that, if their wars had continued a little longer, *no flesh could have been saved*, not one Jew could have been left alive; but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy; and, (1.) He *shortened the days*; he let fall his controversy before he had made a full end. As a church and nation the ruin was complete, but many particular persons had their lives given them for a prey, by the storm's subsiding when it did. (2.) It was *for the elect's sake* that those days were shortened; many among them fared the better for the sake of the few among them that believed in Christ, and were faithful to him. There was a promise, that *a remnant should be saved*, (Isa. 10. 22.) and that God would not, for his servants' sakes, *destroy them all*; (Isa. 65. 8.) and these promises must be fulfilled. God's own *elect cry day and night to him*, and their prayers must be answered, Luke 18. 7.

II. What directions are given to the disciples with reference to it.

1. They must shift for the safety of *their lives*; "When you see the country invaded, and the city invested, flatter not yourselves with thoughts that the enemy will retire, or that you may be able to make your part good with them; but, without further deliberation or delay, *let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains*, v. 14. Meddle not with strife that belongs not to you; *let the potsherd's strive with the potsherd's of the earth*, but do you go out of the slip when you see it sinking, that you die not the death of the *uncircumcised in heart*."

2. They must provide for the safety of *their souls*; "*Seducers* will be busy at that time, for they love to fish in troubled waters, and therefore then you must double your guard; *then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there*, you know he is in heaven, and will come again, at the end of time, to judge the world, and therefore *believe them not*; having received *Christ*, be not drawn into the snares of any *antichrist*; for *false christs*, and *false prophets*, shall arise," v. 22. When the gospel-kingdom was in the setting up, Satan mustered all his force, to oppose it, and made use of all his wiles; and God permitted it, for the trial of the sincerity of some, the discovery of the hypocrisy of others, and the confusion of those who rejected Christ, when he was offered to them. *False christs* shall rise, and false prophets that shall preach them up; or such as, though they pretend not to be christs, set up for *prophets*, and undertake to foretell things to come, and they shall *show signs and lying wonders*; so early did the *mystery of iniquity* begin to work, 2 Thess. 2. 7. *They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; so plausible shall their pretences be, and so industrious shall they be to impose upon people, that they shall draw away many that were forward and zealous professors of religion, many that were very likely to have persevered; for nothing will be effectual to secure men but that foundation of God which stands immovably sure, *The Lord knows them that are his*, who shall be preserved when the faith of some is overthrown, 2 Tim. 2. 18, 19. *They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect*; but it is not possible to seduce them; the *election shall obtain*, whoever are *blinded*, Rom. 11. 7. But, in consideration hereof, let the disciples be cautious whom they give credit to; (v. 23.) But *take ye heed*. Christ knew that they were of the *elect*, who could not possibly be *seduced*, and yet he said to them, *Take heed*. An assurance

of persevering, and cautions against apostacy, will very well consist with each other. Though Christ said to them, *Take heed*, it doth not therefore follow, that their perseverance was doubtful, for they were kept by the power of God; and though their perseverance was secured, yet it doth not therefore follow, that this caution was needless, because they must be kept in the use of proper means. God will keep them, but they must keep themselves. "*I have foretold you all things; have foretold you of this danger, that, being forewarned, you may be fore-armed; I have foretold all things which you needed to have foretold to you, and therefore take heed of hearkening to such as pretend to be prophets, and to foretell more than I have foretold.*" The sufficiency of the scripture is a good argument against listening to such as pretend to inspiration.

21. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light: 25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. 27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven.

These verses seem to point at Christ's second coming, to judge the world; the disciples, in their question, had confounded the *destruction* of Jerusalem and the *end of the world*, (Matth. 24. 3.) which was built upon a mistake, as if the temple must needs stand as long as the world stands; this mistake Christ rectifies, and shows that the *end of the world in those days*, those other days you inquire about, the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be *after that tribulation*, and not coincident with it. Let those who live to see the Jewish nation destroyed, take heed of thinking that, because the Son of man doth not visibly come in the clouds *then*, he will never *so* come; no, he will come *after that*. And here he foretells,

1. The final dissolution of the present frame and fabric of the world: even of that part of it which seems least liable to change the upper part, the purer and more refined part; *The sun shall be darkened*, and the *moon shall no more give her light*; for they shall be quite outshone by the glory of the Son of man, Isa. 24. 23. *The stars of heaven*, that from the beginning had kept their place and regular motion, shall fall as leaves in autumn; and the *powers that are in heaven*, the heavenly bodies, the fixed stars, *shall be shaken*.

2. The visible appearance of the Lord Jesus, to whom the judgment of that day shall be committed; (v. 26.) *Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds*. Probably he will come over that very place where he sat when he said this; for the clouds are in the lower region of the air. He shall come with *great power and glory*, such as will be suited to the errand on which he comes. *Every eye shall then see him*.

3. The gathering together of all the elect to him; (v. 27.) He shall *send his angels*, and *gather together his elect* to him, to meet him in the air, 1 Thess. 4. 17. They shall be fetched from one end of the world to the other, so that none shall be missing from that general assembly; they shall be fetched *from the uttermost part of the earth*, most remote from the place where Christ's tribunal shall be set, and shall be brought to the *uttermost part of heaven*; so sure, so swift, so easy, shall their conveyance be, that

there shall none of them miscarry, though they were to be brought from the uttermost part of the earth one way, to the uttermost part of the heaven another way. A faithful Israelite shall be carried safely, though it were from the utmost border of the land of bondage to the utmost border of the land of promise.

28. Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, *even at the doors*. 30. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32. But of that day and *that hour* knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34. *For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey*, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35. Watch ye therefore: (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning:) 36. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch*.

We have here the application of this prophetic sermon; *now learn* to look forward in a right manner.

I. "As to the *destruction* of Jerusalem, *expect it to come very shortly*; as when the *branch of the fig tree becomes soft*, and the *leaves sprout forth*, ye expect that summer will come shortly, v. 28. When second causes begin to work, ye expect their effects in their proper order and time. So when *we see these things come to pass*, when ye see the Jewish nation embroiled in wars, distracted by false Christs and prophets, and drawing upon them the displeasure of the Romans, especially when ye see them persecuting you for your Master's sake, and thereby standing to what they did when they put him to death, and repeating it, and so filling up the measure of their iniquity, then say that their *ruin is nigh, even at the door*, and provide for yourselves accordingly." The disciples themselves were indeed all of them, except John, taken away from the evil to come, but the next generation, whom they were to train up, would live to see it; and by these instructions which Christ left behind him would be kept from sharing in it; "*This generation*, that is now rising up, shall not all be worn off before *all these things come to pass*, which I have told you of, relating to Jerusalem, and they shall begin to take effect now shortly. And as this destruction is near, and within ken, so it is sure. The decree is gone forth, it is a *consumption determined*, Dan. 9. 27. Christ doth not speak these things merely to frighten them; no, they are the declarations of God's fixed purpose; "*Heaven and earth shall pass away*, at the end of time; but *my words shall not pass away*, (v. 31.) not one of these predictions shall fail of a punctual accomplishment."

II. "As to the *end of the world*, do not inquire

when it will come, for it is not a question fit to be asked, for of *that day*, and *that hour*, *knoweth no man*; it is a thing at a great distance, the exact time is fixed in the counsel of God, but is not revealed by any work of God, either to *men* on earth, or to *angels in heaven*; the angels shall have timely notice to prepare to attend in that day, and it shall be published, when it comes to the children of men, with sound of trumpet; but, at present, *men and angels* are kept in the dark concerning the precise time of it, that they may both attend to their proper services in the present day." But it follows, *neither the Son*; but is there any thing which the Son is ignorant of? We read indeed of a book which was sealed, till the Lamb opened the seals; but did not he know what was in it, before the seals were opened? Was not he privy to the writing of it? There were those, in the primitive times, who taught from this text, that there were some things that Christ, as man, was ignorant of; and from thence were called *Agnoetæ*; they said, "It was no more absurd to say so, than to say that his human soul suffered grief and fear;" and many of the orthodox fathers approved of this. Some would evade it, by saying that Christ spake this in a way of prudential economy, to divert the disciples from further inquiry: but to this one of the ancients answers, *It is not fit to speak too nicely in this matter*—*ὁ δὲ πᾶν ἀκριβοῦράν*, so Leontius in Dr. Hammond, "It is certain (saith Archbishop Tillotson) that Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of any thing; but the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour did communicate itself to his human soul according to the divine pleasure, so that his human nature might sometimes not know some things; therefore Christ is said to grow in wisdom, (Luke 2. 52.) which he could not be said to do, if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things by virtue of its union with the divinity." Dr. Lightfoot explains it thus; Christ calls himself the Son, as Messiah. Now the Messiah, as such, was the Father's servant, (Isa. 42. 1.) sent and deputed by him, and, as such a one, he refers himself often to his Father's will and command, and owns he *did nothing of himself*; (John 5. 19.) in like manner he might be said to *know nothing of himself*. The revelation of Jesus Christ was what *God gave unto him*, Rev. 1. 1. He thinks, therefore, that we are to distinguish between those excellencies and perfections of his, which resulted from the personal union between the divine and human nature, and those which flowed from the anointing of the Spirit; from the former flowed the infinite dignity of his person, and his perfect freedom from all sin; but from the latter flowed his power of working miracles, and his foreknowledge of things to come. What therefore (saith he) was to be revealed by him to his church, he was pleased to take, not from the union of the human nature with the divine, but from the revelation of the Spirit, by which he yet knew not this, but *the Father* only knows it; that is, God only, the Deity; for (as Archbishop Tillotson explains it) it is not used here *personally*, in distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but as the Father is, *Fons et Princiſium Deitatis*—*The Fountain of Deity*.

III. "As to both, your duty is to *watch and pray*. Therefore the time is kept a secret, that you might be engaged to stand always upon your guard; (7. 33.) *Take ye heed* of every thing that would indispose you for your Master's coming, and would render your accounts *perplexed*, and your spirits so too; *watch* for his coming, that it may not at any time be a surprise to you, and *pray* for that grace which is necessary to qualify you for it, for *ye know not when the time is*; and you are concerned to be ready for that *every day*, which may come *any day*." This he illustrates, in the close, by a parable.

1. Our Master is gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of, v. 34. He is *as a man taking a far journey*; for he is gone to be away a great while, he has *left his house* on earth, and left his servants in their offices, given *authority* to some, who are to be overseers, and *work* to others, who are to be labourers. They that have *authority* given them, in that had *work* assigned them, for those that have the greatest *power* have the most *business*; and to them to whom he gave *work*, he gave some sort of *authority*, to do that work. And when he took his last leave, he *appointed the porter to watch*, to be sure to be ready to open to him at his return; and in the mean time to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his Master's friends and servants. Thus our Lord Jesus, when he *ascended on high*, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do him service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. *All* are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule.

2. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of his return, v. 35—37. (1.) Our Lord *will come*, and will come as the *Master of the house*, to take account of his servants, of their work, and of the improvement they have made. (2.) We know not *when he will come*; and he has very wisely kept us at uncertainty, that we might be always ready. We know not *when he will come*, just at what precise time; the *Master of the house*, perhaps, will come *at even*, at nine at night; or it may be *at midnight*, or at *cock-crow*ing, at three in the morning, or, perhaps, not till six. This is applicable to his coming to us, in particular, at our death, as well as to the general judgment. Our present life is a *night*, a dark night, compared with the other life; we know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age; but, as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and therefore, as soon as we are capable of expecting any thing, we must expect death. (3.) Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, he do not *find us sleeping*, secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging ourselves in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming; *ready* to say, He will not come, and *unready* to meet him. (4.) His coming will indeed be *coming suddenly*; it will be a great *surprise* and *terror* to those that are careless and asleep, it will come upon them as a thief in the night. (5.) It is therefore the indispensable duty of all Christ's disciples, to *watch*, to be awake, and keep awake; "*What I say unto you four*, (5. 3.) *I say unto all* the twelve, or rather to *you* twelve, I say unto all my disciples and followers; what I say to you of this generation, I say to all that shall believe in me, through your word, in every age. *Watch, watch*, expect my second coming, prepare for it, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless."

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter begins the account which this evangelist gives of the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus, which we are all concerned to be acquainted, not only with the history of, but with the mystery of. Here is, I. The plot of the chief priests and scribes against Christ, v. 1, 2. II. The anointing of Christ's head at a supper in Bethany, two days before his death, v. 3. . 9. III. The contract Judas made with the chief priests, to betray him, v. 10, 11. IV. Christ's eating of the passover with his disciples, his instituting of the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples, at and after supper, v. 12. . 31. V. Christ's agony in the garden, v. 32. . 42. VI. The betraying of him by Judas, and the apprehending of him by the chief priests' agents, v. 43. . 52. VII. His arraignment before the high priest, his conviction, and the indignities done him at that bar, v. 53. . 65. VIII. Peter's denying of him, v. 66. . 72. Most of which passages we had before, Matth. 26.

1. **A**FTER two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the Scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. 3. And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. 4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. 7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. 8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. 10. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

We have here instances,

I. Of the kindness of Christ's friends, and the provision made of respect and honour for him. Some friends he had, even in and about Jerusalem, that loved him, and never thought they could do enough for him, among whom, though Israel be not gathered, he is, and will be, glorious.

1. Here was one friend, that was so kind as to invite him to sup with him; and he was so kind as to accept the invitation, v. 3. Though he had a prospect of his death approaching, yet he did not abandon himself to a melancholy retirement from all company, but conversed as freely with his friends as usual.

2. Here was another friend, that was so kind as to anoint his head with very precious ointment, as he sat at meat. This was an extraordinary piece of respect paid him by a good woman that thought nothing too good to bestow upon Christ, and to do him honour. Now the scripture was fulfilled, *When the king sits at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof*, Cant. 1. 12. Let us anoint Christ as our Beloved, kiss him with a kiss of affection; and anoint him as our Sovereign, kiss him with a kiss of allegiance. Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him? It is observable that she took care to pour it all out upon Christ's head; She brake the box; (so we read it;) but, because it was an alabaster box, not easily broken, nor was it necessary that it should be broken, to get out the ointment,

some read it, she shook the box, or knocked it to the ground, to loosen what was in it, that it might be got out the better; or, She rubbed and scraped out all that stuck to the sides of it. Christ must be honoured with all we have, and we must not think to keep back any part of the price. Do we give him the precious ointment of our best affections? Let him have them all; love him with all the heart.

Now, (1.) There were those that put a worse construction upon this than it deserved. They called it a waste of the ointment, v. 4. because they could not have found in their hearts to put themselves to such an expense for the honouring of Christ, they thought that she was prodigal, who did. Note, As the vile person ought not to be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful; (Isa. 52. 5.) so the liberal and bountiful ought not to be called wasteful. They pretended it might have been sold, and given to the poor, v. 5. But as a common piety to the corban will not excuse from a particular charity to a poor parent, (ch. 7. 11.) so a common charity to the poor will not excuse from a particular act of piety to the Lord Jesus. What thy hand finds to do, that is good, do it with thy might.

(2.) Our Lord Jesus put a better construction upon it than, for aught that appears, was designed. Probably, she intended no more than to shew the great honour she had for him, before all the company, and to complete his entertainment. But Christ makes it to be an act of great faith, as well as great love; (v. 8.) "She is come aforehand, to anoint my body to the burying, as if she foresaw that my resurrection would prevent her doing it afterward." This funeral rite was a kind of presage of, or prelude to, his death approaching. See how Christ's heart was filled with the thoughts of his death, how every thing was construed with a reference to that, and how familiarly he spake of it upon all occasions. It is usual for those who are condemned to die, to have their coffins prepared, and other provision made for their funerals, while they are yet alive; and so Christ accepted this. Christ's death and burial were the lowest steps of his humiliation, and therefore, though he cheerfully submitted to them, yet he would have some marks of honour to attend them, which might help to take off the offence of the cross, and be an intimation how precious in the sight of the Lord the death of his saint is. Christ never rode in triumph into Jerusalem, but when he came thither to suffer; nor had ever his head anointed, but for his burial.

(3.) He recommended this piece of heroic piety to the applause of the church in all ages; *Wherever this gospel shall be preached, it shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her*, v. 9. Note, The honour which attends well-doing, even in this world, is sufficient to balance the reproach and contempt that are cast upon it. *The memory of the just is blessed and they that had trial of cruel mockings, yet obtained a good report*, Heb. 11. 36, 39. Thus was this good woman repaid for her box of ointment, *Nec oleum perdidit nec operam*—She lost neither her oil nor her labour. She got by it that good name which is better than precious ointment. Those that honour Christ he will honour.

II. Of the malice of Christ's enemies, and the preparation made by them to do him mischief.

1. The chief priests, his open enemies, consulted how they might put him to death, v. 1, 2. The feast of the passover was now at hand, and at that feast he must be crucified, (1.) That his death and sufferings might be the more public, and that all Israel, even those of the dispersion, who came from all parts to the feast, might be witnesses of it, and of the wonders that attended it. (2.) That the Anti-type might answer to the type. Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, and brought us out of the house of bondage, at the same time that the paschal lamb

was sacrificed, and Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was commemorated.

Now see, [1.] How *spiteful* Christ's enemies were; they did not think it enough to banish or imprison him, for they aimed not only to *silence* him, and *stop* his progress for the future, but to be re-venge'd on him for all the good he had done. [2.] How *subtle* they were; *Not on the feast day*, when the people are together; they do not say, *Let* they should be disturbed in their devotions, and diverted from them, but, *Let there should be an uproar*; (v. 2.) *lest* they should rise, and rescue him, and *fall foul* upon those that *attempt* any thing against him. They who *desired* nothing more than the *praise* of men, dreaded nothing more than the rage and displeasure of men.

2. Judas, his *disguised enemy*, contracted with them for the betraying of him, v. 10, 11. He is said to be *one of the twelve* that were Christ's family, intimate with him, trained up for the service of his kingdom; and he *went to the chief priests*, to tender his service in this affair.

(1.) That which he proposed to them, was, to *betray Christ* to them, and to give them notice when and where they might find him, and seize him, without making an *uproar among the people*, which they were afraid of, if they should seize him when he appeared *in public*, in the midst of his admirers. Did he know then what help it was they wanted, and where they were run aground in their counsels? It is probable that he did not, for the debate was held in their close *cabal*. Did they know that he had a mind to serve them, and make court to them? No, they could not imagine that any of his intimates should be so base; but Satan, who was entered into Judas, knew what occasion they had for him, and could guide him to be *guide to them*, who were contriving to *take Jesus*. Note, The spirit that works in all the children of disobedience, knows how to bring them in to the assistance one of another in a wicked project, and then to harden them in it, with the fancy that Providence favours them.

(2.) That which he proposed to himself, was, to *get money* by the bargain; he had what he aimed at, when they *promised to give him money*. Covetousness was Judas's master-lust, *his own iniquity*, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to *that*, and so conquered him. It is not said, They promised him *preferment*, (he was not ambitious of that,) but, They promised him *money*. See what need we have to double our guard against the sin that *most easily besets us*. Perhaps it was Judas's covetousness that brought him at first to *follow Christ*, having a promise that he should be cash-keeper, or purser, to the society, and he loved in his heart to be fingering money; and now, that there was money to be got on the other side, he was as ready to betray him as ever he had been to follow him. Note, Where the principle of men's professions of religion is carnal and worldly, and the serving of a secular interest, the very same principle, whenever the wind turns, will be the bitter root of a vile and scandalous apostacy.

(3.) Having secured the money, he set himself to make good his bargain; He sought *how he might conveniently betray him*, how he might *seasonably deliver him up*, so as to answer the intention of those who had hired him. See what need we have to be careful that we do not ensnare ourselves in sinful engagements. If at any time we be so ensnared in the words of our mouths, we are concerned to deliver ourselves by a speedy retreat, Prov. 6. 1—5. It is a rule in our law, as well as in our religion, that an *obligation to do an evil thing is null and void*; it binds to repentance, not to performance. See how the way of sin is down-hill—when men are *in*, they *must* on; and what *wicked* contrivances many have

in their sinful pursuits, to compass their designs *conveniently*! But such conveniences will prove mischiefs in the end.

12. And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? 13. And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15. And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 17. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? 20. And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish*. 21. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he had never been born. 22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. 23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. 25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. 27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet *will* not I. 30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shall deny me thrice. 31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's eating of the passover with his disciples, the night before he died, with the joys and comforts of which ordinance he prepared himself for his approaching sorrows, the full prospect of which did not indispose him for that solemnity. Note, No apprehension of trouble, come or coming, should put us by, or put us out of frame for, our attendance on holy ordinances, as we have opportunity for it.

1. Christ ate the passover at the *usual time*, when the other Jews did, as Dr. Whitby has fully made out, and not, as Dr. Hammond would have it, the night before. It was on the first day of that feast, which (taking in all the eight days of the feast) was called, *The feast of unleavened bread*, even that day when they *killed the passover*, v. 12.

2. He directed his disciples how to find the place where he intended to eat the passover; and hereby gave such another proof of his infallible knowledge of things distant and future, (which to us seem altogether *contingent*), as he had given when he sent them for the ass on which he rode in triumph; (*ch.* 11. 6.) "*Go into the city, (for the passover must be eaten in Jerusalem,) and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; (a servant sent for water to clean the rooms in his master's house;) follow him, go in where he goes, inquire for his master, the good man of the house, (v. 14.) and desire him to shew you a room.*" No doubt, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had rooms fitted up to be *let out*, for this occasion, to those that came out of the country to keep the passover, and one of those Christ made use of; not any friend's house, nor any house he had formerly frequented, for then he would have said, "*Go to such a friend,*" or, "*You know where we used to be, go thither and prepare.*" Probably, he went where he was not known, that he might be *undisturbed* with his disciples. Perhaps he notified it by a *sign*, to conceal it from Judas, that he might not know till he came to the place; and by *such a sign*, to intimate that he will dwell in the *clean heart*, that is, *washed as with pure water*. Where he designs to come, a pitcher of water must go before him; see Isa. 1. 16—18.

3. He ate the passover in an *upper room, furnished, $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\delta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ —laid with carpets*; so Dr. Hammond; it would seem to have been a very handsome *dining room*. Christ was far from affecting any thing that looked stately in eating his common meals; on the contrary, he chose that which was homely, sat down on the grass: but when he was to keep a sacred feast in honour of that, he would be at the expense of as good a room as he could get. God looks not at *outward pomp*, but he looks at the tokens and expressions of *inward reverence* for a divine institution, which, it is to be feared, those want, who, to save charges, deny themselves decencies in the worship of God.

4. He ate it *with the twelve*, who were his family, to teach those who have the charge of families, not only families of *children*, but families of *servants*, or families of *scholars*, or *pupils*, to keep up religion among them, and worship God with them. If Christ came *with the twelve*, then Judas was with them, though he was at this time contriving to betray his Master; and it is plain by what follows, (v. 20.) that he was there: he did not absent himself, lest he should have been suspected; had his *seat been empty* at this feast, they would have said, as Saul of David, *He is not clean, surely he is not clean*, 1 Sam. 20. 26. Hypocrites, though they know it is at their peril, yet crowd into special ordinances, to keep up their repute, and palliate their secret wickedness. Christ did not *exclude* him from the feast, though he *knew* his wickedness, for it was not, as yet, become public and scandalous. Christ,

designing to put the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* into the hands of men, who can judge according to outward appearance, would hereby both direct and encourage them, in their admissions to his table, to be satisfied with a justifiable profession, because they cannot discern the *root of bitterness* till it *springs up*.

II. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were *eating the passover*. It is probable that they had discourse, according to the custom of the feast, of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of the first-born, and were as pleasant as they used to be together on this occasion, till Christ told them that which would mix *trembling* with their *joys*.

1. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society of *their Master*; but he tells them that they must now presently lose him; *The Son of man is betrayed*; and they knew, for he had often told them, what followed—If he be *betrayed*, the next news you will hear of him, is, that he is *crucified and slain*; God hath determined it concerning him, and he agrees to it; *The Son of man goes, as it is written of him*, v. 21. It was *written* in the councils of God, and *written* in the prophecies of the Old Testament, not one jot or tittle of either of which can *fall to the ground*.

2. They were *pleasing* themselves with the society *one of another*, but Christ cast a damp upon the joy of that, by telling them, *One of you that eateth with me shall betray me*, v. 18. Christ said this, if it might be, to startle the conscience of Judas, and to awaken him to repent of his wickedness, and to draw back (for it was not too late) from the brink of the pit. But, for aught that appears, he, who was *most concerned* in the warning, was *least concerned* at it. All the rest were affected with it. (1.) They began to be *sorrowful*. As the remembrance of our former falls into sin, so the fear of the like again, doth often much imbitter the comfort of our spiritual feasts, and damp our joy. Here were the *bitter herbs*, with which this *passover feast* was taken. (2.) They began to be *suspicious* of themselves; they said *one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? They are to be commended for their charity*, that they were more jealous of themselves than of *one another*. It is the law of charity, to *hope the best*, (1 Cor. 13. 5, 7.) because we assuredly *know*, therefore we may justly *suspect*, more evil by ourselves than by our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said; they trusted more to *his words* than to *their own hearts*; and therefore do not say, "*I am sure it is not I,*" but, "*Lord, is it I?*" see if there be such a *way of wickedness in us*, such a *root of bitterness*, and discover it to us, that we may pluck up that *root*, and stop up that *wau*."

Now, in answer to their inquiry. Christ saith that, [1.] Which would make them easy; "*It is not you, nor you*"; it is this that now *dips with me in the dish*; the adversary and enemy is this wicked Judas." [2.] Which, one would think, should make Judas very *uneasy*. If he go on in his undertaking, it is upon the sword's point, for *woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed*; he is undone, for ever undone; his sin will soon *find him out*; and it were *better for him that he had never been born*, had never had a being, than such a miserable one as he must have. It is very probable that Judas encouraged himself in it with *this* thought, that his Master had often said he must be betrayed; "*And if it must be done, surely God will not find fault with him that doth it, for who has resisted his will?*" As that objector argues, Rom. 9. 19. But Christ tells him that this will be no shelter or excuse to him; *The Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him, as a lamb to the slaughter*; but *woe to that man by*

whom he is betrayed. God's decrees to permit the sins of men, and bring glory to himself out of them, do neither necessitate their sins, nor determine to them, nor will they be any *excuse* of the sin, or *mitigation* of the punishment. Christ was delivered indeed by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*; but, notwithstanding that, it is *with wicked hands that he is crucified and slain*, Acts 2. 23.

III. The institution of the Lord's Supper.

1. It was instituted in the close of a *supper*, when they were sufficiently fed with the *paschal lamb*, to shew that in the Lord's supper there is no *bodily rest* intended; to preface it with such a thing, is to revive Moses again. But it is food for the *soul* only, and therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a *sign*, is enough. It was at the close of the *passover supper*, which by this was evangelized, and then superseded and set aside. Much of the doctrine and duty of the eucharist is illustrated to us by the law of the passover; (Exod. 12.) for the Old-Testament institutions, though they do not *bind us*, yet *instruct us*, by the help of a gospel-key to them. And these two ordinances lying here so near together, it may be good to compare them, and observe how much shorter and plainer the institution of the Lord's supper is, than that of the passover was. Christ's yoke is easy in comparison with that of the ceremonial law, and his ordinances are more spiritual.

2. It was instituted by the *example* of Christ himself; not with the ceremony and solemnity of a law, as the ordinance of baptism was, after Christ's resurrection, (Matth. 28. 19.) with, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, by a power given to Christ *in heaven and on earth*; (v. 18.) but by the practice of our Master himself, because intended for those who are already his disciples, and taken into covenant with him: but it has the obligation of a law, and was intended to remain in full force, power, and virtue, till his second coming.

3. It was instituted with *blessing and giving of thanks*; the gifts of common providence are to be so received, (1 Tim. 4. 4, 5.) much more the gifts of special grace. He *blessed*, (v. 22.) and *gave thanks*, v. 23. At his other meals, he was wont to *bless*, and *give thanks*; (ch. 6. 41.—8. 7.) so remarkably, that he was known by it, Luke 24. 30, 31. And he did the same at this meal.

4. It was instituted to be a *memorial* of his death; and therefore he *brake* the bread, to show how it pleased the Lord to *bruise him*; and he called the *wine*, which is the blood of the grape, the *blood of the New Testament*. The death Christ died was a *bloody death*, and frequent mention is made of the *blood*, the *precious blood*, as the price of our redemption; for the blood is the *life*, and made *atonement for the soul*, Lev. 17. 11, 14. The pouring out of the blood was the most sensible indication of the *pouring out of his soul*, Isa. 53. 12. Blood has a *voice*; (Gen. 4. 10.) and therefore the blood is so often mentioned, because it was to *speak*. Heb. 12. 24. It is called the *blood of the New Testament*; for the covenant of grace became a *testament*, and of force by the death of Christ, the Testator, Heb. 9. 16. It is said to be *shed for many*, to justify *many*, (Isa. 43. 12.) to bring *many* sons to glory, Heb. 2. 10. It was sufficient for *many*, being of infinite value; it has been of use to *many*; we read of a great multitude which no man could number, that had all *washed their robes*, and *made them white in the blood of the Lamb*; (Rev. 7. 9, 14,) and still it is a *fountain opened*. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is *shed for many*! And if for *many*, why not for *me*? If for sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, the chief of sinners, then *why not for me*?

5. It was instituted to be a *ratification* of the co-

venant made with us in him, and a sign of the conveyance of those benefits to us, which were purchased for us by his death: and therefore he brake the bread to *them*, (v. 22.) and said, *Take, eat of it*: he gave the cup to *them*, and ordered them to *drink of it*, v. 23. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves, and let it be *meat* and *drink* to your souls, strengthening, nourishing, and refreshing, to you, and the support and comfort of your spiritual life.

6. It was instituted with an eye to the happiness of heaven, and to be an earnest and foretaste of that, and thereby to put our mouths out of taste for all the pleasures and delights of sense; (v. 25.) *I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, as it is a bodily refreshment. I have done with it. *No one, having tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires sensitive ones*, for he saith, *The spiritual is better*; (Luke 5. 39.) but *every one that hath tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires eternal ones*, for he saith, *These are better still*; and therefore let me *drink no more of the fruit of the vine*, it is dead and flat to those that have been made to *drink of the river* of God's pleasures; but, Lord, hasten the day, when I shall *drink it new and fresh in the kingdom of God*, where it shall be forever new, and in perfection.

7. It was closed with a *hymn*, v. 26. Though Christ was in the midst of his enemies, yet he did not, for fear of them, omit this sweet duty of singing psalms. Paul and Silas sang, when the *prisoners heard them*. This was an *evangelical song*, and gospel-times are often spoken of in the Old Testament, as times of rejoicing, and praise is expressed by *singing*. This was Christ's *swan-like song*, which he sang just before he entered upon his agony; probably, that which was usually sung, Ps. 114. to 119.

IV. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were returning to Bethany by moon-light. When they had *sung the hymn*, presently they *went out*. It was now near bed-time, but our Lord Jesus had his heart so much upon his suffering, that he would *not come into the tabernacle of his house*, nor *go up into his bed*, nor *give sleep to his eyes*, when that work was to be done, Ps. 132. 3, 4. The Israelites were forbidden to go out of their houses that night that they eat the passover, for fear of the sword of the destroying angel, Exod. 12. 22, 23. But because Christ, the *great Shepherd*, was to be *smitten*, he *went out* purposely to expose himself to the sword, as a Champion; they *evaded* the destroyer, but Christ *conquered* him, and brought *destructions to a perpetual end*.

1. Christ here foretells that in his sufferings he should be *deserted* by all his disciples; "*You will all be offended because of me, this night*. I know you will, (v. 27.) and what I tell you now, is no other than what the scripture has told you before; *I will smite the shepherd*, and then *the sheep will be scattered*." Christ knew this before, and yet welcomed them at his table; he foresees the falls and miscarriages of his disciples, and yet doth not refuse them. Nor should we be discouraged from coming to the Lord's supper, by the fear of relapsing into sin afterward; but, the greater our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by the diligent, conscientious use of holy ordinances. Christ tells them that they would be *offended in him*, would begin to question whether he were the Messiah or no, when they saw him *overpowered* by his enemies. Hitherto, they had *continued with him in his temptations*; though they had sometimes offended him, yet they had not been *offended in him*, nor turned their back upon him: but now the storm would be so great, that they would all *slip their anchors*, and be in danger of *shipwreck*. Some trials are more particular; (as Rev. 2. 10. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison*;) but others are more general, an

hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, Rev. 3. 10. The smiting of the shepherd is often the scattering of the sheep: magistrates, ministers, masters of families, if these are, as they should be, *shepherds* to those under their charge, when any thing comes amiss to them, the whole flock suffers for it, and is endangered by it.

But Christ encourages them with a promise that they shall rally again, shall return both to their duty and to their comfort; (v. 28.) "*After I am risen, I will gather you in from all the places whither you are scattered, Ezek. 34. 12. I will go before you into Galilee, will see our friends, and enjoy one another, there.*"

2. He foretells that he should be *denied* particularly by Peter. When they went out to go to the mount of Olives, we may suppose that they dropped Judas, (he stole away from them,) whereupon the rest began to think *highly* of themselves, that they stuck to their Master, when Judas quitted him. But Christ tells them, that though they should be kept by his grace from Judas's apostasy, yet they would have no reason to boast of their constancy. Note, Though God keeps us from being as bad as the worst, yet we may well be ashamed to think that we are not better than we are.

(1.) Peter is confident that he should not *do so ill* as the rest of the disciples; (v. 29.) *Though all should be offended, all his brethren here present, yet will not I.* He supposes himself not only stronger than others, but so much stronger, as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and bear up against it, *all alone*; to stand, though no body stood by him. It is bred in the bone with us, to think well of ourselves, and trust to our own hearts.

(2.) Christ tells him that he will do *worse* than any of them. They will all *desert* him, but he will *deny* him; not once, but *thrice*; and that presently; "*This day, even this night, before the cock crow thrice, thou wilt deny that ever thou hadst any knowledge of me, or acquaintance with me, as one ashamed and afraid to own me.*"

(3.) He stands to his promise; "*If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee*: I will adhere to thee, though it cost me my life;" and, no doubt, he thought as he said. Judas said nothing like this, when Christ told him he would betray him. He sinned by contrivance, Peter by surprise; he *devised the wickedness*; (Mic. 2. 1.) Peter was *over-taken in this fault*, Gal. 6. 1. It was ill done of Peter, to contradict his Master. If he had said, with fear and trembling, "Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil," it might have been prevented: but they were all thus confident; they who said, *Lord, is it I?* now said, *It shall never be I.* Being acquitted from their fear of betraying Christ, they were now secure. But he that thinks he stands, must learn to take heed lest he fall; and he that *girdeth on the harness*, not boast as though he had put it off.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, 34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. 35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground and prayed, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. 36. And he said, Abba, Father, all

things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? 38. Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. 41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42. Arise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Christ is here entering upon his sufferings, and begins with those which were the sorest of all his sufferings, those in his *soul*. Here we have him in his *agony*; this melancholy story we had in Matthew; this *agony* in soul was the *wormwood* and the *gall* in the *affliction* and *misery*; and thereby it appeared that no sorrow was *forced upon him*, but that it was what he *freely* admitted.

I. He retired for prayer; *Sit ye here*, (saith he to his disciples,) while I go a little further, and *pray*. He had lately prayed *with them*; (John 17.) and now he appoints them to withdraw while he goes to his Father upon an errand peculiar to himself. Note, Our praying with our families will not excuse our neglect of secret worship. When Jacob entered into his agony, he first *sent over all that he had*, and was *left alone*, and then *there wrestled a man with him*, (Gen. 32. 23, 24.) though he had been at prayer before, (v. 9.) it is likely, with his family.

II. Even into that retirement he took with him Peter and James and John, (v. 33.) three competent witnesses of this part of his humiliation; and though great spirits care not how few know any thing of their agonies, he was not ashamed that they should see. These three had boasted most of their ability and willingness to suffer with him: Peter here, in this chapter, and James and John: (ch. 10. 39.) and therefore Christ takes them to stand by, and see what a struggle he had with the *bloody baptism* and the *bitter chalice*, to convince them that they knew not what they said. It is fit that they who are most confident, should be *first* tried, that they may be made sensible of their folly and weakness.

III. There he was in a tremendous agitation; (v. 33.) *He began to be sore-amazed*—*ἐκθαμβήσθαι*, a word not used in Matthew, but very significant; it bespeaks something like that *horror of great darkness* which fell upon Abraham, (Gen. 15. 12.) or rather, something much worse, and more frightful. The *terrors of God set themselves in array against him*, and he allowed himself the actual and intense contemplation of them. Never was *sorrow* like unto his at that time; never any had such experience as he had had from eternity of divine favours, and therefore never any had, or could have, such a sense as he had of divine desertions. Yet there was not the least disorder or irregularity in this commotion of his spirits; his affections rose not tumultuously, but under direction, and as they were called up, for he had no corrupt nature to mix with them, as we have. If water have a sediment at the bot-

dom, though it may be clear while it stands still, yet, when shaken, it grows muddy; so it is with our affections; but pure water in a clean glass, though ever so much stirred, continues clear; and so it was with Christ. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it very probable that the devil did now appear to our Saviour in a visible shape, in his *own shape and proper colour*, to terrify and affright him, and to drive him from his hope in God, (which he aimed at in persecuting Job, a type of Christ, to make him *curse God, and die*;) and to deter him from the further prosecution of his undertaking; whatever hindered him from that, he looked upon as coming from Satan, Matth. 16. 23. When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said, He *departed from him for a season*, (Luke 4. 3.) intending another grapple with him, and in another way; finding that he could not by his flatteries allure him into sin, he would try by his terrors to affright him into it, and so make void his design.

IV. He made a sad complaint of this agitation. He said, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*. 1. He was made sin for us, and therefore was thus sorrowful; he fully knew the malignity of the sins he was to suffer for; and having the highest degrees of love to God, who was offended by them, and of love to man, who was damaged and endangered by them, now that those were set in order before him, no marvel that his soul was exceeding sorrowful. Now he was made to serve with our sins, and was thus wearied with our iniquities. 2. He was made a Curse for us; the curses of the law were transferred to him as our Surety and Representative, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action. And when his soul was thus exceeding sorrowful, he did, as it were, yield to them, and lie down under the load, until by his death he had satisfied for sin, and so for ever abolished the curse. He now tasted death, (as he is said to do, Heb. 2. 9.) which is not an extenuating expression, as if he did but taste it; no, he drank up even the dregs of the cup; but it is rather aggravating; it did not go down by wholesale, but he tasted all the bitterness of it. This was that fear which the apostle speaks of, (Heb. 5. 7.) a natural fear of pain and death, which it is natural to human nature to startle at.

Now the consideration of Christ's sufferings in his soul, and his sorrows for us, should be of use to us.

(1.) To *bitte* our sins. Can we ever entertain a favourable or so much as a slight thought of sin, when we see what impression sin (though but imputed) made upon the Lord Jesus? Shall that sit light upon our souls, which sat so heavy upon his? Was Christ in such an agony for our sins, and shall we never be in an agony about them? How should we look upon him whom we have pressed, whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness? It becomes us to be exceeding sorrowful for sin, because Christ was so, and never to make a mock at it. If Christ thus suffered for sin, let us arm ourselves with the same mind.

(2.) To sweeten our sorrows; if our souls be at any time exceeding sorrowful, through the afflictions of this present time, let us remember that our Master was so before us, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Why should we affect to drive away sorrow when Christ for our sakes courted it, and submitted to it, and thereby not only took out the sting of it, and made it tolerable, but put virtue into it, and made it profitable, (for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,) nay, and put sweetness into it, and made it comfortable. Blessed Paul was sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing. If we be exceeding sorrowful, it is but unto death; that will be the period of all our sorrows, if Christ be our's; when the eyes are closed, all tears are wiped away from them.

V. He ordered his disciples to keep with him,

not because he needed their help, but because he would have them to look upon him, and receive instruction; he said to them, *Tarry ye here, and watch*. He had said to the other disciples nothing but, *Sit ye here*; (v. 32.) but these three he bids to tarry and watch, as expecting more from them than from the rest.

VI. He addressed himself to God by prayer; (v. 35.) He fell on the ground, and prayed. It was but a little before this, that in prayer he lift up his eyes; (John 17. 1.) but here, being in an agony, he fell upon his face, accommodating himself to his present humiliation, and teaching us thus to abase ourselves before God; it becomes us to be low, when we come into the presence of the Most High. 1. As Man, he deprecated his sufferings, that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him; (v. 35.) "This short but sharp affliction, that which I am now this hour to enter upon, let man's salvation be, if possible, accomplished without it." We have his very words, (v. 36.) *Abba, Father*. The Syriac word is here retained, which Christ used, and which signifies, Father, to intimate what an emphasis our Lord Jesus, in his sorrows, laid upon it, and would have us to lay. It is with an eye to this, that St. Paul retains this word, putting it into the mouths of all that have the Spirit of adoption; they are taught to cry, *Abba, Father*, Rom. 8. 15. Gal. 4. 6. Father, all things are possible to thee. Note, Even that which we cannot expect to be done for us, we ought yet to believe that God is able to do; and when we submit to his will, and refer ourselves to his wisdom and mercy, it must be with a believing acknowledgment of his power, that all things are possible to him. 2. As Mediator he acquiesced in the will of God concerning them; "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. I know the matter is settled, and cannot be altered, I must suffer and die, and I bid it, welcome."

VII. He roused his disciples, who were dropped asleep while he was at prayer, v. 37, 38. He comes to look after them, since they did not look after him; and he finds them asleep, so little affected were they with his sorrows, his complaints, and prayers. This carelessness of their's was a presage of their further offence in deserting him: and it was an aggravation of it, that he had so lately commended them for continuing with him in his temptations, though they had not been without their faults. Was he so willing to make the best of them, and were they so indifferent in approving themselves to him? They had lately promised not to be offended in him; what! and yet mind him so little? He particularly upbraided Peter with his drowsiness; *Simon, sleepest thou? Kai tu, akataleipon—What thou, my son? Thou that didst so positively promise thou wouldst not deny me, dost thou slight me thus? From thee I expected better things. Couldst thou not watch one hour?*" He did not require him to watch all night with him, only for one hour. It aggravates our faintness and short continuance in Christ's service, that he doth not over-task us, nor weary us with it, Isa. 43. 23. He puts upon us no other burden than to hold fast till he comes; (Rev. 2. 24, 25.) and behold, he comes quickly, Rev. 3. 11.

As those whom Christ loves he rebukes when they do amiss, so those whom he rebukes he counsels and comforts. 1. It was a very wise and faithful word of advice which Christ here gave to his disciples; *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*, v. 38. It was bad to sleep when Christ was in his agony, but they were entering into further temptation, and if they did not stir up themselves, and fetch in grace and strength from God by prayer, they would do worse; and so they did, when they all forsook him, and fled. 2. It was a very kind and tender excuse that Christ made for them, "The spirit truly is

willing; I know it is, it is ready, it is forward; you would willingly keep awake, but you cannot." This may be taken as a reason for that exhortation, "Watch and pray; because, though the spirit is willing, I grant it is, you have sincerely resolved never to be offended in me,) yet the flesh is weak, and if you do not watch and pray, and use the means of perseverance, you may be overcome, notwithstanding." The consideration of the weakness and infirmity of our flesh should engage and quicken us to prayer and watchfulness, when we are entering into temptation.

VIII. He repeated his address to his Father; (v. 39.) He went again, and prayed, saying τὸν πατέρα λέγειν—the same word, or matter, or business; he spake to the same purport, and again the third time. This teaches us, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, Luke 18. 1. Though the answers to our prayers do not come quickly, yet we must renew our requests, and continue instant in prayer; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie, Hab. 2. 3. Paul when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan, besought the Lord thrice, as Christ did here, before he obtained an answer of peace, 2 Cor. 12. 8. A little before this, when Christ, in the trouble of his soul, prayed, Father, glorify thy name, he had an immediate answer by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again; but now he must come a second and a third time, for the visits of God's grace in answer to prayer, come sooner or later, according to the pleasure of his will, that we may be kept depending.

IX. He repeated his visits to his disciples. Thus he gave a specimen of his continued care for his church on earth, even when it is half asleep, and not duly concerned for itself, while he ever lives making intercession with his Father in heaven. See how, as became a Mediator, he passes and repasses between both. He came the second time to his disciples, and found them asleep again, v. 40. See how the infirmities of Christ's disciples return upon them, notwithstanding their resolutions, and overpower them notwithstanding their resistance; and what clogs those bodies of ours are to our souls, which should make us long for that blessed state in which they shall be no more our encumbrance. This second time he spake to them as before, but they wist not what to answer him: they were ashamed of their drowsiness, and had nothing to say in excuse for it. Or, they were so overpowered with it, that, like men between sleeping and waking, they knew not where they were or what they said. But, the third time, they were bid to sleep if they would; (v. 41.) "Sleep on now, and take your rest. I have now no more occasion for your watching, you may sleep, if you will, for me." It is enough; we had not that word in Matthew. "You have had warning enough to keep awake, and would not take it, and now you shall see what little reason you have to be secure." Ἀπέχεσθε, I discharge you from any further attendance; so some understand it; "Now the hour is come, in which I knew you would all forsake me, even take your course;" as he said to Judas. What thou doest, do quickly. The Son of man is now betrayed into the hands of sinners, the chief priests and elders; those worst of sinners, because they made a profession of sanctity. "Come, rise up, do not lie dozing there. Let us go and meet the enemy, for lo, he that betrayeth me, is at hand, and I must not now think of making an escape." When we see trouble at the door, we are concerned to stir up ourselves to get ready for it.

43. And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and

slaves, from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders. 44. And he that betrayed him, had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. 45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. 47. And one of them that stood by, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves, to take me? 49. I was daily with you in the temple, teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50. And they all forsook him, and fled. 51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

We have here the seizing of our Lord Jesus by the officers of the chief priests. This was what his enemies had long aimed at, they had often sent to take him; but he had escaped out of their hands, because his hour was not come, nor could they now have taken him, had he not freely surrendered himself. He began first to suffer in his soul, but afterward suffered in his body, that he might satisfy for sin, which begins in the heart, but afterward makes the members of the body instruments of unrighteousness.

I. Here is a band of rude miscreants employed to take our Lord Jesus, and make him a prisoner; a great multitude with swords and staves. There is no wickedness so black, no villany so horrid, but there may be found among the children of men fit tools to be made use of, that will not scruple to be employed; so miserably deprived and vitiated is mankind. At the head of this rabble is Judas, one of the twelve, one of these that had been many years intimately conversant with our Lord Jesus, had prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils, and yet betrayed him. It is no new thing for a very fair and plausible profession to end in a shameful and fatal apostacy. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer!

II. Men of no less figure than the chief priests and the Scribes, and the elders, sent them, and set them on work, who pretended to expect the Messiah, and to be ready to welcome him; and yet, when he is come, and has given undeniable proofs that it is he that should come, because he doth not make court to them, nor countenance and support their pomp and grandeur, because he appears not as a temporal Prince, but sets up a spiritual kingdom, and preaches repentance, reformation, and a holy life, and directs men's thoughts, and affections, and aims, to another world, they set themselves against him, and, without giving the credentials he produces an impartial examination, resolve to run him down.

III. Judas betrayed him with a kiss; abusing the freedom Christ used to allow his disciples, of kissing his cheek at their return, when they had been any time absent. He called him Master, Master, and kissed him; he said, Rabbi, Rabbi, as if he would be now more respectful to him than ever. It is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with being called of men Rabbi, Rabbi, (Math. 23. 7.) since it was with this compliment that Christ was betrayed. He

bid them take him, and *lead him away safely*. Some think that he spake this *ironically*, knowing that they could not secure him unless he pleased, that this Samson could break their bonds asunder as threads of tow, and make his escape, and then he should get the money, and Christ the honour, and no harm done; and I should think so too, but that Satan was *entered into him*, so that the worst and most malicious intention of this action is not too black to be supposed. Nay, he had often heard his Master say, that being *betrayed*, he should be *crucified*, and had no reason to think otherwise.

IV. They arrested him, and made him their prisoner; (v. 46.) *They laid their hands on him*, rude and violent hands, and *took him into custody*; triumphing, it is likely, that they had done that which had been often before attempted in vain.

V. Peter laid about him, in defence of his Master, and wounded one of the assailants, being for the present mindful of his promise, to venture his life with his Master. He was *one of them that stood by*, of them that *were with him*, (so the word signifies,) of those three disciples that were *with him* in the garden; he *drew a sword*, and aimed, it is likely, to cut off the head, but missed his blow, and only *cut off the ear*, of a servant of the high priest, v. 47. It is easier to *fight* for Christ than to *die* for him; but Christ's good soldiers overcome, not by taking away other people's lives, but by laying down their own, Rev. 12. 11.

VI. Christ argues with them that had seized him, and shews them the absurdity of their proceedings against him. 1. That they came out *against him*, as against a *thief*, whereas he was *innocent* of any crime; he *taught daily in the temple*, and if he had any wicked design, there it would some time or other have been discovered; nay, these officers of the *chief priests*, being *retainers* to the temple, may be supposed to have heard his sermons there; (I was *with you* in the temple;) and had he not taught them excellent doctrine, even his enemies themselves being judges? Were not *all the words of his mouth in righteousness*? Was there any thing *forward* or *perverse* in them? Prov. 8. 8. By his fruits he was known to be a good Tree; why then did they come out against him *as a thief*? 2. That they came to take him *thus privately*, whereas he was neither *ashamed* nor *afraid* to appear *publicly* in the temple. He was none of those *evil-doers* that *hate the light*, neither come *to the light*, John 3. 20. If their masters had any thing to say to him, they might meet him any day in the temple, where he was ready to answer all challenges, all charges; and there they might do as they pleased with him, for the priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus at midnight, and in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. This was to do as David's enemy, that *sat in the lurking places of the villages*, to *murder the innocent*, Ps. 10. 8. But this was not all. 3. They came *with swords and staves*, as if he had been in arms against the government, and must have the *posse comitatus* raised to reduce him. There was no occasion for those weapons; but they made this ado, (1.) To secure themselves from the rage of some; they came armed, because they *feared the people*; but *thus were they in great fear*, where *no fear was*, Ps. 53. 5. (2.) To expose him to the rage of others. By coming *with swords and staves* to take him, they represented him to the people (who are apt to take impressions this way) as a dangerous turbulent man, and so endeavoured to incense them against him, and make them cry out, *Crucify him, crucify him*, having no other way to gain their point.

VII. He reconciled himself to all this injurious, ignominious treatment, by referring himself to the Old-Testament predictions of the Messiah. I am

hardly used, *but I submit, for the scriptures must be fulfilled*, v. 49. 1. See here what a regard Christ had to the *scriptures*; he would bear any thing rather than that the least jot or tittle of the word of God should fall to the ground; and as he had an eye to them in his sufferings, so he has in his glory; for what is Christ doing in the government of the world, *but fulfilling the scriptures*? 2. See what use we are to make of the Old Testament; we must search for Christ, the true *Treasure hid in that field*: as the history of the New Testament expounds the prophecies of the Old, so the prophecies of the Old Testament illustrate the history of the New.

VIII. All Christ's disciples, hereupon, deserted him; (v. 50.) They all *forsook him, and fled*. They were very confident that they should adhere to him; but even good men know not what they will do, till they are tried. If it was such a comfort to him, as he had lately intimated, that they had hitherto *continued with him*, in his lesser trials, (Luke 22. 28.) we may well imagine what a grief it was to him, that they deserted him now in the greatest, when they might have done him some service—when he was abused, to protect him, and when accused, to witness for him. Let not those that suffer for Christ, think it strange, if they be thus deserted, and if all the herd shun the wounded deer; they are not better than their Master, nor can expect to be better used either by their enemies or by their friends. When St. Paul was in peril, none *stood by him*, but *all men forsook him*, 2 Tim. 4. 16.

IX. The noise disturbed the neighbourhood, and some of the neighbours were brought into danger, by the riot, v. 51, 52. This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists. Here is an account of a *certain young man*, who, as it should seem, was no disciple of Christ, nor, as some have imagined, a servant of the house wherein Christ had eaten the passover, who *followed him* to see what would become of him, (as the *sons of the prophets*, when they understood that Elijah was to be *taken up*, went to *view afar off*, 2 Kings 2. 7.) but some young man that lived near the garden, perhaps in the house to which the garden belonged. Now observe concerning him,

1. How he was *frightened out of his bed*, to be a *spectator* of Christ's sufferings. Such a *multitude*, so armed, and coming with so much fury, and in the dead of the night, and in a quiet village, could not but produce a great stir; this alarmed our *young man*, who perhaps thought there was some tumult or rising in the city, some *uproar among the people*, and had the curiosity to go, and see what the matter was, and was in such haste to inform himself, that he could not stay to dress himself, but threw a sheet about him, as if he would appear like a walking-ghost, in grave clothes, to frighten those who had frightened him, and ran among the thickest of them with this question, *What is to do here?* Being told, he had a mind to see the issue, having, no doubt, heard much of the fame of this Jesus; and therefore, when all his disciples had quitted him, he continued to *follow him*, desirous to *hear* what he would say, and *see* what he would do. Some think, that his having no other garment than this *linen cloth* upon his naked body, intimates that he was one of those Jews who made a greater profession of piety than their neighbours, in token of which, among other instances of austerity and mortification of the body, they used no clothes but one linen garment, which, though contrived to be modest enough, was thin and cold. But I rather think that this was not his constant wear.

2. See how he was *frightened into his bed* again, when he was in danger of being made a *sharer* in Christ's sufferings. His own disciples had run away from him; but this young man, having no concern

for him, thought he might securely attend him, especially being so far from being armed, that he was not so much as clothed; but the *young men*, the Roman soldiers, who were called to assist, *had hold of him*, for all was fish that came to their net. Perhaps they were now vexed at themselves, that they had suffered the disciples to *run away*, and, they being got out of their reach, they resolved to seize the first they could *lay their hands on*; though this young man was perhaps one of the *strictest sect* of the Jewish church, yet the Roman soldiers made no conscience of abusing him, upon this occasion. Finding himself in danger, he *left the linen cloth* by which they had *caught hold of him*, and *fled away naked*. This passage is recorded to shew what a barbarous crew this was, that was sent to seize Christ, and what a narrow escape the disciples had of falling into their hands, out of which nothing could have kept them, but their Master's care of them; *If ye seek me, let these go their way*, John 18. 8. It also intimates that there is *no hold* of those who are led by curiosity only, and not by faith and conscience, to follow Christ.

53. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the Scribes. 54. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59. But neither so did their witness agree together. 60. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62. And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64. Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

We have here Christ's arraignment, trial, conviction, and condemnation, in the *ecclesiastical* court, before the great Sanhedrim, of which the *high priest* was president, or judge of the court; the same Caiaphas that had lately adjudged it expedient he should

be put to death, guilty or not guilty, (John 11. 50.) and who therefore might justly be excepted against as partial.

I. Christ is hurried away to his *house*, his *palace* it is called, such state did he live in. And there, though in the dead of the night, *all the chief priests and elders, and Scribes*, that were in the secret, were *assembled*, ready to receive the prey; so sure were they of it.

II. Peter followed at a distance, such a degree of cowardice was his late courage dwindled into, v. 54. But when he came to the high priest's palace, he *sneakingly* went, and *sat with the servants*, that he might not be suspected to belong to Christ. The high priest's fire-side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company, for Peter, but it was his *entrance into a temptation*.

III. Great diligence was used to procure, for love or money, false witnesses against Christ. They had seized him as a malefactor, and, now they had him, they had no indictment to prefer against him, no crime to lay to his charge, but they *sought for witnesses against him*; pumped some with insinuating questions, offered bribes to others, if they *would accuse him*, and endeavoured to frighten others, if they *would not*, v. 55, 56. The chief priests and elders were by the law intrusted with the prosecuting and punishing of *false witnesses*; (Deut. 19. 16.) yet those were now ringleaders in a crime that tends to the overthrow of all justice. It is time to cry, *Help, Lord*, when the physicians of a land are its troubles, and those that should be the conservators of peace and equity, are the corrupters of both.

IV. He was at length charged with words spoken some years ago, which, as they were represented, seemed to threaten the *temple*, which they had made no better than an idol of; (v. 57, 58.) but the witnesses to this matter did not agree, (v. 59.) for one swore that he said, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days*; (so it is in Matthew;) the other swore that he said, *I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and within three days I will build, not it, but another made without hands*; now these two differ much from each other; *ὅτι ἰσχυρὴ ἡ μαρτυρία*—their testimony was not sufficient, nor equal to the charge of a capital crime; so Dr. Hammond; they did not accuse him of that upon which a *sentence of death* might be founded, no, not by the utmost stretch of their law.

V. He was urged to be his own Accuser; (v. 60.) *The high priest stood up in a heat, and said, Answerest thou nothing?* This he said under pretence of justice and fair dealing, but really with a design to insnare him, that they might *accuse him*, Luke 11. 53, 54.—20. 20. We may well imagine with what an air of haughtiness and disdain this proud high priest brought our Lord Jesus to this question; "Come you, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you: what have you now to say for yourself?" Pleased to think that he seemed silent, who had so often silenced those that picked quarrels with him. Still Christ *answered nothing*, that he might set us an example, 1. Of *patience* under calumnies and false accusations; when we are *reviled*, let us not *revile again*, 1 Pet. 2. 22. And, 2. Of *prudence*, when a man shall be made an *offender for a word*, (Isa. 29. 21.) and our defence made our *offence*; it is an evil time indeed when the prudent shall *keep silence*, (lest they make bad worse,) and *commit their cause to him that judgeth righteously*. But,

VI. When he was asked *whether he was the Christ*, he confessed, and denied not, that *he was*, v. 61, 62. He asked, *Art thou the Son of the Blessed?* that is, the Son of God? for, as Dr. Hammond observes, the Jews, when they named *God*, generally added, *blessed for ever*; and thence the *Blessed* is the title

of God, a peculiar title, and applied to Christ, Rom. 9. 5. And for the proof of his being the *Son of God*, he binds them over to his second coming; "*Ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power; that Son of man that now appears so mean and despicable, whom you see and trample upon, (Isa. 53. 2, 3.) you shall shortly see and tremble before.*" Now, one would think that such a word as this, which our Lord Jesus seems to have spoken with a grandeur and majesty not agreeable to his present appearance, (for through the thickest cloud of his humiliation some rays of glory were still darted forth,) should have startled the court, and at least, in the opinion of some of them, should have amounted to a *demurrer*, or *arrest of judgment*, and that they should have stayed process till they had considered further of it; when Paul at the bar reasoned of the *judgment to come*, the judge *trembled*, and adjourned the trial, Acts 24. 25. But these chief priests were so miserably blinded with malice and rage, that, like the horse rushing into the battle, they *mocked at fear*, and *were not affrighted*, neither *believed they that it was the sound of the trumpet*, Job 39. 22, 23. And see Job 15. 25, 26.

VII. The high priest, upon this confession of his, convicted him as a *Blasphemer*; (v. 63.) He *rent his clothes*—*χιτωνες αυτου*. Some think that the word signifies his pontifical vestments, which, for the greater state, he had put on, though in the night, upon this occasion. As before, in his enmity to Christ, he said he knew not what, (John 11. 51, 52.) so now he did he knew not what. If Saul's rending of Samuel's mantle was made to signify the rending of the kingdom from him, (1 Sam. 15. 27, 28.) much more did Caiaphas's rending of his own clothes signify the rending of the priesthood from him, as the rending of the veil, at Christ's death, signified the throwing of all open. Christ's clothes, even when he was crucified, were kept entire, and not rent; for when the Levitical priesthood was rent in pieces and done away, *This man, because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood.*

VIII. They agreed that he was a *Blasphemer*, and, as such, was guilty of a capital crime, v. 64. The question *seemed* to be put fairly, *What think ye?* But it was really *prejudged*, for the high priest had said, *Ye have heard the blasphemy*; he gave judgment first, who, as president of the court, ought to have voted last. So they all *condemned him to be guilty of death*; what friends he had in the great Sanhedrim did not appear, it is probable that they had not notice.

IX. They set themselves to abuse him, and, as the Philistines with Samson, to make sport with him, v. 65. It should seem that some of the priests themselves that had condemned him, so far forgot the dignity, as well as duty, of their place, and the gravity which became them, that they helped their servants in playing the fool with a condemned prisoner. This they made their diversion, while they *waited for the morning* to complete their villany. That *night of observations* (as the passover night was called) they *made a merry night of*. If they did not think it below them to abuse Christ, shall we think any thing below us, by which we may do him honour?

66. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: 67. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch: and the

cock crew. 69. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

We have here the story of Peter's denying Christ.

1. It began in *keeping at a distance* from him. Peter had followed *afar off*, (v. 54.) and now was *beneath in the palace*, at the lower end of the hall. Those that are *shy* of Christ are in a fair way to *deny him*, that are shy of attending on holy ordinances, shy of the communion of the faithful, and loath to be seen on the side of despised godliness.

2. It was occasioned by his associating with the high priest's servants, and sitting among them. They that think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to *suffer for him*, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn in to *sin against him*.

3. The temptation was, his being charged as a disciple of Christ; *Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth*, v. 67. *This is one of them*, (v. 69.) *for thou art a Galilean*, one may know that by thy speaking broad, v. 70. It doth not appear that he was *challenged* upon it, or in danger of being *prosecuted* as a criminal for it, but only *battered* upon it, and in danger of being ridiculed as a fool for it. While the chief priests were abusing the Master, the servants were abusing the disciples. Sometimes the cause of Christ seems to fall so much on the losing side, that every body has a stone to throw at it, and even the *objects gather themselves together against it*. When Job was on the dunghill, he was had in derision of those that were the *children of base men*, Job 30. 8. Yet, all things considered, the temptation could not be called *formidable*; it was only a *maid* that casually cast her eye upon him, and, for aught that appears, without design of giving him any trouble, said, *Thou art one of them*, to which he needed not to have made any reply, or might have said, "And if I be, I hope that is no treason."

4. The sin was very great; he *denied Christ before men*, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned him, and to have appeared in court a witness for him. Christ had often given notice to his disciples of his own sufferings; yet, when they came, they were to Peter as great a surprise and terror as if he had never heard of them before. He had often told them that they must *suffer* for him, must *take up their cross*, and follow him; and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering, upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lie, and swear, and do any thing, to avoid it. When Christ was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him; but now, that he is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him.

5. His repentance was very speedy. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was worst of all, for then he *curled and swore*, to confirm his denial; and that third blow, which, one would think, should

have stunned him, and knocked him down, started him, and roused him up. Then the cock crew the second time, which put him in mind of his Master's words, the warning he had given him, with that particular circumstance of the cock crowing twice; by recollecting that, he was made sensible of his sin, and the aggravations of it; and when he thought thereon, he wept. Some observe that this evangelist, who wrote, as some have thought, by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of Peter's sin as any of them, but more briefly of his sorrow, which Peter, in modesty, would not have to be magnified, and because he thought he could never sorrow enough for so great a sin. His repentance here is thus expressed *ἠρξάνθη ἰκκαία*, where something must be supplied. He added to weep, so some; making it a Hebraism; he wept, and the more he thought of it, the more he wept; he continued weeping; he flung out, and wept; burst out into tears; threw himself down, and wept; he covered his face, and wept, so some; cast his garment about his head, that he might not be seen to weep; he cast his eyes upon his Master, who turned, and looked upon him; so Dr. Hammond supplies it, and it is probable conjecture. Or, as we understand it, fixing his mind upon it, he wept. It is not a transient thought of that which is humbling, that will suffice, but we must dwell upon it. Or, what if this word should mean his laying load upon himself, throwing confusion into his own face; he did as the publican that smote his breast, in sorrow for sin; and this amounts to his weeping bitterly.

CHAP. XV.

What we read of the sufferings of Christ, in the foregoing chapter, was but the prologue or introduction; here we have the completing of them. We left him condemned by the chief priests; but they could only show their teeth, they could not bite. Here we have him, I. Arraigned and accused before Pilate the Roman governor, v. 1. . 5. II. Cried out against by the common people, at the instigation of the priests, v. 6. . 14. III. Condemned to be crucified immediately, v. 15. IV. Bantered and abused, as a Mock king, by the Roman soldiers, v. 16. . 19. V. Led out to the place of execution with all possible ignominy and disgrace, v. 20. . 24. VI. Nailed to the cross between two thieves, v. 25. . 28. VII. Reviled and abused by all that passed by, v. 29. . 32. VIII. Forsaken for a time by his Father, v. 33. . 36. IX. Dying, and rending the veil, v. 37, 38. X. Attested and witnessed to by the centurion and others, v. 39. . 41. XI. Buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, v. 42. . 47.

AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and Scribes, and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. 2. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he, answering, said unto him, Thou sayest it. 3. And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing. 4. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold, how many things they witness against thee. 5. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. 6. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as

he had ever done unto them. 9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews? 10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him from envy. 11. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the king of the Jews? 13. And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

Here we have,

I. A consultation held by the great sanhedrim for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met early in the morning about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out ways and means to get him put to death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an uproar among the people. The unwearied industry of wicked people in doing that which is evil, should shame us for our backwardness and slothfulness in that which is good. They that war against Christ and thy soul, are up early; How long then wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?

II. The delivering of him up a Prisoner to Pilate; they bound him. He was to be the great Sacrifice, and sacrifices must be bound with cords, Ps. 118. 27. Christ was bound, to make bonds easy to us, and enable us, as Paul and Silas, to sing in bonds. It is good for us often to remember the bonds of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was bound for us. They led him through the streets of Jerusalem, to expose him to contempt, who, while he taught in the temple, but a day or two before, was had in veneration; and we may well imagine how miserably he looked after such a night's usage as he had had; so buffeted, spit upon, and abused. Their delivering of him to the Roman power, was a type of the ruin of their church, which hereby they merited, and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, the covenant, and the oracles, of God, and the visible church-state, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up the King, they do, in effect, deliver up the kingdom of God, which is therefore, as it were, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ, to gratify the desires of the Romans, or to satisfy any jealousies of their's concerning him, it had been another matter; but they voluntarily betrayed him that was Israel's Crown, to them that were Israel's voke.

III. The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories; (v. 2.) "Art thou the king of the Jews? Dost thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom the Jews expect as a temporal prince?"—"Yea," saith Christ, "it is as thou sayest, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect." He is the King that rules and protects his Israel according to the Spirit, who are Jews inwardly by the circumcision of the Spirit, and the King that will restrain and punish the carnal Jews, who continue in unbelief.

IV. The articles of impeachment exhibited against him, and his silence under the charge and accusation. The chief priests forgot the dignity of their place, when they turned informers, and did in person accuse Christ of many things, (v. 3.) and witness against him, v. 4. Many of the Old-Testament prophets charge the priests of their times with great

wickedness, in which *well did they prophesy* of their priests; see Ezek. 22. 26. Hos. 5. 1.—6. 9. Mic. 3. 11. Zeph. 3. 4. Mal. 1. 6.—2. 8. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is said to be for the *iniquity of the priests that shed the blood of the just*, Lam. 4. 13. Note, Wicked priests are generally the worst of men. The better any thing is, the worse it is when it is corrupted. Lay-persecutors have been generally found more compassionate than ecclesiastics. These priests were very eager and noisy in their accusation: but Christ *answered nothing*, v. 3. When Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should, (v. 4.) yet still he stood mute, (v. 5.) he *answered nothing*, which Pilate thought very strange. He gave Pilate a direct answer, (v. 2.) but could not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alleged were notoriously false, and he knew Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Note, As Christ *speak* to admiration, so he *kept silence* to admiration.

V. The proposal Pilate made to the people, to have Jesus released to them, since it was the custom of the feast to grace the solemnity with the release of one prisoner. The people expected and demanded that he should do *as he had ever done to them*, (v. 8.) it was an ill usage, but they would have it kept up. Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered Jesus up *for envy*, because he had got such a reputation among the people as eclipsed their's, v. 10. It was easy to see, comparing the eagerness of the persecutors with the slenderness of the proofs, that it was not his *guilt*, but his *goodness*, not any thing *mischievous or scandalous*, but something *meritorious and glorious*, that they were provoked at. And therefore, hearing how much he was the Darling of the crowd, he thought that he might safely appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would be proud of rescuing him out of the priests' hands; and he proposed an expedient for their doing it without danger of an *uproar*; let them demand him to be *released*, and Pilate will readily do it, and stop the mouths of the priests with it—that the people insisted upon his release. There was indeed another prisoner, *one Barabbas*, that had an interest, and would have some votes; but he questioned not but Jesus would out-poll him.

VI. The unanimous outrageous clamours of the people to have *Christ put to death*, and particularly to have him *crucified*. It was a great surprise to Pilate, when he found the people so much under the influence of the priests, that they all agreed to desire that Barabbas might be *released*, v. 11. Pilate opposed it all he could; “*What will ye that I shall do to him whom ye call the King of the Jews? Would not ye then have him released too?*” v. 12. No, say they, *Crucify him*. The priests having put that in their mouths, they insist upon it; when Pilate objected, *Why, what evil has he done?* (a very material question in such a case,) they do not pretend to answer it, but *cried out the more exceedingly*, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, *Crucify him, crucify him*. Now the priests, who were very busy dispersing themselves and their creatures among the mob, to keep up the cry, promised themselves that it would influence Pilate two ways to condemn him. 1. It might incline him to believe *Christ guilty*, when there was so general an outcry against him. “*Surely,*” might Pilate think, “*he must needs be a bad man, whom all the world is weary of.*” He would now conclude that he had been *misinformed*, when he was told what an interest he had in the people, and that the matter was not so. But the priests had hurried on the prosecution with so much expedition, that we may suppose that they who were Christ's friends, and would have opposed this cry, were at the other end of the town, and knew nothing of the matter. Note,

It has been the common artifice of Satan, to put Christ and his religion into an ill name, and so to run them down. When once this sect, as they called it, comes to be *every where spoken against*, though *without cause*, then that is looked upon as *cause enough* to condemn it. But let us *judge* of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prejudice by common fame and the cry of the country. 2. It might induce him to condemn Christ, to *please the people*, and indeed for *fear of displeasing* them. Though he was not so *weak* as to be governed by their opinion, to believe him guilty, yet he was so *wicked* as to be swayed by their outrage, to condemn him though he believed him innocent; induced thereunto by reasons of state, and the wisdom of this world. Our Lord Jesus dying as a *Sacrifice for the sins of many*, he fell a sacrifice to the *rage of many*.

15. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. 16. And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Pretorium; and they call together the whole band, 17. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head; 18. And began to salute him, Hail, king of the Jews! 19. And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshipped him. 20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. 21. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Here,

I. Pilate, to gratify the Jews' malice, delivers Christ to be *crucified*, v. 15. *Willing to content the people*, to do *enough* for them, (so the word is,) and make them easy, that he might keep them quiet, he *released Barabbas unto them*, who was the scandal and plague of their nation, and *delivered Jesus to be crucified*, who was the Glory and Blessing of their nation. Though he *had scourged him* before, hoping that would *content* them, and then not designing to crucify him, yet he went on to that; for no wonder that he who could persuade himself to *chastise* one that was innocent, (Luke 23. 16.) could by degrees persuade himself to crucify him.

Christ was *crucified*, for that was, 1. A *bloody death*, and *without blood no remission*, Heb. 9. 22. The blood is the *life*; (Gen. 9. 4.) it is the *vehicle of the animal spirits*, which connect the soul and body, so that the exhausting of the blood is the exhausting of the life. Christ was to lay down *his life* for us, and therefore shed *his blood*. Blood made *atonement for the soul*, (Lev. 17. 11.) and therefore in every sacrifice of propitiation special order was given for the *pouring out of the blood*, and the *sprinkling of that before the Lord*. Now, that Christ might answer all these types, he *shed his blood*. 2. It was a *painful death*; the pains were exquisite and acute, for death made its assaults upon the vitals by the exterior parts, which are *quickest of sense*. Christ died, so as that he might *feel himself die*, because he was to be both the Priest and the Sacrifice; so that he might be *active* in dying, because he was to *make his soul an offering* for sin. Tully calls crucifixion, *Terrimum supplicium*—A most tremen-

dous punishment: Christ would meet death in its greatest terror, and so conquer it. 3. It was a *shameful* death, the death of slaves, and the vilest malefactors; so it was accounted among the Romans. The *cross* and the *shame* are put together. God having been injured in his honour by the sin of man, it is *in his honour* that Christ makes him *satisfaction*, not only by denying himself in, and divesting himself of, the honours due to his divine nature, for a time, but by submitting to the greatest reproach and ignominy the human nature was capable of being loaded with. Yet this was not the worst. 4. It was a *curled* death; thus it was branded by the Jewish law; (Deut. 21. 23.) *He that is hanged is accursed of God*, is under a particular mark of God's displeasure. It was the death that Saul's sons were put to, when the guilt of their father's bloody house was to be expiated, 2 Sam. 21. 6. Haman and his sons were *hanged*, Esth. 7. 10.—9. 13. We do not read of any of the prophets of the Old Testament that were *hanged*; but now that Christ has submitted to be *hanged upon a tree*, the reproach and curse of that kind of death are quite rolled away, so that it ought not to be any hindrance to the comfort of those who die either innocently or penitently, nor any diminution from, but rather an addition to, the glory of those who die martyrs for Christ, to be, as he was, *hanged upon a tree*.

II. Pilate, to gratify the gay humour of his Roman soldiers, delivered him to them, to be abused and spitefully treated, while they were preparing for the execution. They called together the *whole regiment* that was then in waiting, and they went into an inner hall, where they ignominiously abused our Lord Jesus, as a King, just as in the High Priest's hall his servants had ignominiously abused him as a Prophet and Saviour. 1. Do kings wear robes of purple or scarlet? *They clothed him with purple*. This abuse done to Christ in his apparel should be an intimation to christians, not to make the putting on of apparel *their adorning*, 1 Pet. 3. 4. Shall a purple or scarlet robe be matter of pride to a christian, which was matter of reproach and shame to Christ? 2. Do kings wear *crowns*? *They platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head*. A crown of straw, or rushes, would have been banter enough; but this was pain also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory which he merited. Let us be *taught* by these *thorns*, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth, to hate sin, and be uneasy under it, and to be in love with Jesus Christ, who is here a Lily among thorns. If we be at any time afflicted with a *thorn in the flesh*, let it be our comfort, that our great High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having himself known what *thorns in the flesh* meant. 3. Are kings attended with the acclamations of their subjects, *O king, live for ever*? That also is mimicked; they saluted him with, "*Hail, King of the Jews*"; such a Prince, and such a people, even good enough for one another." 4. Kings have *sceptres* put into their hand, marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity; to resemble that, they put a *reed in his right hand*. Those who despise the authority of the Lord Jesus, as not to be observed and obeyed, who regard not either the precepts of his word, or the threatenings of his wrath, do, in effect, *put a reed in his hand*; nay, and, as these here, *smite him on the head* with it, such is the indignity they do him. 5. Subjects, when they swear allegiance, were wont to *kiss* their sovereign; and this they offered to do, but, instead of that, *spit upon him*. 6. Kings used to be addressed upon the *knee*; and this also they brought into the jest, they *bowed the knee, and worshipped him*; this they did in scorn, to make themselves and one another laugh. We were by sin become liable to *everlasting shame and contempt*, to deliver us from which,

our Lord Jesus submitted to this shame and contempt for us. He was thus mocked, not in *his own clothes*, but in another's, to signify that he suffered not for his own sin; the crime was ours, the shame his. Those who pretend subjection to Christ, but at the same time give themselves up to the service of the world and the flesh, do, in effect, the same that they did, who bowed the knee to him in mockery, and abused him with, *Hail, King of the Jews*, when they said, *We have no king but Cæsar*. Those that bow the knee to Christ, but do not bow the soul, that *draw nigh to him with their mouths, and honour him with their lips*, but *their hearts are far from him*, put the same affront upon him that these here did.

III. The soldiers at the hour appointed, led him away from Pilate's judgment-hall to the place of execution, (τ. 20.) as a Sheep to the slaughter; he was *led forth with the workers of iniquity*, though he did no sin. But lest his death under the load of his cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the further cruelties they intended, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He *passed by, coming out of the country or out of the fields*, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us suddenly, and we be surprised by them. The cross was a very troublesome, unwieldy load; but he that carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have his name upon record in the book of God, though otherwise an obscure person; so that, wherever this gospel is preached, there shall this be told for a memorial of him: in like manner, though *no affliction, no cross, for the present, be joyous, but grievous*, yet afterward it yields a crown of glory to them that are exercised thereby.

22. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a scull. 23. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. 24. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25. And it was the third hour; and they crucified him. 26. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 27. And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. 29. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30. Save thyself, and come down from the cross. 31. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the king of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

We have here the *crucifixion* of our Lord Jesus.

I. The *place* where he was crucified; it was called *Golgotha—the place of a scull*; some think, because of the heads of malefactors that were there cut off; it was the common place of execution, as Tyburn, for

he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. I know not how to give any credit to it, but divers of the ancients mention it as a current tradition, that in this place our first father Adam was buried, and they think it highly congruous that there Christ should be crucified; for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius, (great names,) take notice of it; nay, Cyprian adds, *Credetur a his—Many good people believe that the blood of Christ crucified did trickle down upon the scull of Adam, who was buried in the same place. Something more credible is the tradition, that this mount Calvary was that mountain in the land of Moriah, (and in the land of Moriah it certainly was, for so the country about Jerusalem was called,) on which Isaac was to be offered; and the ram was offered instead of him; and then Abraham had an eye to this day of Christ, when he called the place Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide, expecting that so it would be seen in the mount of the Lord.*

II. The time when he was crucified; it was the *third hour*, v. 25. He was brought before Pilate about the sixth hour, (John 19. 14.) according to the Roman way of reckoning, which John uses, with which ours at this day agrees, that is, at six o'clock in the morning; and then, at the *third hour*, according to the Jews' way of reckoning, that is, about nine of the clock in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. Dr. Lightfoot thinks the *third hour* is here mentioned, to intimate an aggravation of the wickedness of the priests, that they were here prosecuting Christ to the death, though it was after the *third hour*, when they ought to have been attending the service of the temple, and offering the peace-offerings; it being the first day of the *feast of unleavened bread*, when there was to be a *holy convocation*. At that very time, when they should have been, according to the duty of their place, presiding in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it. Note, There are many who pretend to be *for the church*, who yet care not how seldom they go to church.

III. The indignities that were done him, when he was nailed to the cross; as if that had not been ignominious enough, they added several things to the ignominy of it.

1. It being the custom to give *wine* to persons that were to be put to death, they mingled his with *myrrh*, which was bitter, and made it *nauseous*: he tasted it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness of it, but not the benefit of it.

2. The garments of those that were crucified, being, as with us, the executioner's fee, the soldiers cast lots upon his garments, (v. 24.) threw dice (as our soldiers do upon a drum-head) for them: so making themselves merry with his misery, and sitting at their sport while he was hanging in pain.

3. They set a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him both justice and honour, *The King of the Jews*, v. 26. Here was no crime alleged, but his sovereignty owned. Perhaps Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ as a baffled King, or upon the Jews, who by their importunity had forced him, against his conscience, to condemn Christ, as a people that deserved no better a King than he seemed to be: however, God intended it to be the proclaiming even of Christ upon the cross, the *King of Israel*; though Pilate knew not what he wrote, any more than Caiaphas what he said, John 11. 51. Christ crucified is King of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even then when he hung on the cross, he was like a king, conquering his and his people's enemies, and triumphing over them, Col. 2. 15. Now he

was writing his laws in his own blood, and preparing his favours for his subjects. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a King, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites indeed.

4. They crucified *two thieves* with him, *one on his right hand, the other on his left*, and him in the midst as the worst of the three; (v. 27.) so great a degree of dishonour did they hereby intend him. And, no doubt, it gave him disturbance too. Some that have been imprisoned in the common gaols, for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than of any other of the grievances of their prison. Now, in the midst of such our Lord Jesus was crucified; while he lived he had, as there was occasion, associated with sinners to do them good; and now when he died, he was for the same purpose joined with them, for he came into the world, and went out of it, to save sinners, even the chief. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it, v. 28. In that famous prediction of Christ's sufferings, (Isa. 53. 12.) it was foretold that he should be numbered with the transgressors, because he was made *Sin for us*.

5. The spectators, that is, the generality of them, instead of condoling with him in his misery, added to it by insulting over him. Surely never was such an instance of barbarous inhumanity toward the vilest malefactor: but thus the devil shewed the utmost rage against him, and thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him.

(1.) Even they that passed by, that were no way concerned, *railed on him*, v. 29. If their hearts were so hardened, that their compassions were not moved with such a spectacle, yet they should have thought it enough to have their curiosity gratified; but that will not serve: as if they were not only divested of all humanity, but were devils in human shape, they taunted him, and expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him, and shot thick at him their arrows, even bitter words. The chief priests, no doubt, put these sarcasms into their mouths, *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, now, if thou canst, save thyself, and come down from the cross*. They triumph, as if, now that they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his *destroying the temple*; whereas the temple of which he spake he was now *destroying*, and did within *three days build it up*; and the temple of which *they* spake, he did by men, that were his sword and his hand, destroy not many years after. When secure sinners think the danger is over, it is then most ready to seize them: the day of the Lord comes as a thief upon those that deny his coming, and say, Where is the promise of it? much more upon those that defy his coming, and say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work.

(2.) Even the chief priests, who, being taken from among men, and ordained for men, should have compassion even on those that are out of the way, should he tender of those that are suffering and dying, (Heb. 5. 1, 2.) yet they poured vinegar, instead of oil, into his wounds, they talked to the grief of him whom God had smitten, (Ps. 69. 26.) they mocked him, they said, *He saved others, healed and helped them, but now it appears that it was not by his own power, for himself he cannot save*. They challenge him to come down from the cross, if he could, v. 32. Let them but see that, and they would believe; whereas they would not believe, when he gave them a more convincing sign than that, when he came up from the grave. These chief priests, one would think, might now have found themselves other work to do: if they would not go to their duty

in the temple, yet they might have been employed in an office not foreign to their profession; though they would not offer any counsel or comfort to the Lord Jesus, yet they might have given some help to the thieves in their dying moments; (the monks and priests in Popish countries are very officious about criminals broken upon the wheel, a death much like that of the cross;) but they did not think that their business.

(3.) Even they that were crucified with him reviled him; (v. 32.) one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land, until the ninth hour. 34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani! which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. 39. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 40. There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Joses, and Salome; 41. (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Here we have an account of Christ's dying, how his enemies abused him, and God honoured him, at his death.

I. There was a thick darkness over the whole land, (some think over the whole earth,) for three hours, from noon till three of the clock. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Amos 8. 9.) *I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and will darken the earth in the clear day;* and Jer. 15. 9. *Her sun is gone down while it was yet day.* The Jews had often demanded of Christ a sign from heaven; and now they had one, but such a one as signified the blinding of their eyes. It was a sign of darkness that was come, and coming, upon the Jewish church and nation. They were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of Righteousness, which was now setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; and what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness? This intimated to them, that the things which belonged to their peace were now hid from their eyes, and that the day of the Lord was at hand, which should be to them a day of darkness and gloominess, Joel 2. 1, 2. It was the power of darkness that they were now under, the works of darkness that they were now doing; and such as this should their doom justly be, who loved darkness rather than light.

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II. Toward the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus, in the agony of his soul, cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* v. 34. The darkness signified the present cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. Mr. Fox, in his *Acts and Monuments*, (vol. 3. p. 166.) tells of one Dr. Hunter, a martyr in queen Mary's time, who, being fastened to the stake, to be burnt, put up this short prayer, *Son of God, shame upon me;* and immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of a dark cloud, so full in his face, that he was forced to look another way, which was very comfortable to him. But our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was denied the light of the sun, when he was in his sufferings, to signify the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance. And this he complained of more than any thing; he did not complain of his disciples' forsaking him, but of his Father's, 1. Because this wounded his spirit; and that is a thing hard to bear; (Prov. 18. 14.) this brought the waters into his soul. Ps. 69. 1—3. 2. Because in this especially he was made sin for us; our iniquities had deserved indignation and wrath upon the soul, (Rom. 2. 7.) and therefore Christ, being made a sacrifice, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but bear hard indeed upon him who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was always his delight. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes, in extraordinary cases, to consume the sacrifices; (as Lev. 9. 24. 2 Chron. 7. 1. 1 Kings 18. 38.) and it was always a token of God's acceptance. The fire that should have fallen upon the sinner, if God had not been pacified, fell upon the sacrifice, as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted from him this loud and bitter cry. When Paul was to be offered, as a sacrifice for the service of saints, he could joy and rejoice; (Phil. 2. 17.) but it is another thing to be offered as a sacrifice for the sin of sinners. Now, at the sixth hour, and so to the ninth, the sun was darkened by an extraordinary eclipse; and if it be true, as some astronomers compute, that in the evening of this day on which Christ died there was an eclipse of the moon, that was natural and expected, in which seven digits of the moon were darkened, and it continued from five o'clock till seven, it is remarkable, and yet further significant of the darkness of the time that then was. When the sun shall be darkened, the moon also shall not give her light.

III. Christ's prayer was bantered by them that stood by; (v. 35, 36.) because he cried, *Eli, Eli,* or, (as Mark has it, according to the Syriac dialect,) *Eloi, Eloi,* they said, *He calls for Elias,* though they knew very well what he said, and what it signified, *My God, my God.* Thus did they represent him as *fraying to saints,* either because he had abandoned God, or God had abandoned him; and hereby they would make him more and more odious to the people. One of them filled a sponge with vinegar, and reached it up to him upon a reed; "Let him cool his mouth with that, it is drink good enough for him;" v. 36. This was intended for a further affront and abuse to him; and whoever it was that checked him who did it, did but add to the reproach; "Let him alone; he has called for Elias. let us see whether Elias will come to take him down; and if not, we may conclude that he also hath abandoned him."

IV. Christ did again cry with a loud voice, and so gave up the ghost, v. 37. He was now commending his soul into his Father's hands; and though God is not moved with any bodily exercise, yet this loud voice signified the great strength and ardency of affection wherewith he did it; to teach us, in

every thing wherein we have to do with God, to put forth our utmost vigour, and to perform all the duties of religion, particularly that of *self-resignation*, with our whole heart and our whole soul; and then, though speech fails, that we cannot *cry with a loud voice*, as Christ did, yet if God be the *Strength of the heart*, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly *dead*, for he *gave up the ghost*; his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body a breathless clod of clay.

V. Just at that instant that Christ died upon *mount Calvary*, the veil of the temple was rent in twain *from the top to the bottom*, v. 38. This spake a great deal, 1. Of terror to the unbelieving Jews; for it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after; it was like the cutting asunder of the *staff of beauty*, (for this veil was exceeding splendid and glorious, Exod. 26. 31.) and that was done at the same time when they gave for his price *thirty pieces of silver*, (Zech. 11. 10, 12.) to break the covenant which he had made with that people. Now it was time to cry, *Ichabod, The glory is departed from Israel*. Some think that that story which Josephus relates, of the temple-door opening of its own accord, with that voice, *Let us depart hence*, some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, is the same with this; but that is not probable: however this had the same signification, according to that, (Hos. 5. 14.) *I will tear, and go away*. 2. It speaks a deal of comfort to all believing christians, for it signified the consecrating and laying open to us of a *new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*.

VI. The centurion who commanded that detachment which had the oversight of the execution, was convinced, and confessed that this Jesus was the *Son of God*, v. 39. One thing that satisfied him, was, that he *so cried out and gave up the ghost*: that one who was ready to give up the ghost, should be able to cry out so, was very surprising. Of all the sad spectacles of this kind he never observed the like; and that one who had strength to cry so loud, should yet immediately give up the ghost, this also made him wonder; and he said, to the honour of Christ, and the shame of those that abused him, *Truly this man was the Son of God*. But what reason had he to say so? I answer, 1. He had reason to say that he suffered *unjustly*, and had a great deal of wrong done him. Note, He suffered for saying that he was the *Son of God*; and it was true, he did say so, so that he suffered unjustly, as it was plain by all the circumstances of his sufferings that he did, then what he said was true, and he was indeed the *Son of God*. 2. He had reason to say that he was a *Favourite of heaven*, and one for whom the Almighty Power was particularly engaged, seeing how Heaven did him honour at his death, and frowned upon his persecutors. "Surely," thinks he, "this must be some Divine Person, highly beloved of God." This he expressed by such words as denote his eternal generation as God, and his special designation to the office of Mediator, though he meant not so. Our Lord Jesus, even in the depth of his sufferings and humiliation, was the Son of God, and was declared to be so *with power*.

VII. There were some of his friends, the good women especially, that attended him; (v. 40, 41.) *There were women looking on afar off: the men durst not be seen at all, the mob was so very outrageous; Currenti cede furori—Give way to the raging torrent*, they thought, was good counsel now. The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief. Some of these women are here named. *Mary Magdalene* was one; she had been his patient, and owed all her comfort to his power and goodness, which rescued her out of the possession of seven devils, in gratitude for

which she thought she could never do enough for him. *Mary* also was there, *the mother of James the little, Jacobus parvus*, so the word is; probably he was so called, because he was, like Zaccheus, little of stature. This *Mary* was the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, sister to the virgin *Mary*. These women had followed Christ *from Galilee*, though they were not required to attend the feast, as the males were; but it is probable that they came, in expectation that his temporal kingdom would now shortly be set up, and big with hopes of preferment for themselves, and their relations under him. It is plain that the mother of Zebedee's children was so; (Matth. 20. 21.) and now to see *him* upon a cross, whom they thought to have seen upon a throne, could not but be a great disappointment to them. Note, Those that follow Christ, in expectation of great things in this world by him, and by the profession of his religion, may probably live to see themselves sadly disappointed.

42. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43. Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47. And *Mary Magdalene* and *Mary the mother of Joses* beheld where he was laid.

We are here attending the funeral of our Lord Jesus, a solemn, mournful funeral. O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it! Observe,

1. How the body of Christ was *begged*. It was, as the dead bodies of malefactors are, at the disposal of the government. Those that hurried him to the cross, designed he should make *his grave with the wicked*: but God designed he should make it *with the rich*, (Isa. 53. 9.) and so he did. We are here told,

1. When the body of Christ was begged, in order to its being buried, and why such haste was made with the funeral; *The even was come*, and it was *the preparation*, that is, *the day before the sabbath*, v. 42. The Jews were more strict in the observation of the sabbath than of any other feast; and therefore though this day was itself a *feast-day*, yet they observed it more religiously as the *eve* of the sabbath; when they prepared their houses and tables for the *splendid and joyful* solemnizing of the sabbath day. Note, The day before the sabbath should be a day of preparation for the sabbath, not of our houses and tables, but of our hearts, which, as much as possible, should be *freed* from the cares and business of the world, and *fixed*, and put in frame for the service and enjoyment of God. Such work is to be done, and such advantages are to be gained on the sabbath-day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it a day before; nay, the whole week should be divided between the improvement of the foregoing sabbath and the preparation for the following sabbath

2. Who it was that begged the body, and took care for the decent interment of it; it was *Joseph of Arimathea*, who is here called an *honourable counsellor*, (v. 43.) a person of character and distinction, and in an office of public trust; some think in the *state*, and that he was one of Pilate's privy council; his post rather seems to have been in the *church*, he was one of the *great Sanhedrim* of the Jews, or one of the high priest's council. He was *ἰσχυρῶς βουλευτής*—*a counsellor that conducted himself in his place as did become him*. Those are truly honourable, and those only, in places of power and trust, who make conscience of their duty, and whose deportment is agreeable to their preferment. But here is a more shining character put upon him; he was one that *waited for the kingdom of God*, the kingdom of grace on earth, and of glory in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, Those who *wait for the kingdom of God*, and hope for an interest in the privileges of it, must shew it by their forwardness to own Christ's cause and interest, even then when it seems to be crushed and run down. Observe, Even among the *honourable counsellors* there were some, there was one at least, that waited for the kingdom of God, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this necessary service, when none of Christ's disciples could, or durst, undertake it, having neither purse, nor interest, nor courage, for it. *Joseph went in boldly to Pilate*; though he knew how much it would affront the chief priests, who had loaded him with so much reproach, to see any honour done him, yet he *put on courage*; perhaps at first he was a little afraid, but *τῆλεπιστά*—*taking heart on it*, he determined to shew this respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus, let the worst come to the worst.

3. What a surprise it was to Pilate to hear that he was *dead*, (Pilate, perhaps, expecting that he would have saved himself, and come down from the cross,) especially that he was *already dead*, that one, who seemed to have more than ordinary vigour, should so soon yield to death. Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous; for from first to last his name was called *Wonderful*. Pilate doubted (so some understand it) whether he were yet dead or no, fearing lest he should be imposed upon, and the body should be *taken down alive*, and recovered, whereas the sentence was, as with us, to hang *till the body be dead*. He therefore called the centurion, his own officer, and asked him *whether he had been any while dead*, (v. 44.) whether it was so long since they perceived any sign of life in him, any breath or motion, that they might conclude he was dead past recall. The centurion could assure him of this, for he had particularly observed how he *gave up the ghost*, v. 39. There was a special providence in it, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say that he was buried alive, and so to take away the truth of his resurrection; and so fully was this determined, that that objection was never started. Thus the truth of Christ gains confirmation, sometimes, even from its enemies.

II. How the body of Christ was *buried*. Pilate gave Joseph leave to take down the body, and do what he pleased with it. It was a wonder the chief priests were not too quick for him, and had not first begged the body of Pilate, to expose it and drag it about the streets, but that remainder of their wrath did God restrain, and gave that invaluable prize to Joseph, who knew how to value it; and the hearts of the priests were so influenced that they did not oppose it. *Sit divinus, modo non sit vivus*—*We care not for his being adorned, provided he be not revived*.

1. Joseph bought *fine linen* to wrap the body in, though in such a case old linen that had been worn might have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be *generous*, and to

serve him with the *best* that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

2. He *took down the body*, mangled and macerated as it was, and *wrapt it in the linen* as a treasure of great worth. Our Lord Jesus hath commanded himself to be delivered to us sacramentally in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which we should receive in such a manner as may best express our love to him, who loved us and died for us.

3. He *laid it in a sepulchre* of his own, in a private place. We sometimes find it spoken of, in the story of the kings of Judah, as a slur upon the memory of the wicked kings, that they were not buried in the *sepulchres of the kings*; our Lord Jesus, though he did no evil, but much good, and to him was given the throne of his father David, yet was buried in the graves of the common people, for it was not in this world, but in the other, that *his rest was glorious*. This sepulchre belonged to Joseph; Abraham, when he had no other possession in the land of Canaan, yet had a burying-place, but Christ had not so much as that. This sepulchre was *hewn out of a rock*, for Christ died to make the grave a *refuge* and shelter to the saints, and being hewn out of a rock, it is a *strong refuge*. *Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* Christ himself is a *hiding place* to his people, that is, as *the shadow of a great rock*.

4. He *rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre*, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury. When Daniel was put into the lions' den, a stone was laid to the mouth of it to keep him in, as here to the door of Christ's sepulchre, but neither of them could keep off the angels' visits to the prisoners.

5. Some of the good women attended the funeral, and *beheld where he was laid*, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it now. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should *know of his sepulchre*, (Deut. 34. 6.) because the respects of the people towards his person were to die with him; but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to *rise again*; and the care taken of his body speaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body the church; even then when it seems to be a dead body, and as a valley full of dry bones, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whose dust there was a covenant in force which shall not be forgotten. Our meditations on Christ's burial should lead us to think of our own, and should help to make the grave familiar to us, and so to make that bed easy which we must shortly make in the darkness. Frequent thoughts of it would not only take off the dread and terror of it, but quicken us, since the *graves* are always ready for us, to get ready for the graves, Job 17. 1.

CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter, we have a short account of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus; and the joys and triumphs which it furnishes all believers with, will be very acceptable to those who sympathised and suffered with Christ in the foregoing chapters. Here is, I. Christ's resurrection notified by an angel to the women that came to the sepulchre to anoint him, v. 1. 8. II. His appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the account she gave of it to the disciples, v. 9. 11. III. His appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and the report they made of it to their brethren, v. 12, 13. IV. His appearance to the eleven, with the commission he gave them to set up his kingdom in the world, and full instructions and credentials in order therunto, v. 14. 18. V. His ascension into heaven, the apostles' close application to their work, and God's owning of them in it, v. 19, 20.

1. **AND** when the sabbath was past, a Mary Magdalene, and Mary the

motter of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2. And very early in the morning, the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any *man*; for they were afraid.

Never was there such a *sabbath* since the sabbath was first instituted as this was, which the first words of this chapter tell us was *now fast*; during all this sabbath our Lord Jesus lay in the grave. It was to him a sabbath of *rest*, but a *silent* sabbath; it was to his disciples a melancholy sabbath, spent in tears and fears. Never were the sabbath-services in the temple such an *abomination to God*, though they had been often so, as they were now, when the chief priests, who presided in them, had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this sabbath is over, and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world. We have here,

I. The affectionate visit which the good women that had attended Christ, now made to his sepulchre—not a *superstitious* one, but a *pious* one. They set out from their lodgings *very early in the morning*, at break of day, or sooner; but either they had a long walk, or they met with some hinderance, so that it was *sun-rising* by the time they got to the sepulchre. They had *bought sweet spices* too, and came not only to *bedew* the dead body with their tears, (for nothing could more renew their grief than this,) but to *perfume* it with their *spices*, v. 1. Nicodemus had bought a very large quantity of *dry spices*, *myrrh*, and *aloes*, which served to dry the wounds, and dry up the blood, John 19. 39. But these good women did not think that enough; they bought spices, perhaps of another kind, some perfumed oils, to *anoint* him. Note, The respect which others have showed to Christ's name, should not hinder us from showing our respect to it.

II. The care they were in about the rolling away of the stone, and the superseding of that care; (v. 3, 4.) *They said among themselves*, as they were coming along, and now they drew near the sepulchre, *Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? For it was very great*, more than they with their united strength could move. They should have thought of this before they came out, and then discretion would have hid them not go, unless they had those to go with them, who could do it. And there was another difficulty much greater than this, to be got over, which they knew nothing of, to wit, a guard of soldiers set to *keep* the sepul-

chre; who, had they come before they were frightened away, would have frightened them away. But their gracious love to Christ carried them to the sepulchre; and see how by the time they came hither, both these difficulties were removed, both the stone which they *knew of*, and the *guard* which they *knew not of*. They saw that the *stone was rolled away*, which was the first thing that amazed them. Note, they who are carried by a holy zeal, to seek Christ diligently, will find the difficulties that lie in their way strangely to vanish, and themselves helped over them beyond their expectation.

III. The assurance that was given them by an angel, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, and had taken leave of his sepulchre, and had left him there to tell those so who came thither to inquire after him.

1. They *entered into the sepulchre*, at least, a little way in, and saw that the body of Jesus was not there where they left it the other night. He who by his death undertook to pay our debt, in his resurrection took out our acquittance, for it was his discharge out of prison, and it was a fair and legal discharge, by which it appeared that his satisfaction was accepted for all the purposes for which it was intended, and the matter in dispute was determined by an incontestible evidence that he was the Son of God.

2. They saw a *young man sitting on the right side* of the sepulchre. The angel appeared in the likeness of a *man*, of a *young man*; for angels, though created in the beginning, grow not *old*, but are always in the same perfection of beauty and strength; and so shall glorified saints be, when they are *as the angels*. This angel was *sitting on the right hand* as they went into the sepulchre, *clothed with a long white garment*, a garment down to the feet, such as great men were arrayed with. The sight of him might justly have encouraged them, but they were *affrighted*. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistakes and misapprehensions proves a terror to us.

3. He silences their fears by assuring them that here was cause enough for triumph, but none for trembling; (v. 5.) *He saith to them, Be not affrighted*. Note, As angels rejoice in the conversion of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of saints. Be not affrighted, for, (1.) "Ye are faithful lovers of Jesus Christ, and therefore, instead of being *confounded*, ought to be *comforted*. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified." Note, The inquiries of believing souls after Christ have a particular regard to him as *crucified*, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) that they may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being *lifted up from the earth*, is that which *draws all men unto him*. Christ's cross is the ensign to which the Gentiles seek. Observe, He speaks of Jesus as one that *was crucified*; "the thing is *past*, that scene is over, ye must not dwell so much upon the sad circumstances of his crucifixion as to be unapt to believe the joyful news of his resurrection. He was *crucified in weakness*, yet that doth not hinder but that he may be raised in power, and therefore ye that seek him, be not afraid of *missing of him*." He was crucified, but he is glorified; and the shame of his sufferings is so far from lessening the glory of his exaltation, that that glory perfectly wipes away all the reproach of his sufferings. And therefore after his entrance upon his glory, he never drew any veil over his sufferings, nor was shy of having his cross spoken of. The angel here that proclaims his resurrection calls him Jesus that *was crucified*. He himself owns, (Rev. 1. 18.) *I am he that liveth, and was dead*; and he appears in the midst of the praises of the heavenly host as a *Lamb that had been slain*, Rev. 5. 6. (2.) "It will therefore be good news to you, to hear that, instead of anointing him dead, you may rejoice in him living

He is risen, he is not here, not dead, but alive again; we cannot as yet show you him, hereafter you will see him, but you may here see the place where they laid him, and you see he is gone hence, not stolen either by his enemies or by his friends, but risen."

4. He orders them to give speedy notice of this to his disciples. Thus they were made the apostles of the apostles, which was a recompense of their affection and fidelity to him, in attending him on the cross, to the grave, and in the grave. They first came, and were first served; no other of the disciples durst come near his sepulchre, or inquire after him; so little danger was there of their coming by night to steal him away, that none came near him but a few women, who were not able so much as to roll away the stone.

(1.) They must tell the *disciples*, that *he is risen*. It is a dismal time with them, their dear Master is dead, and all their hopes and joys are buried in his grave; they look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves ready to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, so that there remains no more spirit in them, they are perfectly at their wits' end, every one is contriving how to shift for himself. "O, go quickly to them," saith the angel, "tell them that *their Master is risen*; this will put some life and spirit into them, and keep them from sinking into despair." Note, [1.] Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, no, not now that he is in his exalted state; his preference doth not make him shy of them, for he took early care to have it notified to them. [2.] Christ is not extreme to mark what they do amiss, whose hearts are upright with him. The disciples had very unkindly deserted him, and yet he testified this concern for them. [3.] Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that are lamenting after the Lord Jesus, and he will find a time to manifest himself to them.

(2.) They must be sure to tell Peter. This is particularly taken notice of by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. If it were told the disciples, it would be told Peter, for, as a token of his repentance for disowning his Master, he still associated with his disciples; yet he is particularly named, *Tell Peter*, for, [1.] It will be good news to him, more welcome to him than to any of them; for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for their justification. [2.] He will be afraid, lest the joy of this good news do not belong to him. Had the angel said only, *Go tell his disciples*, poor Peter would have been ready to sigh, and say, "But I doubt I cannot look upon myself as one of them, for I disowned him, and deserve to be disowned by him;" to obviate that, "Go to Peter by name, and tell him, he shall be as welcome as any of the rest to see him in Galilee." Note, A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

(3.) They must appoint them all, and Peter, by name, to give him the meeting in Galilee, as *he said unto you*, Matth. 26. 32. In their journey down into Galilee they would have time to recollect themselves, and call to mind what he has often said to them there, that he should suffer and die, and the third day be raised again; whereas while they were at Jerusalem, among strangers and enemies, they could not recover themselves from the fright they had been in, nor compose themselves to the due entertainment of better tidings. Note, [1.] All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointing. [2.] Christ never forgets his appointment, but will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing in every place where he records his name. [3.] In all meetings between Christ

and his disciples, he is the most forward. *He goes before you*.

IV. The account which the women did bring of this to the disciples; (τ. 8.) They *went out quickly, and ran from the sepulchre*, to make all the haste they could to the disciples, *trembling and amazed*. See how much we are enemies to ourselves, and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with what Christ hath said to us; Christ had often told them, that *the third day he would rise again*, had they given that its due notice and credit, they would have come to the sepulchre, expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance, and not with all this terror and amazement. But, being ordered to tell the disciples, because they were to tell it to all the world, they would not tell it to any one else, they shewed not any thing of it to any man that they met by the way, for they were afraid, afraid it was too good news to be true. Note, Our disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ, and to the souls of men, which, if faith and the joy of faith were strong, we might do.

9. Now when *Jesus was risen early the first day of the week*, he appeared first to *Mary Magdalene*, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10. And she went, and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. 12. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

We have here a very short account of two of Christ's appearances, and the little credit which the report of them gained with the disciples.

I. He appeared to *Mary Magdalene*, to her first in the garden, which we have a particular narrative of, John 20. 14. It was she *out of whom he had cast seven devils*; much was forgiven her, and much was given her, and done for her, and she *loved much*; and this honour Christ did her, that she was the first that saw him after his resurrection. The closer we cleave to Christ, the sooner we may expect to see him, and the more to see of him.

Now, 1. She brings notice of what she had seen, to the disciples; not only to the *eleven*, but to the rest that followed him, *as they mourned and wept*, τ. 10. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should *mourn and lament*, John 16. 20. And it was an evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But when their *weeping had endured a night or two*, comfort returned, as Christ had promised them; *I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice*. Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to be comforters to disciples that are mourners, by communicating to them our experiences, and what we have *seen of Christ*.

2. They could not give credit to the report she brought them. They heard that *he was alive*, and had been seen of her. The story was plausible enough, and yet they *believed not*. They would not say that she made the story herself, or designed to deceive them; but they fear that she is *imposed upon*, and that it was but a fancy that she *saw him*. Had they believed the frequent predictions of it from

his own mouth, they would not have been now so incredulous of the report of it.

11. He appeared to two of his disciples, *as they went into the country*, v. 12. This refers, no doubt, to that which is largely related, (Luke 24. 15.) of what passed between Christ and the two disciples *going to Emmaus*. He is here said to have appeared to them in *another form*, in another dress than what he usually wore, in the form of a *traveller*, as, in the garden, in such a dress, that Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener; but that he had really his own countenance, appears by this, that *their eyes were holden, that they should not know him*; and when that restraint on their eyes was taken off, immediately they *knew him*, Luke 24. 16, 31. Now,

1. These *two* witnesses gave in their *testimony* to this proof of Christ's resurrection; *They went and told it to the residue*, v. 13. Being *satisfied* themselves, they were desirous to give their brethren the *satisfaction* they had, that they might be comforted as they were.

2. This did not gain credit with all; *Neither believed they them*. They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. Now there was a wise providence in it, that the proofs of Christ's resurrection were given in thus *gradually*, and admitted thus *cautiously*, that so the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterward, when they ventured their all upon it, might be the more satisfying. We have the more reason to believe those who did themselves believe so slowly: had they swallowed it presently, they might have been thought *credulous*, and their testimony the less to be regarded; but their *disbelieving* at first, shews that they did not believe it afterward but upon a full conviction.

14. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Here is,

I. The *conviction* which Christ gave his apostles of the truth of his resurrection; (v. 14.) He *appeared to them* himself when they were all together, *as they sat at meat*, which gave him an opportunity to *eat and drink with them*, for their full satisfaction; see Acts 10. 41. And still, when he appeared to them, he *upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart*, for even at the general meeting in Galilee some doubted, as we find, Matth. 28. 17. Note, The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not may justly be *upbraided* with their unbelief; and it is owing not to any weakness or deficiency in the proofs, but to the *hardness of the heart*, its senselessness and stupidity. Though they had not till now seen him themselves, they are justly blamed, *because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen*; and perhaps it was owing in part to the *pride of their hearts*,

that they did not; for they thought, "If indeed he were risen, *to whom should he delight to do the honour* of showing himself but to us?" And if he *pass them by*, and show himself to *others* first, they cannot believe it is he. Thus many disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, because they think it *below them* to give credit to such as he has chosen to be the witnesses and publishers of it. Observe, it will not suffice for an excuse of our infidelity in the great day, to say, "*We did not see him* after he was risen," for we ought to have believed the testimony of those who did see him.

II. The *commission* which he gave them to set up his kingdom among men by the preaching of his *gospel*, the glad tidings of reconciliation to God through a Mediator. Now observe,

1. To *whom* they were to preach the *gospel*. Hitherto they had been sent only to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and were forbidden to go into the *way of the Gentiles*, or into any city of the Samaritans; but now their commission is enlarged, and they are authorized to *go into all the world*, into all parts of the world, the habitable world, and to *preach the gospel* of Christ to *every creature*, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; to every human creature that is capable of receiving it. "Inform them concerning Christ, the history of his *life*, and *death*, and *resurrection*; instruct them in the *meaning* and *intention* of these, and of the advantages which the children of men have, or may have, hereby; and invite them, without exception, to come and share in them. This is *gospel*, let this be *preached* in all places, to all persons." These eleven men could not themselves preach it to all the world, much less to *every creature* in it; but they and the other disciples, seventy in number, with those who should afterwards be added to them, must *disperse* themselves several ways, and wherever they went, carry the gospel along with them. They must send *others* to those places whither they could not *go themselves*, and, in short, make it the business of their lives to send those glad tidings *up and down the world* with all possible fidelity and care, not as an amusement or entertainment, but as a solemn message from God to men, and an appointed means of making men happy. "Tell as many as you can, and bid them tell others, it is a message of universal concern, and therefore ought to have a universal welcome, because it *gives* a universal welcome."

2. What is the *summary of the gospel* they are to preach; (v. 16.) "Set before the world life and death, good and evil. Tell the children of men that they are all in a state of misery and danger, *condemned* by their Prince, and *conquered* and *enslaved* by their enemies." This is supposed in their being *saved*, which they would not need to be if they were not *lost*. "Now go and tell them," (1.) "That if they *believe the gospel*, and give up themselves to be Christ's disciples; if they *renounce* the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be *devoted* to Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and to God in Christ as their God in covenant, and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity herein, they *shall be saved* from the guilt and power of sin, it shall not *rule* them, it shall not *ruin* them. He that is a true christian, shall be saved through Christ." *Baptism* was appointed to be the *inaugurating* rite, by which those that embrace Christ, owned him; but it is here put rather for the *thing signified* than for the sign, for Simon Magus *believed*, and was *baptized*, yet was not *saved*, Acts 8. 13. *Believing with the heart*, and *confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus*, (Rom. 10. 9.) seem to be much the same with this here. Or thus, We must assent to gospel-truths, and consent to gospel-terms. (2.) "If they *believe not*, if they receive not the record God gives concerning his Son, they cannot ex-

pect any other way of salvation, but must inevitably perish; *they shall be damned*, by the sentence of a despised gospel, added to that of a broken law." And even this is *gospel*, it is good news, that nothing else but unbelief shall damn men, which is a sin against the remedy. Dr. Whithy here observes, that they who hence infer, "That the infant seed of believers are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe, must hence also infer that they cannot be saved; *faith* being here more expressly required to salvation than to baptism. And that in the latter clause baptism is omitted, because it is not simply the want of baptism, but the contemptuous neglect of it, which makes men guilty of damnation, otherwise infants might be damned for the mistakes or profaneness of their parents."

3. What power they should be endowed with, for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach; (*v.* 17.) *These signs shall follow them that believe*. Not that all who believe, shall be able to produce these signs, but some, even as many as were employed in propagating the faith, and bringing others to it; for signs are intended *for them that believe not*; see 1 Cor. 14. 22. It added much to the glory and evidence of the gospel, that the preachers not only wrought miracles themselves, but conferred upon others a power to work miracles, which power followed some of them that believed, wherever they went to preach. They shall do wonders in *Christ's name*; the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and fetched in by prayer. Some particular signs are mentioned; (1.) They shall *cast out devils*; this power was more common among christians than any other, and lasted longer, as appears by the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenæus, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and others, cited by Grotius on this place. (2.) They shall *speak with new tongues*, which they had never learned, or been acquainted with; and this was both a *miracle*, (a miracle upon the mind,) for the confirming of the truth of the gospel, and a *means* of spreading the gospel among those nations that had not heard it. It saved the preachers a vast labour in learning the languages; and, no doubt, they who by *miracle* were made *masters of languages*, were *complete* masters of them and of all their native elegances, which were proper both to *instruct* and *affect*, which would very much recommend them and their preaching. (3.) They shall *take up serpents*. This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the *vipser* that *fastened on his hand*, which was acknowledged a great miracle by the barbarous people, Acts 28. 5, 6. They shall be kept unhurt by that *generation of vipers* among whom they live, and by the malice of the *old serpent*. (4.) If they be compelled by their persecutors to *drink any deadly poisonous thing, it shall not hurt them*: of which very thing some instances are found in ecclesiastical history. (5.) They shall not only be preserved from hurt themselves, but they shall be enabled to do good to others; *They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*, as multitudes had done by their Master's *healing touch*. Many of the

elders of the church had this power, as appears by Jan. 5. 14. where, as an instituted sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to *anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord*. With what assurance of success might they go about the executing of their commission, when they had such credentials as these, to produce!

19. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here is, 1. Christ *welcomed into the upper world*; (*v.* 19.) *After the Lord had spoken* what he had to say to his disciples, he *went up into heaven*, in a cloud; which we have a particular account of, (Acts 1. 9.) and he had not only an admission, but an abundant *entrance*, into his kingdom there; he was *received up*, received in state, with loud acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he *sat on the right hand of God*: sitting is a posture of *rest*, for now he had finished his work, and a posture of *rule*, for now he took possession of his kingdom; he *sat at the right hand of God*, which denotes the sovereign dignity he is advanced to, and the universal agency he is intrusted with. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is *by his Son*. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world.

2. Christ *welcomed in this lower world*; his being *believed on in the world, and received up into glory*, are put together, 1 Tim. 3. 16. (1.) We have here the apostles working diligently for him; they *went forth, and preached every where*, far and near. Though the doctrine they preached was *spiritual and heavenly*, and directly contrary to the *spirit and genius* of the world, though it met with abundance of opposition, and was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, yet the preachers of it were neither *afraid* nor *ashamed*; they were so industrious in spreading the gospel, that within a few years the sound of it *went forth into the ends of the earth*, Rom. 10. 18. (2.) We have here God *working effectually with them*, to make their labours successful, by *confirming the word with signs following*, partly by the miracles that were wrought upon the *bodies* of people, which were divine seals to the christian doctrine, and partly by the influence it had upon the *minds* of people, through the operation of the Spirit of God, see Heb. 2. 4. These were properly *signs following* the word—the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honour of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays, and teaches us to say, *Amen*. Father in heaven, thus let thy name be hallowed, and let thy kingdom come.