

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

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

S T. M A T T H E W.

We have now before us,

I. *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* ; so this second part of the holy Bible is entitled: *The new Covenant* ; so it might as well be rendered ; the word signifies both. But when it is (as here) spoken of as Christ's act and deed, it is most properly rendered a *Testament*, for he is the Testator, and it becomes of force *by his death* ; (Heb. 6. 16, 17.) nor is there, as in covenants, a previous treaty between the parties, but what is granted, though an estate upon condition, is owing to the will, the free-will, the good-will, of the Testator. Thus all the grace contained in this book is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour ; and unless we consent to him as our Lord, we cannot expect any benefit by him as our Saviour. This is called a *New Testament*, to distinguish it from that which was given by Moses, and was now antiquated ; and to signify that it should be always new, and should never wax old, and grow out of date. These books contain, not only a full discovery of that grace *which has appeared to all men, bringing salvation*, but a legal instrument by which it is conveyed to, and settled upon, all believers. How carefully do we preserve, and with what attention and pleasure do we read, the last will and testament of a friend, who has therein left us a fair estate, and, with it, high expressions of his love to us ! How precious then should this Testament of our blessed Saviour be to us, which secures to us all his unsearchable riches ? It is *his Testament* ; for though, as is usual, it was written by others, (we have nothing upon record that was of Christ's own writing,) yet he dictated it ; and the night before he died, in the institution of his supper, he signed, sealed, and published it, in the presence of twelve witnesses. For, though these books were not written for some years after, for the benefit of posterity, *in perpetuam rei memoriam, as a perpetual memorial*, yet the New Testament of our Lord Jesus was settled, confirmed, and declared, from the time of his death, as a nuncupative will, with which these records exactly agree. The things which St. Luke wrote, were *things which were most surely believed*, and therefore well known, before he wrote them ; but when they were written, the oral tradition was superseded and set aside, and these writings were the repository of that New Testament. This is intimated by the title which is prefixed to many Greek Copies, *Τῆς κατὰς Διαθήκης Ὑπαπαντα*—*The whole of the New Testament, or All the things of it*. In it is declared *the whole counsel of God* concerning our salvation, Acts 20. 27. *As the law of the Lord is perfect*, so is the gospel of Christ, and nothing is to be added to it. We have it all, and are to look for no more.

II. We have before us *The Four Gospels*. *Gospel* signifies *good news, or glad tidings* ; and this history of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, is, without doubt, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth ; the angel gave it this title, (Luke 2. 10.) *Εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν*—*I bring you good tidings ; I bring the gospel to you*. And the prophet foretold it, Isa. 52. 7.—61. 1. It is there foretold, that in the days of the Messiah *good tidings* should be preached. *Gospel* is an old Saxon word ; it is *God's spell or word* ; and God is so called because he is good, *Deus optimus*—*God most excellent*, and therefore it may be a good spell, or word. If we take *spell* in its more proper signification for a *charm* (*carmen*), and take that in a good sense, for what is moving and affecting, which is apt *lenire dolorem*—*to calm the spirits*, or to raise them in admiration or love, as that which is very amiable we call *charming*, it is applicable to the gospel ; for in it the charmer *charmeth wisely*, though to *deaf adders*, Ps. 58. 4, 5. Nor (one would think) can any charms be so powerful as those of the beauty and love of our Redeemer. The whole New Testament is the gospel. St. Paul calls it *his gospel*, because he was one of the preachers of it. Oh that we may each of us make it ours by our cordial acceptance of it, and subjection to it ! But the four books which contain the history of the Redeemer, we commonly call *The Four Gospels*, and the inspired penmen of them *Evangelists, or Gospel-writers* ; not, however, very properly, because that title belongs to a particular order of ministers, that were assistants to the apostles ; (Eph. 4. 11.) *He gave some apostles and some evangelists*. It was requisite that the doctrine of Christ should be interwoven with, and founded upon, the narrative of his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection ; for then it appears in its clearest and strongest light. As in nature, so in grace, the most happy discoveries are those which take rise from the certain representations of matters of fact. Natural history is the best philosophy ; and so is the sacred history, both of the Old and New Testament, the most proper and grateful vehicle of sacred truth. These four gospels were early and constantly received by the primitive church, and read in christian assemblies, as appears by the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenæus, who lived little more than a hundred years after the ascension of Christ ; they declared that neither more nor fewer than four were received by the church. A Har-

mony of these four evangelists was compiled by Tatian about that time, which he called, τὸ διὰ περὶ τὰς τεσσάρων — *The Gospel out of the four*. In the third and fourth centuries there were gospels forged by divers sects, and published, one under the name of St. Peter, another of St. Thomas, another of St. Philip, &c. But they were never owned by the church, nor was any credit given to them; as the learned Dr. Whitby shews. And he gives this good reason why he should adhere to these written records, because, whatever the pretences of tradition may be, it is not sufficient to preserve things with any certainty, as appears by experience. For, whereas Christ said and did many memorable things, which *were not written*, (John 20. 30.—21. 25.) tradition has not preserved any one of them to us, but all is lost except what was written; that therefore is what we must abide by; and blessed be God that we have it to abide by; it is the sure word of history.

III. We have before us *the Gospel according to St. Matthew*. The penman was, by birth, a Jew, by calling a publican, till Christ commanded his attendance, and then he left the receipt of custom, to follow him, and was one of those that accompanied him *all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was taken up*, Acts 1. 21, 22. He was therefore a competent witness of what he has here recorded. He is said to have written this history about eight years after Christ's ascension. Many of the ancients say that he wrote it in the Hebrew, or Syriac, language; but the tradition is sufficiently disproved by Dr. Whitby. Doubtless, it was written in Greek,* as the other parts of the New Testament were; not in that language which was peculiar to the Jews, whose church and state were near a period, but in that which was common to the world, and in which the knowledge of Christ would be most effectually transmitted to the nations of the earth; yet it is probable that there might be an edition of it in Hebrew, published by St. Matthew himself, at the same time that he wrote it in Greek; the former for the Jews, the latter for the Gentiles, when he left Judea, to preach among the Gentiles. Let us bless God that we have it, and have it in a language which we understand.

ST. MATTHEW, 1.

CHAP. I.

This evangelist begins with the account of Christ's parentage and birth, the ancestors from whom he descended, and the manner of his entry into the world, to make it appear that he was indeed the Messiah promised; for it was foretold that he should be the son of David, and should be born of a virgin; and that he was so, is here plainly shewn; for here is, I. His pedigree from Abraham in forty-two generations, three fourteens, v. 1. 17. II. An account of the circumstances of his birth, so far as was requisite to shew that he was born of a virgin, v. 18. 25. Thus methodically is the life of our blessed Saviour written, as lives should be written, for the clearer proposing of the example of them.

1. **T**HE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3. And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4. And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6. And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; 7. And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; 8. And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9. And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10. And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11. And

Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12. And after they were brought to Babylon; Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13. And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14. And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15. And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob: 16. And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Concerning this genealogy of our Saviour, observe.

I. The title of it. It is *the book* (or the account, as the Hebrew word *sepher*—*a book*, sometimes signifies,) of the generation of Jesus Christ, of his ancestors, according to the flesh; or, It is the narrative of his birth. It is βίβλος γενέσεως—*a book of Genesis*. The Old Testament begins with the book of the generation of the world, and it is its glory that it does so; but the glory of the New Testament herein excels, that it begins with *the book of the generation of him that made the world*. As God, his *outgoings were of old, from everlasting*, (Mic. 5. 2.) and none can declare that generation; but, as Man, he was *sent forth in the fulness of time, of a woman*, and it is that generation which is here declared.

II. The principal intention of it. It is not an

* See a vindication of the opposite opinion in Dr. Campbell's Preface to his Translation of this Gospel.—Ed.

endless or needless genealogy; it is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men commonly are. *Stemmata, quia faciunt*—Of what avail are ancient pedigrees? It is like a pedigree given in evidence, to prove a title, and make out a claim; the design is to prove that our Lord Jesus is the *Son of David*, and the *Son of Abraham*, and therefore of that nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. Abraham and David were, in their day, the great trustees of the promise relating to the Messiah. *The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed, of the dominion, to David and his seed*; and they who would have an interest in Christ, as the *Son of Abraham*, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, must be faithful, loyal subjects to him as the *Son of David*, by whom all the families of the earth are to be ruled. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him, (Gen. 12. 3.—22. 18.) and to David that he should descend from him; (2 Sam. 7. 12. Ps. 89. 3, &c.—132. 11.) and therefore, unless it can be proved that Jesus is a *Son of David* and a *Son of Abraham*, we cannot admit him to be the Messiah. Now this is here proved from the authentic records of the heralds' offices. The Jews were very exact in preserving their pedigrees, and there was a providence in it, for the clearing up of the descent of the Messiah from the fathers; and since his coming, that nation is so dispersed and confounded, that it is a question whether any person in the world can legally prove himself to be a *son of Abraham*; however, it is certain that none can prove himself to be either a son of Aaron, or a *son of David*, so that the priestly and kingly office must either be given up, as lost forever, or be lodged in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Christ is here first called the *Son of David*, because under that title he was commonly spoken of, and expected, among the Jews. They who owned him to be the Christ, called him the *Son of David*, ch. 15. 22.—20. 31.—21. 15. This, therefore, the Evangelist undertakes to make out, that he is not only a *Son of David*, but that *Son of David* on whose shoulders the government was to be; not only a *Son of Abraham*, but that *Son of Abraham*, who was to be the *Father of many nations*.

In calling Christ the *Son of David*, and the *Son of Abraham*, he shews that God is faithful to his promise, and will make good every word that he has spoken; and this, 1. Though the performance be long deferred. When God promised Abraham a Son, who should be the great Blessing of the world, perhaps he expected it should be his immediate son; but it proved to be one at the distance of forty-two generations, and about 2000 years. So long before can God foretell what shall be done, and so long after, sometimes, does God fulfil what has been promised. Note, Delays of promised mercies, though they exercise our patience, do not weaken God's promise. 2. Though it begin to be despaired of. This *Son of David*, and *Son of Abraham*, who was to be the Glory of his Father's house, was born then when the seed of Abraham was a despised people recently become tributary to the Roman yoke, and when the house of David was buried in obscurity; for Christ was to be a *Root out of a dry ground*. Note, God's time for the performance of his promise, is, when it labours under the greatest improbabilities.

III. The particular series of it, drawn in a direct line from Abraham downward, according to the genealogies recorded in the beginning of the books of Chronicles, (as far as those go,) and which here we see the use of.

Some particulars we may observe in this genealogy.

1. Among the ancestors of Christ, who had brethren, generally, he descended from a younger

brother; such Abraham himself was, and Jacob, and Judah, and David, and Nathan, and Rhesa; to shew that the pre-eminence of Christ came not, as that of earthly princes, from the primogeniture of his ancestors, but from the will of God, who, according to the method of his providence, *exalts them of low degree, and puts more abundant honour upon that part which lacked*.

2. Among the sons of Jacob, beside Judah, from whom Shiloh came, notice is here taken of his brethren; Judas and his brethren. No mention is made of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, or of Esau, the son of Isaac, because they were shut out of the church; whereas all the children of Jacob were taken in, and though not fathers of Christ, were yet patriarchs of the church, (Acts 7. 8.) and therefore are mentioned in this genealogy, for the encouragement of the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, intimating to them that they have an interest in Christ, and stand in relation to him as well as Judah.

3. Phares and Zara, the twin-sons of Judah, are likewise both named, though Phares only was Christ's ancestor, for the same reason that the brethren of Judah are taken notice of: some think because the birth of Phares and Zara had something of allegory in it. Zara put out his hand first, as the first-born, but drawing it in, Phares got the birthright. The Jewish church, like Zara, reached first at the birthright, but, through unbelief, withdrawing the hand, the Gentile church, like Phares, broke forth, and went away with the birthright; and thus blindness is in part happened unto Israel, till the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and then Zara shall be born—all Israel shall be saved, Rom. 11. 25, 26.

4. There are four women, and but four, named in this genealogy; two of them were originally strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, Rahab a Canaanitess, and a harlot besides, and Ruth the Moabitess; for in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew; those that are strangers and foreigners are welcome, in Christ, to the citizenship of the saints. The other two were adulteresses, Tamar and Bathsheba; which was a further mark of humiliation put upon our Lord Jesus, that not only he descended from such, but that his descent from them is particularly remarked in his genealogy, and no veil drawn over it. He took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, (Rom. 8. 3.) and takes even great sinners, upon their repentance, into the nearest relations to himself. Note, we ought not to upbraid people with the scandals of their ancestors; it is what they cannot help, and has been the lot of the best, even of our Master himself. David's begetting Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias, is taken notice of, (says Dr. Whitby,) to shew that that crime of David, being repented of, was so far from hindering the promise made to him, that it pleased God by this very woman to fulfil it.

5. Though divers kings are here named, yet none is expressly called a king, but David, (v. 6.) *David the king*; because with him the covenant of royalty was made, and to him the promise of the kingdom of the Messiah was given, who is therefore said to inherit the throne of his father David, Luke 1. 32.

6. In the pedigree of the kings of Judah, between Joram and Ozias, (v. 8.) there are three left out, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah; and therefore when it is said, *Joram begat Ozias*, it is meant, according to the usage of the Hebrew tongue, that Ozias was lineally descended from him, as it is said to Hezekiah, that the sons which he should beget should be carried to Babylon, whereas they were removed several generations from him. It was not through mistake or forgetfulness that these three were omitted, but, probably, they were omitted in the genealogical tables that the Evangelist consulted, which yet were admitted as authentic. Some give this

reason for it.—It being Matthew's design, for the sake of memory, to reduce the number of Christ's ancestors to three fourteens, it was requisite that in this period three should be left out, and none more fit than they who were the immediate progeny of cursed Athaliah, who introduced the idolatry of Ahab into the house of David; for which this brand is set upon the family, and the iniquity thus visited to the third and fourth generation. Two of these three were apostates; and such God commonly sets a mark of his displeasure upon in this world; they all three had their heads brought to the grave with blood.

7. Some observe what a mixture there was of good and bad, in the succession of these kings; as for instance, (*v.* 7, 8.) wicked *Roboam* begat wicked *Abia*; wicked *Abia* begat good *Asa*; good *Asa* begat good *Josaphat*; good *Josaphat* begat wicked *Joram*. Grace does not run in the blood, nor does reigning sin. God's grace is his own, and he gives or withholds it as he pleases.

8. The captivity in Babylon is mentioned as a remarkable period in this line, *v.* 11, 12. All things considered, it was a wonder that the Jews were not lost in that captivity, as other nations have been; but this intimates the reason why the streams of that people were kept to run pure through that dead sea, because from them, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*, even that Blessing of blessings, Christ himself, *Isa.* 65. 8, 9. It was with an eye to him that they were restored, and the desolations of the sanctuary were looked upon with favour for the Lord's sake, *Dan.* 9. 17.

9. *Josias* is here said to beget *Jechonias* and his brethren; (*v.* 11.) by *Jechonias* is meant *Jehoiakim*, who was the first-born of *Josias*; but when it is said, (*v.* 12.) that *Jechonias* begat *Salathiel*, that *Jechonias* was the son of that *Jehoiakim* who was carried into Babylon, and there begat *Salathiel*, (as Dr. Whitby shews,) and when *Jechonias* is said to have been written *childless*, (*Jer.* 22. 30.) it is explained thus; *No man of his seed shall prosper*. *Salathiel* is here said to beget *Zorobabel*, whereas *Salathiel* begat *Pedaiah*, and he begat *Zorobabel* (*1 Chron.* 3. 19.) but, as before, the grandson is often called the son; *Pedaiah*, it is likely, died in his father's life-time, and so his son *Zorobabel* was called the son of *Salathiel*.

10. The line is brought down not to Mary, the mother of our Lord, but to *Joseph, the husband of Mary*; (*v.* 16.) for the Jews always reckoned their genealogies by the males; yet Mary was of the same tribe and family with Joseph, so that, both by the mother and by this supposed father, he was of the house of David; yet his interest in that dignity is derived by Joseph, to whom really, according to the flesh, he had no relation, to shew that the kingdom of the Messiah is not founded in a natural descent from David.

11. The centre in whom all these lines meet, is *Jesus, who is called Christ*, *v.* 16. This is he that was so importunately desired, so impatiently expected, and to whom the patriarchs had an eye when they were so desirous of children, that they might have the honour of coming into the sacred line. Blessed be God, we are not now in such a dark and cloudy state of expectation as they were then in, but see clearly what these prophets and kings saw as through a glass darkly. And we may have, if it be not our own fault, a greater honour than that of which they were so ambitious: for they who do the will of God, are in a more honourable relation to Christ, than those who were akin to him according to the flesh, *ch.* 12. 50. *Jesus* is called *Christ*, that is, the *Anointed*, the same with the Hebrew name *Messiah*. He is called *Messiah* the

Prince, (*Dan.* 9. 25.) and often God's *Anointed*, (*Ps.* 2. 2.) Under this character he was expected; *Art thou the Christ—the Anointed one?* David, the king, was anointed; (*1 Sam.* 16. 13.) so was Aaron, the priest, (*Lev.* 3. 12.) and Elisha, the prophet, (*1 Kings* 19. 16.) and Isaiah, the prophet, (*Isa.* 61. 1.) Christ, being appointed to, and qualified for, all these offices, is therefore called the *Anointed*—*anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*; and from this name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, all his followers are called *Christians*, for they also have received the anointing.

Lastly. The general summary of all this genealogy we have, *v.* 17. where it is summed up in three fourteens, signalized by remarkable periods. In the first fourteen, we have the family of David rising, and looking forth as the morning; in the second, we have it flourishing in its meridian lustre; in the third, we have it declining and growing less and less, dwindled into the family of a poor carpenter, and then Christ shines forth out of it, the *Glory of his people Israel*.

18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. 20. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, 23. Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us. 24. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the LORD had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25. And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

The mystery of Christ's incarnation is to be adored, not pryed into. If we know not the way of the Spirit in the formation of common persons, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of any one that is with child, (*Eccles.* 11. 5.) much less do we know how the blessed Jesus was formed in the womb of the blessed virgin. When David admires how he himself was made in secret, and curiously wrought, (*Ps.* 139. 13—16.) perhaps he speaks, in spirit, of Christ's incarnation. Some circumstances attending the birth of Christ we find here, which are not in Luke, though it is more largely recorded there. Here we have,

I. Mary's espousals to Joseph. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was espoused to Joseph, not completely married, but contracted; a purpose of marriage solemnly declared in words *de futuro*—that regarded the future, and a promise of it made if God per-

mit. We read of a man who *has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her*, Deut. 20. 7. Christ was born of a virgin, but a contracted virgin, 1. To put respect upon the married state, and to recommend it as *honourable among all*, against that doctrine of devils which *forbids to marry*, and places perfection in the single state. Who more highly favoured than Mary was in her espousals? 2. To save the credit of the blessed virgin, which otherwise would have been exposed. It was fit that her conception should be protected by a marriage, and so justified in the eye of the world. One of the ancients says, It was better it should be asked, Is not this the *son of a carpenter*? than, Is not this the *son of a harlot*? 3. That the blessed virgin might have one to be the guide of her youth, the companion of her solitude and travels, a partner in her cares, and a help meet for her. Some think that Joseph was now a widower, and that those who are called the *brethren of Christ*, (ch. 13. 55.) were Joseph's children by a former wife. This is the conjecture of many of the ancients. Joseph was a *just man*, she a *virtuous woman*. Those who are *believers* should not be *unequally yoked with unbelievers*; but let those who are religious choose to marry with those who are so, as they expect the comfort of the relation, and God's blessing upon them in it. We may also learn from this example, that it is good to enter into the married state with deliberation, and not hastily; to preface the nuptials with a contract. It is better to *take time to consider before*, than to *find time to repent after*.

II. Her pregnancy of the Promised Seed; *before they came together*, she was *found with child*, which really was of the *Holy Ghost*. The marriage was deferred so long after the contract, that she appeared to be *with child*, before the time came for the solemnizing of the marriage, though she was contracted before she conceived. Probably, it was after her return from her cousin Elisabeth, with whom she continued *three months*, (Luke 1. 56.) that she was perceived by Joseph to be with child, and did not herself deny it. Note, Those in whom Christ is formed, will shew it: it will be *found to be* a work of God, which he will own. Now we may well imagine, what a perplexity this might justly occasion to the blessed virgin. She herself knew the divine original of this conception; but how could she prove it? She would be *dealt with as with a harlot*. Note, After great and high advancements, lest we should be puffed up with them, we must expect something or other to humble us; some reproach, as a *thorn in the flesh*, nay, as a *sword in the bones*. Never was any daughter of Eve so dignified as the Virgin Mary was, and yet in danger of falling under the imputation of one of the worst of crimes; yet we do not find that she tormented herself about it; being conscious of her own innocence, she kept her mind calm and easy, and committed her cause to him that *judges righteously*. Note, Those who take care to keep a good conscience, may cheerfully trust God with the keeping of their good names, and have reason to hope that he will clear up, not only their integrity, but their honour, as the sun at noon day.

III. Joseph's perplexity, and his care what to do in this case. We may well imagine what a great trouble and disappointment it was to him, to find one he had such an opinion of, and value for, come under the suspicion of such a heinous crime. *Is this Mary?* He began to think; "How may we be deceived in those we think best of! How may we be disappointed in what we expect the most from!" He is loth to believe so ill a thing of one whom he believed to be so good a woman; and yet the matter, as it is too bad to be excused, is also too plain to be denied. What a struggle does this occasion

in his breast, between that jealousy which is the rage of man, and is cruel as the grave, on the one hand, and that affection which he has for Mary, on the other.

Observe, 1. The extremity which he studied to avoid. He was *not willing to make her a public example*. He might have done it; for, by the law, a *betrothed virgin*, if she play the harlot, was to be stoned to death, Deut. 22, 23, 24. But he *was not willing to take the advantage of the law against her*; if she be guilty, yet it is not known, nor shall it be known from him. How different was the spirit which Joseph displayed from that of Judah, who in a similar case hastily passed that severe sentence, *Bring her forth and let her be burnt!* Gen. 38. 24. How good is it to *think on things*, as Joseph did here! Were there more of deliberation in our censures and judgments, there would be more of mercy and moderation in them. Bringing her to punishment, is here called *making her a public example*: which shews what is the end to be aimed at in punishments—giving warning to others: it is in *terrorem*—that *all about may hear and fear*. Smite the scorner, and the simple will beware.

Some persons of a rigorous temper would blame Joseph for his clemency, but it is here spoken of to his praise; because *he was a just man*, therefore he was not willing to expose her. He was a *religious, good man*; and therefore inclined to be merciful as God is, and to *forgive* as one that was *forgiven*. In the case of a betrothed damsel, if she were defiled in the field, the law charitably supposed that she *cried out*, (Deut. 22. 26.) and she was not to be punished. Some charitable construction or other Joseph will put upon this matter; herein he is a *just man*, tender of the good name of one who never before had done any thing to blenish it. Note, It becomes us, in many cases, to be gentle toward those that come under suspicion of having offended, to hope the best concerning them, and make the best of that which at first appears bad, in hopes it may prove better. *Summum jus summa injuria*—*The rigour of the law is* (sometimes) *the height of injustice*. That court of conscience which moderates the rigour of the law, we call a *court of equity*. Those who are found faulty were perhaps *overtaken in the fault*, and are therefore to be *restored with the spirit of meekness*.

2. The expedient he found out for avoiding this extremity. He was *mindful to put her away privately*, that is, to give a bill of divorce into her hand before two witnesses, and so to hush up the matter among themselves. Being a *just man*, a strict observer of the law, he would not proceed to marry her, but resolved to *put her away*; and yet, in tenderness for her, determined to do it as privately as possible. Note, the necessary censures of those who have offended, ought to be managed without noise. *The words of the wise are heard in quiet*. Christ himself *shall not strive nor cry*. Christian love and christian prudence will *hide a multitude of sins*, and great ones, as far as may be done without having fellowship with them.

IV. Joseph's discharge from this perplexity by an express sent from heaven; (v. 20, 21.) *While he thought on these things*, and knew not what to determine, God graciously directed him what to do, and made him easy. Note, Those who would have direction from God, must *think on things* themselves, and consult with themselves. It is the *thoughtful*, not the *unthinking*, whom God will guide. When he was at a loss, and had carried the matter as far as he could in his own thoughts, then God came in with advice. Note, God's time to come in with instruction to his people, is when they are *nonplussed*, and at a stand. God's comforts most delight the soul, *in the multitude of its perplexed thoughts*.

The message was sent to Joseph by an *angel of the Lord*; probably, the same angel that brought to Mary the tidings of the conception—the angel Gabriel. Now the intercourse with heaven, by angels, with which the patriarchs had been dignified, but which had been long disused, begins to be revived; for when the *First-Begotten* is to be brought into the world, the angels are ordered to attend his motions. How far God may now, in an invisible way, make use of the ministration of angels, for extricating his people out of their straits, we cannot say; but this we are sure of, they are all *ministering spirits* for their good. This angel appeared to Joseph in a *dream*, when he was asleep, as God sometimes spake unto the fathers. When we are most quiet and composed, we are in the best frame to receive the notices of the divine will. The Spirit moves on the calm waters. This dream, no doubt, carried its own evidence along with it, that it was of God, and not the production of a vain fancy.

Now, 1. Joseph is here directed to proceed in his intended marriage. The angel calls him, *Joseph, thou son of David*: he puts him in mind of his relation to David, that he might be prepared to receive this surprising intelligence of his relation to the Messiah, who, every one knew, was to be a descendant from David. Sometimes, when great honours devolve upon those who have small estates, they care not for accepting them, but are willing to drop them; it was therefore requisite to put this poor carpenter in mind of his high birth; “Value thyself. Joseph, thou art that *son of David*, through whom the line of the Messiah is to be drawn.” We may thus say to every true believer; “Fear not, thou son of Abraham, thou child of God; forget not the dignity of thy birth, thy new birth.” *Fear not to take Mary for thy wife*; so it may be read. Joseph, suspecting she was with child by whoredom, was afraid of *taking her*, lest he should bring upon himself either guilt or reproach. No, saith God, *Fear not*; the matter is not so. Perhaps Mary had told him that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, and he might have heard what Elisabeth said to her, (Luke 1. 42.) when she called her the *mother of her Lord*; and if so, he was afraid of presumption in marrying one so much above him. But from whatever cause his fears arose, they were all silenced with this word, *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife*. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from our fears, and to have our doubts resolved, so as to proceed in our affairs with satisfaction.

2. He is here informed concerning that *Holy Thing*, with which his espoused wife was now pregnant. That which is conceived in her, is of a divine original. He is so far from being in danger of sharing in an impurity by marrying her, that he will thereby share in the highest dignity he is capable of. Two things he is told,

(1.) That she had conceived *by the power of the Holy Ghost*; not by the power of nature. The Holy Spirit, who produced the world, now produced the Saviour of the world, and *prepared him a body*, as was promised him, when he said, *Lo, I come*, Heb. 10. 5. Hence he is said to be *made of a woman*, (Gal. 4. 4.) and yet to be that second *Adam*, that is, the *Lord from heaven*, 1 Cor. 15. 47. He is the *Son of God*, and yet so far partakes of the substance of his mother, as to be called the *Fruit of her womb*, Luke 1. 42. It was requisite that his conception should be otherwise than by ordinary generation, that so, though he partook of the human nature, yet he might escape the corruption and pollution of it, and not be *conceived and shapen* in iniquity. History tells us of some who vainly pretended to have conceived by a divine power, as the mother of Alexander; but none ever really did so, except the mother

of our Lord. His name in this, as in other things, is, *Wonderful*. We do not read that the Virgin Mary did herself proclaim the honour done her; but she hid it in her heart, and therefore God sent an angel to attest it. Those who seek not their own glory shall have the honour that comes from God; it is reserved for the humble.

(2.) That she should bring forth the *Saviour of the world*; (v. 21.) *She shall bring forth a Son*; what he shall be, is intimated,

[1.] In the name that should be given to her Son; *Thou shalt call his name Jesus, a Saviour*. Jesus is the same name with Joshua, the termination only being changed, for the sake of conforming it to the Greek. Joshua is called *Jesus*, (Acts 7. 45. Heb. 4. 8.) from the Seventy. There were two of that name under the Old Testament, who were both illustrious types of Christ; Joshua, who was Israel's Captain at their first settlement in Canaan; and Joshua, who was their High-Priest at their second settlement after the captivity, Zech. 6. 11, 12. Christ is our Joshua; both the *Captain of our salvation*, and the *High-Priest of our profession*, and, in both, our Saviour;—a Joshua who comes in the stead of Moses, and does that for us, which *the law could not do, in that it was weak*. Joshua had been called *Hoshea*, but Moses prefixed the first syllable of the name *Jehovah*, and so made it *Jehoshua*, (Numb. 13. 16.) to intimate that the Messiah, who was to bear that name, should be *Jehovah*; he is therefore *able to save to the uttermost*, neither is there *salvation in any other*.

[2.] In the reason of that name; *For he shall save his people from their sins*; not the nation of the Jews only, (he came to *his own*, and they *received him not*;) but all who were given him by the *Father's choice*, and all who have given themselves to him by *their own*. He is a King who *protects* his subjects, and, as the Judges of Israel of old, *works salvation* for them. Note, Those whom Christ saves, he saves *from their sins*; from the guilt of sin by the *merit of his death*, from the dominion of sin by the *Spirit of his grace*. In saving them from sin, he saves them from wrath and the curse, and all misery here and hereafter. Christ came to save his people, not *in their sins*, but *from their sins*; to purchase for them, not a liberty to sin, but a liberty *from sins*, to *redeem them from all iniquity*; (Tit. 2. 14.) and so to redeem them *from among men*, (Rev. 14. 4.) to himself, who is *separate from sinners*. So that those who leave their sins, and give up themselves to Christ as *his people*, are interested in the Saviour, and the great salvation which he has wrought out, Rom. 11. 26.

V. The fulfilling of the scripture, in all this. This evangelist, writing among the Jews, more frequently observes this than any other of the evangelists. Here, the Old-Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in our Lord Jesus; by which it appears, that this was He that should come, and we are to look for no other; for this was *He to whom all the prophets bear witness*. Now the scripture that was fulfilled in the birth of Christ, was that promise of a sign which God gave to king Ahaz, (Isa. 7. 14.) *Behold, a virgin shall conceive*; where the prophet, encouraging the people of God to hope for the promised deliverance from Sennacherib's invasion, directs them to look forward to the Messiah, who was to come of the people of the Jews, and the house of David; whence it was easy to infer, that though that people and that house were afflicted, yet neither the one nor the other could be abandoned to ruin, so long as God had such an honour, such a blessing, in reserve for them. The deliverances which God wrought for the Old-Testament church, were types and figures of the great salvation by Christ; and if God will do the greater, he will not fail to do the less.

The prophecy here quoted is justly ushered in with a *Behold*, which commands both attention and admiration; for we have here the mystery of godliness, which is, without controversy, great, that *God was manifested in the flesh*.

1. The sign given us, that the Messiah shall be *born of a virgin*. *A virgin shall conceive*, and, by her, he shall be manifested *in the flesh*. The word *Almah* signifies a virgin, in the strictest sense, such as Mary professes herself to be, Luke 1. 34. *I know not a man*; nor had it been any such wonderful sign as it was intended for, if it had been otherwise. It was intimated from the beginning that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, when it was said that he should be the *Seed of the woman*; so the Seed of the woman, as not to be the seed of any man. Christ was born of a virgin, not only because his birth was to be *supernatural*, and altogether extraordinary, but because it was to be *spotless*, and pure, and without any stain of sin. Christ would be born, not of an *Empress or Queen*, for he appeared not in outward pomp or splendour, but of a virgin, to teach us spiritual purity, to die to all the delights of sense, and so to *keep ourselves unspotted* from the world and the flesh, that we may be presented *chaste virgins to Christ*.

2. The truth proved by this sign is, that he is the Son of God, and the Mediator between God and man; for they shall call his name *Immanuel*; that is, he shall be *Immanuel*; when it is said *He shall be called*, it is meant, he shall be, the *Lord our Righteousness*. *Immanuel* signifies *God with us*; a mysterious name, but very precious; God incarnate among us, and so God *reconcilable* to us, at peace with us, and taking us into covenant and communion with himself. The people of the Jews had *God with them*, in types and shadows, dwelling between the cherubim; but never so as when the *Word was made flesh*—that was the blessed *Shechinah*. What a happy step is hereby taken toward the settling of a peace and correspondence between God and man, that the two natures are thus brought together in the person of the Mediator; by this he became an unexceptionable Referee, a Days-Man, fit to lay his hand upon them both, since he partakes of the nature of both. Behold, in this, the deepest mystery, and the richest mercy, that ever was. By the light of nature, we see God as a God *above us*; by the light of the law, we see him as a God *against us*; but by the light of the gospel, we see him as *Immanuel*, God *with us*, in our own nature, and (which is more) in our interest. Herein the Redeemer commended his love. With Christ's name *Immanuel* we may compare the name given to the gospel church. (Ezek. 48. 35.) *Jehovah Shammah*—*The Lord is there*; the Lord of hosts is with us.

Nor is it improper to say that the prophecy which foretold that he should be called *Immanuel*, was fulfilled in the design and intention of it, when he was called *Jesus*; for if he had not been *Immanuel*—*God with us*, he could not have been *Jesus*—*I Saviour*; and herein consists the salvation he wrought out, in the *bringing of God and man together*; this was what he designed, to bring *God to be with us*, which is our great happiness, and to bring *us to be with God*, which is our great duty.

VI. Joseph's obedience to the divine precept; (v. 24.) *being raised from sleep* by the impression which the dream made upon him, *he did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him*, though it was contrary to his former sentiments and intentions; he *took unto him his wife*; he did it speedily, without delay, and cheerfully, without dispute; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Extraordinary direction like this we are not now to expect; but God has still ways of making known his mind in doubtful cases, by hints of providence, debates of conscience, and advice of faithful friends; by each of these, ap-

plying the general rules of the written word, we should, therefore, in all the steps of our life, particularly the great turns of it, such as this of Joseph's, take direction from God, and we shall find it safe and comfortable to do as he bids us.

VII. The accomplishment of the divine promise; (v. 25.) *She brought forth her first-born son*. The circumstances of it are more largely related, Luke 2. 1, &c. Note, That which is *conceived of the Holy Ghost* never proves *abortive*, but will certainly be brought forth in its season. What is *of the will of the flesh*, and *of the will of man*, often miscarries; but if Christ be *formed* in the soul, God himself has begun the good work which he will perform; what is *conceived* in grace, will, no doubt, be brought forth in glory.

It is here further observed, 1. That Joseph, though he solemnized the marriage with Mary, his espoused wife, kept at a distance from her while she was with child of this holy thing; he *knew her not till she had brought him forth*. Much has been said concerning the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord; Jerome was very angry with Helvidius for denying it. It is certain that it cannot be proved from scripture. Dr. Whitby inclines to think, that when it is said, *Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born*, it is intimated that, afterward, the reason ceasing, he lived with her, according to the law, Exod. 21. 10. 2. That Christ was the *First-Born*; and so he might be called, though his mother had not any other children after him, according to the language of scripture. Nor was it without a mystery that Christ is called her *First-Born*, for he is the *First-born of every creature*, that is, the Heir of all things; and he is the *First-Born among many brethren*, that in all things he may have the pre-eminence. 3. That *Joseph called his name Jesus*, according to the direction given him. God having appointed him to be the Saviour, which was intimated in his giving him the name *Jesus*, we must accept of him to be our Saviour, and, in concurrence with that appointment, we must call him *Jesus, our Saviour*.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have the history of our Saviour's infancy, where we find how early he began to suffer, and that in him the word of righteousness was fulfilled, before himself began to fulfil all righteousness. Here is, I. The wise men's solicitous inquiry after Christ, v. 1. . 8. II. Their devout attendance on him, when they found out where he was, v. 9. . 12. III. Christ's flight into Egypt, to avoid the cruelty of Herod, v. 13. . 15. IV. The barbarous murder of the infants of Bethlehem, v. 16. . 18. V. Christ's return out of Egypt into the land of Israel again, v. 19. . 23.

1. **N**OW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2. Saying Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet. 6. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of

thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

It was a *mark of humiliation* put upon the Lord Jesus, that though he was the *Desire of all nations*, yet his coming into the world was little observed and taken notice of, his birth was obscure and unregarded: herein he emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. If the son of God must be brought into the world, one might justly expect that he should be received with all the ceremony possible; that crowns and sceptres should immediately have been laid at his feet, and that the high and mighty princes of the world should have been his humble servants; such a Messiah as this the Jews expected, but we see none of all this; he *came into the world*, and *the world knew him not*; nay, he *came to his own*, and *his own received him not*; for having undertaken to make satisfaction to his Father for the wrong done him *in his honour* by the sin of man, he did it by denying himself in, and despoiling himself of, the honours undoubtedly due to an incarnate Deity; yet, as afterward, so in his birth, some rays of glory darted forth in the midst of the greatest instances of his abasement. Though *there was the hiding of his power*, yet he had *beams coming out of his hand*, (Hab. 3. 4.) enough to condemn the world, and the Jews especially, for their stupidity.

The first who took notice of Christ after his birth, were the shepherds, (Luke 2. 15, &c.) who saw and heard glorious things concerning him, and *made them known abroad*, to the amazement of all that heard them, v. 17, 18. After that, Simeon and Anna spake of him, by the Spirit, to all that were disposed to heed what they said, Luke 2, 38. Now, one would think, these hints should have been taken by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they should with both arms have embraced the long-looked-for Messiah; but, for aught that appears, he continued nearly two years after at Bethlehem, and no further notice was taken of him till these wise men came. Note, Nothing will awaken those that are resolved to be regardless. Oh the amazing stupidity of these Jews! And no less, that of many who are called christians! Observe,

I. When this enquiry was made concerning Christ; it was *in the days of Herod the King*. This Herod was an Edomite, made king of Judea by Augustus and Antonius, the then chief rulers of the Roman state, a man made up of falsehood and cruelty; yet he was complimented with the title of *Herod the Great*. Christ was born in the 35th year of his reign, and notice is taken of this, to shew that the *sceptre* was now *departed from Judah*, and the *lawgiver from between his feet*; and therefore now was the time for Shiloh to come, and *to him shall the gathering of the people be*, witness the wise men, Gen. 49. 10.

II. Who and what these *wise men* were; they are here called *Μάγοι*—*Magicians*. Some take it in a good sense; the *Magi* among the *Persians* were their philosophers, and their priests; nor would they admit any one for their king who had not first been enrolled among the *Magi*; others think they dealt in unlawful arts; the word is used of Simon, the sorcerer, (Acts 8. 9, 11.) and of Elymas, the sorcerer, (Acts 13. 6.) nor does the scripture use it in any other sense; and then it was an early in-

stance and presage of Christ's victory over the Devil, when those who had been so much his devotees, became the early adorers even of the infant Jesus; so soon were trophies of his victory over the powers of darkness erected. Well, whatever sort of wise men they were before, now they began to be *wise men* indeed when they set themselves to to inquire after Christ.

This we are sure of, 1. That they were Gentiles, and not belonging to the commonwealth of Israel. The Jews regarded not Christ, but these Gentiles inquired him out. Note, Many times those who are nearest to the means, are furthest from the end. See ch. 8. 11, 12. The respect paid to Christ by these Gentiles was a happy presage and specimen of what would follow, when those who were *afar off* should be *made nigh by Christ*. 2. That they were *scholars*, they dealt in arts, curious arts; good scholars should be good christians, and then they complete their learning when they learn Christ. 3. That they were *men of the east*, who were noted for their *soothsaying*, Isa. 2. 6. Arabia is called the land of the east, (Gen. 25. 6.) and the *Arabians* are called, *Men of the east*, Judg. 6. 3. The presents they brought were the products of that country; the Arabians had done homage to David and Solomon as types of Christ. Jethro and Job were of that country. More than this we have not to say of them. The traditions of the Romish church are frivolous, that they were in number three, (though one of the ancients says that they were fourteen,) that they were kings, and that they lie buried in Colen, thence called the *three kings of Colen*; we covet not to be wise above what is written.

III. What induced them to make this inquiry. They, in their country, which was in the east, had seen an *extraordinary star*, such as they had not seen before; which they took to be an indication of an extraordinary person born in the land of Judea, over which land this star was seen to hover, in the nature of a comet, or a meteor rather, in the lower regions of the air; this differed so much from any thing that was common, that they concluded it to signify something uncommon. Note, Extraordinary appearances of God in the creatures, should put us upon inquiring after his mind and will therein; Christ foretold *signs in the heavens*. The birth of Christ was notified to the Jewish shepherds by an *angel*, to the Gentile philosophers by a *star*; to whom God spake in their own language, and in the way they were best acquainted with. Some think that that very light which the shepherds saw shining round about them the night after Christ was born, was the very same which, to the wise men who lived at such a distance, appeared as a star; which we cannot easily admit, because the star they had seen in the east, they saw a great while after, leading them to the house where Christ lay; it was a candle set up on purpose to guide them to Christ. The idolaters worshipped the stars as the *host of heaven*, especially the eastern nations, whence the planets have the names of their idol-gods; we read of a particular star they had in veneration, Amos 5. 26. Thus the stars that had been misused, came to be put to the right use, to lead men to Christ; the gods of the heathen became his servants. Some think this star put them in mind of Balaam's prophecy, that a star should come out of Jacob, pointing at a *sceptre* that shall rise out of Israel; see Numb. 24. 17. Balaam came from the mountains of the east, and was one of their *wise men*. Others impute their inquiry to the general expectation entertained at that time, in those eastern parts, of some great prince to appear; Tacitus, in his history, (*Lib. v.*) takes notice of it; *Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum literis contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valeret Oriens,*

profectique Judæa rerum potirentur—A persuasion existed in the minds of many, that some ancient writings of the priests contained a prediction that about that time an eastern power would prevail, and that persons proceeding from Judea would obtain dominion. Suetonius also, in the life of Vespasian, speaks of it; so that this extraordinary phenomenon was construed as pointing to that king; and we may suppose a divine impression made upon their minds, enabling them to interpret this star as a signal given by Heaven of the birth of Christ.

IV. How they prosecuted this inquiry. *They came from the east to Jerusalem, in further quest of this prince.* Whither should they come to inquire for the king of the Jews, but to Jerusalem, the mother-city, *whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord?* They might have said, "If such a prince should be born, we shall hear of him shortly in our own country, and it will be time enough then to pay our homage to him." But so impatient were they to be better acquainted with him, that they took a long journey on purpose to inquire after him. Note, Those who truly desire to know Christ, and find him, will not regard pains or perils in seeking after him. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.*

Their question is, *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* They do not ask, *whether there was such a one born;* (they are sure of that, and speak of it with assurance, so strongly was it set home upon their hearts;) but, *Where is he born?* Note, Those who know something of Christ, cannot but covet to know more of him. They call Christ the *King of the Jews*, for so the Messiah was expected to be; and he is Protector and Ruler of all the spiritual Israel, *he is born a King.*

To this question they doubted not but to have a ready answer, and to find all Jerusalem worshipping at the feet of this new King; but they come from door to door with this question, and no man can give them any information. Note, There is more gross ignorance in the world, and in the church too, than we are aware of. Many that we think should direct us to Christ, are themselves strangers to him. They ask, as the spouse of the daughters of Jerusalem, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* But they are never the wiser. However, like the spouse, they pursue the inquiry, *Where is he that is born king of the Jews?* Are they asked, "Why do ye make this inquiry?" It is because they have seen his star in the east. Are they asked, "What business have ye with him? What have the men of the east to do with the King of the Jews?" They have their answer ready; *We are come to worship him.* They conclude he will, in process of time, be their King, and therefore they will betimes ingratiate themselves with him, and with those about him. Note, Those in whose hearts the day-star is risen, to give them any thing of the knowledge of Christ, must make it their business to worship him. Have we seen Christ's star? Let us study to give him honour.

V. How this inquiry was treated at Jerusalem. News of it at last came to court; and when Herod heard it, *he was troubled.* v. 3. He could not be a stranger to the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, and the times fixed for his appearing by Daniel's weeks; but, having himself reigned so long and so successfully, he began to hope that those promises would for ever fail, and that his kingdom should be established and perpetuated, in spite of them. What a damp therefore must it needs be upon him, to hear talk of this King being born, now, when the time fixed for his appearing was come! Note, Carnal, wicked hearts, dread nothing so much as the fulfilling of the scriptures.

But though Herod, an Edomite, was troubled, one would have thought Jerusalem should rejoice greatly to hear that her King comes; yet, it seems, all Jerusalem, except the few there that waited for the Consolation of Israel, were troubled with Herod, and were apprehensive of I know not what ill consequences of the birth of this new King; that it would involve them in war, or restrain their lusts; they, for their parts, desired no King but Herod; no, not the Messiah himself. Note, The slavery of sin is foolishly preferred by many to the glorious liberty of the children of God, only because they apprehend some present difficulties attending that necessary revolution of the government in the soul. Herod and Jerusalem were thus troubled, from a mistaken notion that the kingdom of the Messiah would clash and interfere with the secular powers; whereas the star that proclaimed him King, plainly intimated that his kingdom was heavenly, and not of this lower world. Note, The reason why the kings of the earth, and the people, oppose the kingdom of Christ, is, because they do not know it, but err concerning it.

VI. What assistance they met with in this inquiry from the scribes and the priests, v. 4—6. Nobody can pretend to tell where the King of the Jews is, but Herod inquires where it was expected he should be born. The persons he consults are, the chief priests, who were now teachers by office; and the scribes, who made it their business to study the law; their *lips must keep knowledge*, but then the people must *inquire the law at their mouth*, Mal. 2. 7. It was generally known that Christ should be born at Bethlehem; (John 7. 42.) but Herod would have counsel's opinion upon it, and therefore applies himself to the proper persons; and, that he might be the better satisfied, he has them altogether, *all the chief priests, and all the scribes;* and demands of them what was the place, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, *where Christ should be born!* Many a good question is put with an ill design, so was this by Herod.

The priests and scribes need not take any long time to give an answer to this query; nor do they differ in their opinion, but all agree that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, here called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the land of Zebulun, Josh. 19. 15. Bethlehem signifies the *house of bread*; the fittest place for him to be born in, who is the true Manna, the bread which came down from heaven, which was given for the life of the world. The proof they produce is taken from Mic. 5. 2. where it is foretold, that though Bethlehem be little among the thousands of Judah, (so it is in Micah,) no very populous place, yet it shall be found not the least among the princes of Judah; (so it is here;) for Bethlehem's honour lay not, as that of other cities, in the multitude of the people, but in the magnificence of the princes it produced. Though, upon some accounts, Bethlehem was little, yet herein it had the pre-eminence above all the cities of Israel, that the Lord shall count, when he writes up the people, that this Man, even the Man Jesus Christ was born there, Ps. 87. 6. Out of thee shall come a Governor, the King of the Jews. Note, Christ will be a Saviour to those only who are willing to take him for their Governor. Bethlehem was the city of David, and David the glory of Bethlehem; there, therefore, must David's Son and Successor be born. There was a famous well at Bethlehem, by the gate, which David longed to drink of; (2. Sam. 23. 15.) in Christ we have not only bread enough and to spare, but may come and take also of the water of life freely. Observe here, how Jews and Gentiles compare notes about Jesus Christ. The Gentiles know the time of it by a star; the

Jews knew the place of it by the scriptures; and so, they are capable of informing one another. Note, It would contribute much to the increase of knowledge, if we did thus mutually communicate what we know. Men grow rich by bartering and exchanging; so, if we have knowledge to communicate to others, they will be ready to communicate to us; thus many shall discourse, shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

VII. The bloody project and design of Herod, occasioned by this inquiry, v. 7, 8. Herod was now an old man; had reigned thirty-five years; this King was but newly born, and not likely to enterprise any thing considerable for many years; yet Herod is jealous of him. Crowned heads cannot endure to think of successors, much less of rivals; and therefore nothing less than the blood of this infant King will satisfy him; and he will not give himself liberty to think that, if this new-born Child should be indeed the Messiah, in opposing him, or making any attempts upon him, he would be found fighting against God, than which nothing is more vain, nothing more dangerous. Passion has got the mastery of reason and conscience.

Now, 1. See how cunningly he laid the project; (v. 7, 8.) *He privily called the wise men*, to talk with them about this matter. He would not openly own his fears and jealousies; it would be his disgrace to let the wise men know them, and dangerous to let the people know them. Sinners are often tormented with secret fears, which they keep to themselves. Herod learns of the wise men the time when the star appeared, that he might take his measures accordingly; and then employs them to inquire further, and bids them bring him an account. All this might look suspicious, if he had not covered it with a shew of religion; that *I may come and worship him also*. Note, The greatest wickedness often conceals itself under a mask of piety. Absalom cloaks his rebellious project with a vow.

2. See how strangely he was befooled and infatuated in this, that he trusted it with the wise men, and did not choose some other managers, that would have been true to his interests. It was but seven miles from Jerusalem; how easily might he have sent spies to watch the wise men, who might have been as soon there to destroy the Child as they to worship him. Note, God can hide from the eyes of the church's enemies those methods by which they might easily destroy the church; when he intends to lead princes away spoiled, his way is to make the judges fools.

9. When they had heard the king, they departed, and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

We have here the wise men's humble attendance upon this new-born King of the Jews, and the honours they paid him. From Jerusalem they went to Bethlehem, resolving to seek till they find; but it is very strange that they went alone; that not one

person of the court, church, or city, should accompany them, if not in conscience, yet in civility to them, or touched with a curiosity to see this young Prince. As the queen of the south, so the wise men of the east, will rise up in judgment against the men of that generation, and of this too, and will condemn them; for they came from a far country, to worship Christ; while the Jews, his kinsmen, would not stir a step, would not go to the next town to bid him welcome. It might have been a discouragement to these wise men, to find him whom they sought, thus neglected at home. Are we come so far, to honour the King of the Jews, and do the Jews themselves put such a slight upon him and us? Yet they persist in their resolution. Note, We must continue our attendances upon Christ, though we be alone in them; whatever others do, we must serve the Lord; if they will not go to heaven with us, yet we must not go to hell with them. Now,

1. See how they found out Christ by the same star that they had seen in their own country, v. 9, 10. Observe, 1. How graciously God directed them. By the first appearance of the star they were given to understand where they might inquire for this King, and then it disappeared, and they were left to take the usual methods for such an enquiry. Note, Extraordinary helps are not to be expected where ordinary means are to be had. Well, they had traced the matter as far as they could; they were upon their journey to Bethlehem, but that is a populous town, where shall they find him when they come thither? Here they were at a loss, at their wit's end, but not at their faith's end; they believed that God, who had brought them thither by his word, would not leave them there; nor did he; for behold, the star which they saw in the east went before them. Note, If we go on as far as we can in the way of our duty, God will direct and enable us to do that which of ourselves we cannot do; *Uti, and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee. Vigilantibus, non dormientibus, succurrit lex*—The law affords its aid, not to the idle, but to the active. The star had left them a great while, yet now returns. They who follow God in the dark shall find that light is sown, is reserved, for them. Israel was led by a pillar of fire to the promised land, the wise men by a star to the promised Seed, who is himself the bright and Morning Star, Rev. 22. 16. God would rather create a new thing, than leave those at a loss who diligently and faithfully sought him. This star was the token of God's presence with them; for he is Light, and goes before his people as their Guide. Note, If we by faith eye God in all our ways, we may see ourselves under his conduct; he guides with his eye, (Ps. 32. 8.) and saith to them, *This is the way, walk in it*; and there is a day-star that arises in the hearts of those that inquire after Christ, 2 Pet. 1. 19. 2. Observe how joyfully they followed God's direction; (v. 10.) *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy*. Now they saw they were not deceived, and had not taken this long journey in vain. *When the desire comes, it is a tree of life*. Now they were sure that God was with them, and the tokens of his presence and favour cannot but fill with joy unspeakable the souls of those that know how to value them. Now they could laugh at the Jews in Jerusalem, who, probably, had laughed at them as coming on a fool's errand. The watchmen can give the spouse no tidings of her beloved; yet it is but a little that she passes from them, and she finds him, Cant. 3. 3, 4. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. What a transport of joy these wise men were in, upon this sight of the star, none know so well as those who, after a long and melancholy night of temptation and desertion, under the power of a spirit of bondage, at length receive the spirit of adop-

tion, witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God; this is light out of darkness, it is life from the dead. Now they had reason to hope for a sight of the Lord's Christ speedily, of the Sun of righteousness, for they see the Morning Star. Note, We should be glad of every thing that will shew us the way to Christ. This star was sent to meet the wise men, and to conduct them into the presence-chamber of the King; by this manner of the ceremonies they were introduced, to have their audience. Now God fulfils his promise of meeting those that are disposed to rejoice, and work righteousness, (Isa. 64. 5.) and they fulfil his precept. Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord, Ps. 105. 3. Note, God is pleased sometimes to favour young converts with such tokens of his love as are very encouraging to them, in reference to the difficulties they meet with at their setting out in the ways of God.

II. See how they made their address to him when they had found him, v. 11. We may well imagine their expectations were raised to find this royal Babe, though slighted by the nation, yet honourably attended at home; and what a disappointment it was to them, when they found a cottage was his palace, and his own poor mother all the retinue he had! Is this the Saviour of the world? Is this the King of the Jews, nay, and the Prince of the kings of the earth? Yes, this is he, who, though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, became thus poor. However, these wise men were so wise as to see through this veil, and in this despised Babe to discern the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father; they did not think themselves balked or baffled in their inquiry; but, as having found the King they sought, they presented themselves first, and then their gifts, to him.

1. They presented themselves to him; they fell down, and worshipped him. We do not read that they gave such honour to Herod, though he was in the height of his royal grandeur; but to this Babe they gave this honour, not only as to a King, (then they would have done the same to Herod,) but as to a God. Note, All that have found Christ fall down before him; they adore him, and submit themselves to him. He is thy Lord, and worship him. It will be the wisdom of the wisest of men, and by this it will appear they know Christ, and understand themselves and their true interests, if they be the humble, faithful worshippers of the Lord Jesus.

2. They presented their gifts to him. In the eastern nations, when they did homage to their kings, they made them presents; thus the subjection of the kings of Sheba to Christ is spoken of, (Ps. 72. 10.) They shall bring presents, and offer gifts. See Isa. 60. 6. Note, With ourselves, we must give up all that we have to Jesus Christ; and if we be sincere in the surrender of ourselves to him, we shall not be unwilling to part with what is dearest to us, and most valuable, to him and for him; nor are our gifts accepted, unless we first present ourselves to him living sacrifices. God had respect to Abel, and then to his offering. The gifts they presented were, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, money, and money's worth. Providence sent this for a seasonable relief to Joseph and Mary in their present poor condition. These were the products of their own country; what God favours us with, we must honour him with. Some think there was a significancy in their gifts; they offered him gold, as a King, paying him tribute; to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's; frankincense, as God, for they honoured God with the smoke of incense; and myrrh, as a Man that should die, for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies.

III. See how they left him when they had made their address to him, v. 12. Herod appointed them

to bring him word what discoveries they had made, and, it is probable, they would have done so, if they had not been countermanded, not suspecting their being thus made his tools in a wicked design. Those that mean honestly and well themselves are easily made to believe that others do so too, and cannot think the world is so bad as really it is; but the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. We do not find that the wise men promised to come back to Herod, and, if they had, it must have been with the usual proviso, If God permit; God did not permit them, and prevented the mischief Herod designed to the Child Jesus, and the trouble it would have been to the wise men to have been made involuntarily accessory to it. They were warned of God, χρηματισθέντες—*oraculo vel responso accepto*—by an *oracular intimation*. Some think that it intimates that they asked counsel of God, and that this was the answer. Note, Those that act cautiously, and are afraid of sin and snares, if they apply themselves to God for direction, may expect to be led in the right way. They were warned not to return to Herod, or to Jerusalem; these were unworthy to have reports brought them concerning Christ, that might have seen with their own eyes, and would not. They departed into their own country another way, to bring the tidings to their countrymen; but it is strange that we never hear any more of them, and that they or theirs did not afterwards attend him in the temple, whom they had worshipped in the cradle. However, the direction they had from God in their return would be a further confirmation of their faith in this Child, as the Lord from heaven.

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; 15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

We have here Christ's flight into Egypt, to avoid the cruelty of Herod, which was the effect of the wise men's inquiry after him; for, before that, the obscurity he lay in was his protection. It was but little respect (compared with what should have been) that was paid to Christ in his infancy; yet even that, instead of honouring him among his people, did but expose him.

Now here observe,

1. The command given to Joseph concerning it, v. 15. Joseph knew neither the danger the Child was in, nor how to escape it; but God, by an angel, tells him both in a dream, as before he directed him in like manner what to do, ch. 1. 20. Joseph, before his alliance to Christ, had not been wont to converse with angels as now. Note, Those that are spiritually related to Christ by faith, have that communion and correspondence with Heaven, which before they were strangers to.

2. Joseph is here told what their danger was; Herod will seek the young Child to destroy him. Note, God is acquainted with all the cruel projects and purposes of the enemies of his church. I know thy rage against me, saith God to Sennacherib, Isa. 37. 28. How early was the blessed Jesus involved in trouble! Usually, even those whose ripener years

are attended with toils and perils have a peaceable and quiet infancy; but it was not so with the blessed Jesus: his life and sufferings began together; he was born a *Man striven with*, as Jeremiah was, (Jer. 15. 10.) who was *sanctified from the womb*, Jer. 1. 5. Both Christ the Head, and the church his body, agree in saying, *Many a time have they afflicted me, from my youth up*. Pharaoh's cruelty fastens upon the Hebrews' children, and the great red dragon stands ready to devour the man-child as soon as it should be born, Rev. 12. 4.

2. He is directed what to do, to escape the danger; *Take the young Child, and flee into Egypt*. Thus early must Christ give an example to his own rule; (ch. 10. 23.) *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*. He that came to die for us, when his hour was not yet come, fled for his own safety. Self-preservation, being a branch of the law of nature, is eminently a part of the law of God. *Flee*; but why *into Egypt*? Egypt was infamous for idolatry, tyranny, and enmity to the people of God; it had been a house of bondage to Israel, and particularly cruel to the infants of Israel; in Egypt, as much as in Ramah, *Rachel had been weeping for her children*; yet that is appointed to be a place of refuge to the holy Child Jesus. Note, God, when he pleases, can make the worst of places serve the best of purposes; for *the earth is the Lord's*, he makes what use he pleases of it: sometimes the earth helps the woman, Rev. 12. 26. God, who made Moab a shelter to his outcasts, makes Egypt a refuge for his Son. This may be considered,

(1.) As a trial of the faith of Joseph and Mary. They might be tempted to think, "if this Child be the Son of God, as we are told he is, has he no other way to secure himself from a man that is a worm, than by such a mean and inglorious retreat as this? Cannot he summon legions of angels to be his life-guard, or cherubims with flaming swords to keep this tree of life? Cannot he strike Herod dead, or wither the hand that is stretched out against him, and so save us the trouble of this remove?" They had been lately told that he should be *the Glory of his people Israel*; and is the land of Israel so soon become too hot for him? But we find not that they made any such objections; their faith, being tried, was found firm, and they believe *this is the son of God*, though they see no miracle wrought for his preservation; but they are put to the use of ordinary means. Joseph had great honour put upon him in being the husband of the blessed Virgin; but that honour has trouble attending it, as all honours have in this world; Joseph must take the young Child, and carry him *into Egypt*; and now it appeared how well God had provided for the young Child and his mother, in appointing Joseph to stand in so near a relation to them; now the gold which the wise men brought would stand them in stead to bear their charges. God foresees his people's distresses, and provides against them beforehand. God intimates the continuance of his care and guidance, when he said, *Be thou there until I bring thee word*; so that he must expect to hear from God again, and not stir without fresh orders. Thus God will keep his people still in a dependence upon him.

(2.) As an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. As there was no room for him in the inn at Bethlehem, so there was no quiet room for him in the land of Judea. Thus was he banished from the earthly Canaan, that we, who for sin were banished from the heavenly Canaan, might not be for ever expelled. If we and our infants be at any time in straits, let us remember the straits Christ in his infancy was brought into, and be reconciled to them.

(3.) As a token of God's displeasure against the Jews, who took so little notice of him; justly does he leave those who had slighted him. We see also

here an earnest of his favour to the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to bring the gospel when the Jews rejected it. If Egypt entertain Christ when he is forced out of Judea, it will not be long ere it be said, *Blessed be Egypt my people*, Isa. 19. 25.

II. Joseph's obedience to this command, v. 14. The journey would be inconvenient and perilous both to the young Child and to his mother; they were but poorly provided for it, and were likely to meet with cold entertainment in Egypt: yet Joseph was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, made no objection, nor was dilatory in his obedience. As soon as he had received his orders, he immediately arose, and went away by night, the same night, as it should seem, that he received the orders. Note, Those that would make sure work of their obedience, must make quick work of it. Now Joseph went out, as his father Abraham did, with an implicit dependence upon God, *not knowing whither he went*, Heb. 11. 8. Joseph and his wife, having little, had little to take care of in this remove. And abundance encumbers a necessary flight. If rich people have the advantage of the poor while they possess what they have, the poor have the advantage of the rich when they are called to part with it.

Joseph took the young Child and his mother. Some observe, that the young Child is put first, as the principal Person, and Mary is called, *not the wife of Joseph*, but, which was her greater dignity, *the mother of the young Child*. This was not the first Joseph that was driven from Canaan to Egypt for a shelter from the anger of his brethren; this Joseph ought to be welcome there for the sake of that.

If we may credit tradition, at their entrance into Egypt happening to go into a temple, all the images of their gods were overthrown by an invisible power, and fell like Dagon before the ark, according to that prophecy, *The Lord shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence*, Isa. 19. 1. They continued in Egypt till the death of Herod, which, some think, was seven years, others think, not so many months. There they were at a distance from the temple and the service of it, and in the midst of idolaters; but God sent them thither, and will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Though they were far from the temple of the Lord, they had with them the Lord of the temple. A forced absence from God's ordinances, and a forced presence with wicked people, may be the lot, are not the sin, yet cannot but be the grief, of good people.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in all this—that scripture, (Hos. 11. 1.) *Out of Egypt have I called my son*. Of all the evangelists, Matthew takes most notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what concerned Christ, because his gospel was first published among the Jews, with whom that would add much strength and lustre to it. Now this word of the prophet undoubtedly referred to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, in which God owned them for his son, his first-born; (Exod. 4. 22.) but it is here applied, by way of analogy, to Christ, the Head of the church. Note, the scripture has many accomplishments, so full and copious is it, and so well ordered in all things! God is every day fulfilling the scripture. Scripture is not of private interpretation, we must give it its full latitude. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him; and though I loved him, I suffered him to be a great while in Egypt; but because I loved him, in due time I called him out of Egypt. They that read this, must, in their thoughts, not only look back, but look forward; that which has been shall be again; (Eccl. 1. 9.) and the manner of expression intimates this; for it is not said, I called him,

but, I called *my son*, out of Egypt. Note, It is no new thing for God's sons to be in Egypt, in a strange land, in a house of bondage; but they shall be fetched out. They may be hid in Egypt, but they shall not be left there. All the elect of God, being by nature children of wrath, are born in a spiritual Egypt, and in conversion are effectually called out. It might be objected against Christ, that he had been in Egypt. Must the *sun of Righteousness* arise out of that land of darkness? But this shews that to be no such strange thing: Israel was brought out of Egypt, to be advanced to the highest honours; and this is but the doing the same thing again.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. 17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, 18. In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Here is, I. Herod's resentment of the departure of the wise men. He waited long for their return; he hopes though they be slow, they will be sure, and he shall crush his Rival at his first appearing; but he hears, upon enquiry, that they are gone off another way, which increases his jealousy, and makes him suspect they are in the interest of this new King, which made him *exceeding wroth*; and he is the more desperate and outrageous for his being disappointed. Note, Inevitable corruption swells the higher for the obstructions it meets with in a sinful pursuit.

II. His politic contrivance, notwithstanding this, to take off him that is *born king of the Jews*. If he could not reach him by a particular execution, he doubted not but to involve him in a general stroke, which, like the sword of war, should *devour one as well as another*. This would be sure work; and thus those that would destroy *their own* iniquity, must be sure to destroy *all* their iniquities. Herod was an Edomite, enmity to Israel was bred in the bone with him. Doeg was an Edomite, who, for David's sake, *slew all the priests of the Lord*. It was strange that Herod could find any so inhuman as to be employed in such a bloody and barbarous piece of work; but wicked hands never want wicked tools to work with. Little children have always been taken under the special protection, not only of human laws, but of human nature; yet these are sacrificed to the rage of this tyrant, under whom, as under Nero, innocence is the least security. Herod was, throughout his reign, a bloody man; it was not long before, that he destroyed the whole Sanhedrim, or bench of judges; but blood to the blood-thirsty is like drink to those in a drowsy; *Quo plus s'unt potes, plus sitiuntur aquas*—*The more they drink, the more thirsty they become*. Herod was now about seventy years old, so that an infant, at this time *under two years old*, was not likely ever to give him any disturbance. Nor was he a man over fond of his own children, or of their preferment, having formerly slain two of his own sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and his son Antipater after this, but five days before he himself died; so that it was

purely to gratify his own brutish lusts of pride and cruelty that he did this. All is fish that comes to his net.

Observe what large measures he took, 1. As to time; He *slew all from two years old and under*. It is probable that the blessed Jesus was at this time not a year old; yet Herod took in all the infants *under two years old*, that he might be sure not to miss of his prey. He cares not how many heads fall, which he allows to be innocent, provided that escape not which he supposes to be guilty. 2. As to place; He kills all the male children, not only in *Bethlehem*, but in *all the coasts thereof*, in all the villages of that city. This was being *overmuch wicked*, (Eccl. 7. 17.) Note, An unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often transports men to the most absurd and unreasonable instances of cruelty. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as it commences; that sin which entered by one man's disobedience, introduced death with it; and we are not to suppose any thing more than that common guilt, we are not to suppose that these children were *sinners above all that were in Israel*, because they suffered such things. *God's judgments are a great deep*. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But we must look upon this murder of the infants under another character: it was their martyrdom. How early did persecution commence against Christ and his kingdom! *Think ye that he came to send peace on the earth?* No, but a sword, such a sword as this, ch. 10. 34, 35. A passive testimony was hereby given to the Lord Jesus. As when he was in the womb, he was witnessed to by a child's leaping in the womb for joy at his approach, so now, at *two years old*, he had contemporary witnesses to him of the same age. They shed their blood for him, who afterwards shed his for them. These were the infantry of the *noble army of martyrs*. If these infants were thus baptized with blood, though it were their own, into the church triumphant, it could not be said but that, with what they got in heaven, they were abundantly recompensed for what they lost on earth. *Out of the mouths of these babes and sucklings God did perfect praise*; otherwise, it is not good to the Almighty that he should thus afflict.

The tradition of the Greek church, (and we have it in the Æthiopic missal,) is, that the number of the children slain was 14,000; but that is very absurd. I believe, if the births of the male children in the weekly bills were computed, there would not be found so many *under two years old*, in one of the most populous cities in the world, much less in Bethlehem, a small town, that was not near a fortieth part of it. But it is an instance of the vanity of tradition. It is strange that Josephus does not relate this story; but he wrote long after St. Matthew, and it is probable that he *therefore* would not relate it, because he would not so far countenance the christian history, for he was a zealous Jew; but, to be sure, if it had not been true and well attested, he would have contested it. Macrobius, a heathen writer, tells us, that when Augustus Cæsar heard that Herod, among the children he ordered to be slain *under two years old*, slew his own son, he passed this jest upon him, That it was better to be Herod's swine than his son. The usage of the country forbade him to kill a swine, but nothing could restrain him from killing his son. Some think that he had a young child at nurse in Bethlehem; others think that, through mistake, two events are confounded—the murder of the infants, and the murder of his son Antipater. But for the church of Rome to put the Holy Innocents, as they call them, into their calendar, and observe a day in memory of them, while they have so often, by their barbarous

massacres, justified, and even out-done Herod, is but to do as their predecessors did, who built the tombs of the prophets, while they themselves filled up the same measure.

Some observe another design of Providence in the murder of the infants. By all the prophecies of the Old Testament it appears that Bethlehem was the place, and this the time, of the Messiah's nativity; now all the children of Bethlehem, born at this time, being murdered, and Jesus only escaping, none but Jesus could pretend to be the Messiah. Herod now thought he had baffled all the Old-Testament prophecies, had defeated the indications of the star, and the devotions of the wise men, by ridding the country of this new King; having burnt the hive, he concludes he had killed the master bee; but God in heaven *laughs at him, and has him in derision*. Whatever crafty cruel devices are in men's hearts, *the counsel of the Lord shall stand*.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in this; (*v. 17, 18.*) *Then was fulfilled that prophecy, (Jer. 31. 15.) A voice was heard in Ramah. See and adore the fulness of the scripture! That prediction was accomplished in Jeremiah's time, when Nebuzaradan, after he had destroyed Jerusalem, brought all his prisoners to Ramah, (Jer. 40. 1.) and there disposed of them as he pleased, for the sword, or for captivity. Then was the cry in Ramah heard to Bethlehem; (for those two cities, the one in Judah's lot, and the other in Benjamin's, were not far asunder; but now the prophecy is again fulfilled in the great sorrow that was for the death of these infants. The scripture was fulfilled,*

1. In the place of this mourning. The noise of it was heard from Bethlehem to Ramah; for Herod's cruelty extended itself to *all the coasts of Bethlehem*, even into the lot of Benjamin, among the children of Rachel. Some think the country about Bethlehem was called *Rachel*, because there she died, and was buried. Rachel's sepulchre was hard by Bethlehem, Gen. 35. 16, 19. Compare 1 Sam. 10. 2. Rachel had her heart much set upon children; the son she died in travail of, she called *Benoni—the son of her sorrow*. These mothers were like Rachel, lived near Rachel's grave, and many of them descended from Rachel; and therefore their lamentations are elegantly represented by *Rachel's weeping*.

2. In the degree of this mourning. It was *lamentation and weeping, and great mourning*; all little enough to express the sense they had of this aggravated calamity. There was a great cry in Egypt when the first-born were slain, and so there was here when the youngest was slain; for whom we naturally have a particular tenderness. Here was a representation of this world we live in. We hear in it *lamentation, and weeping, and mourning*, and see the *tears of the oppressed*, some upon one account, and some upon another. Our way lies through a *vale of tears*. This sorrow was so great, that they *would not be comforted*. They hardened themselves in it, and took a pleasure in their grief. Blessed be God, there is no occasion of grief in this world, no, not that which is supplied by sin itself, that will justify us in refusing to be comforted! They *would not be comforted, because they are not*, that is, *they are not in the land of the living, are not as they were, in their mothers' embraces*. If, indeed, they *were not*, there might be some excuse for sorrowing as though we had no hope; but we know they are not lost, but gone before; if we forget that *they are*, we lose the best ground of our comfort, 1 Thess.

4. 13. Some make this great grief of the Bethlehemites to be a judgment upon them for their contempt of Christ. They that would not rejoice for the birth of the Son of God, are justly made to weep for the death of their own sons; for they only *won-*

dered at the tidings the shepherds brought them, but did not *welcome* them.

The quoting of this prophecy might serve to obviate an objection which some would make against Christ, upon this sad providence. "Can the Messiah, who is to be the Consolation of Israel, be introduced with all that lamentation?" Yes, for so it was foretold, and the scripture must be accomplished. And besides, if we look further into this prophecy, we shall find that *the bitter weeping in Ramah* was but a prologue to the greatest joy, for it follows, *Thy work shall be rewarded, and there is hope in thy end*. The worse things are, the sooner they will mend. Unto them a Child was born, sufficient to repair their losses.

19. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. 21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: 23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

We have here Christ's return out of Egypt into the *land of Israel* again. Egypt may serve to sojourn in, or take shelter in, for a while, but not to abide in. Christ was *sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and therefore to them he must return. Observe,

I. What it was that made way for his return—the death of Herod, which happened not long after the murder of the infants; some think not above three months. Such quick work did divine vengeance make! Note, Herods must die; proud tyrants, that were the terror of the mighty, and the oppressors of the godly, *in the land of the living*, their day must come to fall, and down to the pit they must go. *Who art thou then, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* (Isa. 51. 12, 13.) especially considering that at death, not only their envy and hatred are perished, (Eccl. 9. 6.) and they cease from troubling, (Job 3. 17.) but they are punished. Of all sins, the guilt of innocent blood fills the measure soonest. It is a dreadful account which Josephus gives of the death of this same Herod, (Antiq. Jud. lib. xvi. cap. viii, ix, x.) that he was seized with a disease which burned him inwardly with an inexpressible torture; that he was insatiably greedy of meat; had the colic, and gout, and dropsy; such an intolerable stench attended his disease, that none could come near him; and so passionate and impatient was he, that he was a torment to himself, and a terror to all that attended him: his innate cruelty, being thus exasperated, made him more barbarous than ever; having ordered his own son to be put to death, he imprisoned many of the nobility and gentry, and ordered that as soon as he was dead they should be killed; but that execution was prevented. See what kind of men have been the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his followers! Few have opposed christianity but such

as have first divested themselves of humanity, as Nero and Donitian.

II. The orders given from Heaven concerning their return, and Joseph's obedience to those orders, *v. 19—21*. God had sent Joseph into Egypt, and there he stayed till the same that brought him thither ordered him thence. Note, In all our removes, it is good to see our way plain, and God going before us; we should not move either one way or the other without order. These orders were sent him by an angel. Note, Our intercourse with God, if it be kept up on our part, shall be kept up on his, wherever we are. No place can exclude God's gracious visits. Angels come to Joseph in Egypt, to Ezekiel in Babylon, and to John in Patmos. Now, 1. The angel informs him of the death of Herod and his accomplices: *They are dead, which sought the young Child's life*. They are dead, but the young Child lives. Persecuted saints sometimes live to tread upon the graves of their persecutors. Thus did the church's King weather the storm, and many a one has the church in like manner weathered. *They are dead*, to wit, Herod and his son Antipater, who, though there were mutual jealousies between them, yet, probably, concurred in seeking the destruction of this new King. If Herod first kill Antipater, and then die himself, the coasts are cleared, and the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes, when one wicked instrument is the ruin of another. 2. He directs him what to do. He must go and return to the land of Israel; and he did so without delay; not pleading the tolerably good settlement he had in Egypt, or the inconveniences of the journey, especially if, as is supposed, it was in the beginning of winter that Herod died. God's people follow his direction, whithersoever he leads them, wherever he lodges them. Did we but look upon the world as our Egypt, the place of our bondage and banishment, and heaven only as our Canaan, our home, our rest, we should as readily arise, and depart thither, when we are called for, as Joseph did out of Egypt.

III. The further direction he had from God, which way to steer, and where to fix in the land of Israel, *v. 22, 23*. God could have given him these instructions with the former, but God reveals his mind to his people by degrees, to keep them still waiting on him, and expecting to hear further from him. These orders Joseph received in a dream, probably, as those before, by the ministration of an angel. God could have signified his will to Joseph by the Child Jesus, but we do not find that in those removes he either takes notice, or gives notice, of any thing that occurred; surely it was because in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren; being a Child, he spake as a child, and did as a child, and drew a veil over his infinite knowledge and power; as a child he increased in wisdom.

Now the direction given this holy, royal family, is, 1. That it might not settle in Judea, *v. 22*. Joseph might think that Jesus, being born in Bethlehem, must be brought up there; yet he is prudently afraid for the young Child, because he heard that Archelaus reigns in Herod's stead, not over all the kingdom as his father did, but only over Judea, the other provinces being put into other hands. See what a succession of enemies there is to fight against Christ and his church! If one drop off, another presently appears, to keep up the old enmity. But for this reason Joseph must not take the young Child into Judea. Note, God will not thrust his children into the mouth of danger, but when it is for his own glory and their trial; for *precious in the sight of the Lord are the life and the death of his saints; precious is their blood* to him.

2. That it must settle in Galilee, *v. 22*. There Philip now ruled, who was a mild, quiet man. Note,

The providence of God commonly so orders it, that his people shall not want a quiet retreat from the storm and from the tempest; when one climate becomes hot and scorching, another shall be kept more cool and temperate. Galilee lay far north; Samaria lay between it and Judea; thither they were sent, to Nazareth, a city upon a hill, in the centre of the lot of Zebulun; there the mother of our Lord lived, when she conceived that *holy thing*; and, probably, Joseph lived there too, Luke 1, 26, 27. Thither they were sent, and there they were well known, and were among their relations; the most proper place for them to be in. There they continued, and from thence our Saviour was called *Jesus of Nazareth*, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, for, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*

In this is said to be fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets. He shall be called a Nazarene; which may be looked upon, (1.) As a name of honour and dignity, though primarily it signifies, no more than, a man of Nazareth; there is an allusion, or mystery in it, speaking Christ to be, [1.] The Man, the Branch, spoken of, Isaiah 11. 1. The word there is *Netzar*, which signifies, either a branch, or the city Nazareth; in being denominated from that city, he is declared to be that Branch. [2.] It speaks him to be the great Nazarite; of whom the legal Nazarites were a type and figure, (especially Samson, Judge 13. 5.) and Joseph, who is called a Nazarite among his brethren, (Gen. 49. 26.) and to whom that which was prescribed concerning the Nazarites, has reference, Numb. 6. 2, &c. Not that Christ was, strictly, a Nazarite, for he drank wine, and touched dead bodies; but he was eminently so, both as he was singularly holy, and as he was by a solemn designation and dedication set apart to the honour of God in the work of our redemption, as Samson was to save Israel. And it is a name we have all reason to rejoice in, and to know him by. Or, (2.) As a name of reproach and contempt. To be called a Nazarene, was to be called a despicable man, a man from whom no good was to be expected, and to whom no respect was to be paid. The Devil first fastened this name upon Christ, to render him mean, and prejudice people against him, and it stuck as a nick-name to him and his followers. Now this was not particularly foretold by any one prophet, but, in general, it was spoken by the prophets, that he should be despised and rejected of men, (Isa. 53. 2, 3.) a Worm and no man, (Ps. 22. 6, 7.) that he should be an Alien to his brethren, Ps. 69. 7, 8. Let no name of reproach for religion's sake seem hard to us, when our Master was himself called a Nazarene.

CHAP. III.

At the story of this chapter, concerning the baptism of John, begins the gospel; (Mark, 1. 1.) what went before is but Preface or Introduction; this is "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." And Peter observes the same date, Acts 1. 22, beginning from the baptism of John, for then Christ began first to appear in him, and then to appear to him, and by him to the world. Here is, I. The glorious rising of the morning-star—John the Baptist, *v. 1—11*. The doctrine he preached, *v. 2*. 2. The fulfilling of the scripture in him, *v. 3*. 3. His manner of life, *v. 4*. 4. The resort of multitudes to him, and their submission to his baptism, *v. 5, 6*. 5. His sermon that he preached to the Pharisees and Sadducees, wherein he endeavours to bring them to repentance, (*v. 7—10*.) and so to bring them to Christ, *v. 11, 12*. II. The more glorious shining forth of the sun of righteousness, immediately after: where we have, 1. The honour done by him to the baptism of John, *v. 13—15*. 2. The honour done to him by the descent of the Spirit upon him, and a voice from heaven, *v. 16, 17*.

I. IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

2. And saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. 5. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

We have here an account of the preaching and baptism of John, which were the dawning of the gospel-day. Observe,

I. The time when he appeared. *In those days*, (v. 1.) or, *after those days*, long after what was recorded in the foregoing chapter, which left the Child Jesus in his infancy. *In those days*, in the time appointed of the Father for the beginning of the gospel, when the *fulness of time* was come, which was often thus spoken of in the *Old Testament*, in *those days*. Now the last of Daniel's weeks began, or rather, the latter half of the last week, when the Messiah was to *confirm the covenant with many*, Dan. 9. 27. Christ's appearances are all in their season. Glorious things were spoken both of John and Jesus, at and before their births, which would have given occasion to expect some extraordinary appearances of a divine presence and power with them when they were very young; but it is quite otherwise. Except Christ's disputing with the doctors at twelve years old, nothing appears remarkable concerning either of them, till they were about thirty years old. Nothing is recorded in their childhood and youth, but the greatest part of their life is *tempestus obscurus*—*wrapt up in darkness and obscurity*: these children differ little in outward appearance from other children, as the heir, while he is under age, differs nothing from a servant, though he be *lord of all*. And this was to shew, 1. That even then when God is acting as the God of Israel, the *Saviour*, *verily he is a God that hideth himself*, (Isa. 45. 15.) *The Lord is in this place, and I know it not*, Gen. 28. 16. Our beloved stands behind the wall long, before he *looks forth at the windows*, Cant. 2. 9. 2. That our faith must principally have an eye to Christ in his office and undertaking, for there is the *display* of his power; but in his person is the *hiding* of his power. All this while, Christ was God-man; yet we are not told what he said or did, till he appeared as a Prophet; and then, *Hear ye him*. 3. That young men, though well qualified, should not be forward to put forth themselves in public service, but be humble, and modest, and self-diffident, *swift to hear, and slow to speak*.

Matthew says nothing of the conception and birth of John the Baptist, which is largely related by St. Luke, but finds him at full age, as if dropt from the clouds to preach in the wilderness. For above three hundred years the church had been without prophets; those lights had been long put out, that he might be the more desired, who was to be the great Prophet. After Malachi there was no prophet, nor any pretender to prophecy, till John the Baptist, to whom therefore the prophet Malachi points more directly, than any of the Old-Testament prophets had done; (Mal. 3. 1.) *I send my messenger*.

II. The place where he appeared first. *In the wilderness of Judea*. It was not an uninhabited desert, but a part of the country not so thickly peopled, nor so much inclosed into fields and vineyards,

as other parts were; it was such a wilderness as had six cities and their villages in it, which are named, Josh. 15. 61, 62. In these cities and villages John preached, for thereabouts he had hitherto lived, being born hard by, in Hebron; the scenes of his action began there, where he had long spent his time in contemplation; and even when he shewed himself to Israel, he shewed how well he loved retirement, as far as would consist with his business. The word of the Lord found John here in a wilderness. Note, No place is so remote as to shut us out from the visits of divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse the saints have with Heaven, is when they are withdrawn furthest from the noise of this world. It was in this wilderness of Judea that David penned the 63d Psalm, which speaks so much of the sweet communion he then had with God, Hos. 2. 14. In a wilderness the law was given; and as the *Old Testament*, so the *New Testament*, Israel was first found in a desert land, and there God led him about and instructed him, Deut. 32. 10. John Baptist was a priest of the order of Aaron, yet we find him preaching in a wilderness, and never officiating in the temple; but Christ, who was not a Son of Aaron, is yet often found in the temple, and sitting there as one having authority; so it was foretold, Mal. 3. 1. *The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple*; not the messenger that was to prepare his way. This intimated that the priesthood of Christ was to thrust out that of Aaron, and drive it into a wilderness.

The beginning of the gospel in a wilderness, speaks comfort to the deserts of the Gentile world. Now must the prophecies be fulfilled, *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar*, Isa. 41. 18, 19. The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, Isa. 32. 15. And the desert shall rejoice, Isa. 35. 1, 2. The Septuagint reads, *the desert of Jordan*, the very wilderness in which John preached. In the Romish church there are those who call themselves *hermits*, and pretend to follow John; but when they say of Christ, *Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth*, ch. 24. 26. There was a seducer that led his followers into the wilderness, Acts 21. 38.

III. His preaching. This he made his business. He came, not fighting, nor disputing, but *preaching*; (v. 1.) for by the foolishness of preaching Christ's kingdom must be set up.

1. The doctrine he preached was that of repentance; (v. 2.) *Repent ye*. He preached this in Judea, among those that were called *Jews*, and made a profession of religion; for even they need repentance. He preached it, not in Jerusalem, but in the wilderness of Judea, among the plain country people; for even those who think themselves most out of the way of temptation, and furthest from the vanities and vices of the town, cannot wash their hands in innocency, but must do it in repentance. John Baptist's business was to call men to repent of their sins; *Metanoia*—*Bethink yourselves*; "Admit a second thought, to correct the errors of the first—an after-thought, Consider your ways, change your minds; you have thought amiss; think again, and think aright." Note, True penitents have other thoughts of God and Christ, and sin and holiness, and this world and the other, than they have had, and stand otherwise affected toward them. The change of the mind produces a change of the way. Those who are truly sorry for what they have done amiss, will be careful to do so no more. This repentance is a necessary duty, in obedience to the command of God; (Acts 17. 30.) and a necessary preparative and qualification for the comforts of the gospel of Christ. If the heart of man had continued upright and unstained, divine consolations might have been received without this painful operation preceding; but, being sinful, it must be first pained

before it can be laid at ease, must *labour* before it can be at rest. The sore must be searched, or it cannot be cured. *I repent and I heal.*

2. The argument he used to enforce this call, was, *For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The prophets of the *Old Testament* called people to *repent*, for the obtaining and securing of temporal national mercies, and for the preventing and removing of temporal national judgments; but now, though the duty pressed is the same, the reason is new, and purely evangelical. Men are now considered in their personal capacity, and not so much as then in a social and political one. Now *repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; the gospel-dispensation of the covenant of grace, the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a *kingdom* of which Christ is the Sovereign, and we must be the willing, loyal subjects of it. It is a kingdom of *heaven*, not of this world, a spiritual kingdom: its original from heaven, its tendency to heaven. John preached this as *at hand*; then it was at the door; to us it is come, by the pouring out of the Spirit, and the full exhibition of the riches of gospel-grace. Now, (1.) This is a great *inducement* to us to *repent*. There is nothing like the consideration of divine grace to break the heart, both *for sin* and *from sin*. That is evangelical repentance, that flows from a sight of Christ, from a sense of his love, and the hopes of pardon and forgiveness through him. Kindness in conquering; abused kindness, humbling and melting. What a wretch was I to sin against such grace, against the law and love of such a kingdom! (2.) It is a *great encouragement* to us to *repent*; "Repent, for your sins shall be pardoned upon your repentance." Return to God in a way of duty, and he will, through Christ, return to you in a way of mercy." The proclamation of pardon discovers, and fetches in, the malefactor who before fled and absconded. Thus are we drawn to it with the cords of a man and the brands of love.

IV. The *prophecy* that was fulfilled in him, v. 3. This is he that was spoken of in the beginning of that part of the prophecy of Esaias, which is mostly evangelical, and which points at gospel-times and gospel-grace; see Isa. 40. 3, 4. John is here spoken of,

1. As the *voice of one crying in the wilderness*. John owned it himself; (John 1. 23.) *I am the voice*, and that is all. God is the Speaker, who makes known his mind by John, as a man does by his voice. The word of God must be received as such; (1 Thess. 2. 13.) what also is Paul, and what is Apollos, but the voice! John is called the *voice, cavi βελτίς*—the voice of one crying aloud, which is startling and awakening. Christ is called the *Word*, which, being distinct and articulate, is more instructive. John, as the *voice*, roused men, and then Christ, as the *Word*, taught them; as we find, Rev. 14. 2. The voice of many waters, and of a great thunder, made way for the melodious voice of *harpers* and the *new song*, v. 3. Some observe that, as Samson's mother must drink no *strong drink*, yet he was designed to be a *strong man*; so John Baptist's father was struck dumb, and yet he was designed to be the *voice of one crying*. When the crier's voice is begotten of a dumb father, it shews the *excellency of the power to be of God, and not of man*.

2. As one whose business it was to *prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight*; so it was said of him before he was born, that he should *make ready a people prepared for the Lord*, (Luke 1. 17.) as Christ's harbinger and forerunner: he was such a one as intimated the nature of Christ's kingdom, for he came not in the gaudy dress of a herald at arms, but in the homely one of a hermit. Officers are sent before great men to clear the way;

so John prepares the way of the Lord. (1.) He himself did so among the men of that generation. In the Jewish church and nation, at that time, all was out of course; there was a great decay of piety, the vitals of religion were corrupted and eaten out by the traditions and injunctions of the elders. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that is, the greatest hypocrites in the world, had the key of knowledge, and the key of government, at their girdle. The people were, generally, extremely proud of their privileges, confident of justification by their own righteousness, insensible of sin; and though now under the most *humbling* providences, being lately made a province of the Roman Empire, yet they were *unhumbled*; they were much in the same temper as they were in Malachi's time, insolent and haughty, and ready to contradict the word of God: now John was sent to level these mountains, to take down their high opinion of themselves, and to shew them their sins, that the doctrine of Christ might be the more acceptable and effectual. (2.) His doctrine of repentance and humiliation is still as necessary as it was then to prepare the way of the Lord. Note, There is a great deal to be done, to make way for Christ into a soul, to *bow the heart* for the reception of the Son of David; (2 Sam. 19. 14.) and nothing is more needful, in order to this, than the discovery of sin, and a conviction of the insufficiency of our own righteousness. That which lets will let, until it be taken out of the way; prejudices must be removed, high thoughts brought down, and captivated to the obedience of Christ. Gates of brass must be broken, and bars of iron cut asunder, ere the everlasting doors be opened for the King of glory to come in. The way of sin and Satan is a *crooked way*; to prepare a way for Christ, the paths must be *made straight*, Heb. 12. 13.

V. The garb in which he appeared, the figure he made, and the manner of his life, v. 4. They who expected the Messiah as a temporal prince, would think that his forerunner must come in great pomp and splendour, that his equipage should be very magnificent and gay; but it proves quite contrary; he shall be *great in the sight of the Lord*, but mean in the eye of the world; and, as Christ himself, having *no form or comeliness*; to intimate betimes, that the glory of Christ's kingdom was to be spiritual, and the subjects of it such as ordinarily were either *found* by it, or *made* by it, poor and despised, who derived their honours, pleasures, and riches, from another world.

1. His *dress* was *plain*. This same John had *his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins*; he did not go in *long clothing*, as the *scribes*, or *soft clothing*, as the courtiers, but in the clothing of a country-husbandman; for he lived in a country-place, and suited his *habit* to his *habitation*. Note, It is good for us to accommodate ourselves to the place and condition which God, in his providence, has put us in. John appeared in this dress, (1.) To shew that, like Jacob, he was a *plain man*, and mortified to this world, and the delights and gaieties of it. *Behold an Israelite indeed!* Those that are *lowly in heart* should shew it by a holy negligence and indifference in their attire; and not make the putting on of apparel their adorning, nor value others by their attire. (2.) To shew that he was a *prophet*, for prophets wore *rough garments*, as mortified men; (Zech. 13. 4.) and, especially, to shew that he was the Elias promised; for particular notice is taken of Elias, that he was a *hairy man*, (which, some think, is meant of the hairy garments he wore,) and that he was *girt with a girdle of leather about his loins*, 2 Kings 1. 8. John Baptist appears no way inferior to him in mortification; this therefore is that Elias that was to come. (3.) To shew that he was a man of resolution; his

girdle was not *fine*, such as were then commonly worn, but it was *strong*, it was a *leathern girdle*; and blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds with *his loins girt*, Luke 12. 35. 1 Pet. 1. 13.

2. His diet was *plain*; his meat was *locusts and wild honey*; not as if he never ate any thing else; but these he frequently fed upon, and made many meals of them, when he retired into solitary places, and continued long there for contemplation. *Locusts* were a sort of flying insect, very good for food, and allowed as clean; (Lev. 11. 22.) they required little dressing, and were light, and easy of digestion, whence it is reckoned among the infirmities of old age, that the *grasshopper, or locust*, is then a *burthen* to the stomach, Eccl. 12. 5. *Wild honey* was that which *Canaan* flowed with, 1 Sam. 14. 26. Either it was gathered immediately, as it fell in the dew, or rather, as it was found in the hollows of trees and rocks, where bees built, that were not, like those in hives, under the care and inspection of men. This intimates that he ate *sparingly*, a little served his turn; a man would be long ere he filled his belly with locusts and wild honey: *John Baptist* came *neither eating nor drinking*, (ch. 11. 18.)—not with the curiosity, formality, and familiarity that other people do. He was so entirely taken up with spiritual things, that he could seldom find time for a set meal. Now, (1.) This agreed with the doctrine he preached of *repentance, and fruits meet for repentance*. Note, Those whose business it is to call others to mourn for sin, and to mortify it, ought themselves to live a serious life, a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world. John Baptist thus shewed the deep sense he had of the badness of the time and place he lived in, which made the preaching of repentance needful; every day was a *fast-day* with him. (2.) This agreed with his office as Christ's *forerunner*; by this practice he shewed that he knew what the *kingdom of heaven* was, and had experienced the powers of it. Note, Those that are acquainted with divine and spiritual pleasures, cannot but look upon all the delights and ornaments of sense with a holy indifference; they know better things. By giving others this example he made way for Christ. Note, A conviction of the vanity of the world, and every thing in it, is the best preparative for the entertainment of the kingdom of heaven in the heart. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*.

V1. The people who attended upon him, and flocked after him; (v. 5.) *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea*. Great multitudes came to him from the city, and from all parts of the country; some of all sorts, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, Pharisees and Publicans; they *went out to him*, as soon as they heard of his preaching the *kingdom of heaven*, that they might hear what they heard so much of. Now, 1. This was a great honour put upon John, that so many attended him, and with so much respect. Note, Frequently those have most real honour done them, who least court the shadow of it. Those who live a mortified life, who are humble and self-denying, and dead to the world, command respect; and men have a secret value and reverence for them, more than one would imagine. 2. This gave John a great opportunity of doing good, and was an evidence that God was with him. Now people begin to crowd and *press into the kingdom of heaven*; (Luke 16. 16.) and a blessed sight it was, to see the *dew of the youth dropping from the womb* of the gospel-morning, (Ps. 110. 3.) to see the net cast where there were so many fish. 3. This was an evidence, that it was now a time of great expectation; it was generally thought that the *kingdom of God* would presently *appear*; (Luke 19. 11.) and therefore, when John shewed himself

to Israel, lived and preached at this rate, so very different from the Scribes and Pharisees, they were ready to say of him, that he was *the Christ*; (Luke 3. 15.) and this occasioned such a confluence of people about him. 4. Those who would have the benefit of John's ministry must *go out* to him in the wilderness, sharing in his reproach. Note, They who truly desire the sincere milk of the word, if it be not brought to them, will seek out for it; and they who would learn the doctrine of repentance must *go out* from the hurry of this world, and be still. 5. It appears by the issue, that of the many who came to John's baptism, there were but few that adhered to it; witness the cold reception Christ had in Judea, and about Jerusalem. Note, There may be a multitude of forward hearers, where there are but a few true believers. Curiosity, and affectation of novelty and variety may bring many to attend upon good preaching, and to be affected with it for a while, who yet are never subject to the power of it, Ezek. 33. 31, 32.

VII. The rite, or ceremony, by which he admitted disciples, v. 6. Those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his discipline, were *baptized of him in Jordan*, thereby professing their repentance, and their belief that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand. 1. They testified their repentance by *confessing their sins*; a general confession, it is probable, they made to John that they were *sinners*, that they were polluted by sin, and needed cleansing; but to God they made a confession of particular sins, for he is the party offended. The Jews had been taught to *justify* themselves; but John teaches them to *accuse* themselves, and not to rest, as they used to do, in the general confession of sin made for all Israel, once a year, upon the day of atonement, but to make a particular acknowledgment, every one of the *plague of his own heart*. Note, A penitent confession of sin is required in order to peace and pardon; and those only are ready to receive Jesus Christ as their Righteousness, who are brought with sorrow and shame to own their guilt, 1 John 1. 8. 2. The benefits of the *kingdom of heaven*, now at hand, were thereupon sealed to them by baptism. He washed them with water, in token of this—that from all their iniquities God would *cleanse them*. It was usual with the Jews to baptize those whom they admitted Proselytes to their religion, especially those who were only *Proselytes of the gate*, and were not circumcised, as the *Proselytes of righteousness* were. Some think it was likewise a custom for persons of eminent religion, who set up for leaders, by baptism to admit pupils and disciples. Christ's question concerning John's baptism, *Was it from heaven, or of men?* implied, that there were baptisms of men, who pretended not to a divine mission; with this usage John complied, but *his* was from heaven, and was distinguished from all others with this character, it was *the baptism of repentance*, Acts 19. 4. All Israel were baptized unto Moses, 1 Cor. 10. 2. The ceremonial law consisted in *divers washings or baptisms*; (Heb. 9. 10.) but John's baptism refers to the remedial law, the law of repentance and faith. He is said to baptize them in Jordan, that river which was famous for Israel's passage through it, and Naaman's cure; yet it is probable that John did not baptize in that river at first, but that afterward, when the people who came to his baptism were numerous, he removed to Jordan. By baptism he obliged them to live a holy life, according to the profession they took upon themselves. Note, Confession of sin must always be accompanied with holy resolutions, in the strength of divine grace, not to return to it again.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism,

he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 3. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. 11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 12. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The doctrine John preached was that of repentance, in consideration of the *kingdom of heaven* being at hand; now here we have the use of that doctrine. Application is the life of preaching, so it was of John's preaching.

Observe, 1. To whom he applied it; to the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to his baptism, *v. 7.* To others he thought it enough to say, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; but when he saw these Pharisees and Sadducees come about him, he found it necessary to explain himself, and deal more closely. These were two of the three noted sects among the Jews at that time; the third was that of the Essenes, whom we never read of in the Gospels, for they affected retirement, and declined busying themselves in public affairs. The Pharisees were zealots for the ceremonies, for the power of the church, and the traditions of the elders; the Sadducees ran into the other extreme, and were little better than deists, denying the existence of spirits and a future state. It was strange that they came to John's baptism, but their curiosity brought them to be hearers; and some of them, it is probable, submitted to be baptized, but it is certain that the generality of them did not; for Christ says, (*Luke 7. 29, 30.*) that *when the publicans justified God, and were baptized of John, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.* Note, Many come to ordinances, who come not under the power of them. Now to them John here addresses himself with all faithfulness; and what he said to them, he said to the multitude, (*Luke 3. 7.*) for they were all concerned in what he said. 2. What the application was. It is plain and home, and directed to their consciences; he speaks as one that came not to preach *before* them, but to preach *to* them. Though his education was private, he was not bashful when he appeared in public, nor did he fear the face of man, for he was full of the Holy Ghost, and of power.

I. Here is a word of conviction and awakening. He begins harshly, calls them not Rabbi, gives them not the titles, much less the applauses, they had been used to. 1. *The title* he gives them, is, *O generation of vipers.* Christ gave them the same titles, *ch. 12. 34.—23. 33.* They were as *vipers*; though specious, yet venomous and poisonous, and full of malice and enmity to every thing that was good; they were a *viperous brood*, the seed and offspring of such as had been of the same spirit; it

was bred in the bone with them. They gloried in it, that they were the seed of Abraham; but John shewed them that they were the serpent's seed; (compare *Gen. 3. 15.*) of their father the Devil, *John 8. 44.* They were a *viperous gang*, they were all alike; though enemies to one another, yet confederate in mischief. Note, A wicked generation is a *generation of vipers*, and they ought to be told so; it becomes the ministers of Christ to be bold in shewing sinners their true character. 2. *The alarm* he gives them, is, *Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* This intimates that they were in danger of the wrath to come; and that their case was so nearly desperate, and their hearts so hardened in sin, (the Pharisees by their parade of religion, and the Sadducees by their arguments against religion,) that it was next to a miracle to effect any thing hopeful among them. "What brings you hither? Who thought of seeing you here? What fright have you been put into, that you inquire after the kingdom of heaven?" Note, (1.) There is a *wrath to come*; beside present wrath, the vials of which are poured out now, there is future wrath, the stores of which are treasured up for hereafter. (2.) It is the great concern of every one of us to flee from that wrath. (3.) It is wonderful mercy that we are fairly warned to flee from this wrath; think — *Who has warned us?* God has warned us, who delights not in our ruin; he warns by the written word, by ministers, by conscience. (4.) These warnings sometimes startle those who seemed to have been very much hardened in their security and good opinion of themselves.

II. Here is a word of *exhortation and direction*; (*v. 8.*) "*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.* Therefore, because you are warned to flee from the wrath to come, let the terrors of the Lord persuade you to a holy life." Or, "Therefore, because you profess repentance, and attend upon the doctrine and baptism of repentance, evidence that you are true penitents." Repentance is seated in the heart. There it is as a root; but in vain do we pretend to have it there, if we do not *bring forth the fruits* of it in a universal reformation, forsaking all sin, and cleaving to that which is good; these are fruits, *ἀγαθὰ ἔργα μακαρίας*—*worthy of repentance.* Note, These are not worthy the name of penitents, or their privileges, who say they are sorry for their sins, and yet persist in them. They that profess repentance, as all that are baptized do, must be and act as becomes penitents, and never do any thing unbecoming a penitent sinner. It becomes penitents to be humble and low in their own eyes, to be thankful for the least mercy, patient under the greatest affliction, to be watchful against all appearances of sin, and approaches towards it, to abound in every duty, and to be charitable in judging others.

III. Here is a word of caution, not to trust to their external privileges, so as with them to shift off these calls to repentance; (*v. 9.*) *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* Note, There is a great deal which carnal hearts are apt to say within themselves, to put by the convincing, commanding power of the word of God, which ministers should labour to meet with and anticipate; vain thoughts which lodge within those who are called to *wash their hearts*, *Jer. 4. 14. מוֹדֵי זַחַת*—*"Pretend not, presume not, to say within yourselves; be not of the opinion that this will save you; harbour not such a conceit. Please not yourselves with saying this;"* (so some read it;) "rock not yourselves asleep with this, nor flatter yourselves into a fool's paradise." Note, God takes notice of what we say *within* ourselves, which we dare not speak out, and is acquainted with all the false rests of the soul, and the fallacies with which it deludes

itself, but which it will not discover, lest it should be undeceived. Many hide the lie that ruins them, in *their right hand*, and roll it *under their tongue*, because they are ashamed to own it; they keep in the Devil's interest, by keeping the Devil's counsel. Now John shews them,

1. What their pretence was; "*We have Abraham to our father*; we are not sinners of the Gentiles; it is fit indeed that *they* should be called to repent; but we are Jews, a holy nation, a peculiar people, what is this to us?" Note, The word does us no good, when we will not take it as spoken to us, and belonging to us. "Think not that because you are the seed of Abraham, therefore," (1.) "You need not repent, you have nothing to repent of; your relation to Abraham, and your interest in the covenant made with him, denominate you so holy, that there is no occasion for you to change your mind or way." (2.) "That therefore you shall fare well enough, though you do not repent. Think not that this will bring you off in the judgment, and secure you from the wrath to come; that God will connive at your impenitence, because you are Abraham's seed." Note, It is vain presumption to think that our having good relations will save us, though we be not good ourselves. What though we be descended from pious ancestors; have been blessed with a religious education; have our lot cast in families where the fear of God is uppermost; and have good friends that advise us, and pray for us; what will all this avail us, if we do not repent, and live a life of repentance? We have Abraham to our father, and therefore are entitled to the privileges of the covenant made with him; being his seed, we are *sons of the church, the temple of the Lord*, Jer. 7. 4. Note, Multitudes, by resting in the honours and advantages of their visible church-membership, take up short of heaven.

2. How foolish and groundless this pretence was; they thought that being the seed of Abraham, they were the only people God had in the world, and therefore that, if they were cut off, he would be at a loss for a church; but John shews them the folly of this conceit; *I say unto you*, (whatever you say within yourselves,) that *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*. He was now baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, (John 1. 28.) *the house of passage*, where the children of Israel passed over; and there were the twelve stones, one for each tribe, which Joshua set up for a memorial, Josh. 4. 20. It is not unlikely that he pointed to those stones, which God should raise to be, more than in representation, the *twelve tribes of Israel*. Or perhaps he refers to Isa. 51. 1. where Abraham is called the *rock out of which they were hewn*. That God who raised Isaac out of such a rock, can, if there be occasion, do as much again, for with him *nothing is impossible*. Some think he pointed to those *heathen soldiers* that were present, telling the Jews that God would raise up a church for himself among the Gentiles, and entail the blessing of Abraham upon them. Thus when our first parents fell, God could have left them to perish, and out of stones have raised up another Adam and another Eve. Or, take it thus; "Stones themselves shall be owned as Abraham's seed, rather than such hard, dry, barren sinners as you are." Note, As it is lowering to the confidence of the sinners in Zion, so it is encouraging to the fears of the sons of Zion, that, whatever comes of the present generation, God will never want a church in the world; if the Jews fall off, the Gentiles shall be grafted in, ch. 21. 43. Rom. 11. 12.

IV. Here is a word of terror to the careless and secure Pharisees and Sadducees, and other Jews, that knew not the signs of the times, nor the day of their visitation, v. 10. "Now look about you, now

that the kingdom of God is at hand, and be made sensible."

1. "How strict and short your trial is; *Now the axe is carried before you*, now it is *laid to the root of the tree*, now you are upon your good behaviour, and are to be so but a *while*; now you are marked for ruin, and cannot avoid it but by a speedy and sincere repentance. Now you must expect that God will make quicker work with you by his judgments than he did formerly, and that they will *begin at the house of God*: where God allows more means, he allows less time." *Behold, I come quickly*. Now they were put upon their last trial; now, or never.

2. "How sore and severe your doom will be, if you do not improve this." It is now declared with the axe at the root, to shew that God is earnest in the declaration, that *every tree*, however high in gifts and honours, however green in external professions and performances, if it *bring not forth good fruit*, the fruits meet for repentance, is *hewn down*, disowned as a tree in God's vineyard, unworthy to have room there, and is cast into the fire of God's wrath—the fittest place for barren trees: what else are they good for? If not fit for fruit, they are fit for fuel. Probably, this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which was not, as other judgments had been, like the lopping off of the branches, or cutting down of the body of the tree, leaving the root to bud again, but it would be the total, final, and irrecoverable extirpation of that people, in which all those should perish that continued impenitent. Now God would make a full end, wrath was coming on them to the utmost.

V. A word of instruction concerning Jesus Christ, in whom all John's preaching centred. Christ's ministers preach, not themselves, but him. Here is,

1. The dignity and pre-eminence of Christ above John. See how meanly he speaks of himself, that he might magnify Christ; (v. 11.) "*I indeed baptize you with water*, that is the utmost I can do." Note, Sacraments derive not their efficacy from those who administer them; they can only apply the sign; it is Christ's prerogative to give the thing signified, 1 Cor. 3. 6. 2 Kings 4. 31. *But he that comes after me, is mightier than I*. Though John had much power, for he came in the *spirit and power of Elias*, Christ had more; though John was truly great, great in the sight of the Lord, (not a greater was born of woman,) yet he thinks himself unworthy to be in the meanest place of attendance upon Christ; *whose shoes I am not worthy to bear*. He sees, (1.) How mighty Christ is, in comparison with him. Note, It is a great comfort to faithful ministers, to think that Jesus Christ is mightier than they, can do that *for* them, and that *by* them, which they cannot do; his strength is perfected in their weakness. (2.) How mean he is, in comparison with Christ, not worthy to carry his shoes after him! Note, Those whom God puts honour upon, are thereby made very humble and low in their own eyes; willing to be abased, so that Christ may be magnified; to be any thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

2. The design and intention of Christ's appearing, which they were now speedily to expect. When it was prophesied that John should be sent as Christ's forerunner, (Mal. 3. 1, 2.) it immediately follows, *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come, and shall sit as a refiner*, v. 3. And, after the coming of Elijah, *the day comes, that shall burn as an oven*, (Mal. 4. 1.) to which the Baptist seems here to refer. Christ will come to make a distinction,

(1.) By the powerful working of his grace; *He shall baptize you*, that is, some of you, *with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*. Note, [1.] It is Christ's prerogative to baptize *with the Holy Ghost*. This he

did in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon the apostles, to which Christ himself applies these words of John, Acts 1. 5. This he does in the graces and comforts of the Spirit given to them that ask him, Luke 11. 13. John 7. 38, 39. See Acts 11. 16. [2.] They who are baptized with the Holy Ghost are baptized *as with fire*; the seven spirits of God appear as *seven lamps of fire*, Rev. 4. 5. Is fire enlightening? So the Spirit is a Spirit of illumination. Is it warming? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of Judgment, as a *Spirit of burning*, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upwards? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heaven-ward. Christ says, *I am come to send fire*, Luke 12. 49.

(2.) By the final determinations of his judgment; (v. 12.) *Whose fan is in his hand*. His ability to distinguish, as the eternal wisdom of the Father, who sees all by a true light, and his authority to distinguish, as the Person to whom all judgment is committed, is the *fan* that is in his hand, Jer. 15. 7. Now he sits as a Refiner. Observe here, [1.] The visible church is Christ's floor; *O my threshing, and the corn of my floor*, Isa. 21. 10. The temple, a type of the church, was built upon a threshing-floor. [2.] In this floor there is a mixture of wheat and chaff. True believers are as wheat, substantial, useful, and valuable; hypocrites are as chaff, light and empty, useless and worthless, and carried about with every wind; these are now mixed, good and bad, under the same external profession, and in the same visible communion. [3.] There is a day coming when the floor shall be purged, and the wheat and chaff shall be separated. Something of this kind is often done in this world, when God calls his people out of Babylon, Rev. 18. 4. But it is the day of the last judgment that will be the great winnowing, distinguishing day, which will infallibly determine concerning doctrines and works, (1 Cor. 3. 13.) and concerning persons, (ch. 25. 32, 33.) when saints and sinners shall be parted for ever. [4.] Heaven is the garner into which Jesus Christ will shortly gather all his wheat, and not a grain of it shall be lost: he will gather them as the ripe fruits were gathered in. Death's scythe is made use of to gather them to their people. In heaven the saints are brought together, and no longer scattered: they are safe, and no longer exposed; separated from corrupt neighbours without, and corrupt affections within, and there is no chaff among them. They are not only gathered into the barn, (ch. 13. 30.) but into the garner, where they are thoroughly purified. [5.] Hell is the *unquenchable fire*, which will burn up the chaff, which will certainly be the portion and punishment, and everlasting destruction, of hypocrites and unbelievers. So that here are life and death, good and evil, set before us; according as we now are in the *field*, we shall be then in the *floor*.

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. 17. And lo, a voice

from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Our Lord Jesus, from his childhood till now, when he was almost thirty years of age, had lain hid in Galilee, as it were, buried alive; but now, after a long and dark night, behold, the *Sun of righteousness* rises in glory. *The fulness of time was come* that Christ should enter upon his prophetic office; and he chooses to do it, not at Jerusalem, (though it is probable that he went thither at the three yearly feasts, as others did,) but there *where John was baptizing*; for to him resorted those who waited for the consolation of Israel, to whom alone he would be welcome. John the Baptist was six months older than our Saviour, and it is supposed that he began to preach and baptize about six months before Christ appeared; so long he was employed in preparing his way, in the region round about Jordan; and more was done towards it in these six months than had been done in several ages before. Christ's coming from Galilee to Jordan, to be baptized, teaches us not to shrink from pains and travail, that we may have an opportunity of drawing nigh to God in an ordinance. We should be willing to go far, rather than come short of communion with God. They who will find must seek.

Now in this story of Christ's baptism we may observe,

I. How hardly John was persuaded to admit of it, v. 14, 15. It was an instance of Christ's great humility, that he would offer himself to be baptized of John; that he *who knew no sin* would submit to the baptism of repentance. Note, As soon as ever Christ began to preach, he preached humility, preached it by his example, preached it to all, especially to young ministers. Christ was designed for the highest honours, yet in his first step he thus abases himself. Note, They who would rise high must begin low. *Before honour is humility*. It was a great piece of respect done to John, for Christ thus to come to him; and it was a return for the service he did him, in giving notice of his approach. Note, Those that honour God he will honour. Now here we have,

1. The objection that John made against baptizing Jesus, v. 14. *John forbade him*, as Peter did, when Christ went about to wash his feet, John 13. 6, 8. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions are so surprising, as to appear at first incredible to the strongest believers; so deep and mysterious, that even they who know his mind well cannot soon find out the meaning of them, but, *by reason of darkness*, start objections against the will of Christ. John's modesty thinks this an honour too great for him to receive, and he expresses himself to Christ, just as his mother had done to Christ's mother; (Luke 1. 43.) *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* John had now obtained a great name, and was universally respected: yet see how humble he is still! Note, God has further honours in reserve for those whose spirits continue low when their reputation rises.

(1.) John thinks it necessary that he should be baptized of Christ; *I have need to be baptized of thee* with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as of fire, for that was Christ's baptism, v. 11. [1.] Though *John was filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb*, (Luke 1. 15.) yet he acknowledges he had need to be baptized with that baptism. Note, They who have much of the Spirit of God, yet, while here, in this imperfect state, see that they have need of more, and need to apply themselves to Christ for more. [2.] *John has need to be baptized*, though he was the *greatest that ever was born of woman*; yet, being born of a woman, he is polluted, as others of Adam's seed are, and owns he has need of cleansing.

Note, the purest souls are most sensible of their own remaining impurity, and seek most earnestly for spiritual washing. [3.] He has *need to be baptized of Christ*, who can do that for us, which no one else can, and which must be done for us, or we are undone. Note, The best and holiest of men *have need of Christ*, and the better they are, the more they see of that need. [4.] This was said before the multitude, who had a great veneration for John, and were ready to embrace him for the Messiah; yet he publicly owns that he had *need to be baptized of Christ*. Note, It is no disparagement to the greatest of men, to confess that they are undone without Christ and his grace. [5.] John was Christ's forerunner, and yet owns that he had *need to be baptized of him*. Note, Even they who were before Christ in time depended on him, received from him, and had an eye to him. [6.] While John was dealing with others about their souls, observe how feelingly he speaks of the case of his own soul, *I have need to be baptized of thee*. Note, Ministers, who preach to others, and baptize others, are concerned to look to it that they preach to themselves, and be themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost. Take heed to thyself first; *save thyself*, 1 Tim. 4. 16.

(2.) He therefore thinks it very preposterous and absurd, that Christ should be baptized by him; *Comest thou to me?* Does the holy Jesus, that is separated from sinners, come to be baptized by a sinner, as a sinner, and among sinners? How can this be? Or what account can we give of it? Note, Christ's coming to us may well be wondered at.

2. The over-ruling of this objection: (v. 15.) *Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now*. Christ accepted his humility, but not his refusal; he will have the thing done; and it is fit that Christ should take his own method, though we do not understand it, nor can give a reason for it. See,

(1.) How Christ insists upon it; it must *be so now*. He does not deny that *John had need to be baptized of him*, yet he will now be *baptized of John*. * *Αετι οτι*—*Let it be yet so*; *Suffer it to be so now*. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season. But why *now*? Why *yet*? [1.] Christ is now in a state of humiliation: he has emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. He is not only found in fashion as a man, but is made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and therefore now let him be *baptized of John*; as if he needed to be washed, though perfectly pure; and thus he was made *Sin for us*, though he *knew no sin*. [2.] John's baptism is now in reputation, it is that by which God is now doing his work; that is the present dispensation, and therefore Jesus will now be baptized with water; but his baptizing with the Holy Ghost is reserved for hereafter, *many days hence*, Acts 1. 5. John's baptism has *now* its day, and therefore honour must *now* be put upon that, and they who attend upon it must be encouraged. Note, They who are of greatest attainments in gifts and graces, should yet, in their place, bear their testimony to instituted ordinances, by a humble and diligent attendance on them, that they may give a good example to others. What we see God owns, and while we see he does so, we must own. John was now increasing, and therefore it must be thus yet; shortly he will decrease, and then it will be otherwise. [3.] It must *be so now*, because now is the time for Christ's appearing in public, and this will be a fair opportunity for it. See John 1. 31—34. Thus he must be made manifest to Israel, and be signalized by wonders from heaven, in that act of his own, which was most condescending and self-abasing.

(2.) The reason he gives for it; *Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness*. Note, [1.] There was a propriety in every thing that Christ did for us; it was all graceful; (Heb. 2. 10.—7. 26.) and we must study to do not only that which behoves us, but that

which becomes us; not only that which is indispensably necessary, but that which is *lovely, and of good report*. [2.] Our Lord Jesus looked upon it as a thing well becoming him, *to fulfil all righteousness*, that is, (as Dr. Whitby explains it,) to own every divine institution, and to shew his readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts. *Thus it becomes him to justify God*, and approve his wisdom, in sending John to prepare his way by the baptism of repentance. *Thus it becomes us to countenance and encourage every thing that is good*, by pattern as well as precept. Christ often mentioned John and his baptism with honour, which, that he might do the better, he was himself baptized. Thus Jesus began *first to do, and then to teach*; and his ministers must take the same method. Thus Christ *filled up the righteousness of the ceremonial law*, which consisted in divers washings; thus he recommended the gospel-ordinance of baptism to his church, put honour upon it, and shewed what virtue he designed to put into it. It became Christ to submit to John's washing with water, because it was a divine appointment; but it became him to oppose the Pharisees' washing with water, because it was a human invention and imposition; and he justified his disciples in refusing to comply with it.

With the will of Christ, and this reason for it, John was entirely satisfied, and *then he suffered him*. The same modesty which made him at first decline the honour Christ offered him, now made him do the service Christ enjoined him. Note, No pretence of humility must make us decline our duty.

II. How solemnly Heaven was pleased to grace the baptism of Christ with a special display of glory; (v. 16, 17.) *Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water*. Others that were baptized stayed to confess their sins; (v. 6.) but Christ, having no sins to confess, *went up* immediately *out of the water*; so we read it, but not right: for it is *ἀνέβη*—*from the water*; from the brink of the river, to which he went down to be washed with water, that is, to have his head or face washed; (John 13. 2.) for here is no mention of the putting off, or putting on, of his clothes, which circumstance would not have been omitted, if he had been baptized naked. *He went up straightway*, as one that entered upon his work with the utmost cheerfulness and resolution: he would lose no time. *How was he straitened till it was accomplished!*

Now, when he was coming *up out of the water*, and all the company had their eye upon him,

1. *Lo! the heavens were opened unto him*, so as to discover something above and beyond the starry firmament, at least, to him. This was, (1.) To encourage him to go on in his undertaking, with the prospect of the glory and joy that were set before him. Heaven is opened to receive him, when he has finished the work he is now entering upon. (2.) To encourage us to receive him, and submit to him. Note, In and through Jesus Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men. Sin shut up heaven, put a stop to all friendly intercourse between God and man; but now Christ has *opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers*. Divine light and love are darted down upon the children of men, and we have *boldness to enter into the holiest*. We have receipts of mercy from God, we make returns of duty to God, and all by Jesus Christ, who is the Ladder that has its foot on earth and its top in heaven, by whom alone it is that we have any comfortable correspondence with God, or any hope of getting to heaven at last. *The heavens were opened* when Christ was baptized, to teach us, that when we duly attend on God's ordinances, we may expect communion with him, and communications from him.

2. *He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, or as a dove, and coming or lighting upon him*. Christ

saw it, (Mark 1. 10.) and John saw it, (John 1. 33, 34.) and it is probable that all the standers-by saw it; for this was intended to be his public inauguration. Observe,

(1.) *The Spirit of God descended, and lighted on him.* In the beginning of the old world, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, (Gen. 1. 2.) hovered as a bird upon the nest. So here, in the beginning of this new world, Christ, as God, needed not to receive the Holy Ghost, but it was foretold that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, (Isa. 11. 2.—61. 1.) and here he did so; for, [1.] He was to be a Prophet; and prophets always spoke by the Spirit of God, who came upon them. Christ was to execute the prophetic office, not by his divine nature, (says Dr. Whitty,) but by the allusion of the Holy Spirit. [2.] He was to be the Head of the church; and the Spirit descended upon him, by him to be derived to all believers, in his gifts, graces, and comforts. *The ointment on the head ran down to the skirts;* Christ received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men.

(2.) He descended on him like a dove; whether it was a real, living dove, or, as was usual in visions, the representation or similitude of a dove, is uncertain. If there must be a bodily shape, (Luke 3. 22.) it must not be that of a man, for the being seen in fashion as a man was peculiar to the second person; none therefore was more fit than the shape of one of the fowls of heaven, (heaven being now opened,) and of all fowl none was so significant as the dove. [1.] The Spirit of Christ is a dove-like spirit; not like a silly dove, without heart, (Hos. 7. 11.) but like an innocent dove without gall. *The Spirit descended,* not in the shape of an eagle, which is, though a royal bird, yet a bird of prey, but in the shape of a dove, than which no creature is more harmless and inoffensive. Such was the Spirit of Christ; *Ye shall not strive, nor cry;* such must christians be, *harmless as doves.* The dove is remarkable for her eyes; we find that both the eyes of Christ, (Cant. 5. 12.) and the eyes of the church, (Cant. 1. 13.—4. 1.) are compared to doves' eyes, for they have the same spirit. The dove mourns much, (Isa. 38. 14.) Christ wept oft; and penitent souls are compared to doves of the vallies. [2.] The dove was the only fowl that was offered in sacrifice, (Lev. 1. 14.) and Christ by the Spirit, the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God. [3.] The tidings of the decrease of Noah's flood were brought by a dove, with an olive-leaf in her mouth; fitly therefore are the glad tidings of peace with God brought by the Spirit as a dove. It speaks God's good-will toward men; that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of good, and not of evil. By the voice of the turtle heard in our land, (Cant. 2. 12.) the Chaldee paraphrase understands, the voice of the Holy Spirit. That God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, is a joyful message, which comes to us upon the wing, the wings of a dove.

3. To explain and complete this solemnity, there came a voice from heaven, which, we have reason to think, was heard by all that were present. The Holy Spirit manifested himself in the likeness of a dove, but God the Father by a voice; for when the law was given they saw no manner of similitude, only they heard a voice: (Deut. 4. 12.) and so this gospel came, and gospel indeed it is, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth; for it speaks plainly and fully God's favour to Christ, and us in him.

(1.) See here how God owns our Lord Jesus; *This is my beloved Son.* Observe, [1.] The relation he stood in to him; *He is my son.* Jesus Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation, as he was begotten of the Father before all worlds, (Col. 1. 15. Heb. 1. 3.) and by supernatural conception; he was therefore called the Son of God, because he was conceived by

the power of the Holy Ghost; (Luke 1. 35.) yet this is not all; he is the Son of God by special designation to the work and office of the world's Redeemer. He was sanctified and sealed, and sent upon that errand, brought up with the Father for it, (Prov. 8. 30.) appointed to it; *I will make him my First-born,* Ps. 89. 27. [2.] The affection the Father had for him; *He is my beloved Son;* his dear Son, the Son of his love; (Col. 1. 13.) he had him in his bosom from all eternity, (John 1. 18.) had been always his delight, (Prov. 8. 30.) but particularly as Mediator, and in undertaking the work of man's salvation, he was his beloved Son. *He is mine Elect, in whom my soul delights.* See Isa. 42. 1. Because he consented to the covenant of redemption, and delighted to do that will of God, therefore the Father loved him. John 10. 17.—3. 35. Behold, then, behold, and wonder, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that he should deliver up him that was the Son of his love, to suffer and die for those that were the generation of his wrath; nay, and that he therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep! Now know we that he loved us, seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son, his Isaac whom he loved, but gave him to be a Sacrifice for our sin.

(2.) See here how ready he is to own us in him: *He is my beloved Son,* not only with whom, but in whom, I am well-pleased. He is pleased with all that are in him, and are united to him by faith. Hitherto God had been displeased with the children of men, but now his anger is turned away, and he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6. Let all the world take notice, that this is the Peacemaker, the Days-man, who has laid his hand upon us both, and that there is no coming to God as a Father, but by him as Mediator, John 14. 6. In him our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable, for he is the Altar that sanctifies every gift, 1 Pet. 2. 5. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire, but, in Christ, a reconciled Father. This is the sum of the whole gospel; it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that God has declared, by a voice from heaven, that Jesus Christ is his beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased, with which we must by faith cheerfully concur, and say, that he is our beloved Saviour, in whom we are well-pleased.

CHAP. IV.

John Baptist said concerning Christ, He must increase, but I must decrease; and so it proved. For, after John had baptized Christ, and borne his testimony to him, we hear little more of his ministry; he had done what he came to do, and thenceforward there is as much talk of Jesus as ever there had been of John. As the rising Sun advances, the morning star disappears. Concerning Jesus Christ we have in this chapter, I. The temptation he underwent, the triple assault the tempter made upon him, and the repulse he gave to each assault, v. 1. . 11. II. The teaching work he undertook, the places he preached in, (v. 12. . 16.) and the subject he preached on, v. 17. III. His calling of disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, v. 18. . 22. IV. His curing diseases, (v. 23, 24.) and the great resort of people to him, both to be taught and to be healed.

1. **THEN** was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. 2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungry. 3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city,

and setteth him α . a pinnacle of the temple, 6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 8. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: 9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

We have here the story of a famous duel, fought hand to hand, between Michael and the dragon, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, nay, the serpent himself, in which the Seed of the woman suffers, being *tempted*, and so has his heel bruised; but the serpent is quite baffled in his temptations, and so has his head broken; and our Lord Jesus comes off a Conqueror, and so secures not only comfort, but conquest at last, to all his faithful followers. Concerning Christ's temptation, observe,

1. The time when it happened: *Then*; there is an emphasis laid upon that. Immediately after the *heavens were opened* to him, and the *Spirit descended upon him*, and he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, the next news we hear of him is, he is *tempted*; for then he is best able to grapple with the temptation. Note, 1. Great privileges, and special tokens of divine favour will not secure us from being *tempted*. Nay, 2. After great honours put upon us, we must expect something that is humbling; as Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, after he had been in the third heavens. 3. God usually prepares his people for temptation before he calls them to it; he *gives strength according to the day*, and, before a sharp trial, gives more than ordinary comfort. 4. The assurance of our sonship is the best preparative for temptation. If the good Spirit witness to our adoption, that will furnish us with an answer to all the suggestions of the evil spirit, designed either to debauch or disquiet us.

Then, when he was newly come from a solemn ordinance, when he was baptized, *then* he was *tempted*. Note, After we have been admitted into communion with God, we must expect to be set upon by Satan. The enriched soul must double its guard. *When thou hast eaten and art full, then beware*. *Then*, when he began to shew himself publicly to Israel, *then* he was *tempted*, so as he never had been while he lived in privacy. Note, The Devil has a particular spite at useful persons, who are not only good, but given to do good, especially at their first setting out. It is the advice of the Son of Sirach, (Ecclesiastic. 2. 1.) *My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thyself for temptation*. Let young ministers know what to expect, and arm accordingly.

II. The place where it was; *in the wilderness*; probably in the great wilderness of *Sinai*, where Moses and Elijah *fasted forty days*, for no part of the *wilderness* of Judea was so abandoned to wild beasts

as this is said to have been, Mark 1. 13. When Christ was baptized he did not go to Jerusalem, there to publish the glories that had been put upon him, but retired into a wilderness. After communion with God, it is good to be private a while, lest we lose what we have received, in the crowd and hurry of worldly business. Christ withdrew into the wilderness, 1. To gain advantage to himself. Retirement gives an opportunity for meditation and communion with God; even they who are called to the most active life must yet have their contemplative hours, and must find time to be alone with God. Those are not fit to speak of the things of God in public to others, who have not first conversed with those things in secret by themselves. When Christ would appear as a *Teacher come from God*, it shall not be said of him, "He is newly come from travelling, he has been abroad, and has seen the world;" but, "He is newly come out of a desert, he has been alone conversing with God and his own heart." 2. To give advantage to the tempter, that he might have a readier access to him than he could have had in company. Note, Though solitude is a friend to a good heart, yet Satan knows how to improve it against us. *Woe to him that is alone*. Those who, under pretence of sanctity and devotion, retire into dens and deserts, find that they are not out of the reach of their spiritual enemies, and that there they want the benefit of the communion of saints. Christ retired, (1.) That Satan might have leave to do his worst. To make his victory the more illustrious, he gave the enemy sun and wind on his side, and yet baffled him. He might give the Devil advantage, for the *prince of this world had nothing in him*; but he has in us, and therefore we must pray not to be *led into temptation*, and must keep out of harm's way. (2.) That he might have opportunity to do his best himself, that he might be exalted in his own strength; for so it was written, *I have trod the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with me. Christ entered the lists without a second.

III. The preparatives for it, which were two.

1. He was directed to the combat; he did not wilfully thrust himself upon it, but he was *led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the Devil*. The Spirit that *descended upon him like a dove* made him meek, and yet made him bold. Note, Our care must be, not to enter into temptation; but if God, by his providence, order us into circumstances of temptation for our trial, we must not think it strange, but double our guard. *Be strong in the Lord, resist steadfast in the faith*, and all shall be well. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves; but, whithersoever God leads us, we may hope he will go along with us, and bring us off *more than conquerors*.

Christ was *led, to be tempted of the Devil*, and of him only. Others are tempted, *when they are drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed*; (Jam. 1. 14.) the Devil takes hold of that handle, and ploughs with that heifer; but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, and therefore he was led securely, without any fear or trembling, as a champion into the field, *to be tempted purely by the Devil*.

Now Christ's temptation is, (1.) An instance of his own condescension and humiliation. Temptations are *fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, buffetings, siftings, wrestlings, combats*, all which denote hardship and suffering; therefore Christ submitted to them, because he would humble himself, *in all things to be made like unto his brethren*; thus he gave his back to the smiters. (2.) An occasion of Satan's confusion. There is no conquest without a combat. Christ was tempted, that he might overcome the tempter. Satan tempted the first Adam, and triumphed over him; but he shall not always triumph, the second Adam shall overcome him, and *lead*

captivity captive. (3.) Matter of comfort to all the saints. In the temptation of Christ it appears, that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring in his temptations; but it appears withal, that he is not invincible. Though he is a *strong man armed*, yet the Captain of our salvation is *stronger than he*. It is some comfort to us to think that Christ suffered, being *tempted*; for thus it appears that temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only, and such as may be the lot of these with whom God is well-pleased. And we have a High-Priest who knows, by experience, what it is to be *tempted*, and who therefore is the more tenderly touched with the feeling of our infirmities in an hour of temptation, Heb. 2. 18.—4. 15. But it is much more a comfort to think that Christ conquered, being *tempted*, and conquered for us; not only that the enemy we grapple with is a conquered, baffled, disarmed enemy, but that we are interested in Christ's victory over him, and through him are *more than conquerors*.

2. He was dictated for the combat, as wrestlers, who are *temperate in all things*; (1 Cor. 9. 25.) but Christ beyond any other, for he *fasted forty days and forty nights*, in compliance with the type and example of Moses the great law-giver, and of Elias the great reformer, of the Old Testament. John Baptist came as Elias, in those things that were moral, but not in such things as were miraculous; (John 10. 41.) that honour was reserved for Christ. Christ needed not to fast for mortification; (he had no corrupt desires to be subdued;) yet he *fasted*, (1.) That herein he might humble himself, and might seem as one abandoned, *whom no man seeketh after*. (2.) That he might give Satan both occasion and advantage against him; and so make his victory over him the more illustrious. (3.) That he might sanctify and recommend fasting to us, when God in his providence calls to it, or when we are reduced to straits, and are destitute of daily food, or when it is requisite for the keeping under of the body or the quickening of prayer, those excellent preparatives for temptation. If good people are brought low, if they want friends and succours, this may comfort them, that their Master himself was in like manner exercised. A man may want bread, and yet be a favourite of heaven, and under the conduct of the Spirit. The reference which the Papists make of their lent-fast to this fasting of Christ *forty days*, is a piece of foppery and superstition which the law of our land witnesses against, Stat. 5. Eliz. chap. v. sect. 39, 40. *When he had fasted forty days, he was never hungry*; converse with heaven was instead of meat and drink to him, but he *was afterward an hungred*, to shew that he was really and truly Man; and he took upon him our natural infirmities, that he might atone for us. Man fell by eating, and that way we often sin, and therefore Christ *was an hungred*.

IV. The temptations themselves. That which Satan aimed at, in all his temptations, was, to bring him to *sin against God*, and so to render him for ever incapable of being a Sacrifice for the sin of others. Now, whatever the colours were, that which he aimed at was, to bring him, 1. To despair of his Father's goodness. 2. To presume upon his Father's power. 3. To alienate his Father's honour, by giving it to Satan. In the two former, that which he tempted him *to*, seemed innocent, and therein appeared the subtilty of the tempter; in the last, that which he tempted him *with*, seemed desirable. The two former are artful temptations, which there was need of great wisdom to discern: the last was a strong temptation, which there was need of great resolution to resist; yet he was baffled in them all.

1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him.

(1.) See how the temptation was managed; (v. 3.) *The tempter came to him.* Note, The Devil is the tempter, and therefore he is *Satan—an adversary*; for those are our worst enemies, that entice us to sin, and are Satan's agents, are doing his work, and carrying on his designs. He is called emphatically *the tempter*, because he was so to our first parents, and still is so, and all other tempters are set on work by him. *The tempter came to Christ in a visible appearance*, not terrible and affrighting, as afterward in his agony in the garden; no, if ever the Devil transformed himself into an *angel of light*, he did it now, and pretended to be a good genius, a guardian angel.

Observe the subtilty of the tempter, in joining this first temptation with what went before, to make it the stronger. [1.] Christ began to be hungry, and therefore the motion seemed very proper, to turn *stones into bread* for his necessary support. Note, It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition, in that to plant the battery of his temptations. He is an adversary no less watchful than spiteful; and the more ingenious he is to take advantage against us, the more industrious we must be to give him none. When he began to be hungry, and that in a *wilderness*, where there was nothing to be had, then the Devil assaulted him. Note, Want and poverty are a great temptation to discontent and unbelief, and the use of unlawful means for our relief, under pretence that necessity has no law; and it is excused with this, that hunger will break through stone-walls, which yet is no excuse, for the law of God ought to be stronger to us than stone-walls. Agur prays against poverty, not because it is an affliction and reproach, but because it is a temptation; *lest I be poor, and steal*. Those therefore who are reduced to straits, have need to double their guard; it is better to starve to death, than live and thrive by sin. [2.] Christ was lately declared to be the *Son of God*, and here the Devil tempts him to doubt of that; *If thou be the Son of God*. Had not the Devil known that the Son of God was to come into the world, he would not have said this; and had he not suspected that this was he, he would not have said it to him, nor durst he have said it, if Christ had not now drawn a veil over his glory, and if the Devil had not now put on an impudent face.

First, "Thou hast now an occasion to question whether thou be the *Son of God* or no; for can it be, that the *Son of God*, who is *Heir of all things*, should be reduced to such straits? If God were thy Father, he would not see thee starve, for *all the beasts of the forest are his*, Ps. 50. 10, 12. It is true, there was a *voice from heaven*, *This is my beloved Son*, but surely it was delusion, and thou wast imposed upon by it; for either God is not thy Father, or he is a very unkind one." Note, 1. The great thing Satan aims at, in tempting good people, is, to overthrow their relation to God as a Father, and so to cut off their dependence on him, their duty to him, and their communion with him. The good Spirit, as the Comforter of the brethren, witnesses that they are the *children of God*; the evil spirit, as the accuser of the brethren, does all he can to shake that testimony. 2. Outward afflictions, wants and burdens, are the great arguments Satan uses to make the people of God question their sonship; as if afflictions could not consist with, when really they proceed from, God's fatherly love. They know how to answer this temptation, who can say, with holy Job, *Though he slay me, though he starve me, yet will I trust in him, and love him as a Friend, even when he seems to come forth against me as an Enemy*. 3. The Devil aims to shake our faith in the word of God, and bring us to question the truth of that. Thus he began with our first parents; *Yea, has God*

said so and so? Surely he has not. So here, *Has God said that thou art his beloved Son?* Surely he did not say so; or if he did, it is not true. We then give place to the Devil, when we question the truth of any word that God has spoken; for his business, as the father of lies, is to oppose the true sayings of God. 4. The Devil carries on his designs very much by possessing people with hard thoughts of God, as if he were unkind, or unfaithful, and had forsaken or forgotten those who have ventured their all with him. He endeavoured to beget in our first parents a notion that God forbade them the tree of knowledge, because he grudged them the benefit of it; and so here he insinuates to our Saviour, that his Father had cast him off, and left him to shift for himself. But see how unreasonable this suggestion was, and how easily answered. If Christ seemed to be a mere Man now, because he was hungry, why was he not confessed to be more than a Man, even the Son of God, when for forty days he fasted, and was not hungry?

Secondly, "Thou hast now an opportunity to shew that thou art the Son of God. If thou art the Son of God, prove it by this, command that these stones" (a heap of which, probably, lay now before him,) "be made bread, v. 3. John Baptist said but the other day, that God can, out of stones, raise up children to Abraham; a divine power therefore can, no doubt, out of stones, make bread for those children; if therefore thou hast that power, exert it now in a time of need for thyself." He does not say, *Pray to thy Father* that he would turn them into bread, but *command* it to be done; thy Father hath forsaken thee, set up for thyself, and be not obliged to him. The Devil is for nothing that is humbling, but every thing that is assuming; and gains his point, if he can but bring men off from their dependence upon God, and possess them with an opinion of their self-sufficiency.

(2.) See how this temptation was resisted and overcome.

[1.] Christ refused to comply with it. He would not command these stones to be made bread; not because he could not; his power, which soon after this, turned water into wine, could have turned stones into bread; but he would not. And why would he not? At first view, the thing appears justifiable enough, and the truth is, The more plausible a temptation is, and the greater appearance there is of good in it, the more dangerous it is. This matter would bear a dispute, but Christ was soon aware of the snake in the grass, and would not do any thing, *First*, That looked like questioning the truth of the voice he heard from heaven, or putting that upon a new trial which was already settled. *Secondly*, That looked like distrusting his Father's care of him, or limiting him to one particular way of providing for him. *Thirdly*, That looked like setting up for himself, and being his own carver; or, *Fourthly*, That looked like gratifying Satan, by doing a thing at his motion. Some would have said, To give the Devil his due, this was good counsel; but for those who wait upon God, to consult him, is more than his due; it is like inquiring of the god of Ekron, when there is a God in Israel.

[2.] He was ready to reply to it; (v. 4.) *He answered, and said, It is written.* This is observable, that Christ answered and baffled all the temptations of Satan with, *It is written.* He is himself the eternal Word, and could have produced the mind of God without having recourse to the writings of Moses; but he put honour upon the scripture, and, to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the law; and he says this to Satan, taking it for granted that he knew well enough what was written. It is possible that those who are the Devil's children may yet know very well what is written in

God's book; *The devils believe, and tremble.* This method we must take when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation with, *It is written.* The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, the only offensive weapon in all the christian armoury; (Eph. 6. 17.) and we may say of it as David of Goliath's sword, *none is like that* in our spiritual conflicts.

This answer, as all the rest, is taken out of the book of *Deuteronomy*, which signifies the second law, and in which there is very little ceremonial; the Levitical sacrifices and purifications could not drive away Satan, though of divine institution, much less holy water and the sign of the cross, which are of human invention; but moral precepts and evangelical promises, mixed with faith, these are mighty, through God, for the vanquishing of Satan. This is here quoted from Deut. 8. 3. where the reason given why God fed the Israelites with manna, is, because he would teach them that man shall not live by bread alone. This Christ applies to his own case. Israel was God's son, whom he called out of Egypt, (Hos. 11. 1.) so was Christ; (ch. 2. 15.) Israel was then in a wilderness, Christ was so now, perhaps the same wilderness. Now, *First*, The Devil would have him question his sonship, because he was in straits; no, says he, Israel was God's son, and a son he was very tender of, and whose manners he bore; (Acts 13. 18.) and yet he brought them into straits; and it follows there, (Deut. 8. 5.) *As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.* Christ, being a Son, thus learns obedience. *Secondly*, The Devil would have him distrust his Father's love and care. "No," says he, "that would be to do as Israel did, who, when they were in want, said, *Is the Lord among us?* and, *Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread?*" *Thirdly*, The Devil would have him, as soon as he began to be hungry, immediately look out for supply; whereas God, for wise and holy ends, suffered Israel to hunger before he fed them; to humble them, and prove them. God will have his children, when they want, not only to wait on him, but to wait for him. *Fourthly*, The Devil would have him to supply himself with bread. "No," says Christ, "what need is there of that? It is a point long since settled, and incontestably proved, that man may live without bread, as Israel in the wilderness lived forty years upon manna." It is true, God, in his providence, ordinarily maintains men by bread out of the earth; (Job 28. 5.) but he can, if he pleases, make use of other means to keep men alive; any word proceeding out of the mouth of God, any thing that God shall order and appoint for that end, will be as good a livelihood for man as bread, and will maintain him as well. As we may have bread, and yet not be nourished, if God deny his blessing, (Hos. 1. 6, 9. Mic. 6. 14. for though bread is the staff of life, it is God's blessing that is the staff of bread,) so we may want bread, and yet be nourished some other way. God sustained Moses and Elias without bread, and Christ himself just now for forty days; he sustained Israel with bread from heaven, angels' food; Elijah with bread sent miraculously by ravens, and another time with the widow's meal miraculously multiplied; therefore Christ need not turn stones into bread, but trust God to keep him alive some other way now that he is hungry, as he had done forty days before he hungered. Note, As in our greatest abundance we must not think to live without God, so in our greatest straits we must learn to live upon God; and when the fig-tree does not blossom, and the field yields no meat, when all ordinary means of succour and support are cut off, yet then we must rejoice in the Lord; then we must not think to command what we will, though contrary to his command, but must

humbly pray for what he thinks fit to give us, and be thankful for the bread of our allowance, though it be a short allowance. Let us learn of Christ here to be at God's finding, rather than at our own; and not to take any irregular courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing. (Ps. 37. 5.) *Jehovah-jireh*; some way or other the Lord will provide. It is better to live poorly upon the fruits of God's goodness, than live plentifully upon the products of our own sin.

2. He tempted him to presume upon his Father's power and protection! See what a restless unwearyed adversary the Devil is! If he fail in one assault, he tries another.

Now in this second attempt we may observe,

(1.) What the temptation was, and how it was managed. In general, finding Christ so confident of his Father's care of him, in point of nourishment, he endeavours to draw him to presume upon that care, in point of safety. Note, We are in danger of missing our way, both on the right hand and on the left, and therefore must take heed, lest, when we avoid one extreme, we be brought by the artifices of Satan, to run into another; lest, by overcoming our prodigality, we fall into covetousness. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than those of despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls. Some who have obtained a persuasion that Christ is able and willing to save them from their sins, are then tempted to presume that he will save them in their sins. Thus when people begin to be zealous in religion, Satan hurries them into bigotry and intemperate heats.

Now in his temptation we may observe,

[1.] How he made way for it. He took Christ, not by force and against his will, but moved him to go, and went along with him, to Jerusalem. Whether Christ went upon the ground, and so went up the stairs to the top of the temple, or whether he went in the air, is uncertain; but so it was, that he was set upon a pinnacle, or spire; upon the fane, (so some,) upon the battlements, (so others,) upon the wings, (so the word is,) of the temple. Now observe, First, How submissive Christ was, in suffering himself to be hurried thus, that he might let Satan do his worst, and yet conquer him. The patience of Christ here, as afterward in his sufferings and death, is more wonderful than the power of Satan or his instruments; for neither he nor they could have any power against Christ but what was given them from above. How comfortable is it, that Christ, who let loose this power of Satan against himself, does not in like manner let it loose against us, but restrains it, for he knows our frame! Secondly, How subtle the Devil was, in the choice of the place for his temptations. Intending to solicit Christ to an ostentation of his own power, and a vain-glorious presumption upon God's providence, he fixes him on a public place in Jerusalem, a populous city, and the joy of the whole earth; in the temple, one of the wonders of the world, continually gazed upon with admiration by some one or other. There he might make himself remarkable, and he taken notice of by every body, and prove himself the Son of God; not, as he was urged in the former temptation, in the obscurities of a wilderness, but before multitudes, upon the most eminent stage of action.

Observe, 1. That Jerusalem is here called the holy city; for so it was in name and profession, and there was in it a holy seed, that was the substance thereof. Note, There is no city on earth so holy as to exempt and secure us from the Devil and his temptations. The first Adam was tempted in the holy garden, the second in the holy city. Let us not, therefore, in any place, be off our watch. Nay, the holy city is the place where he does, with the

greatest advantage and success, tempt men to pride and presumption; but, blessed be God, into the Jerusalem above, that holy city, no unclean thing shall enter; there we shall be for ever out of temptation. 2. That he set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, which (as Josephus describes it, Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 14.) was so very high, that it would make a man's head giddy to look down to the bottom. Note, Pinnacles of the temple are places of temptation; I mean, (1.) High places are so; they are slippery places; advancement in the world makes a man a fair mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. God casts down, that he may raise up; the Devil raises up, that he may cast down; therefore they who would take heed of falling, must take heed of climbing. (2.) High places in the church are, in a special manner, dangerous. They who excel in gifts, who are in eminent stations, and have gained great reputation, have need to keep humble; for Satan will be sure to aim at them, to puff them up with pride, that they may fall into the condemnation of the Devil. Those that stand high are concerned to stand fast.

[2.] How he moved it; "If thou be the Son of God, now show thyself to the world, and prove thyself to be so; cast thyself down, and then," First, "Thou wilt be admired, as under the special protection of Heaven. When they see thee receive no hurt by a fall from such a precipice, they will say" (as the barbarous people did of Paul) "that thou art a God." Tradition says, that Simon Magus by this very thing attempted to prove himself a god, but that his pretensions were disproved, for he fell down, and was miserably bruised. "Nay," Secondly, "Thou wilt be received, as coming with a special commission from Heaven. All Jerusalem will see and acknowledge, not only that thou art more than a man, but that thou art that Messenger, that Angel of the covenant, that should suddenly come to the temple, (Mal. 3. 1.) and from thence descend into the streets of the holy city; and thus the work of convincing the Jews will be cut short, and soon done."

Observe, The Devil said, Cast thyself down. The Devil could not cast him down, though a little thing would have done it, from the top of a spire. Note, The power of Satan is a limited power; hitherto he shall come, and no further. Yet, if the Devil had cast him down, he had not gained his point; that had been his suffering only, not his sin. Note, Whatever real mischief is done us, it is of our own doing; the Devil can but persuade, he cannot compel; he can but say, Cast thyself down; he cannot cast us down. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and not forced, but enticed. Therefore let us not hurt ourselves, and then, blessed be God, no one else can hurt us, Prov. 9. 12.

[3.] How he backed this motion with a scripture; For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee. But is Saul also among the prophets? Is Satan so well versed in scripture, as to be able to quote it so readily? It seems, he is. Note, It is possible for a man to have his head full of scripture-notions, and his mouth full of scripture-expressions, while his heart is full of reigning enmity to God and all goodness. The knowledge which the devils have of the scripture, increases both their mischievousness and their torment. Never did the Devil speak with more vexation to himself, than when he said to Christ, I know thee who thou art. The Devil would persuade Christ to throw himself down, hoping that he would be his own murderer, and that there would be an end of him and his undertaking, which he looked upon with a jealous eye; to encourage him to do it, he tells him, that there was no danger, that the good angels would protect him, for

so was the promise, (Ps. 91. 11.) *He shall give his angels charge over thee.* In this quotation,

First, There was *something right*. It is true, there is such a promise of the ministration of the angels, for the protection of the saints. The Devil knows it by experience; for he finds his attempts against them fruitless, and he frets and rages at it, as he did at the hedge about Job, which he speaks of so sensibly, Job 1. 10. He was also right in applying it to Christ, for to him all the promises of the protection of the saints primarily and eminently belong, and to them, in and through him. That promise, that *not a bone of theirs shall be broken*, (Ps. 34. 20.) was fulfilled in Christ, John 19. 36. The angels guard the saints for Christ's sake.

Secondly, There was a great deal *wrong in it*; and perhaps the Devil had a particular spite against this promise, and perverted it, because it often stood in his way, and baffled his mischievous designs against the saints. See here, 1. How he *misquoted* it; and that was *bad*. The promise is, *They shall keep thee*; but how? *In all thy ways*; not otherwise; if we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection. Now this word made against the tempter, and therefore he industriously left it out. If Christ had *cast himself down*, he had been out of his way, for he had no call so to expose himself. It is good for us upon all occasions to consult the scriptures themselves, and not to take things upon trust, that we may not be imposed upon by those that maim and mangle the word of God; we must do as the noble *Bereans*, who searched the scriptures daily. 2. How he *misapplied* it; and that was *worse*. Scripture is abused when it is pressed to patronize sin; and when men thus wrest it to their own temptation, they do it to *their own destruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 16. This promise is firm, and stands good; but the Devil made an ill use of it, when he used it as an encouragement to presume upon the divine care. Note, It is no new thing for the *grace of God to be turned into wantonness*; and for men to take encouragement in sin from the discoveries of God's good will to sinners. But *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound*; throw ourselves down, that the angels may bear us up? God forbid.

(2.) How Christ overcame this temptation; he resisted and overcame it, as he did the former, with. *It is written*. The Devil's *abusing* of scripture did not prevent Christ from using it, but he presently urges, Deut. 6. 16. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*. The meaning of this is not, Therefore thou must not tempt me; but, Therefore *I must not tempt my Father*. In the place whence it is quoted, it is in the plural number. *Ye shall not tempt*; here it is singular, *Thou shalt not*. Note, We are then likely to get good by the word of God, when we hear and receive general promises as speaking to us in particular. Satan said, *It is written*; Christ says, *It is written*; not that one scripture contradicts another. God is one, and his word one, and he in one mind, but that is a promise, this is a precept, and therefore that is to be explained and applied by this; for scripture is the best interpreter of scripture; and they who prophesy, who expound scripture, must do it according to the proportion of faith, (Rom. 12. 6.) consistently with practical godliness.

If Christ should *cast himself down*, it would be the tempting of God, [1.] As it would be *requiring a further confirmation* of that which was so well confirmed. Christ was abundantly satisfied that God was already his Father, and took care of him, and gave his angels a charge concerning him; and therefore to put it upon a new experiment, would be to tempt him, as the Pharisees tempted Christ;

when they had so many signs on earth, they demanded a *sign from heaven*. This is limiting the *Holy One of Israel*. [2.] As it would be *requiring a special preservation* of him, in doing that which he had no call to. If we expect that because God has promised not to forsake us, therefore he should follow us out of the way of our duty; that because he has promised to supply our wants, therefore he should humour us, and please our fancies; that because he has promised to keep us, we may wilfully thrust ourselves into danger, and may expect the desired end, without using the appointed means; this is presumption, this is tempting God. And it is an aggravation of the sin, that he is the Lord our God; it is an abuse of the privilege we enjoy, in having him for our God; he has thereby encouraged us to trust him, but we are very ungrateful, if therefore we tempt him; it is contrary to our duty to him as our God. This is to affront him whom we ought to honour. Note, We must never promise ourselves any more than God has promised us.

3. He tempted him to the most *black and horrid idolatry*, with the proffer of the *kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*. And here we may observe,

(1.) How the Devil made this push at our Saviour, v. 8, 9. The worst temptation was reserved for the last. Note, Sometimes the saints' last encounter is with the sons of *Anak*, and the parting blow is the sorest; therefore, whatever temptation we have been assaulted by, still we must prepare for worse; must be armed for all attacks, with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.

In this temptation, we may observe,

[1.] What he *showed him*—*all the kingdoms of the world*. In order to this, he took him to an *exceeding high mountain*; in hopes of prevailing, as Balak with Balaam, he changed his ground. The pinnacle of the temple is not high enough; the prince of the power of the air must have him further up into his territories. Some think this high mountain was on the other side of Jordan, because there we find Christ next after the temptation, John 1. 28, 29. Perhaps it was *mount Pisgah*, whence Moses, in communion with God, had all the kingdoms of Canaan showed him. Hither the blessed Jesus was carried for the advantage of a prospect; as if the Devil could show him more of the world than he knew already, who made and governed it. Thence he might discover some of the kingdoms situate about Judea, though not the *glory of them*; but there was doubtless a juggle and a delusion of Satan's in it; it is probable that that which he showed him, was but a landscape, an airy representation in a cloud, such as that great deceiver could easily frame and put together; setting forth, in proper and lively colours, the glories and splendid appearance of princes, and their robes and crowns, their retinue, equipage, and life-guards; the pomps of thrones, and courts, and stately palaces, the sumptuous buildings in cities, the gardens and fields about the country-seats, with the various instances of their wealth, pleasure, and gaiety; so as might be most likely to strike the fancy, and excite the admiration and affection. Such was this show, and his taking of him up into a high mountain, was but to *humour the thing*, and to colour the delusion; in which yet the blessed Jesus did not suffer himself to be imposed upon, but saw through the cheat, only he permitted Satan to take his own way, that his victory over him might be the more illustrious. Hence observe, concerning *Satan's temptations*, that, *First*, They often *come in at the eye*, which is blinded to the things it should see, and dazzled with the vanities it should be turned from. The first sin began in the eye, Gen. 3. 6. We therefore need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to pray that

God would turn them away from beholding vanity. *Secondly*, That temptations commonly take rise from the world, and the things of it. *The lust of the flesh*, and of the *eye*, with the *pride of life*, are the topics from which the Devil fetches most of his arguments. *Thirdly*, That it is a *great cheat* which the Devil puts upon poor souls, in his temptations. He deceives, and so destroys; he imposes upon men with shadows and false colours; shows the world and the glory of it, and hides from men's eyes the sin and sorrow and death which stain the pride of all this glory, the cares and calamities which attend great possessions, and the thorns which crown themselves are lined with. *Fourthly*, That the *glory of the world* is the most *charming* temptation to the *unthinking* and *unwary*, and that by which men are most imposed upon. *Laban's sons* grudge *Jacob all his glory*; the *pride of life* is the most dangerous snare.

[2.] What he said to him; (v. 9.) *All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* See,

First, How vain the promise was. *All these things will I give thee.* He seems to take it for granted, that in the former temptations he had in part gained his point, and proved that Christ was not the *Son of God*, because he had not given him those evidences of it which he demanded; so that here he looks upon him as a mere man. "Come," says he, "it seems that the God, whose Son thou thinkest thyself to be, deserts thee, and starves thee—a sign that he is not thy Father; but if thou wilt be ruled by me, I will provide better for thee than so; own me for thy father, and ask my blessing, and *all this will I give thee.*" Note, Satan makes an easy prey of men, when he can persuade them to think themselves abandoned of God. The fallacy of this promise lies in that, *All this will I give thee.* And what was *all that*? It was but a map, a picture, a mere phantasm, that had nothing in it real or solid, and this he would give him; a goodly prize! Yet such are Satan's proffers. Note, Multitudes lose the sight of that which is, by setting their eyes on that which is not. The Devil's baits are all a sham; they are shows and shadows with which he deceives them, or rather they deceive themselves. The *nations of the earth* had been, long before, promised to the Messiah; if he be the *Son of God*, they belong to him; Satan pretends now to be a good angel, probably one of those that were set over kingdoms, and to have received a commission to deliver possession to him according to promise. Note, We must take heed of receiving even that which God had promised, out of the Devil's hand; we do so when we precipitate the performance, by catching at it in a sinful way.

Secondly, How vile the condition was; *If thou wilt fall down, and worship me.* Note, The Devil is fond of being worshipped. All the worship which the heathen performed to their gods, was directed to the Devil, (Deut. 32. 17.) who is therefore called the *god of this world*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. 1 Cor. 10. 20. And vain would he draw Christ into his interests, and persuade him, now that he set up for a teacher, to preach up the Gentile idolatry, and to introduce it again among the Jews, and then the nations of the earth would soon flock in to him. What temptation could be more hideous, more black? Note, The best of sins may be tempted to the worst of sins, especially when they are under the power of melancholy; as, for instance, to atheism, blasphemy, murder, self-murder, and what not. It is their affliction, but while there is no consent to it, nor approbation of it, it is not their sin; Christ was tempted to worship Satan.

(2.) See how Christ warded off the thrust, baffled the assault, and came off a Conqueror. He rejected the proposal,

[1.] With *abhorrence and detestation*! *Get thee hence, Satan!* The two former temptations had something of colour, which would admit of a consideration, but this was so gross as not to bear a parley; it appears abominable at the first sight, and therefore is immediately rejected. If the best friend we have in the world should suggest such a thing as this to us, *Go, serve other gods*, he must not be heard with patience, Deut. 13. 6, 8. Some temptations have their wickedness written in their forehead, they are open before-hand; they are not to be disputed with, but rejected; "*Get thee hence, Satan!* Away with it, I cannot bear the thought of it!" While Satan tempted Christ to do himself a mischief, by casting himself down, though he yielded not, yet he heard it; but now that the temptation flies in the face of God, he cannot bear it; *Get thee hence, Satan!* Note, It is a just indignation, which rises at the proposal of any thing that reflects on the honour of God, and strikes at his crown. Nay, whatever is an abominable thing, which we are sure the Lord hates, we must thus abominate it; far be it from us that we should have any thing to do with it. Note, It is good to be *peremptory* in resisting temptation, and to *stop our ears* to Satan's charms.

[2.] With an argument fetched from scripture. Note, In order to the strengthening of our resolutions against sin, it is good to see what a great deal of reason there is for those resolutions. The argument is very suitable, and exactly to the purpose, taken from Deut. 6. 13. and 10. 20. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Christ does not dispute whether he were an angel of light, as he pretended, or not; but though he were, yet he must not be worshipped, because that is an honour due to God only. Note, It is good to make our answers to temptation as full and as brief as may be, so as not to leave room for objections. Our Saviour has recourse to the fundamental law in this case, which is indispensable, and universally obligatory. Note, Religious worship is due to God only, and must not be given to any creature; it is a flower of the crown which cannot be alienated, a branch of God's glory which he will not give to another, and which he would not give to his own Son, by obliging all men to *honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, if he had not been God, *equal to him, and one with him.* Christ quotes this law concerning religious worship, and quotes it with application to himself; *First*, To show that in his estate of humiliation he was himself *made under this law*: though, as God, he was worshipped, yet, as Man, he did worship God, both publicly and privately. He obliges us to no more than what he was first pleased to oblige himself to. Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. *Secondly*, To show that the law of religious worship is of eternal obligation: though he abrogated and altered many institutions of worship, yet this fundamental law of nature—that God only is to be worshipped, he came to ratify, and confirm, and enforce upon us.

V. We have here the end and issue of this combat, v. 11. Though the children of God may be exercised with many and great temptations, yet God will not suffer them to be tempted above the strength which either they have, or he will put into them, 1 Cor. 10. 13. It is but for a season that they are in heaviness, through manifold temptations.

Now the issue was glorious; and much to Christ's honour; for,

1. The Devil was baffled, and quitted the field; *Then the Devil leaveth him*, forced to do so by the power that went along with that word of command, *Get thee hence, Satan.* He made a shameful and inglorious retreat, and came off with disgrace; and the more daring his attempts had been, the more

mortifying was the foil that was given him. *Magnis tamen excidit ausis—The attempt, however, in which he failed, was daring.* Then, when he had done his worst, had tempted him with *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, and found that he was not influenced by that bait, that he could not prevail with that temptation with which he had overthrown so many thousands of the children of men, then he leaves him; then he gives him over as more than a man. Since this did not move him, he despairs of moving him, and begins to conclude, that he is the *Son of God*, and that it is in vain to tempt him any further. Note, If we resist the Devil, he will flee from us; he will yield, if we keep our ground; as when *Naomi* saw that *Ruth* was steadfastly resolved, she left off speaking to her. When the Devil left our Saviour, he owned himself fairly beaten; his head was broken by the attempt he made to bruise *Christ's heel*. He left him because he had *nothing in him*, nothing to take hold of; he saw it was to no purpose, and so gave over. Note, The Devil, though he is an enemy to all the saints, is a conquered enemy. The Captain of our salvation has defeated and disarmed him; we have nothing to do but to *pursue the victory*.

2. The holy angels came and attended upon our victorious Redeemer; *Behold, angels came and ministered unto him.* They came in a visible appearance, as the Devil had done in the temptation. While the Devil was making his assaults upon our Saviour, the angels stood at a distance, and their immediate attendance and ministration were suspended, that it might appear that he vanquished Satan in his own strength, and that his victory might be the more illustrious; and that afterward, when *Michael* makes use of his angels in fighting with the dragon and his angels, it might appear, that it is not because he *needs them*, or could not do his work without them, but because he is pleased to honour them so far as to employ them. One angel might have served to bring him food, but here are many attending him, to testify their respect to him, and their readiness to receive his commands. Behold this! It is worth taking notice of; (1.) That as there is a world of wicked, malicious spirits that fight against Christ and his church, and all particular believers, so there is a world of holy, blessed spirits engaged and employed for them. In reference to our *war with devils*, we may take abundance of comfort from our *communion with angels*. (2.) That Christ's victories are the angels' triumphs. The angels came to congratulate Christ on his success, to rejoice with him, and to give him the glory due to his name; for that was sung with a loud voice in heaven, when the great dragon was cast out, (Rev. 12. 9, 10.) *Now is come salvation and strength.* (3.) That the angels ministered to the Lord Jesus, not only food, but whatever else he wanted after this great fatigue. See how the instances of Christ's condescension and humiliation were balanced with tokens of his glory. As when he was crucified in weakness, yet he lived by the power of God; so when in weakness he was tempted, was hungry and weary, yet by his divine power he commanded the ministration of angels. Thus the Son of man did eat angels' food, and like *Elias*, is fed by an angel in the wilderness. 1 Kings 19. 4, 7. Note, Though God may suffer his people to be brought into wants and straits, yet he will take effectual care for their supply, and will rather send angels to feed them, than see them perish. *Trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be fed.* Ps. 37. 3.

Christ was thus succoured after the temptation, [1.] For his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, that he might see the powers of heaven siding with him, when he saw the powers of hell set against him. [2.] For our encouragement to

trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, and how hard that was, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted, and how comfortable that was; and therefore we may expect, not only that he will sympathize with his tempted people, but that he will come in with seasonable relief to them; as our great Melchizedec, who met Abraham when he returned from the battle, and as the angels here ministered to him.

Lastly, Christ, having been thus signalized and made great in the invisible world by the voice of the Father, the descent of the Spirit, his victory over devils, and his dominion over angels, was doubtless qualified to appear in the visible world as the Mediator between God and man; for consider how great this Man was!

12. Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee: 13. And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: 14. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by *Isaiah* the prophet, saying, 15. The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16. The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. 17. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We have here an account of Christ's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, for he came into the world to be a Preacher; the great salvation which he wrought out, he himself began to publish, (Heb. 2. 3.) to shew how much his heart was upon it, and ours should be.

Several passages in the other gospels, especially in that of St. John, are supposed, in the order of the story of Christ's life, to intervene between his temptation and his preaching in Galilee. His first appearance after his temptation, was when John Baptist pointed to him, saying, *Behold the Lamb of God*, John 1. 29. After that, he went up to Jerusalem, to the passover, (John 2.) discoursed with Nicodemus, (John 3.) with the woman of Samaria, (John 4.) and then returned into Galilee, and preached there. But Matthew, having had his residence in Galilee, begins his story of Christ's public ministry, with his preaching there, which here we have an account of Observe,

1. The time; when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, then he went into Galilee, v. 12. Note, The cry of the saints' sufferings comes up into the ears of the Lord Jesus. If John be cast into prison, Jesus hears it, takes cognizance of it, and steers his course accordingly; he remembers the bonds and afflictions that abide his people. Observe, 1. Christ did not go into the country, till he heard of John's imprisonment; for he must have time given him to prepare the way of the Lord, before the Lord himself appear. Providence wisely ordered it, that John should be eclipsed before Christ shone forth; otherwise the minds of people would have been distracted between the two; one would have said, *I am of John*, and another, *I am of Jesus*. John must be Christ's harbinger, but not his rival. The moon and stars are lost when the sun rises. John had done his work by the baptism of repentance,

and then he is laid aside. The witnesses were slain when they had finished their testimony, and not before, Rev. 11. 7. 2. He *did* go into the country as soon as he heard of John's imprisonment; not only to provide for his own safety, knowing that the Pharisees in Judea were as much enemies to him as Herod was to John, but to supply the want of John Baptist, and to build upon the good foundation he had laid. Note, God will not leave himself without witness, nor his church without guides; when he removes one useful instrument, he can raise up another, for he has the residue of the Spirit, and he will do it, if he has work to do. *Arise my servant is dead*, John is cast into prison; now therefore, Joshua, arise; Jesus, arise.

11. The place where he preached; in Galilee, a remote part of the country, that lay furthest from Jerusalem, and was there looked upon with contempt, as rude and boorish. The inhabitants of that country were reckoned stout men, fit for soldiers, but not polite men, or fit for scholars. Thither Christ went, there he set up the standard of his gospel; and in this, as in other things, he humbled himself. Observe,

1. The particular city he chose for his residence; not Nazareth, where he had been bred up; no, he left Nazareth; particular notice is taken of that, v. 13. And with good reason did he leave Nazareth; for the men of that city *thrust him out* from among them, Luke 4. 29. He made them his first, and a very fair, offer of his service, but they rejected him and his doctrine, and were filled with indignation at him and it; and therefore he left Nazareth, and shook off the dust of his feet for a testimony against those there, who would not have him to teach them. Nazareth was the first place that refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. Note, It is just with God, to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Unhappy Nazareth! *If thou hadst known* in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, how well had it been for thee! *But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

But he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which was a city of Galilee, but many miles distant from Nazareth, a great city and of much resort. It is said here to be *on the sea coast*, not the great sea, but the sea of Tiberias, an inland water, called also *the lake of Genesareth*. Close by the falling of Jordan into this sea stood Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphtali, but bordering upon Zebulun; thither Christ came, and here he dwelt. Some think that his father Joseph had a habitation here, others that he took a house or lodgings at least; and some think it more than probable, that he dwelt in the house of Simon Peter; however, here he fixed, not constantly, for he went about doing good; but this was for some time his head-quarters: what little rest he had, was here; here he had a place, though not a place of his own, to lay his head on. And at Capernaum, it should seem, he was welcome, and met with better entertainment than he had at Nazareth. Note, If some reject Christ, yet others will receive him, and bid him welcome. Capernaum is glad of Nazareth's leaveings. If Christ's own countrymen be not gathered, yet he will be glorious. "And thou, Capernaum, hast now a day of it; thou art now lifted up to heaven; be wise for thyself, and know the time of thy visitation."

2. The prophecy that was fulfilled in this, v. 14—16. It is quoted, Isa. 9. 1, 2. but with some variation. The prophet in that place is foretelling a greater darkness of affliction to befall the countries there mentioned, either in their first captivity under Benhadad, which was but light, (1 Kings 15. 20.) or in

their second captivity under the Assyrian, which was much heavier, 2 Kings 15. 29. The punishment of the Jewish nation for rejecting the gospel, should be sorer than either; (see Isa. 8. 21, 22.) for those captivated places had some reviving in their bondage, and saw a great light again, ch. 9. 12. This is Isaiah's sense; but the Scripture has many fulfillings; and the Evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them.

The places are spoken of, v. 15. *The land of Zebulun is rightly said to be by the sea coast*, for Zebulun was a *haven of ships*, and *rejoiced in her going out*, Gen. 49. 13. Deut. 33. 18. Of Naphtali, it had been said, that he should *give goodly words*, (Gen. 49. 21.) and should be *satisfied with favour*, (Deut. 33. 23.) for from him began the gospel; goodly words indeed, and such as bring to a soul God's satisfying favour. The country beyond Jordan is mentioned likewise, for there we sometimes find Christ preaching, and Galilee of the Gentiles, the upper Galilee to which the Gentiles resorted for traffic, and where they were mingled with the Jews; which intimates a kindness in reserve for the poor Gentiles. When Christ came to Capernaum, the gospel came to all those places round about; such diffusive influence did the Sun of righteousness cast.

Now, concerning the inhabitants of these places, observe, (1.) The posture they were in before the gospel came among them; (v. 16.) they were in *darkness*. Note, These that are without Christ, are in the dark, nay, they are darkness itself; as the darkness that was upon the *face of the deep*. Nay, they were in the *region and shadow of death*; which denotes not only *great darkness*, as the grave is a *land of darkness*, but *great danger*. A man that is desperately sick, and not likely to recover, is in the *valley of the shadow of death*, though not quite dead; so the poor people were in the borders of damnation, though not yet damned, dead in law. And, which is worst of all, they were *sitting* in this condition. Sitting is a continuing posture; where we sit, we mean to stay; they were in the dark, and likely to be so, despairing to find the way out. And it is a contented posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations, which are to be thought of, and prayed for, with pity. But *their* condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel-light. He that is in the dark because it is night, may be sure that the sun will shortly arise; but he that is in the dark because he is blind, will not so soon have his eyes opened. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not light in the Lord? (2.) The privilege they enjoyed, when Christ and his gospel came among them; it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. Note, When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there, John 3. 19. Luke 1. 78, 79. Light is discovering, it is directing; so is the gospel.

It is a *great light*; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel-revelations; not like the light of a candle, but the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. *Great* in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away. It is a *great light*, for it discovers great things and of vast consequence; it will last long, and spread far. And it is a *growing light*, intimated in that word. It is *sprung up*. It was but *spring of day* with them; now the day dawned, which afterward *shone more and more*. The gospel-kingdom, like a

grain of mustard-seed, or the morning-light, was small in its beginnings, gradual in its growth, but great in its perfection.

Observe, The light *sprang up to them*; they did not go to seek it, but were prevented with the blessings of this goodness. It came upon them ere they were aware, at the time appointed, by the disposal of him who *commandeth the morning, and causes the day-spring to know its place, that it may take hold of the ends of the earth*, Job 38. 12, 13.

The text he preached upon is mentioned, v. 17. *From that time*, that is, from the time of his coming into Galilee, into the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, from that time, he began to preach. He had been preaching, before this, in Judea, and had made and baptized many disciples; (John 4. 1.) but his preaching was not so public and constant as now it began to be. The work of the ministry is so great and awful, that it is fit to be entered upon by steps and gradual advances.

The subject which Christ dwelt upon now in his preaching, (and it was indeed the sum and substance of all his preaching,) was the very same that John had preached upon; (*ch. 3. 2.*) *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*; for the gospel is the same for substance under various dispensations; the commands the same, and the reasons to enforce them the same; an *angel from heaven* dares not preach any other gospel, (Gal. 1. 8.) and will preach this, for it is the *everlasting gospel*. *Fear God, and, by repentance, give honour to him*, Rev. 14. 6, 7. Christ put a great respect upon John's ministry, when he preached to the same purport that he had preached before him. By this he showed that John was his messenger and ambassador; for when he brought the errand himself, it was the same that he had sent by him. Thus did God confirm the word of his messengers, Isa. 44. 26. The Son came on the same errand that the servants came on, (*ch. 21. 37.*) to *seek fruit*, fruits meet for repentance. Christ had lain in the bosom of the Father, and could have preached sublime notions of divine and heavenly things, that should have alarmed and amused the learned world, but he pitches upon this old, plain text, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*.

[1.] This he preached *first* upon; he began with this. Ministers must not be ambitious of broaching new opinions, framing new schemes, or coining new expressions, but must content themselves with plain, practical things, with the word that is *nigh us*, even *in our mouth, and in our heart*. We need not go up to heaven, nor down to the deep, for matter or language in our preaching. As John prepared Christ's way, so Christ prepared his own, and made way for the further discoveries he designed, with the doctrine of repentance. *If any man will do this part of his will, he shall know more of his doctrine*, John 7. 17. [2.] This he preached *often* upon; wherever he went, this was his subject, and neither he nor his followers ever reckoned it worn threadbare, as those would have done, that have *itching ears*, as those are fond of novelty and variety more than that which is truly edifying. Note, That which has been preached and heard before, may yet very profitably be preached and heard again; but then it should be preached and heard better, and with new affections; what Paul had said before, he said again, *weeping*, Phil. 3. 1, 18. [3.] This he preached as gospel; "Repent, review your ways, and return to yourselves." Note, The doctrine of repentance is right gospel-doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, who was looked upon as a melancholy, morose man, but the sweet and gracious Jesus, whose lips dropped as a honey-comb, preached repentance; for it is an unspeakable privilege that room is left for repentance. [4.] The reason is still the same; *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*; for it was not reckoned to

be fully come; till the pouring out of the Spirit after Christ's ascension. John had preached the kingdom of heaven at hand above a year before this; but now that it was so much nearer, the argument was so much the stronger; now is the *salvation nearer*, Rom. 13. 11. We should be so much the more quickened to our duty, *as we see the day approaching*, Heb. 10. 25.

18. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. 22. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

When Christ began to preach, he began to *gather disciples*, who should now be the *hearers*, and hereafter the *preachers*, of his doctrine, who should now be witnesses of his miracles, and hereafter *concerning* them. Now, in these verses, we have an account of the first disciples that he called into fellowship with himself.

And this was an instance, 1. *Of effectual calling* to Christ. In all his preaching he gave a common call to all the country, but in this he gave a special and particular call to those that were given him by the Father. Let us see and admire the power of Christ's grace, own his word to be the rod of his strength, and wait upon him for those powerful influences which are necessary to the efficacy of the gospel-call—those distinguishing influences. All the country was *called*, but those were *called out*, were *redeemed from among men*. Christ was so manifested to them, as he was not manifested unto the world. 2. It was an instance of *ordination*, and appointment to the work of the ministry. When Christ, as a Teacher, set up his great school, one of his first works was to appoint ushers, or under-masters, to be employed in the work of instruction. Now he began to give gifts unto men, to put the treasure into earthen vessels. It was an early instance of his care for his church.

Now we may observe here,

1. *Where* they were called—by the *sea of Galilee*, where Jesus was walking, Capernaum being situated near that sea. Concerning this sea of Tiberias, the Jews have a saying, That of all the seven seas that God made, he made choice of none but this sea of Genesaret; which is very applicable to Christ's choice of it, to honour it, as he often did, with his presence and miracles. Here, on the banks of the sea, Christ was walking for contemplation, as Isaac in the field; hither he went to call disciples: not to Herod's court, (for few mighty or noble are called,) not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee; surely Christ sees not as man sees. Not but that the same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew, would have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible; but, as in other things, so in his converse and attendance, he would humble himself, and show that God has *chosen the poor of this world*. Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the

curious, their *speech betrayed them*. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galileans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom, for he *chooses the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise*.

II. *Who they were*. We have an account of the call of two pair of brothers in these verses—Peter and Andrew, James and John; the two former, and, probably, the two latter also, had had acquaintance with Christ before, (John 1. 40, 41.) but were not till now called into a close and constant attendance upon him. Note, Christ brings poor souls by degrees into fellowship with himself. They had been disciples of John, and so were the better disposed to follow Christ. Note, Those who have submitted to the discipline of repentance, shall be welcome to the joys of faith. We may observe concerning them,

1. That they were *brothers*. Note, It is a blessed thing, when they who are *kinsmen according to the flesh*, (as the apostle speaks, Rom. 9. 3.) are brought together into a spiritual alliance to Jesus Christ. It is the honour and comfort of a house, when those that are of the *same family*, are of *God's family*.

2. That they were *fishers*. Being fishers, (1.) They were *poor men*; if they had had estates, or any considerable stock in trade, they would not have made it their trade, however they might have made it their recreation. Note, Christ does not despise the poor, and therefore we must not; the poor are evangelized, and the Fountain of honour sometimes gives more abundant honour to that part which most lacked. (2.) They were *unlearned men*, not bred up to books or literature as Moses was, who was conversant with all the learning of the Egyptians. Note, Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. Yet this will not justify the bold intrusion of ignorant and unqualified men into the work of the ministry; extraordinary gifts of knowledge and utterance are not now to be expected, but requisite abilities must be obtained in an ordinary way, and without a competent measure of these, none are to be admitted to that service. (3.) They were *men of business*, who had been bred up to labour. Note, Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and no hinderance to a holy life. Moses was called from keeping sheep, and David from following the ewes, to eminent employments. Idle people lie more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God. (4.) They were men that were accustomed to *hardships and hazards*; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in *peril by waters*. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and to run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

III. *What they were doing*. Peter and Andrew were then using their nets, they were fishing; and James and John were *mending their nets*, which was an instance of their industry and good husbandry. They did not go to their father for money to buy new nets, but took pains to mend their old ones. It is commendable to make what we have go as far, and last as long, as may be. James and John were *with their father Zebedee*, ready to assist him, and make his business easy to him. Note, It is a happy and hopeful presage, to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful to them. Observe, 1. They were *all employed*, all very busy, and none idle. Note, When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. "Am I in Christ?" is a very needful question for us to ask ourselves; and, next to that, "Am I in my calling?" 2. They were *differently employed*; two of them

were fishing, and two of them *mending their nets*. Note, Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying; they may always find themselves something to do, if it be not their own fault; and *mending their nets* is, in its season, as necessary work as fishing.

IV. *What the call was*; (v. 19.) *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*. They had followed Christ before, as ordinary disciples, (John 1. 37.) but so they might follow Christ, and follow their calling too; therefore they were called to a more close and constant attendance, and must leave their calling. Note, Even they who have been called to follow Christ, have need to be called to follow on, and to follow nearer, especially when they are designed for the work of the ministry. Observe,

1. What Christ intended them for; *I will make you fishers of men*, this alludes to their former calling. Let them not be proud of the new honour designed them, they are still but fishers; let them not be afraid of the new work cut out for them, for they have been used to fishing, and fishers they are still. It was usual with Christ to speak of spiritual and heavenly things under such allusions, and in such expressions, as took rise from common things that offered themselves to his view. David was called from feeding sheep to feed God's Israel; and when he is a king, is a shepherd. Note, (1.) Ministers are *fishers of men*, not to destroy them, but to save them, by bringing them into another element. They must fish, not for wrath, wealth, honour, and preferment, to gain them to themselves, but for souls, to gain them to Christ. *They watch for your souls*, (Heb. 13. 17.) and *seek not yours, but you*, 2 Cor. 12. 14, 16. (2.) It is Jesus Christ that makes them so; *I will make you fishers of men*. It is he that qualifies men for this work, calls them to it, authorizes them in it, and gives them success in it, gives them commission to fish for souls, and wisdom to win them. Those ministers are likely to have comfort in their work, who are thus made by Jesus Christ.

2. What they must do in order to this; *Follow me*. They must separate themselves to a diligent attendance on him, and set themselves to a humble imitation of him; must follow him as their Leader. Note, (1.) Those whom Christ employs in any service for him, must first be fitted and qualified for it. (2.) Those who would *preach Christ*, must first *learn Christ*, and learn of him. How can we expect to bring others to the knowledge of Christ, if we do not know him well ourselves? (3.) Those who would get an acquaintance with Christ, must be diligent and constant in their attendance on him. The apostles were prepared for their work, by *accompanying Christ all the time that he went in and out among them*, Acts 1. 21. There is no learning comparable to that which is got by following Christ. Joshua, by ministering to Moses, is fitted to be his successor. (4.) Those who are to fish for men, must therein follow Christ, and do it as he did, with diligence, faithfulness, and tenderness. Christ is the great Pattern for preachers, and they ought to be *workers together with him*.

V. What was the success of this call. Peter and Andrew *straightway left their nets*; (v. 20.) and James and John *immediately left the ship and their father*; (v. 22.) and they all *followed him*. Note, Those who would follow Christ aright, must *leave all* to follow him. Every christian must leave all in affection, sit loose to all, must *hate father and mother*, (Luke 14. 26.) must love them less than Christ, must be ready to part with his interest in them rather than with his interest in Jesus Christ; but those who are devoted to the work of the ministry are, in a special manner, concerned to disentangle themselves from all the affairs of this life, that

they may give themselves wholly to that work which requires the whole man. Now,

1. This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus gives us good encouragement to depend upon the sufficiency of his grace. How strong and effectual is his word! *He speaks, and it is done.* The same power goes along with this word of Christ, *Follow me*, that went along with that word, *Lazarus, come forth*; a power to *make willing*, Ps. 110. 3.

2. This instance of the pliability of the disciples, gives us a good example of obedience to the command of Christ. Note, It is the good property of all Christ's faithful servants to come when they are called, and to follow their Master wherever he leads them. They objected not their present employments, their engagements to their families, the difficulties of the service they were called to, or their own unfitness for it; but, being called, they obeyed, and, like Abraham, *went out not knowing whither they went*, but knowing very well whom they followed. James and John *left their father*, it is not said what became of him; their mother Salome was a constant follower of Christ; no doubt, their father Zebedee was a believer, but the call to follow Christ fastened on the young ones. Youth is the learning age, and the labouring age. The priests ministered in the prime of their time.

23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. 24. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. 25. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

See here,

1. What an industrious preacher Christ was; *He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.* Observe, 1. What Christ preached—the *gospel of the kingdom*. The *kingdom of heaven*, that is, of grace and glory, is emphatically the *kingdom*, the *kingdom* that was now to come; the kingdom which shall survive, as it doth surpass, all the kingdoms of the earth. The *gospel* is the charter of that kingdom, containing the King's coronation oath, by which he has graciously obliged himself to pardon, protect, and save the subjects of that kingdom; it contains also their oath of allegiance, by which they oblige themselves to observe his statutes and seek his honour; this is the *gospel of the kingdom*; this Christ was himself the Preacher of, that our faith in it might be confirmed. 2. *Where he preached—in the synagogues*; not there only, but there chiefly, because those were the *places of concourse*, where *wisdom* was to *lift up her voice*; (Prov. 1. 21.) because they were *places of concourse* for religious worship, and there, it was to be hoped, the minds of the people would be prepared to receive the *gospel*; and there the scriptures of the Old Testament were read, the exposition of which would easily introduce the *gospel of the kingdom*. 3. *What pains he took in preaching*; *He went about all Galilee, teaching.* He might have issued out a proclamation to summon all to come to him; but, to show his humility, and the

condescensions of his grace, he goes to them; for *he waits to be gracious*, and comes to *seek and save*. Josephus says, There were above two hundred cities and towns in Galilee, and all, or most of them, Christ visited. *He went about doing good.* Never was there such an itinerant preacher, such an indefatigable one, as Christ was; he went from town to town, to beseech poor sinners to be reconciled to God. This is an example to ministers, to lay themselves out to do good, and to be *instant and constant, in season, and out of season*, to preach the word.

II. What a powerful Physician Christ was; *he went about, not only teaching, but healing*, and both with his word, that he might magnify that above all his name. *He sent his word, and healed them.* Now observe,

1. What diseases he cured—all without exception. *He healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.* There are diseases which are called the *refracho of physicians*, being obstinate to all the methods they can prescribe; but even those were the glory of this Physician, for *he healed them all*, however inveterate. His word was the true *pharmakon*—all-heal.

Three general words are here used to intimate this; he healed every sickness, *viz*, as blindness, lameness, fever, dropsy; every *disease*, or languishing, *μαλακία*, as fluxes and consumptions; and all *torments*, *κατάνας*, as gout, stone, convulsions, and such like torturing distempers; whether the disease was acute or chronic; whether it was a racking or a wasting disease; none was too bad, none too hard, for Christ to heal with a word's speaking.

Three particular diseases are specified; *the palsy*, which is the greatest weakness of the body; *lunacy*, which is the greatest malady of the mind; and *possession of the Devil*, which is the greatest misery and calamity of both; yet Christ healed all: for he is the sovereign Physician both of soul and body, and has command of all diseases.

2. What patients he had. A physician who was so easy of access, so sure of success, who cured immediately, without either a painful suspense and expectation, or such painful remedies as are worse than the disease; who cured gratis, and took no fees, could not but have abundance of patients. See here what flocking there was to him from all parts; great multitudes of people came, not only *from Galilee* and the country about, but even *from Jerusalem*, and *from Judea*, which lay a great way off; for *his fame went throughout all Syria*, not only among all the people of the Jews, but among the neighbouring nations, which, by the report that now spread far and near concerning him, would be prepared to receive his gospel, when afterwards it should be brought them. This is given as the reason why multitudes came to him. Note, What we hear of Christ from others, should invite us to him. The queen of Sheba was induced, by the fame of Solomon, to pay him a visit. The voice of fame is, "Come, and see." Christ both *taught and healed*. They who came for cures, met with instruction concerning the things that belonged to their peace. It is well if any thing will bring people to Christ; and they who come to him, will find more in him than they expected. These Syrians, like Naaman the Syrian, coming to be healed of their diseases, many of them became converts, 2 Kings 5. 15, 17. They sought health for the body, and obtained the salvation of the soul; like Saul, who sought the asses, and found the kingdom. Yet it appeared, by the issue, that many of those who rejoiced in Christ as a Healer, forgot him as a Teacher.

Now concerning the cures which Christ wrought, let us, once for all, observe the *miracle*, the *mercy*, and the *mystery* of them.

(1.) The *miracle* of them. They were wrought

in such a manner, as plainly spake them to be the immediate products of a divine and supernatural power; and they were God's seal to his commission. Nature could not do these things, it was the God of nature; the cures were many, of diseases incurable by the art of the physician, of persons that were strangers, of all ages and conditions; the cures were wrought openly, before many witnesses, in mixed companies of persons that would have denied the matter of fact, if they could have had any colour for it. No cure ever failed, or was afterward called in question; they were wrought speedily, and not (as cures by natural causes) gradually; they were perfect cures, and wrought with a world's speaking; all which proves him a *Teacher come from God*, for, otherwise, none could have done the works that he did, John 3. 2. He appeals to these as credentials, *ch.* 11. 4. 5. John 5. 36. It was expected that the Messiah should work miracles, (John 7. 31.) miracles of this nature; (Isa. 35. 5, 6.) and we have this indisputable proof of his being the Messiah; never was there any man that did thus; and therefore his healing and his preaching generally went together, for the former confirmed the latter; thus here he *began to do and to teach*, Acts 1. 1.

(2.) The *mercy* of them. The miracles that Moses wrought, to prove his mission, were most of them plagues and judgments, to intimidate the terror of that dispensation, though from God; but the miracles that Christ wrought, were most of them cures, and all of them (except the cursing of the barren fig-tree) blessings and favours; for the gospel-dispensation is founded, and built up, in love, and grace, and sweetness; and the management is such as tends not to affright but to allure us to obedience. Christ designed by his cures to win upon people, and to ingratiate himself and his doctrine into their minds, and so to draw them with the bands of love, Hos. 11. 4. The miracle of them proved his doctrine a *faithful saying*, and convinced men's judgments; the mercy of them proved it *worthy of all acceptance*, and wrought upon their affections. They were not only *great works*, but *good works*, that he *showed them from his Father*; (John 10. 32.) and his goodness was intended to *lead men to repentance*, (Rom. 2. 4.) as also to show that kindness, and beneficence, and doing good to all, to the utmost of our power and opportunity, are essential branches of that holy religion which Christ came into the world to establish.

(3.) The *mystery* of them. Christ, by curing *bodily diseases*, intended to show that his great errand into the world was to cure *spiritual maladies*. He is the *Sun of Righteousness*, that *arises with his healing under his wings*. As the Converter of sinners, he is the *Physician of souls*, and has taught us to call him so, *ch.* 9, 12, 13. Sin is the *sickness, disease, and torment*, of the soul; Christ *came to take away sin*, and so to heal these. And the particular stories of the cures Christ wrought, may not only be applied spiritually, by way of allusion and illustration, but, I believe, are very much intended to reveal to us spiritual things, and to set before us the way and method of Christ's dealing with souls, in their conversion and sanctification; and those cures are recorded, that were most significant and instructive this way; and they are therefore so to be explained and improved, to the honour and praise of that glorious Redeemer, *who forgiveth all our iniquities, and so healeth all our diseases*.

CHAP. V.

This chapter, and the two that follow it, are a sermon; a famous sermon; the sermon upon the mount. It is the longest and fullest continued discourse of our Saviour that we have upon record in all the gospels. It is a practical

discourse; there is not much of the *credenda* of Christianity in it—the things to be believed, but it is wholly taken up with the *agenda*—the things to be done; these Christ began with in his preaching; for if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. The circumstances of the sermon being accounted for, (v. 1, 2.) the sermon itself follows, the scope of which is, not to fill our heads with notions, but to guide and regulate our practice. I. He proposes blessedness as the end, and gives us the character of those who are entitled to blessedness, (very different from the sentiments of a vain world,) in eight beatitudes, which may justly be called paradoxes, v. 3. 12. II. He prescribes duty as the way, and gives us standing rules of that duty. He directs his disciples, 1. To understand what they are—the salt of the earth, and the lights of the world, v. 13. 17. 2. To understand what they have to do—they are to be governed by the moral law. Here is, (1.) A general ratification of the law, and a recommendation of it to us, as our rule, v. 17. 20. (2.) A particular rectification of divers mistakes; or, rather, a reformation of divers wilful, gross corruptions, which the Scribes and Pharisees had introduced in their exposition of the law; and an authentic explication of divers branches which most needed to be explained and vindicated, v. 20. Particularly, here is an explication, [1.] Of the sixth commandment, which forbids murder, v. 21. 26. [2.] Of the seventh commandment, against adultery, v. 27. 32. [3.] Of the third commandment, v. 33. 36. [4.] Of the law of retaliation, v. 38. 42. [5.] Of the law of brotherly love, v. 43. 48. And the scope of the whole is, to show that the law is spiritual.

1. **AND** seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

We have here a general account of this sermon.

I. *The Preacher* was our Lord Jesus, the Prince of preachers, the great Prophet of his church, who *came into the world*, to be the *Light of the world*. The prophets and John had *done virtuously* in preaching, but Christ *excelled them all*. He is the eternal Wisdom that *lay in the bosom of the Father*, before all worlds, and perfectly knew his will; (John 1. 18.) and he is the eternal Word, by whom he *has in these last days spoken to us*. The many miraculous cures wrought by Christ in Galilee, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, were intended to make way for this sermon, and to dispose people to receive instructions from one in whom there appeared so much of a divine power and goodness; and, probably, this sermon was the summary, or rehearsal, of what he had preached up and down in the synagogues of Galilee. His text was, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. This is a sermon on the former part of that text, showing what it is to *repent*; it is to reform, both in judgment and practice; and he here tells us wherein, in answer to that question, (Mal. 3. 7.) *Wherein shall we return?* He afterward preached upon the latter part of the text, when, in divers parables, he showed what the kingdom of heaven is like, *ch.* 13.

II. *The place* was a mountain in Galilee. As in other things, so in this, our Lord Jesus was but ill accommodated; he had no convenient place to preach in, any more than *to lay his head on*. While the Scribes and Pharisees had Moses' chair to sit in, with all possible ease, honour, and state, and there corrupted the law; our Lord Jesus, the great Teacher of truth, is driven out to the desert, and finds no better a pulpit than a *mountain* can afford; and not one of the *holy mountains* neither, not one of the *mountains of Zion*, but a common mountain; by which Christ would intimate that there is no such distinguishing holiness of places now, under the gospel, as there was under the law; but that it is *the will of God that men should pray and preach every where*, any where, provided it be decent and convenient. Christ preached this sermon, which was

an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the law was given; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the christian law. But observe the difference: when the law was given, the Lord came down upon the mountain; now the Lord went up; then, he spake in thunder and lightning; now, in a still small voice; then the people were ordered to keep their distance; now they are invited to draw near: a blessed change! If God's grace and goodness are (as certainly they are) his glory, then the glory of the gospel is the glory that excels, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 3. 7. Heb. 12. 18. &c. It was foretold of Zebulun and Issachar, two of the tribes of Galilee, (Deut. 33. 19.) that they shall call the people to the mountain; to this mountain we are called, to learn to offer the sacrifices of righteousness. Now was this the mountain of the Lord, where he taught us his ways, Isa. 2. 2, 3. Mic. 4. 1, 2.

III. The auditors were his disciples, who came unto him; came at his call, as appears by comparing Mark 3. 13. Luke 6. 13. To them he directed his speech, because they followed him for love and learning, while others attended him only for cures. He taught them, because they were willing to be taught; (the meek will he teach his way;) because they would understand what he taught, which to others was foolishness; and because they were to teach others; and it was therefore requisite that they should have a clear and distinct knowledge of these things themselves. The duties prescribed in this sermon were to be conscientiously performed by all those that would enter into that kingdom of heaven which they were sent to set up, with hope to have the benefit of it. But though this discourse was directed to the disciples, it was in the hearing of the multitude; for it is said, (ch. 7. 28.) The people were astonished. No bounds were set about this mountain, to keep the people off, as were about mount Sinai; (Exod. 19. 12.) for, through Christ, we have access to God, not only to speak to him, but to hear from him. Nay, he had an eye to the multitude, in preaching this sermon. When the fame of his miracles had brought a vast crowd together, he took the opportunity of so great a confluence of people, to instruct them. Note, It is an encouragement to a faithful minister to cast the net of the gospel where there are a great many fishes, in hope that some will be caught. The sight of a multitude puts life into a preacher, which yet must arise from a desire of their profit, not his own praise.

IV. The solemnity of his sermon is intimated in that word, when he was set. Christ preached many times occasionally, and by interlutory discourses; but this was a set sermon, καθίστατο αὐτὴν, when he had placed himself so as to be best heard. He sat down as a Judge or Lawgiver. It intimates with what sedateness and composure of mind the things of God should be spoken and heard. He sat, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, (Mal. 3. 3.) He shall sit as a refiner, to purge away the dross, the corrupt doctrines of the sons of Levi. He sat as in the throne, judging right; (Ps. 9. 4.) for the word he spake shall judge us. That phrase, He opened his mouth, is only a Hebrew periphrasis of speaking, as Job 3. 1. Yet some think it intimates the solemnity of this discourse; the congregation being large, he raised his voice, and spake louder than usual. He had spoken long by his servants the prophets, and opened their mouths; (Ezek. 3. 27.—24. 27. 33. 22.) but now he opened his own, and spake with freedom, as one having authority. One of the ancients has this remark upon it; Christ taught much without opening his mouth, that is, by his holy and exemplary life; nay, he taught, when, being led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth; but now he

opened his mouth, and taught, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, Prov. 8. 1, 2, 6. Doth not Wisdom cry—cry on the top of high places? And the opening of her lips shall be right things. He taught them, according to the promise, (Isa. 54. 13.) All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; for this purpose he had the tongue of the learned, (Isa. 53. 4.) and the Spirit of the Lord, Isa. 61. 1. He taught them, what was the evil they should abhor, and what the good they should abide and abound in; for christianity is not a matter of speculation, but is designed to regulate the temper of our minds and the tenour of our conversations; gospel-time is a time of reformation; (Heb. 9. 10.) and by the gospel we must be reformed, must be made good, must be made better. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is the truth which is according to godliness, Tit. 1. 1.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for he came into the world to bless us, (Acts 3. 26.) as the great High-Priest of our profession; as the blessed Melchizedec; as He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, Gen. 12. 3. He came not only to purchase blessings for us, but to pour out and pronounce blessings on us; and here he does it as one having authority, as one that can command the blessing, even life for evermore, and that is the blessing here again and again promised to the good; his pronouncing of them happy makes them so; for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. The Old Testament ended with a curse, (Mal. 4. 6.) the gospel begins with a blessing; for henceunto are we called, that we should inherit the blessing. Each of the blessings Christ here pronounces has a double intention: 1. To show who they are that are to be accounted truly happy, and what their characters are. 2. What that is—wherein true happiness consists in the promises made to persons of certain characters, the performance of which will make them happy. Now,

1. This is designed to rectify the ruinous mistakes of a blind and carnal world. Blessedness is the thing which men pretend to pursue; Who will make us to see good? Ps. 4. 6. But most mistake the end, and form a wrong notion of happiness; and then no wonder that they miss the way; they choose their own delusions, and court a shadow. The general opinion is, Blessed and happy are they that are rich, and great, and honourable in the world; that spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure; that

eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf; *happily the people that is in such a case*; and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly; they *bless the covetous*, (Ps. 10. 3.) *they will be rich*. Now our Lord Jesus comes to correct this fundamental error, to advance a new hypothesis, and to give us quite another notion of blessedness and blessed people, which, however paradoxical it may appear to those who are prejudiced, yet is in itself, and appears to be to all who are savingly enlightened, a rule and doctrine of eternal truth and certainty, by which we must shortly be judged. If this, therefore, be the beginning of Christ's doctrine, the beginning of a christian's practice must be to take his measures of happiness from those maxims, and to direct his pursuits accordingly.

2. It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel, by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy that were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness; but that even *the least in the kingdom of heaven*, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honours and privileges of that kingdom.

3. It is designed to invite souls to Christ, and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings, not at the end of his sermon, to dismiss the people, but at the beginning of it, to prepare them for what he had further to say to them, may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, on which the blessings and cursings of the law were read, Deut. 27. 12, &c. *There the curses are expressed, and the blessings only implied; here the blessings are expressed, and the curses implied: in both, life and death are set before us*; but the law appeared more as a ministration of death, to deter us from sin; the gospel as a dispensation of life, to allure us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be had. And they who had seen the gracious cures wrought by his hand, (ch. 4. 23, 24.) and now heard *the gracious words proceeding out of his mouth*, would say that he was all of a piece, made up of love and sweetness.

4. It is designed to settle and sum up the articles of agreement between God and man. The scope of the divine revelation is to let us know what God expects from us, and what we may then expect from him; and no where is this more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with a more exact reference to each other; and this is that gospel which we are required to believe: for what is faith but a conformity to these characters, and a dependence upon these promises? The way to happiness is here opened, and made a *highway*; (Isa. 35. 8.) and this coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ, it is intimated that from him, and by him, we are to receive both the seed and the fruit, both the grace required, and the glory promised. Nothing passes between God and fallen man, but through his hand. Some of the wisest heathen had notions of blessedness different from the rest of mankind, and looking toward this of our Saviour. Seneca, undertaking to describe a blessed man, makes it out, that it is only an honest, good man that is to be so called: *De Vita beata*, cap. iv. *Cui nullum bonum malumque sit, nisi bonus malusque animus—Quem nec extollant fortuita, nec frangant—Cui vera voluntas erit voluntatum contentio—Cui unum bonum honestas, unum malum turpitudine—In whose estimation nothing is good or evil, but a good or evil heart—Whom no occurrences elate or deject—Whose true pleasure consists in a contempt of pleasure—To whom the only good is virtue, and the only evil vice*.

Our Saviour here gives us eight characters of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a christian. On each of them a present blessing is pronounced; *Blessed are they*; and to

each a future blessedness is promised, which is variously expressed, so as to suit the nature of the grace or duty recommended.

Do we ask then who are happy? It is answered,

1. *The poor in spirit* are happy, &c. 3. There is a poor spiritiveness that is so far from making men blessed, that it is a sin and a snare—cowardice and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be *poor in spirit*, is, 1. To be contentedly poor, willing to be empty of worldly wealth, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world, but high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining, and blaming their lot, but we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must *know how to be abased*, Phil. 4. 12. Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments, which may befall us in the most prosperous state. It is not, in pride or pretence, to make ourselves poor, by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who view poverty, and yet engross the wealth of nations; but, if we be rich in the world, we must be *poor in spirit*, that is, we must condescend to the poor, and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities; we must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience, Heb. 10. 34. Job was *poor in spirit*, when he blessed God in *taking away*, as well as giving. 2. It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be *poor in spirit*, is to think meanly of ourselves, of what we are, and have, and do; the poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those that are at ease, and the proud; it is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves, weak, foolish, and insignificant, ch. 18. 4.—19. 14. Laodicea was *poor in spirituals*, wretchedly and miserably poor, and yet rich in *spirit*, so well increased with goods, as to *have need of nothing*, Rev. 3. 17. On the other hand, Paul was *rich in spirituals*, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet *poor in spirit*, the least of the apostles, less than the least of all saints, and *nothing* in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others, and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and mean, and little, to do good; to *become all things to all men*. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy, and we are sinful; that he is all, and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing; and to humble ourselves before him, and under his mighty hand. 3. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification, and the Spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That *broken and contrite spirit* with which the publican cried for mercy to a poor sinner, is this poverty of spirit. We must call ourselves poor, because always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house.

Now, (1.) This poverty in spirit is put first among the christian graces. The philosophers did not reckon humility among their moral virtues, but Christ puts it first. Self-denial is the first lesson to be learned in his school, and poverty of spirit entitled to the first beatitude. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility. Those who would

build high, must begin low; and it is an excellent preparative for the entrance of gospel-grace into the soul; it fits the soil to receive the seed. Those who are weary and heavy laden, are the poor in spirit, and they shall find rest with Christ.

(2.) They are *blessed*. Now they are so, in this world. God looks graciously upon them. They are his little ones, and have their angels. To them he gives more grace; they live the most comfortable lives, and are easy to themselves and all about them, and nothing comes amiss to them; while high spirits are always uneasy.

(3.) *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. The kingdom of *grace* is composed of such; they only are fit to be members of Christ's church, which is called *the congregation of the poor*; (Ps. 74. 19.) the kingdom of *glory* is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The great, high spirits go away with the glory of the *kingdoms of the earth*; but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of the *kingdom of heaven*. We are ready to think concerning those who are rich, and do good with their riches, that, no doubt, *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; for they can thus lay up in store a good security *for the time to come*: but what shall the poor do, who have not wherewithal to do good? Why, the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor, as to those who are usefully rich. If I am not able to *spend* cheerfully for his sake, if I can but *want* cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. And do not we serve a good Master then?

II. *They that mourn* are happy; (v. 4.) *Blessed are they that mourn*. This is another strange blessing, and fitly follows the former. The poor are accustomed to mourn, the graciously poor mourn graciously. We are apt to think, Blessed are the *mercy*; but Christ, who was himself a great Mourner, says, Blessed are the *mourners*. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness—the *sorrow of the world*; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account, and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness, by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us, for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning, which qualifies for blessedness, a habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual sorrow. 1. A penitential mourning for our own sins; this is *godly sorrow*, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin, with an eye to Christ, Zech. 12. 10. Those are God's mourners, who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawals from them; and who, out of regard to God's honour, mourn also for the sins of others, and *sigh and cry for their abominations*, Ezek. 9. 4. 2. A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who *weep with them that weep*, are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion, (Zeph. 3. 18. Ps. 137. 1.) especially who look with compassion on perishing souls, and *weep over them*, as Christ over Jerusalem.

Now these gracious mourners, (1.) *Are blessed*. As in vain and sinful laughter the heart is sorrowful, so in gracious mourning the heart has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction, which a stranger does not intermeddle with. They are *blessed*, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who *was a man of sorrows*, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. They are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. (2.) *They shall be comforted*. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provi-

sion is made for their comfort; light is sown for them; and in heaven, it is certain, *they shall be comforted*, as Lazarus, Luke 16. 25. Note, The happiness of heaven consists in being perfectly and eternally comforted, and in the *wiping away of all tears from their eyes*. It is the joy of our Lord; a *fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore*; which will be doubly sweet to those who have been prepared for them by this *godly sorrow*. Heaven will be heaven indeed to those who go mourning thither; it will be a harvest of joy, the return of a seed-time of tears; (Ps. 126. 5, 6.) a mountain of joy, to which our way lies through a vale of tears. See Isa. 66. 10.

III. *The meek* are happy; (v. 5.) *Blessed are the meek*. The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to his word and to his rod, who follow his directions, and comply with his designs, and are *gentle towards all men*; (Tit. 3. 2.) who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent, or return a soft answer; and who can show their displeasure, when there is occasion for it, without being transported into any indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot; and in their patience keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of any thing else. They are the meek, who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits.

These meek ones are here represented as happy, even in this world. 1. They are *blessed*, for they are like the blessed Jesus, in that wherein particularly they are to learn of him, ch. 11. 29. They are like the blessed God himself, who is Lord of his anger, and in whom fury is not. They are *blessed*, for they have the most comfortable, undisturbed enjoyment of themselves, their friends, their God; they are fit for any relation, any condition, any company; fit to live, and fit to die. 2. *They shall inherit the earth*; it is quoted from Ps. 37. 11. and it is almost the only express temporal promise in all the New Testament. Not that they shall always have much of the earth, much less that they shall be put off with that only; but this branch of godliness has, in a special manner, the *promise of the life that now is*. Meekness, however ridiculed and run down, has a real tendency to promote our health, wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. The meek and quiet are observed to live the most easy lives, compared with the forward and turbulent. Or, *They shall inherit the land*, (so it may be read,) *the land of Canaan*, a type of heaven. So that all the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek.

IV. *They that hunger and thirst after righteousness* are happy, v. 6. Some understand this as a further instance of outward poverty, and a low condition in this world, which not only exposes men to injury and wrong, but makes it in vain for them to seek to have justice done them; they *hunger and thirst after it*, but such is the power on the side of their oppressors, that they cannot have it; they desire only that which is just and equal, but it is denied them by those that *neither fear God nor regard man*. This is a melancholy case! Yet, *blessed are they*, if they suffer these hardships for and with a good conscience; let them hope in God, who will see justice done, right take place, and will deliver the poor from their oppressors, Ps. 103. 6. Those who contentedly bear oppression, and quietly refer themselves to God to plead their cause, shall in due time be satisfied, abundantly satisfied, in the wisdom and kindness which shall be manifested in his appearances for them. But it is certainly to be understood spiritually, of such a desire as, being terminated on such an object, is gracious, and the work of God's grace in the soul, and qualifies for the gift-

if the divine favour. 1. *Righteousness* is here put for all spiritual blessings. See Ps. 24. 5.—*ch.* 6. 33. They are purchased for us by the *righteousness of Christ*; conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us; and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ made of God to us *Righteousness*, and to be made the *righteousness of God in him*; to have the whole man renewed in *righteousness*, so as to become a new man, and to bear the image of God; to have an interest in Christ and the promises—this is *righteousness*. 2. These we must *hunger and thirst after*. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things be wanting. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and importunate: “*Give me these, or else I die*; every thing else is dross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else.” *Hunger and thirst* are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant meals of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who *hunger and thirst* will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his Practical Catechism, distinguishes between *hunger and thirst*. *Hunger* is a desire of food to sustain, such is sanctifying *righteousness*. *Thirst* is the desire of drink to refresh, such is justifying *righteousness*, and the sense of our pardon.

Those who thus *hunger and thirst* after spiritual blessings, are *blessed* in those desires, and shall be filled with those blessings. (1.) They are *blessed* in those desires. Though all desires of grace are not grace, (feigned, faint desires are not,) yet such a desire as this, is; it is an *evidence* of something good, and an *earnest* of something better. It is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Something or other the soul will be *hungering and thirsting* after; therefore they are blessed who fasten upon the right object, which is satisfying, and not deceiving; and do not *pant after the dust of the earth*, Amos 2. 7. Isa. 55. 2. (2.) They shall be filled with those blessings. God will give them what they desire to their complete satisfaction. It is God only who can fill a soul, whose grace and favour are adequate to its just desires; and he will fill those with *grace for grace*, who, in a sense of their own emptiness, have recourse to his fulness. He fills the hungry, (Luke 1. 53.) *satiates* them, Jer. 31. 25. The happiness of heaven will certainly fill the soul; their righteousness shall be complete, the favour of God and his image, both in their full perfection.

V. The *merciful* are happy, *v.* 7. This, like the rest, is a paradox; for the merciful are not taken to be the wisest, nor are likely to be the richest; yet Christ pronounces them *blessed*. These are the *merciful*, who are piously and charitably inclined to pity, help, and succour, persons in misery. A man may be truly *merciful*, who has not wherewithal to be bountiful or liberal; and then God accepts the willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren; pity must be showed, (Job 6. 14.) and *bowels of mercy put on*; (Col. 3. 12.) and, being put on, they must put forth themselves in contributing all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of oth-

ers, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as *brands out of the burning*. We must have compassion on those who are melancholy and in sorrow, and comfort them; (Job 16. 5.) on those whom we have advantage against, and not be rigorous and severe with them; on those who are in want, and supply them; which if we refuse to do, whatever we pretend, we *shut up the bowels of our compassion*, James 2. 13, 16. 1 John 3. 17, 18. Draw out thy soul by dealing thy bread to the hungry, Isa. 58. 7, 10. Nay, a good man is *merciful to his beast*.

Now, as to the *merciful*, 1. They are *blessed*; so it was said in the Old Testament; *Blessed is he that considers the poor*, Ps. 41. 1. Herein they resemble God, whose goodness is his glory; in being *merciful as he is merciful*, we are, in our measure, *perfect as he is perfect*. It is an evidence of love to God; it will be a satisfaction to ourselves, to be any way instrumental for the benefit of others. One of the purest and most refined delights in this world, is that of *doing good*. In this word, *Blessed are the merciful*, is included that saying of Christ, which otherwise we find not in the gospels, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts 20. 35. 2. They shall obtain mercy; mercy with men, when they need it; *he that watereth, shall be watered also himself*; we know not how soon we may stand in need of kindness, and therefore should be kind; but especially mercy with God, for with the *merciful he will show himself merciful*, Ps. 18. 25. The most *merciful* and charitable cannot pretend to merit, but must fly to mercy. The merciful shall find with God *sparing mercy*, (*ch.* 6. 14.) *supplying mercy*, (Prov. 19. 17.) *sustaining mercy*, (Ps. 41. 2.) mercy in that day; (2 Tim. 1. 18.) nay, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them; (*ch.* 25. 34, 35.) whereas they shall have judgment without mercy, (which can be nothing short of hell-fire,) who have showed no mercy.

VI. The *pure in heart* are happy; (*v.* 8.) *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*. This is the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes; here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together.

1. Here is the most comprehensive character of the blessed; they are the *pure in heart*. Note, True religion consists in heart-purity. Those who are inwardly pure, show themselves to be under the power of *pure and undefiled* religion. True christianity lies in the heart, in the *purity of the heart*; the *washing of that from wickedness*, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be *pure*, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine *unmixed*, as water *unmuddied*. The heart must be kept *pure from fleshly lusts*, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and from *worldly lusts*; covetousness is called *filthy lucre*; from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, all that which comes out of the heart, and defiles the man. The heart must be *purified by faith*, and entire for God; must be presented and preserved a chaste virgin to Christ. Create in me such a clean heart, O God!

2. Here is the most comprehensive comfort of the blessed; They shall see God. Note, (1.) It is the perfection of the soul's happiness to see God; seeing him, as we may by faith in our present state, is a *heaven upon earth*; and seeing him as we shall in the future state, is the *heaven of heaven*. To see him as he is, face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly; to see him as ours, and to see him and enjoy him; to see him and be like him, and be satisfied with that likeness; (Ps. 17. 15.) and to see

him for ever, and never lose the sight of him ; this is heaven's happiness. (2.) The happiness of seeing God is promised to those, and those only, who are *pure in heart*. None but the *pure* are capable of seeing God, nor would it be a felicity to the impure. What pleasure could an unsanctified soul take in the vision of a holy God ? As he cannot endure to look upon their iniquity, so they cannot endure to look upon his purity ; nor shall any unclean thing enter into the new Jerusalem ; but all that are *pure in heart*, all that are truly sanctified, have desires wrought in them, which nothing but the sight of God will satisfy ; and divine grace will not leave those desires unsatisfied.

VII. The *peace-makers* are happy, v. 9. The wisdom that is from above, is first *pure*, and then *peaceable* ; the blessed ones are *pure* toward God, and *peaceable* toward men ; for with reference to both, conscience must be kept *void of offence*. The *peace-makers* are those who have, 1. *A peaceable disposition* ; as, to *make a lie*, is to be given and addicted to lying, so, to *make peace*, is to have a strong and hearty affection to peace. *I am for peace*, Ps. 120. 7. It is to love, and desire, and delight in peace ; to be in it as in our element, and to study to be quiet. 2. *A peaceable conversation* ; industriously, as far as we can, to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken ; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others ; where distance is among brethren and neighbours, to do all we can to accommodate it, and to be *repairers of the breaches*. The *making of peace* is sometimes a *thankless office*, and it is the lot of him who parts a fray, to have *blows on both sides* ; yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Some think that this is intended especially as a lesson for ministers, who should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote christian love among those under their charge.

Now, (1.) Such persons are *blessed* ; for they have the satisfaction of *enjoying themselves*, by keeping the peace, and of being truly serviceable to others, by disposing them to peace. They are working together with Christ, who came into the world to *slay all enmities*, and to proclaim *peace on earth*. (2.) *They shall be called the children of God* ; it will be an evidence to themselves that they are so ; God will own them as such, and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace ; the Son of God is the Prince of peace ; the Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us all, he will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another ; for if the peace-makers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers ! Now by this it appears, that Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry, or intemperate zeal, as the marks of his disciples. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peace-makers, the *quiet in the land*.

VIII. Those who are *persecuted for righteousness' sake*, are happy. This is the greatest paradox of all, and peculiar to christianity ; and therefore it is put last, and more largely insisted upon than any of the rest, v. 10—12. This beatitude, like Pharaoh's dream, is doubled, because hardly credited, and yet *the thing is certain* ; and in the latter part there is a change of the person, "Blessed are *ye*—*ye* my disciples, and immediate followers. This is that which you, who excel in virtue, are more immediately concerned in ; for you must reckon upon hardships and troubles more than other men." Observe here,

1. The case of suffering saints described ; and it is a hard case, and a very piteous one.

(1.) They are persecuted, hunted, pursued, run

down, as noxious beasts are, that are sought for to be destroyed ; as if a christian did *caput gerere lujinum*—*bear a wolf's head*, as an outlaw is said to do—any one that finds him may slay him ; they are abandoned as the *offscouring of all things* ; fined, imprisoned, banished, stripped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, racked, tortured, always delivered to death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the enmity of the serpent's seed against the holy seed, ever since the time of *righteous Abel*. It was so in *Old-Testament* times, as we find, Heb. 11. 35, &c. Christ has told us that it would much more be so with the christian church, and we are not to think it strange, 1 John 3. 13. He has left us an example.

(2.) They are *reviled*, and have all manner of *evil said against them falsely*. Nick-names, and names of reproach, are fastened upon them, upon particular persons, and upon the generation of the righteous in the gross, to render them odious ; sometimes to make them despicable, that they may be trampled upon ; sometimes to make them formidable, they are powerfully assailed ; things are laid to their charge that they knew not, Ps. 35. 10. Jer. 20. 18. Acts 17. 6, 7. Those who have had no power in their hands to do them any other mischief, could yet do this ; and those who have had power to *persecute*, have found it necessary to *do this too*, to justify themselves in their barbarous usage of them ; they could not have baited them, if they had not dressed them in bear-skins ; nor have given them the worst of treatment, if they had not first represented them as the worst of men. They will *revile you*, and *persecute you*. Note, *Reviling* the saints is *persecuting* them, and will be found so shortly, when *hard speeches* must be accounted for, (Jude 15.) and *cruel mockings*, Heb. 11. 36. They will say all manner of *evil of you falsely* ; sometimes before the *seat of judgment*, as witnesses ; sometimes in the *seat of the scornful*, with *hypocritical mockers at feasts* ; they are the *song of the drunkards* ; sometimes to their faces, as Shimei cursed David ; sometimes behind their backs, as the enemies of Jeremiah did. Note, There is no evil so black and horrid, which, at one time or other, has not been said, falsely, of Christ's disciples and followers.

(3.) All this is *for righteousness' sake*, (v. 10.) *for my sake*, v. 11. If *for righteousness' sake*, then *for Christ's sake*, for he is nearly interested in the work of righteousness. Enemies to righteousness are enemies to Christ. This concludes those from this blessedness who suffer *justly*, and are evil spoken of *truly* for their real crimes ; let such be ashamed and confounded, it is part of their punishment ; it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. Those suffer *for righteousness' sake*, who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and who suffer for doing that which is good. Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to ; it is really Christ and his righteousness that are maligned, hated, and persecuted ; *For thy sake I have borne reproach*, Ps. 69. 9. Rom. 8. 36.

1. The comforts of suffering saints laid down.

(1.) They are *blessed* ; for they now, in their lifetime, receive their *evil things*, (Luke 16. 25.) and receive them upon a good account. They are *blessed*, for it is an honour to them ; (Acts 5. 41.) it is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace, and tokens of his presence, 2 Cor. 1. 5. Dan. 3. 25. Rom. 8. 29.

(2.) They shall be *recompensed* ; Theirs is *the kingdom of heaven*. They have at present a sure title to it, and sweet foretastes of it ; and shall ere long be in possession of it. Though there be nothing

in those sufferings that can, in strictness, merit of God, (for the sins of the best deserve the worst,) yet this is here promised as a *reward*; (v. 12.) *Great is your reward in heaven*; so great, as far to transcend the service. It is in *heaven*, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud, and violence. Note, God will provide that those who lose for him, though it be life itself, shall not lose by him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which has borne up the suffering saints in all ages—*this joy set before them*.

(3.) “So persecuted they the prophets that were before you, v. 12. They were before you in excellency, above what you are yet arrived at; they were before you in time, that they might be examples to you of *suffering affliction and of patience*, James 5. 10. They were in like manner persecuted and abused; and can you expect to go to heaven in a way by yourselves? Was not Isaiah mocked for his *line upon him*? *Elisha for his bald head*? Were not all the prophets thus treated? Therefore *marvel not* at it as a *strange* thing, *murmur not* at it as a *hard* thing; it is a comfort to see the way of suffering a beaten road, and an honour to follow such leaders. That grace which was sufficient for them, to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be deficient to you. Those who are your enemies are the seed and successors of them who of old mocked the messengers of the Lord,” 2 Chron. 36. 16. *ch.* 23. 25. Acts 7. 52.

(4.) Therefore *rejoice and be exceeding glad*, v. 12. It is not enough to be patient and content under these sufferings as under common afflictions, and not to render railing for railing; but we must rejoice, because the honour and dignity, the pleasure and advantage, of suffering for Christ, are much more considerable than the pain or shame of it. Not that we must take a *pride* in our sufferings, (that spoils all,) but we must take a *pleasure* in them, as Paul; (2 Cor. 12. 10.) as knowing that Christ is herein *before-hand* with us, and that he will not be *behind-hand* with us, 1 Pet. 4. 12, 13.

13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. 15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Christ had lately called his disciples, and told them that they should be *fishers of men*; here he tells them further what he designed them to be—the *salt of the earth, and lights of the world*, that they might be indeed what it was expected they should be.

1. Ye are the salt of the earth. This would encourage and support them under their sufferings, that, though they should be treated with contempt, yet they should really be blessings to the world, and the more so for their suffering thus. The prophets, who went before them, were the salt of the land of Canaan; but the apostles were the salt of the *whole earth*, for they must go into all the world to preach the gospel. It was a discouragement to them that

they were so few and so weak. What could they do in so large a province as the *whole earth*? Nothing, if they were to work by force of arms and dint of sword; but, being to work silently as salt, one handful of that salt would diffuse its savour far and wide; would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly as leaven, *ch.* 13. 33. The doctrine of the gospel is as salt; it is penetrating, quick, and powerful; (Heb. 4. 12.) it reaches the heart, Acts 2. 37. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. We read of the *savour of the knowledge of Christ*; (2 Cor. 2. 14.) for all other learning is insipid without that. An everlasting covenant is called a *covenant of salt*; (Numb. 18. 19.) and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices, (Lev. 2. 13.) in Ezekiel's mystical temple, Ezek. 43. 24. Now Christ's disciples, having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others, were as salt. Note, Christians, and especially ministers, are the salt of the earth.

1. If they be such as they should be, they are *as good salt*, white, and small, and broken into many grains, but very useful and necessary. Pliny says, *Sine sale vita humana non potest degere*—Without salt, human life cannot be sustained. See in this, (1.) What they are to be in themselves—seasoned with the gospel, with the salt of grace; thoughts and affections, words and actions, all seasoned with grace, Col. 4. 6. *Have salt in yourselves*, else you cannot diffuse it among others, Mark 9. 50. (2.) What they are to be to others; they must not only be good, but do good; must insinuate themselves into the minds of people, not to serve any secular interest of their own, but that they may transform them into the taste and relish of the gospel. (3.) What great blessings they are to the world. Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were a vast heap, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God, to the angels, and to all that relish divine things. (4.) How they must expect to be disposed of; not laid on a heap, they must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there a grain; as the Levites were dispersed in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savour. Some have observed, that whereas it is foolishly called an ill omen to have the salt fall towards us, it is really an ill omen to have this salt fall from us.

2. If they be not, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavoury, void of spiritual life, relish, and vigour; if a christian be so, especially if a minister be so, his condition is very sad; for, (1.) He is *irrecoverable*; *Wherewith shall it be salted*? Salt is a remedy for *unsavoury meat*, but there is no remedy for *unsavoury salt*. Christianity will give a man a relish; but if a man can take up and continue the profession of it, and yet remain flat and foolish, and graceless and insipid, no other doctrine, no other means, can be applied, to make him savoury. If Christianity do not do it, nothing will. (2.) He is *unprofitable*; *It is therefore good for nothing*; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? As a man without reason, so is a christian without grace. A wicked man is the worst of creatures; a wicked christian is the worst of men; and a wicked minister is the worst of christians. (3.) He is doomed to ruin and rejection; He shall be *cast out*—expelled the church and the communion of the faithful, to which he is a blot and a burden; and he shall be *trodden under foot of men*. Let God be glorified in the shame and rejection of those by whom he has been reproached, and who

have made themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled upon.

II. *Ye are the light of the world*, v. 14. This also bespeaks their usefulness, as the former, (*Sole et sale nihil utilis*—*Nothing more useful than the sun and salt*;) but more glorious. All Christians are *light in the Lord*, (Eph. 5. 8.) and must *shine as lights*, (Phil. 2. 15.) but ministers in a special manner. Christ calls himself *the Light of the world*, (John 8. 12.) and they are *workers together with him*, and have some of his honour put upon them. Truly *the light is sweet*, it is welcome; the light of the first day of the world was so, when it *shone out of darkness*; so is the morning light of every day; so was the gospel, and those that spread it, to all sensible people. *The world sat in darkness*, Christ raised up his disciples to shine in it; and, that they may do so, from him they borrow and derive their light.

This similitude is here explained in two things :

1. As the *lights of the world*, they are illustrious and conspicuous, and have many eyes upon them. A city that is *set on a hill, cannot be hid*. The disciples of Christ, especially they who are forward and zealous in his service become remarkable, and are taken notice of as beacons. They are for *signs*, (Isa. 8. 18.) *men wondered at*; (Zech. 3. 8.) all their neighbours have an eye upon them. Some admire them, commend them, rejoice in them, and study to imitate them; others envy them, hate them, censure them, and study to blast them. They are concerned therefore to *walk circumspectly*, because of *their observers*; they are as *spectacles to the world*, and must take heed of every thing that *looks ill*, because they are so much *looked at*. The disciples of Christ were obscure men before he called them, but the character he put upon them dignified them, and as preachers of the gospel they made a figure; and though they were reproached for it by some, they were respected for it by others, advanced to thrones, and made judges; (Luke 22. 30.) for Christ will honour those that honour him.

2. As the *lights of the world*, they are intended to illuminate and give light to others, (v. 15.) and therefore, (1.) They shall be *set up* as lights. Christ having lighted these candles, they shall not be put under a bushel, not confined always, as they are now, to the cities of Galilee, or the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but they shall be sent into all the world. The churches are the candlesticks, the golden candlesticks, in which these lights are placed, that their light may be diffused; and the gospel is so strong a light, and carries with it so much of its own evidence, that, *like a city on a hill, it cannot be hid*, it cannot but appear to be from God, to all those who do not wilfully shut their eyes against it. It will *give light to all that are in the house*, to all that will draw near to it, and come where it is. Those to whom it does not give light, must thank themselves; they will not be in the house with it; will not make a diligent and impartial inquiry into it, but are prejudiced against it. (2.) They must *shine as lights*, [1.] By their *good preaching*. The knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it *under a bushel*, but spread it. The talent must not be buried in a napkin, but traded with. The disciples of Christ must not muffle themselves up in privacy and obscurity, under pretence of contemplation, modesty, or self-preservation, but, as they have received the gift, must *minister the same*, Luke 12. 3. [2.] By their *good living*. They must be *burning and shining lights*; (John 5. 35.) must evidence, in their whole conversation, that they are indeed the followers of Christ, James 3. 13. They must be to others for instruction, direction, quickening, and comfort, Job 29. 11.

See here, *First, How our light must shine*—by

doing such *good works* as men *may see*, and may approve of; such works as are of *good report* among them that are without, and as will therefore give them cause to think well of christianity. We must do good works that *may be seen* to the edification of others, but not that they *may be seen* to our own ostentation; we are bid to pray in secret, and what lies between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open and obvious to the sight of men, we must study to make *congruous* to our profession, and praiseworthy, Phil. 4. 8. Those about us must not only *hear* our good words, but *see* our good works; that they may be convinced that religion is more than a bare name, and that we do not only make a profession of it, but abide under the power of it.

Secondly, For what *end* our light must shine—“That those who see your good works, may be brought, not to glorify *you*, (which was the thing the Pharisees aimed at, and it spoiled all their performances,) but to glorify *your Father which is in heaven*.” Note, The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do in religion, 1 Pet. 4. 11. In this centre the lines of all our actions must meet. We must not only endeavour to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. The sight of our *good works* will do this, by furnishing them, 1. With *matter for praise*. “Let them see *your good works*, that they may see the power of God’s grace in you, and may thank him for it, and give him the glory of it, who has given such power unto men.” 2. With *motives to piety*. “Let them see your good works, that they may be convinced of the truth and excellency of the christian religion, may be provoked by a holy emulation to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God.” Note, The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints, may do much toward the conversion of sinners; those who are unacquainted with religion, may hereby be brought to know what it is. Examples teach. And those who are prejudiced against it, may hereby be brought in love with it, and thus there is a winning virtue in a godly conversation.

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Those to whom Christ preached, and for whose use he gave these instructions to his disciples, were such as in their religion had an eye, 1. To the *scriptures of the Old Testament as their rule*, and therein Christ here shows them they were in the right: 2. To the Scribes and Pharisees as their *example*, and therein Christ here shows them they were in the wrong; for,

1. The rule which Christ came to establish, exactly agreed with the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, here called *the law and the prophets*. The

prophets were commentators upon the law, and both together made up that rule of faith and practice which Christ found upon the throne in the Jewish church, and here lie keeps it on the throne.

1. He protests against the thought of cancelling and weakening the *Old Testament*; *Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.* (1.) "Let not the pious Jews, who have an affection for the law and the prophets, fear that I come to destroy them." Let them not be prejudiced against Christ and his doctrine, from a jealousy that this kingdom he came to set up, would derogate from the honour of the scriptures, which they had embraced as coming from God, and of which they had experienced the power and purity; no, let them be satisfied that Christ has no ill design upon the law and the prophets. (2.) "Let not the profane Jews, who have a disaffection to the law and the prophets, and are weary of that yoke, hope that I am come to destroy them." Let not carnal libertines imagine that the Messiah is come to discharge them from the obligation of divine precepts, to secure to them divine promises to make them happy, and yet to give them leave to live as they list. Christ commands nothing new, which was forbidden either by the law of nature or the moral law, nor forbids any thing which those laws had enjoined; it is a great mistake to think he does, and he here takes care to rectify the mistake; *I am not come to destroy.* The Saviour of souls is the *Destroyer* of nothing but the *works of the Devil*, of nothing that comes from God, much less of those excellent dictates which we have from Moses and the prophets. No, he came to *fulfil* them. That is, [1.] To obey the commands of the law, for he was *made under the law*, Gal. 4. 4. He in all respects yielded obedience to the law, honoured his parents, sanctified the sabbath, prayed, gave alms, and did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing. [2.] To make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, which did all bear witness to him. The covenant of grace is, for substance, the same now that it was then, and Christ the Mediator of it. [3.] To answer the types of the law; thus, (as Bishop Tillotson expresses it,) he did not make *void*, but make *good*, the ceremonial law, and manifested himself to be the Substance of all those shadows. [4.] To fill up the defects of it, and so to complete and perfect it. Thus the word *πληρῶσι* properly signifies. If we consider the law as a vessel that had some water in it before, he did not come to pour out the water, but to fill the vessel up to the brim; or, as a picture that is first rough-drawn, displays some outlines only of the piece intended, which are afterward filled up; so Christ made an improvement of the law and the prophets by his additions and explications. [5.] To carry on the same design; the christian institutes are so far from thwarting and contradicting that which was the main design of the Jewish religion, that they promote it to the highest degree. The gospel is the *time of reformation*, (Heb. 9. 10.) not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, and, consequently, its establishment.

2. He asserts the perpetuity of it; that not only he designed not the abrogation of it, but that it never should be abrogated; (v. 18.) "*Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, solemnly declare it, that till heaven and earth pass, when time shall be no more, and the unchangeable state of recompenses shall supersede all laws, one jot, or one tittle, the least and most minute circumstance, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled;*" for what is it that God is doing in all the operations, both of providence and grace, but fulfilling the scripture? Heaven and earth shall come together, and all the fulness thereof be wrapt up in ruin and confusion,

rather than any word of God shall fall to the ground, or be in vain. *The word of the Lord endures for ever*, both that of the law, and that of the gospel. Observe, The care of God concerning his law extends itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iotas and the tittles; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, be it ever so little, shall be preserved. The laws of men are conscious to themselves of so much imperfection, that they allow it for a maxim, *Ipices juris non sunt jura*—*The extreme points of law are not law*, but God will stand by and maintain every iota and tittle of his law.

3. He gives it in charge to his disciples, carefully to preserve the law, and shows them the danger of the neglect and contempt of it; (v. 19.) *Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least commandments of the law of Moses, much more any of the greater as the Pharisees did, who neglected the weightier matters of the law, and shall teach men so as they did, who made void the commandment of God with their traditions, (ch. 15. 3.) he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.* Though the Pharisees be cried up for such teachers as should be, they shall not be employed as teachers in Christ's kingdom; but *whosoever shall do and teach them*, as Christ's disciples would, and thereby prove themselves better friends to the *Old Testament* than the Pharisees were, they, though despised by men, shall be *called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Note, (1.) Among the commands of God there are some less than others; none absolutely little, but comparatively so. The Jews reckon the least of the commandments of the law to be that of the bird's nest; (Deut. 22. 6, 7.) yet even that had a significance and an intention very great and considerable. (2.) It is a dangerous thing, in doctrine or practice, to disannul the least of God's commands; to break them, that is to go about either to *contract the extent*, or *weaken the obligation* of them; whoever does so, will find it is at his peril. Thus to vacate any of the ten commandments, is too bold a stroke for the jealous God to pass by. It is something more than transgressing the law, it is making void the law, Ps. 119. 126. (3.) That the further such corruptions as these spread, the worse they are. It is impudence enough to break the command, but it is a greater degree of it to teach men so. This plainly refers to those who at this time sat in Moses' seat, and by their comments corrupted and perverted the text. Opinions that tend to the destruction of serious godliness and the vitals of religion, by corrupt glosses on the scripture, are bad when they are held, but worse when they are propagated and taught as the word of God. He that does so, shall be called *least in the kingdom of heaven*, in the kingdom of glory; he shall never come thither, but be eternally excluded; or, rather, in the kingdom of the gospel-church. He is so far from deserving the dignity of a teacher in it, that he shall not so much as be accounted a member of it. The prophet that teaches these lies, shall be the tail in that kingdom; (Isa. 9. 15.) when truth shall appear in its own evidence, such corrupt teachers, though cried up as the Pharisees, shall be of no account with the wise and good. Nothing makes ministers more contemptible and base than corrupting of the law, Mal. 2. 8, 11. Those who extenuate and encourage sin, and discountenance and put contempt upon strictness in religion and serious devotion, are the dregs of the church. But, on the other hand, [1.] Those are truly honourable, and of great account in the church of Christ, who lay out themselves by their life and doctrine to promote the purity and strictness of practical religion; who both do and teach that which is good; for those who do not as they teach, pull down with one hand what they build up with

the other, and give themselves the lie, and tempt men to think that all religion is a delusion; but those who speak from experience, who live up to what they preach, are truly great; they honour God, and God will honour them, (1 Sam. 2. 10.) and hereafter they shall shine as the *stars in the kingdom of our Father*.

II. The righteousness which Christ came to establish by this rule, must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, v. 20. This was strange doctrine to those who looked upon the Scribes and Pharisees as having arrived at the highest pitch of religion. The Scribes were the most noted teachers of the law, and the Pharisees the most celebrated professors of it, and they both sat in Moses' chair, (ch. 23. 2.) and had such a reputation among the people, that they were looked upon as super-conformable to the law, and people did not think themselves obliged to be as good as they; it was therefore a great surprise to them, to hear that they must be better than they, or they should not go to heaven; and therefore Christ here avers it with solemnity; *I say unto you*, It is so. The Scribes and Pharisees were enemies to Christ and his doctrine, and were great oppressors; and yet it must be owned, that there was something commendable in them. They were much in fasting, and prayer, and giving of alms; they were punctual in observing the ceremonial appointments, and made it their business to teach others; they had such an interest in the people, that they thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee; and yet our Lord Jesus here tells his disciples, that the religion he came to establish, did not only exclude the badness, but excel the goodness, of the Scribes and Pharisees. We must do more than they, and better than they, or we shall come short of heaven. They were *partial in the law*, and laid most stress upon the ritual part of it; but we must be *universal*, and not think it enough to give the priest his tithe, but must give God our hearts. They minded only the *outside*, but we must make conscience of *inside* godliness. They aimed at the *praise and applause of men*, but we must aim at *acceptance with God*; they were *proud* of what they did in religion, and trusted to it as a *righteousness*; but we, when we have done all, must *deny ourselves*, and say, *We are unprofitable servants*, and trust only to the *righteousness of Christ*; and thus we may go beyond the Scribes and Pharisees.

21. We have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. 23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26. Verily I say unto

thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Christ having laid down these principles, that Moses and the prophets were still to be their rulers, but that the Scribes and Pharisees were to be no longer their rulers, proceeds to expound the law in some particular instances, and to vindicate it from the corrupt glosses which those expositors had put upon it. He adds not any thing new, only limits and restrains some permissions which had been abused; and as to the precepts, shows the breadth, strictness, and spiritual nature of them, adding such explanatory statutes as made them more clear, and tended much toward the perfecting of our obedience to them. In these verses, he explains the law of the sixth commandment, according to the true intent and full extent of it.

I. Here is the *command itself* laid down; (v. 12.) *We have heard it*, and remember it; he speaks to them *who know the law*, who had Moses read to them in their synagogues every sabbath-day; you have heard that it was said by *them*, or rather as it is in the margin, *to them of old time*, to your forefathers the Jews, *Thou shalt not kill*. Note, The laws of God are not novel, upstart laws, but were delivered to them of old time; they are ancient laws, but of that nature as never to be *antiquated* nor grow *obsolete*. The moral law agrees with the law of nature, and the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil, that is, the rectitude of the eternal Mind. *Killing* is here forbidden, killing ourselves, killing any other, directly or indirectly, or being any way accessory to it. The law of God, the God of life, is a hedge of protection about our lives. It was one of the precepts of Noah, Gen. 9. 5, 6.

II. The exposition of this command which the Jewish teachers contented themselves with; their comment upon it was, *Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment*. This was all they had to say upon it, that wilful murderers were liable to the sword of justice, and casual ones to the judgment of the city of refuge. The courts of judgment sat in the gate of their principal cities; the judges, ordinarily, were in number twenty-three; these tried, condemned, and executed murderers; so that whoever killed, was in danger of their judgment. Now this gloss of theirs upon this commandment was faulty, for it intimated, 1. That the law of the sixth commandment was only external, and forbade no more than the act of murder, and laid no restraint upon the inward lusts, from which *wars and fightings come*. This was indeed the *αποκρυφισμός*—the *fundamental error* of the Jewish teachers, that the divine law prohibited only the sinful act, not the sinful thought; they were disposed *hæc ere in cortice—to rest in the letter* of the law, and they never inquired into the spiritual meaning of it. Paul, while a Pharisee, did not, till, by the key of the tenth commandment, divine grace let him into the knowledge of the spiritual nature of all the rest, Rom. 7. 7, 14. 2. Another mistake of theirs was, that this law was merely *political and municipal*, given for them, and intended as a directory for their courts, and no more; as if they only were the people, and the wisdom of the law must die with them.

III. The exposition which Christ gave of this commandment; and we are sure that according to his exposition of it we must be judged hereafter, and therefore ought to be ruled now. *The commandment is exceeding broad*, and not to be limited by the will of the flesh, or the will of men.

1. Christ tells them that *rash anger is heart-murder*; (v. 22.) *Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause*, breaks the sixth commandment. By *our brother* here, we are to understand any per-

son, though ever so much our inferior, as a child, a servant, for we are all *made of one blood*. Anger is a natural passion; there are cases in which it is lawful and laudable; but it is then *sinful*, when we are angry without cause. The word is *ixx*, which signifies, *sine causa, sine effectu, et sine modo*—without cause, without any good effect, without moderation; so that the anger is then sinful, (1.) When it is without any just provocation given; either for no cause, or no good cause, or no great and proportionable cause; when we are angry at children or servants for that which could not be helped, which was only a piece of forgetfulness or mistake, that we ourselves might easily have been guilty of, and for which we should not have been angry at ourselves; when we are angry upon groundless surmises, or for trivial affronts not worth speaking of. (2.) When it is without any good end aimed at, merely to show our authority, to gratify a brutish passion, to let people know our resentments, and excite ourselves to revenge, then it is in vain, it is to do hurt; whereas if we are at any time angry, it should be to awaken the offender to repentance, and prevent his doing so again; to clear ourselves, (2 Cor. 7. 11.) and to give warning to others. (3.) When it exceeds due bounds; when we are hardy and headstrong in our anger, violent and vehement, outrageous and mischievous, and when we seek the hurt of those we are displeased at. This is a breach of the sixth commandment, for he that is thus angry, would kill if he could and durst; he has taken the first step towards it: Cain's killing his brother began in anger; he is a murderer in the account of God, who knows his heart, whence murders proceed, *ch.* 15. 19.

2. He tells them, that giving opprobrious language to our brother is tongue-murder, calling him, *Raca*, and, *Thou fool*. When this is done with mildness and for a good end, to convince others of their vanity and folly, it is not sinful. Thus James says, *O vain man*; and Paul, *Thou fool*; and Christ himself, *O fools, O fools, O slow of heart*. But when it proceeds from anger and malice within, it is the smoke of that fire which is kindled from hell, and falls under the same character. (1.) *Raca* is a scornful word, and comes from pride, "Thou empty fellow;" it is the language of that which Solomon calls *proud wrath*, (Prov. 21. 24.) which tramples upon our brother—disdains to set him even with the dogs of our flock. *This people which knows not the law, is cursed*, is such language, John 7. 49. (2.) *Thou fool* is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred; looking upon him, not only as mean and not to be honoured, but as vile and not to be loved; "Thou wicked man, thou reprobate." The former speaks a man without sense, this (in scripture-language) speaks a man without grace; the more the reproach touches his spiritual condition, the worse it is; the former is a haughty taunting of our brother, this is a malicious censuring and condemning of him, as abandoned of God. Now this is a breach of the sixth commandment; malicious slanders and censures are *poison under the tongue*, that kills secretly and slowly; *bitter words* are as *arrows* that wound suddenly, (Ps. 64. 3.) or as a sword in the bones. The good name of our neighbour, which is better than life, is thereby stabbed and murdered; and it is an evidence of such an ill-will to our neighbour as would strike at his life, if it were in our power.

3. He tells them, that how light soever they made of these sins, they will certainly be reckoned for; he that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement and anger of God; he that calls him *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council, of being punished by the Sanhedrim for reviling an Israelite; but whosoever saith, *Thou fool*, thou profane person, thou child of hell, shall be in danger of hell-fire, to which he condemns his brother; so the learned

Dr. Whitby. Some think, in allusion to the penalties used in the several courts of judgment among the Jews, Christ shows that the sin of rash anger exposes men to lower or higher punishments, according to the degrees of its proceeding. The Jews had three capital punishments, each worse than the other; beheading, which was inflicted by the judgement; stoning, by the council or chief Sanhedrim; and burning in the valley of the son of Hinnom, which was used only in extraordinary cases: it signifies, therefore, that rash anger and reproachful language are damning sins; but some are more sinful than others, and accordingly there is a greater damnation, and a sorer punishment reserved for them: Christ would thus show which sin was most sinful, by showing which was it the punishment whereof was most dreadful.

IV. From all this it is here inferred, that we ought carefully to preserve christian love and peace with all our brethren, and that if at any time a breach happens, we should labour for a reconciliation, by confessing our fault, humbling ourselves to our brother, begging his pardon, and making restitution, or offering satisfaction for wrong done in word or deed, according as the nature of the thing is; and that we should do this quickly, for two reasons:

1. Because, till this be done, we are utterly unfit for communion with God in holy ordinances, *v.* 23, 24. The case supposed is, "That thy brother have somewhat against thee, that thou hast injured and offended him, either really, or in his apprehension: if thou art the party offended, there needs not this delay; if thou have aught against thy brother, make short work of it; no more is to be done but to forgive him, (Mark 11. 25.) and forgive the injury; but if the quarrel began on thy side, and the fault was either at first or afterward thine, so that thy brother has a controversy with thee, go and be reconciled to him before thou offer thy gift at the altar, before thou approach solemnly to God in the gospel-services of prayer and praise, hearing the word or the sacraments. Note, (1.) When we are addressing ourselves to any religious exercises, it is good for us to take that occasion of serious reflection and self-examination: there are many things to be remembered when we bring our gift to the altar, and this among the rest, whether our brother hath aught against us; then, if ever, we are disposed to be serious, and therefore should then call ourselves to account. (2.) Religious exercises are not acceptable to God, if they are performed when we are in wrath: envy, malice, and uncharitableness, are sins so displeasing to God, that nothing pleases him which comes from a heart wherein they are predominant, 1 Tim. 2. 8. Prayers made in wrath are written in gall, Isa. 1. 15.—58. 4. (3.) Love or charity is so much better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, that God will have reconciliation made with an offended brother before the gift be offered; he is content to stay for the gift, rather than have it offered while we are under guilt and engaged in a quarrel. (4.) Though we are unfitted for communion with God, by a continual quarrel with a brother, yet that can be no excuse for the omission or neglect of our duty: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, lest otherwise, when thou art gone away, thou be tempted not to come again." Many give this as a reason why they do not come to church or to the communion, because they are at variance with some neighbour; and whose fault is that? One sin will never excuse another, but will rather double the guilt. Want of charity cannot justify the want of piety. The difficulty is easily got over; those who have wronged us, we must forgive; and these whom we have wronged, we must make satisfaction to, or at least make a tender of it, and desire a renewal of the friendship, so that if reconciliation be not made,

it may not be our fault; *and then come, come and welcome, come and offer thy gift*, and it shall be accepted. *Therefore we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath* any day, because we must go to prayer before we go to sleep; much less let the sun rise upon our wrath on a sabbath-day, because it is a day of prayer.

2. Because, till this be done, we lie exposed to much danger, *v. 25, 26*. It is at our peril if we do not labour after an agreement, and that quickly, upon two accounts:

(1.) Upon a temporal account. If the offence we have done to our brother, in his body, goods, or reputation, be such as will bear an action, in which he may recover considerable damages, it is our wisdom, and it is duty to our family, to prevent that by a humble submission and a just and peaceable satisfaction; lest otherwise he recover it by law, and put us to the extremity of a prison. In such a case it is better to compound and make the best terms we can, than to stand it out; for it is in vain to contend with the law, and there is danger of our being crushed by it. Many ruin their estates by an obstinate persisting in the offences they have given, which would soon have been pacified by a little yielding at first. Solomon's advice in case of suretyship is, *Go, humble thyself*, and so secure and deliver thyself, *Prov. 6. 1-5*. It is good to agree, for the law is costly. Though we must be merciful to those we have advantage against, yet we must be just to those that have advantage against us, as far as we are able. *"Agree, and compound with thine adversary quickly, lest he be exasperated by thy stubbornness, and provoked to insist upon the utmost demand, and will not make thee the abatement which at first he would have made."* A prison is an uncomfortable place to those who are brought to it by their own pride and prodigality, their own wilfulness and folly.

(2.) Upon a spiritual account. *"Go, and be reconciled to thy brother"*, be just to him, be friendly with him, because while the quarrel continues, as thou art unfit to bring thy gift to the altar, unfit to come to the table of the Lord, so thou art unfit to die: if thou persist in this sin, there is danger lest thou be suddenly snatched away by the wrath of God, whose judgment thou canst not escape nor except against; and if that iniquity be laid to thy charge, thou art undone for ever." Hell is the prison for all that live and die in malice and uncharitableness, for all that are contentious, (*Rom. 2. 8.*) and out of that prison there is no rescue, no redemption, no escape, to eternity.

This is very applicable to the great business of our reconciliation to God through Christ; *Agree with him quickly, whilst thou art in the way*. Note, [1.] The great God, is an adversary to all sinners, *Ἄντιδικός*.—A law-adversary; he has a controversy with them, an action against them. [2.] It is our concern to agree with him, to acquaint ourselves with him, that we may be at peace, *Job 22. 21. 2 Cor. 5. 20*. [3.] It is our wisdom to do this quickly, *while we are in the way*. While we are alive, we are in the way; after death, it will be too late to do it; therefore give not sleep to thine eyes till it be done. [4.] They who continue in a state of enmity to God, are continually exposed to the arrests of his justice, and the most dreadful instances of his wrath. Christ is the Judge, to whom impenitent sinners will be delivered; for all judgment is committed to the Son; he that was rejected as a Saviour, cannot be escaped as a Judge, *Rev. 6. 16, 17*. It is a fearful thing to be thus turned over to the Lord Jesus, when the Lamb shall become a Lion. Angels are the officers to whom Christ will deliver them: (*ech. 13. 41, 42.*) devils are so too, having the power of death as executioners to all unbelievers, *Heb. 2. 14*. Hell is

the prison into which those will be cast that continue in a state of enmity to God, *2 Pet. 2. 4. [5.]* Darned sinners must remain in it to eternity; they shall not depart till they have paid the uttermost farthing, and that will not be to the utmost ages of eternity: Divine justice will be for ever satisfying, but never satisfied.

27. We have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 31. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

We have here an exposition of the seventh commandment, given us by the same hand that made the law, and therefore was fittest to be the interpreter of it: it is the law against uncleanness, which fitly follows upon the former; that laid a restraint upon sinful passions, this upon sinful appetites, both which ought always to be under the government of reason and conscience, and if indulged are equally pernicious.

I. The command is here laid down, (*v. 17.*) *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; which includes a prohibition of all other acts of uncleanness, and the desire of them: but the Pharisees, in their expositions of this command, made it to extend no further than the act of adultery, suggesting, that if the iniquity was only regarded in the heart, and went no further, God could not hear it, would not regard it, (*Ps. 66. 18.*) and therefore they thought it enough to be able to say that they were no adulterers, *Luke 18. 11*.

II. It is here explained in the strictness of it, in three things, which would seem new and strange to those who had been always governed by the tradition of the elders, and took all for oracular that they taught.

1. We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of adultery or fornication; and perhaps the defilement which these give to the soul, that is here so clearly asserted, was not only included in the seventh commandment, but was signified and intended in many of those ceremonial pollutions under the law, for which they were to wash their clothes, and bathe their flesh in water. *Whosoever looketh on a woman*, (not only another man's wife, as some would have it, but any woman,) to lust after her, has committed adultery with her in his heart, *v. 28*. This command forbids not only the acts of fornication or adultery, but, (1.) All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object; this is the beginning of the sin, *lust conceiving*; (*Jam. 1. 15.*) it is a bad step toward the sin; and

where the lust is dwelt upon and approved, and the wanton desire is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, it is the commission of the sin, as far as the heart can do it; there wants nothing but a convenient opportunity for the sin itself. *Adultera mens est—The mind is debauched.* Ovid. Lust is conscience baffled or biassed; biassed, if it say nothing against the sin; baffled, if it prevail not in what it says. (2.) All approaches toward them; feeding the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not only looking for that end, that I may lust; but looking till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. The eye is both the inlet and outlet of a great deal of wickedness of this kind, witness Joseph's mistress, (Gen. 39. 7.) Samson, (Judg. 16. 1.) David, 2 Sam. 11. 2. We read of *cues full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin*, 2 Pet. 2. 14. What need have we, therefore, with holy Job, to *make a covenant with our eyes*, to make this bargain with them, that they should have the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun and the works of God, provided they would never fasten or dwell upon any thing that might occasion impure imaginations or desires; and under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears! Job 31. 1. What have we the covering of the eyes for, but to restrain corrupt glances, and to keep out their defiling impressions? This forbids also the using of any other of our senses to stir up lust. If insnaring looks are forbidden fruit, much more unclean discourses, and wanton dalliances, the fuel and bellows of this hellish fire. These precepts are hedges about the law of heart-purity, *v. 8.* And if looking be lust, they who dress and deck, and expose themselves, with design to be looked at and lusted after, (like Jezebel, that *painted her face and tired her head, and looked out of the window,*.) are no less guilty. Men sin, but devils tempt to sin.

2. That such looks and such dalliances are so very dangerous and destructive to the soul, that it is better to lose the eye and the hand that thus offend, than to give way to the sin, and perish eternally in it. This lesson is here taught us, *v. 29, 30.* Corrupt nature would soon object against the prohibition of heart-adultery, that it is impossible to be governed by it; "*It is a hard saying, who can bear it?*" Flesh and blood cannot but look with pleasure upon a beautiful woman; and it is impossible to forbear lusting after and dallying with such an object." Such pretences as these will scarcely be overcome by reason, and therefore must be argued against with the *terrors of the Lord*, and so they are here argued against.

(1.) It is a severe operation that is here prescribed for the preventing of these fleshly lusts. *If thy right eye offend thee, or cause thee to offend*, by wanton glances, or wanton gazings, upon forbidden objects: *if thy right hand offend thee, or cause thee to offend*, by wanton dalliances; and if it were indeed impossible, as is pretended, to govern the eye and the hand, and they have been so accustomed to these wicked practices, that they will not be withheld from them; if there were no other way to restrain them, (which, blessed be God, through his grace, there is,) it were better for us to *pluck out the eye, and cut off the hand*, though the *right eye, and right hand*, the more honourable and useful, than to indulge them in sin to the ruin of the soul. And if this must be submitted to, at the thought of which nature startles, much more must we resolve to *keep under the body, and to bring it into subjection*; to live a life of mortification and self-denial; to keep a constant watch over our own hearts, and to suppress the first rising of lust and corruption there; to avoid the occasions of sin, to resist the beginnings of it, and to decline the company of those who will be a snare to us,

though ever so pleasing; to keep out of harm's way, and abridge ourselves in the use of lawful things, when we find them temptations to us; and to seek unto God for his grace, and depend upon that grace daily, and so to *walk in the Spirit*, as that we may not *fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; and this will be as effectual as *cutting off a right hand or pulling out a right eye*; and perhaps as much against the grain to flesh and blood; it is the destruction of the old man.

(1.) It is a startling argument that is made use of to enforce this prescription, (*v. 29.*) and it is repeated in the same words, (*v. 30.*) because we are loth to hear such rough things; Isa. 50. 10. *It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish*, though it be an eye or a hand, which can be worst spared, and not that *thy whole body should be cast into hell.* Note, [1.] It is not unbecoming a minister of the gospel to preach of hell and damnation; nay, he *must* do it, for Christ himself did it; and we are unfaithful to our trust, if we give not warning of the *wrath to come.* [2.] There are some sins from which we need to be *saved with fear*, particularly *fleshly lusts*, which are such *natural brute beasts* as cannot be checked, but by being frightened; cannot be kept from a forbidden tree, but by a *cherubim with a flaming sword.* [3.] When we are tempted to think it hard to *deny ourselves*, and to *crucify fleshly lusts*, we ought to consider how much harder it will be to lie for ever in the *lake that burns with fire and brimstone*: those do not know or do not believe what hell is, that will rather venture their eternal ruin in those flames, than deny themselves the gratification of a base and brutish lust. [4.] In hell there will be torments for the body; the *whole body will be cast into hell*, and there will be torment in every part of it; so that if we have any care of our own bodies, we shall *possess them in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness.* [5.] Even those duties that are most unpleasant to flesh and blood, are *profitable for us*; and our Master requires nothing from us but what he knows to be for our advantage.

3. That men's divorcing their wives upon dislike, or for any other cause except adultery, however tolerated and practised among the Jews, was a violation of the seventh commandment, as it opened a door to adultery, *v. 31, 32.* Here observe,

(1.) How the matter now stood with reference to divorce. *It hath been said*, (he does not say, as before, *It hath been said by them of old time*, because this was not a precept, as those were, though the Pharisees were willing so to understand it, (*ch. 19. 7.*) but only a permission,) "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce*"; let him not think to do it by word of mouth, when he is in a passion; but let him do it deliberately, by a legal instrument in writing, attested by witnesses; if he will dissolve the matrimonial bond, let him do it solemnly." Thus the law had prevented rash and hasty divorces; and perhaps at first, when writing was not so common among the Jews, that made divorces rare things; but in process of time they became very common, and this direction how to do it when there was just cause for it, was construed into a permission of it, for any cause, *ch. 19. 3.*

(2.) How this matter was rectified and amended by our Saviour. He reduced the ordinance of marriage to its primitive institution, *They two shall be one flesh*, not to be easily separated, and therefore a divorce is not to be allowed, except in case of adultery, which breaks the marriage-covenant; but he that puts away his wife upon any other pretence, *causeth her to commit adultery*, and him also that shall marry her when she is thus divorced. Note, Those who lead others into temptation to sin, or leave them in it, or expose them to it, make themselves guilty of

their sin, and will be accountable for it. This is one way of being *partaker with adulterers*, Ps. 50. 18.

33. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35. Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: 37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

We have here an exposition of the third commandment, which we are the more concerned rightly to understand, because it is particularly said, that *God will not hold him guiltless*, however he may hold himself, who breaks this commandment, by *taking the name of the Lord God in vain*. Now as to this command,

1. It is agreed on all hands that it forbids perjury, forswearing, and the violation of oaths and vows, v. 33. This was said to them of old time, and is the true intent and meaning of the third commandment. *Thou shalt not use, or take up, the name of God* (as we do by an oath) *in vain, or unto vanity, or a lie*. He *hath not lift up his soul unto vanity*, is expounded in the next words, *nor sworn deceitfully*, Ps. 24. 4. Perjury is a sin condemned by the light of nature, as a complication of impiety toward God and injustice toward man, and as rendering a man highly obnoxious to the divine wrath, which was always judged to follow so infallibly upon that sin, that the forms of swearing were commonly turned into execrations or imprecations; as that, *God do so to me, and more also*; and with us, *So help me, God*; wishing I may never have any help from God, if I swear falsely. Thus, by the consent of nations, have men cursed themselves, not doubting but that God would curse them, if they lied against the truth then, when they solemnly called God to witness to it.

It is added, from some other scriptures, *but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*; (Numb. 30. 2.) which may be meant, either, 1. Of those promises to which God is a party, vows made to God; these must be punctually paid: (Eccl. 5. 4, 5.) or, 2. Of those promises made to our brethren, to which God was a Witness, he being appealed to concerning our sincerity; these must be *performed to the Lord*, with an eye to him, and for his sake: for to him, by ratifying the promise with an oath, we have made ourselves debtors; and if we break a promise so ratified, we *have not lied unto men only, but unto God*.

II. It is here added, that the commandment does not only forbid false swearing, but all rash, unnecessary swearing: *Swear not at all*, v. 34. Compare Jam. 5. 12. Not that all swearing is sinful, so far from that, if rightly done, it is a part of religious worship, and we in it *give unto God the glory due to his name*. See Deut. 6. 13.—10. 20. Isa. 45. 23. Jer. 4. 2. We find Paul confirming what he said by such solemnities, (2 Cor. 1. 23.) when there was a necessity for it. In swearing, we pawn the truth of something known, to confirm the truth of something doubtful or unknown; we appeal to a greater knowledge, to a higher court, and imprecate the vengeance of a righteous Judge, if we swear deceitfully.

Now the mind of Christ in this matter is,

1. That we must *not swear at all*, but when we are duly called to it, and justice or charity to our

brother, or respect to the commonwealth, make it necessary *for the end of strife*, (Heb. 6. 16.) of which necessity the civil magistrate is ordinarily to be the judge. We may be sworn, but we must not swear, we may be adjured, and so obliged to it, but we must not thrust ourselves upon it for our own worldly advantage.

2. That we must not swear lightly and irreverently in common discourse: it is a very great sin to make a ludicrous appeal to the glorious Majesty of heaven, which, being a sacred thing, ought always to be very serious: it is a gross profanation of God's holy name, and of one of the holy things which *the children of Israel sanctify to the Lord*: it is a sin that has no cloak, no excuse for it, and therefore a sign of a graceless heart, in which enmity to God reigns; *Thine enemies take thy name in vain*.

3. That we must in a special manner avoid promissory oaths, of which Christ more particularly speaks here, for they are oaths that are to be performed. The influence of an affirmative oath immediately ceases, when we have faithfully discovered the truth, and the whole truth; but a promissory oath binds so long, and may be so many ways broken, by the surprise as well as strength of a temptation, that it is not to be used but upon great necessity: the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths.

4. That we must not swear by any creature. It should seem there were some, who, in civility (as they thought) to the name of God, would not make use of that in swearing, but would swear *by heaven or earth, &c.* This Christ forbids here, (v. 34.) and shows that there is nothing we can swear by, but it is some way or other related to God, who is the Fountain of all beings, and therefore it is as dangerous to swear by them, as it is to swear by God himself: it is the verity of the creature that is laid at stake; now that cannot be an instrument of testimony, but as it has regard to God, who is the *sum-mum verum—the chief Truth*. As, for instance,

(1.) *Swear not by the heaven*; "As sure as there is a heaven, this is true;" *for it is God's throne*, where he resides, and in a particular manner manifests his glory, as a Prince upon his throne: this being the inseparable dignity of the upper world, you cannot *swear by heaven*, but you swear by God himself.

(2.) *Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool*. He governs the motions of this lower world; as he rules in heaven, so he rules over the earth; and though under his feet, yet it is also under his eye and care, and stands in relation to him as his, Ps. 24. 1. *The earth is the Lord's*; so that in swearing by it, you swear by its Owner.

(3.) *Neither by Jerusalem, a place for which the Jews had such a veneration, that they could not speak of any thing more sacred, to swear by*; but beside the common reference Jerusalem has to God, as part of the earth, it is in special relation to him, *for it is the city of the great King*, (Ps. 48. 2.) *the city of God*, (Ps. 46. 4.) he is therefore interested in it, and in every oath taken by it.

(4.) *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head*; though it be near thee, and an essential part of thee, yet it is more God's than thine; for he made it, and formed all the springs and powers of it; whereas thou thyself canst not, from any natural, intrinsic influence, change the colour of *one hair*, so as to make it *white or black*; so that thou canst not *swear by thy head*, but thou swearest by him who is the *Life of thy head, and the Lifter up of it*. Ps. 3. 3.

5. That therefore in all our communication we must content ourselves with, *Yea, yea, and, Nay, nay*, v. 37. In ordinary discourse, if we affirm a

thing, let us only say, *Yea*, it is so; and, if need be, to evidence our assurance of a thing, we may double it, and say, *Yea, yea*, indeed it is so: *Verily, verily*, was our Saviour's *yea, yea*. So if we deny a thing, let it suffice to say, *No*; or, if it be requisite, to repeat the denial, and say, *No, no*; and if our fidelity be known, that will suffice to gain us credit; and if it be questioned, to back what we say with swearing and cursing, is but to render it more suspicious. They who can swallow a profane oath, will not strain at a lie. It is a pity, that this, which Christ puts in the mouths of all his disciples, should be fastened, as a name of reproach, upon a sect faulty enough other ways, when (as Dr. Hammond says) we are not only forbidden any more than *yea* and *ay*, but are in a manner directed to the use of that.

The reason is observable; *For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*, though it do not amount to the iniquity of an oath. It comes *ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ*; so an ancient copy has it: it comes from the Devil, the evil one; it comes from the corruption of men's nature, from passion and vehemence; from a reigning vanity in the mind, and a contempt of sacred things: it comes from that deceitfulness which is in men, *All men are liars*; therefore men use these protestations, because they are distrustful one of another, and think they cannot be believed without them. Note, Christians should, for the credit of their religion, avoid not only that which is in itself evil, but that which cometh of evil, and has the appearance of it. That may be suspected as a bad thing, which comes from a bad cause. An oath is phisic, which supposes a disease.

33. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 33. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

In these verses the law of retaliation is expounded, and in a manner repealed. Observe,

1. What the *Old Testament permission* was, in case of injury; and here the expression is only, *Ye have heard that it has been said*; not, as before, concerning the commands of the decalogue, *that it has been said by, or to, them of old time*. It was not a command, that every one should of necessity require such satisfaction; but they might lawfully insist upon it, if they pleased: *an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*. This we find, Exod. 21. 24. Lev. 24. 20. Deut. 19. 21. in all which places it is appointed to be done by the magistrate, who bears not the sword in vain, but is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath, Rom. 13. 4. It was a direction to the judges of the Jewish nation what punishments to inflict in case of maims, for terror to such as would do mischief on the one hand, and for a restraint to such as have mischief done to them on the other hand, that they may not insist on a greater punishment than is proper: it is not a *life for an eye*, nor a *limb for a tooth*, but observe a proportion; and it is intimated, (Numb. 35. 31.) that the forfeiture in this case might be redeemed with money; for when it is provided that *no ransom shall be taken for the life of a murderer*, it is supposed that for maims a pecuniary satisfaction was allowed.

But some of the Jewish teachers, who were not the most compassionate men in the world, insisted upon it as necessary, that such revenge should be taken, even by private persons themselves, and that there was no room left for remission, or the acceptance of satisfaction. Even now, when they were under the government of the Roman magistrates, and consequently the judicial law fell to the ground of course, yet they were still zealous for any thing that looked harsh and severe.

Now, so far this is in force with us, as a direction to magistrates, to use the sword of justice according to the good and wholesome laws of the land, for the terror of evil-doers, and the vindication of the oppressed. That judge *neither feared God, nor regarded man*, who would not *avenge* the poor widow of her adversary, Luke 18. 2, 3. And it is in force as a rule to lawgivers, to provide accordingly, and wisely to apportion punishments to crimes, for the restraint of rapine and violence, and the protection of innocency.

II. What the *New-Testament precept* is. As to the complainant himself, his duty is, to *forgive the injury* as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the public good; and this precept is consonant to the meekness of Christ, and the gentleness of his yoke.

Two things Christ teaches us here.

1. We must not be revengeful; (v. 39.) *I say unto you, that ye resist not evil*;—the evil person that is injurious to you. The resisting of any ill attempt upon us, is here as generally and expressly forbidden, as the *resisting of the higher powers* is; (Rom. 13. 2.) and yet this does not repeal the law of self-preservation, and the care we are to take of our families: we may *avoid evil*, and may *resist* it, so far as is necessary to our own security; but we must not *render evil for evil*, must not bear a grudge, nor avenge ourselves, nor study to be even with those that have treated us unkindly, but we must go beyond them by forgiving them, Prov. 20. 22.—24. 29.—25. 21, 22. Rom. 12. 17. The law of retaliation must be made consistent with the law of love: nor, if any have injured us, is our recompense in our own hands, but in the hands of God, to whose wrath we must give place; and sometimes in the hands of his viceregents, where it is necessary for the preservation of the public peace: but it will not justify us in hurting our brother, to say that he began, for it is the second blow that makes the quarrel; and when we were injured, we had an opportunity not to justify our injuring him, but to show ourselves the true disciples of Christ, by forgiving him.

Three things our Saviour instances, to show that christians must patiently yield to those who bear hard upon them, rather than contend; and these include others.

(1.) A blow on the cheek, which is an injury to me in my body; "*Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek*, which is not only a hurt, but an affront and indignity, (2 Cor. 11. 20.) if a man in anger or scorn thus abuse thee, *turn to him the other cheek*;" that is, instead of avenging that injury, prepare for another, and bear it patiently: give not the rude man as good as he brings; do not challenge him, nor enter an action against him; if it be necessary to the public peace that he be bound to his good behaviour, leave that to the magistrate; but for thy own part, it will ordinarily be the wisest course to pass it by, and take no further notice of it: there are no bones broken, no great harm done, forgive it, and forget it; and if proud fools think the worse of thee, and laugh at thee for it, all wise men will value and honour thee for it, as a follower of the blessed Jesus, who, though he was the Judge of Israel, did not smite those who smote him on the cheek, Micah 5. 1. Though this may perhaps, with some base spirits,

expose us to the like affront another time, and so it is, in effect, *to turn the other cheek*, yet let not that disturb us, but let us trust God and his providence to protect us in the way of our duty. Perhaps, the forgiving of one injury may prevent another, when the avenging of it would but draw on another; some will be overcome by submission, who by resistance would but be the more exasperated, Prov. 25. 22. However, our recompense is in Christ's hands, who will reward us with eternal glory for the shame we thus patiently endure; and though it be not directly inflicted, if it be quietly born for conscience sake, and in conformity to Christ's example, it shall be put upon the score of suffering for Christ.

(2.) The loss of a coat, which is a wrong to me in my estate; (v. 40.) *If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat*; It is a hard case. Note, It is common for legal processes to be made use of for the doing of the greatest injuries. Though judges be just and circumspect, yet it is possible for bad men, who make no conscience of oaths and forgeries, by course of law to force off the coat from a man's back. *Marvel not at the matter*, (Eccl. 5. 8.) but, in such a case, rather than go to law by way of revenge, rather than exhibit a cross bill, or stand out to the utmost, in defence of that which is thy undoubted right, *let him even take thy cloak also*. If the matter be small, which we may lose without any considerable damage to our families, it is good to submit to it for peace sake. "It will not cost thee so much to buy another cloak, as it will cost thee by course of law to recover that; and therefore unless thou canst get it again by fair means, it is better to let him take it."

(3.) The going a mile by constraint, which is a wrong to me in my liberty; (v. 41.) *"Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, to run of an errand for him, or to wait upon him, grudge not at it, but go with him two miles rather than fall out with him"*: say not, "I would do it, if I were not compelled to it, but I hate to be forced," rather say, "Therefore I will do it, for otherwise there will be a quarrel;" and it is better to serve him, than to serve thy own lusts of pride and revenge. Some give this sense of it: The Jews taught that the disciples of the wise, and the students of the law, were not to be pressed, as others might, by the king's officers, to travel upon the public service; but Christ will not have his disciples to insist upon this privilege, but to comply rather than offend the government. The sum of all is, that christians must not be litigious; small injuries must be submitted to, and no notice taken of them; and if the injury be such as requires us to seek reparation, it must be for a good end, and without thought of revenge: though we must not invite injuries, yet we must meet them cheerfully in the way of duty, and make the best of them. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront, let them remember, that *flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

2. We must be charitable and beneficent; (v. 42.) must not only do no hurt to our neighbours, but labour to do them all the good we can. (1.) We must be ready to give; *"Give to him that asketh thee"*. If thou hast an ability, look upon the request of the poor, as giving thee an opportunity for the duty of almsgiving." When a real object of charity presents itself, we should give at the first word: *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight*; yet the affairs of our charity must be guided with discretion, (Ps. 112. 5.) lest we give that to the idle and unworthy, which should be given to those that are necessitous, and deserve well. What God says to us, we should be ready to say to our poor brethren, *Ask, and it shall be given you*. (2.) We must be ready to lend. This is sometimes as great a piece of charity as giving; as it not only relieves the present exigence, but ob-

lises the borrower to providence, industry, and honesty; and therefore, *"From him that would borrow of thee something to live on, or something to trade on, turn not thou away"*: shun not those that thou knowest have such a request to make to thee, nor contrive excuses to shake them off. Be easy of access to him that would borrow: though he be bashful, and have not confidence to make known his case and beg the favour, yet thou knowest both his need and his desire, and therefore offer him the kindness." *Exorabor antequam rogor; honestis precibus occurram—I will be prevailed on before I am entreated; I will anticipate the becoming petition*. Seneca, *De Vita beatâ*. It becomes us to be thus forward in acts of kindness, for before we call, God hears us, and prevents us with the blessings of his goodness.

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: 44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: 45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? 47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? 48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

We have here, lastly, an exposition of that great fundamental law of the second table, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*, which was the fulfilling of the law.

I. See here how this law was corrupted by the comments of the Jewish teachers, v. 43. God said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*; and by neighbour they understood those only of their own country, nation, and religion; and those only that they were pleased to look upon as their friends: yet this was not the worst; from this command, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour*, they were willing to infer what God never designed, *Thou shalt hate thine enemy*; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God by their traditions, though there were express laws to the contrary, Exod. 23. 4, 5. Deut. 23. 7. *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite nor an Egyptian*, though these nations had been as much enemies to Israel as any whatsoever. It was true, God appointed them to destroy the seven devoted nations of Canaan, and not to make leagues with them; but there was a particular reason for it—to make room for Israel, and that they might not be *snares to them*; but it was very ill-natured from hence to infer, that they must hate all their enemies; yet the moral philosophy of the heathen allowed this. It is Cicero's rule, *Nemini nocere nisi prius lacessitus injuria—To injure no one, unless first injured*. *De Offic*. See how willing corrupt passions are to fetch countenance from the word of God, and to take occasion by the commandment to justify themselves.

II. See how it is cleared by the command of the Lord Jesus, who teaches us another lesson: *"But I say unto you, I, who come to be the great Peacemaker, the general Reconciler, who loved you when you were strangers and enemies, I say, Love your enemies,"* v. 44. Though men are ever so bad them-

selves, and carry it ever so basely towards us, yet that does not discharge us from the great debt we owe them, of love to our kind, love to our kin. We cannot but find ourselves very prone to wish the hurt, or at least very coldly to desire the good, of those that *hate* us, and have been abusive to us; but that which is at the bottom hereof, is a root of bitterness which must be plucked up, and a remnant of corrupt nature which grace must conquer. Note, It is the great duty of Christians to *love their enemies*; we cannot have complacency in one that is openly wicked and profane, nor put a confidence in one that we know to be deceitful; nor are we to love all alike; but we must pay respect to the human nature, and so far *honour all men*: we must take notice, with pleasure, of that even in our enemies which is amiable and commendable; ingenuity, good temper, learning, moral virtue, kindness to others, profession of religion, &c. and love that, though they are our enemies. We must have a compassion for them, and a good will toward them. We are here told,

1. That we must *speak* well of them: *Bless them that curse you*. When we speak to them, we must answer their revilings with courteous and friendly words, and *not render railing for railing*; behind their backs we must commend that in them which is commendable, and when we have said all the good we can of them, not be forward to say any thing more. See 1 Pet. 3. 9. They, in whose tongues is the *law of kindness*, can give good words to those who give bad words to them.

2. That we must *do* well to them. "*Do good to them that hate you*, and that will be a better proof of love than good words. Be ready to do them all the real kindness that you can, and glad of an opportunity to do it, in their bodies, estates, names, families; and especially to do good to their souls." It was said of Archbishop Crammer, that the way to make him a friend was to do him an ill turn; so many did he serve who had disoblighed him.

3. We must *pray* for them; *pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*. Note, (1.) It is no new thing for the most excellent saints to be hated, and cursed, and persecuted, and despitefully used, by wicked people; Christ himself was so treated. (2.) That when at any time we meet with such usage, we have an opportunity of showing our conformity both to the precept and to the example of Christ, by praying for them who thus abuse us. If we cannot otherwise testify our love to them, yet this way we may without ostentation, and it is such a way as surely we durst not dissemble in. We must pray that God will forgive them, that they may never fare the worse for any thing they have done against us, and that he would make them to be at peace with us: and this is one way of making them so. Plutarch, in his Laconic Apophthegms, has this of Aristo; when one commended Cleomenes's saying, who, being asked *what a good king should do*, replied, *τὸ εὖ εἰς τοὺς φίλους, καὶ τὸ ἐχθρὸς κακῶς*: *Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies*; he said, How much better is *τὸ εὖ εἰς τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς*, *εἰς τοὺς φίλους*—to do good to our friends, and make friends of our enemies. This is *heaping coals of fire on their head*.

Two reasons are here given to enforce this command (which sounds so harsh) of *loving our enemies*. We must do it.

[1.] That we may be like *God our Father*; "that ye may be, may approve yourselves to be, the children of your Father which is in heaven." Can we write after a better copy? It is a copy in which love to the worst of enemies is reconciled to, and consistent with, infinite purity and holiness. God maketh his sun to rise, and sendeth rain, on the just and unjust, v. 45. Note, First, *Sunshine and rain* are great blessings to the world, and they come from God. It

is *his sun* that shines, and the rain is sent by him. They do not come of course, or by chance, but from God. Secondly, Common mercies must be valued as instances and proofs of the goodness of God, who in them shows himself a bountiful benefactor to the world of mankind, who would be very miserable without these favours, and are utterly unworthy of the least of them. Thirdly, These gifts of common providence are dispensed indifferently to *good and evil, just and unjust*; so that we cannot know *love and hatred* by what is *before us*, but by what is *within us*; not by the shining of the sun on our heads, but by the rising of the sun of righteousness in our hearts. Fourthly, The worst of men partake of the comforts of this life in common with others, though they abuse them, and fight against God with his own weapons; which is an amazing instance of God's patience and bounty. It was but once that God forbade his sun to shine on the Egyptians, when the Israelites had *light in their dwellings*; God could make such a distinction every day. Fifthly, The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men that are in rebellion against him, teach us to *do good to those that hate us*; especially considering, that though there is in us a carnal mind which is enmity to God, yet we share in his bounty. Sixthly, Those only will be accepted as the children of God, who study to resemble him, particularly in his goodness.

[2.] That we may herein *do more than others*, v. 46, 47. First, *Publicans love their friends*. Nature inclines them to it; interest directs them to it. To do good to them who do good to us, is a common piece of humanity, which even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give as good proofs of as the best of them. The Publicans were men of no good fame, yet they were grateful to such as had helped them to their places, and courteous to these they had a dependence upon; and shall we be no better than they? In doing this we serve ourselves and consult our own advantage; and what reward can we expect for that, unless a regard to God, and a sense of duty, carry us further than our natural inclination and worldly interest? Secondly, We must therefore love our enemies, that we may exceed them. If we must go beyond Scribes and Pharisees, much more beyond Publicans. Note, Christianity is something more than humanity. It is a serious question, and which we should frequently put to ourselves, "*What do we more than others? What excellent thing do we do?*" We know more than others; we talk more of the things of God than others; we profess, and have promised, more than others; God has done more for us, and therefore justly expects more from us than from others; the glory of God is more concerned in us than in others; but *what do we more than others?* Wherein do we live above the rate of the children of this world? *Are we not carnal*, and do we not walk as men, below the character of christians? In this especially we must do more than others, that while every one will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle, and is consonant to a higher rule, than the most of men act by. Others salute their brethren, they embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion; but we must not so confine our respect, but *love our enemies*, otherwise *what reward have we?* We cannot expect the reward of christians, if we rise no higher than the virtue of Publicans. Note, They who promise themselves a reward above others, must study to *do more than others*.

Lastly, Our Saviour concludes this subject with this exhortation, (v. 48.) *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*. Which may be understood, 1. In general, including all these things wherein we must be followers of God as dear children. Note, It is the duty of christians to desire,

and aim at, and press towards, a perfection in grace and holiness, Phil. 3. 12—14. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16. Or, 2. In this particular before mentioned, of *doing good to our enemies*; see Luke 6. 36. It is God's perfection to *forgive injuries* and to *entertain strangers*, and to do good to the evil and unthankful, and it will be ours to be like him. We that owe *so much*, that owe *our all*, to the divine bounty, ought to copy it out as well as we can.

CHAP. VI.

Christ having, in the former chapter, armed his disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the Scribes and Pharisees, especially in their expositions of the law, (that was called their heaven, ch. 16. 12.) comes in this chapter to warn them against their corrupt practices; against the two sins, which, though in their doctrine they did not justify, yet in their conversation they were notoriously guilty of, hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness; sins which, of all others, the professors of religion need most to guard against, as sins that most easily beset those who have escaped the grosser pollutions that are in the world through lust, and which are therefore highly dangerous. We are here cautioned, I. Against hypocrisy; we must not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as the hypocrites do. 1. In giving of alms, v. 1. . 4. 2. In prayer, v. 5. . 8. We are here taught what to pray for, and how to pray; (v. 9. . 13.) and to forgive in prayer, v. 14, 15. 3. In fasting, v. 16. . 18. II. Against worldly-mindedness. 1. In our choice, which is the destroying sin of hypocrites, v. 19. . 24. 2. In our cares, which is the disquieting sin of many good Christians, v. 25. . 34.

1. **T**AKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2. Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4. That thine alms may be in secret: and thy father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

As we must do better than the Scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine, Luke 12. 1. *Alms-giving, prayer, and fasting*, are three great christian duties—the three foundations of the law, say the Arabians: by them we do homage and serve to God with our three principal interests; by *prayer* with our *souls*, by *fasting* with our *bodies*, by *alms-giving* with our *estates*. Thus we must not only *depart from evil*, but *do good*, and do it well, and so *dwell for evermore*.

Now in these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. *Take heed of it*. Our being bid to *take heed* of it, intimates that it is a sin, 1. We are in *great danger of*; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh. 2. It is a sin we are in *great danger by*. Take heed of

hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

Two things are here supposed.

I. *The giving of alms* is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. Divers ancient copies here for *τὴν δικαιοσύνην*—*your alms*, read *τὴν δικαιοσύνην*—*your righteousness*, for *alms* are *righteousness*, Ps. 112. 9. Prov. 10. 2. The Jews called the *poor's box*, the *box of righteousness*. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due, Prov. 3. 27. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. If superstitious Papists have placed a merit in works of charity, that will not be an excuse for covetous Protestants that are barren in such good works. It is true, our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is as true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is *pure religion*, (Jam. 1. 27.) and will be the test at the great day; Christ here takes it for granted that his disciples *give alms*, nor will he own those that do not.

II. That it is such a duty as has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy. It is sometimes rewarded in temporal things with *plenty*; (Prov. 11. 24, 25.—19. 17.) *security from want*; (Prov. 28. 27. Ps. 37. 21, 25.) *succour in distress*; (Ps. 41. 1, 2.) *honour and a good name*, which follow those most that least covet them, Ps. 112. 9. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, (Luke 14. 14.) in *eternal riches*.

Quas dederis, solas semper habebis, opes.

The riches you impart form the only wealth you will always retain.—Martial.

This being supposed, observe now,

1. What was the *practice of the hypocrites* about this duty. They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glory; not in compassion to the poor, but purely for ostentation, that they might be extolled for good men, and so might gain an interest in the esteem of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave. Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms *in the synagogues, and in the streets*, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. Not that it is unlawful to give alms *when men see us*; we may do it, we must do it, but not that *men may see us*; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms at their own houses, *sounded a trumpet*, under pretence of calling the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.

Now the doom that Christ passes upon this is very observable: *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward*. At first view this seems a promise—if they have their reward they have enough, but two words in it make it a threatening.

(1.) It is a reward, but it is *their reward*; not the reward which God promises to them that do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be *seen of men*, and they are seen of men; they *chose their own delusions* with which they cheated themselves, and they shall have what they chose. Carnal professors

stipulate with God for preferment, honour, wealth, and they shall have their bellies filled with those things; (Ps. 17. 14.) but let them expect no more; these are their consolation, (Luke 6. 24.) their good things, (Luke 16. 25.) and they shall be put off with these. "*Didst thou agree with me for a penny?*" It is the bargain thou art likely to abide by."

(2.) It is a reward, but it is a *present* reward; they have it; and there is none reserved for them in the future state. They now have all that they are likely to have from God; they have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter. *Ἀποδοῖς τῷ μισθῷ.* It signifies a *receipt in full*. What rewards the godly have in this life are but in *part of payment*; there is more behind, much more; but hypocrites have their *all* in this world, so shall their doom be; themselves have decided it. The world is but for *provision* to the saints, it is their spending money; but it is *pay* to hypocrites, it is their portion.

2. What is the *precept of our Lord Jesus* about it, v. 3. 4. He that was himself such an example of humility, pressed it upon his disciples, as absolutely necessary to the acceptance of their performances. "*Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* when thou givest alms." Perhaps it alludes to the placing of the Corban, the poor man's box, or the chest into which they cast their free-will offerings, *on the right hand* of the passage into the temple; so that they put their gifts into it with the *right hand*. Or the giving of alms with the *right hand*, intimates readiness to it and resolution in it; do it dexterously, not awkwardly, or with a sinister intention. The *right hand* may be used in helping the poor, lifting them up, writing for them, dressing their sores, and other ways besides giving to them; but "*whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, let not thy left hand know it*;" conceal it as much as possible; industriously keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, not because it will get thee a good name." *In omnibus factis, re, non teste, moveamur*—*In all our actions, we should be influenced by a regard to the object, not to the observer.* Cic. de Fin. It is intimated, (1.) That we must not let *others* know what we do; no, not those that stand at our *left hand*, that are very near us. Instead of acquainting them with it, keep it from them if possible; however, appear so desirous to keep it from them, as that in civility they may seem not to take notice of it, and keep it to themselves, and let it go no further. (2.) That we must not observe it too much *ourselves*: the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves. Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men. We find those had their good works remembered to their honour, who had themselves forgotten them: *When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?*

3. What is the *promise of those who are thus sincere and humble* in their alms-giving. Let *thine alms be in secret*, and then *thy Father which seeth in secret* will observe them. Note, When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. As God hears the wrongs done to us when we do not hear them, (Ps. 38. 14, 15.) so he sees the good done by us, when we do not see it. As it is a terror to hypocrites, so it is a comfort to sincere christians, that God *sees in secret*. But this is not all; not only the observation and praise, but the recompense, is of God, *himself shall reward thee openly*. Note, They who in their alms-giving study to approve themselves to God, only turn themselves over to him for their Paymaster. The hypocrite catches at the shadow, but the upright man makes

sure of the substance. Observe how emphatically it is expressed; *himself shall reward*, he will himself be the Rewarder, Heb. 11. 6. Let him alone to make it up in kind or kindness; nay, he will *himself be the Reward*, (Gen. 15. 1.) *thine exceeding great reward*. He will reward thee as thy Father, not as a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a father who gives abundantly more, and without stint, to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee *openly*, if not in the present day, yet in the great day; *then shall every man have praise of God*, open praise, thou shalt be confessed *before men*. If the work be not open, the reward shall, and that is better.

5. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. 7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

In *prayer* we have more immediately to do with God than in *giving alms*, and therefore are yet more concerned to be *sincere*, which is what we are here directed to. *When thou prayest*; (v. 5.) it is taken for granted that all the disciples of Christ *pray*. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *behold, he prayeth*. You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living christian that does not pray. *For this shall every one that is godly pray*. If prayerless, then graceless. "*Now, when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as they do.*" (v. 2.) Note, Those who would not do as the hypocrites do in their way and actions, must not be as the hypocrites are in their frame and temper. He names nobody, but it appears by ch. 23. 13. that by the hypocrites here he means especially the Scribes and Pharisees.

Now there were two great faults they were guilty of in prayer, against each of which we are here cautioned—vain-glory; (v. 5, 6.) and vain repetitions, v. 7, 8.

1. We must not be *proud and vain-glorious* in prayer, nor aim at the praise of men. And here observe,

1. What was the *way and practice of the hypocrites*. In all their exercises of devotion, it was plain the chief thing they aimed at was to be commended by their neighbours, and thereby to make an interest for themselves. When they seemed to *soar upwards* in prayer, (and if it be right, it is the soul's ascent toward God,) yet even then their eye was *downwards* upon this as their *prize*. Observe,

(1.) What the *places* were which they chose for their devotion; they prayed in the *synagogues*, which were indeed proper places for public prayer, but not for personal. They pretended hereby to do honour to the place of their assemblies, but intended to do honour to themselves. They prayed in the *corners of the streets*, the broad streets, (so the word signifies,) which were most frequented. They withdrew

thither, as if they were under a pious impulse which would not admit delay, but really it was to make themselves to be taken notice of. There, where two streets met, they were not only within view of both, but every passenger turning close upon them would observe them, and hear what they said.

(2.) The *posture* they used in prayer; they prayed standing; this is a lawful and proper posture for prayer, (Mark 11. 25. *When ye stand praying*;) but kneeling being the more humble and reverent gesture, Luke 22. 41. Acts 7. 60. Eph. 3. 14. their standing seemed to savour of pride and confidence in themselves, (Luke 18. 11.) *The Pharisee stood and prayed.*

(3.) Their *pride* in choosing those public places, which is expressed in two things: [1.] They love to pray there. They did not love prayer for its own sake, but they loved it when it gave them an opportunity of making themselves noticed. Circumstances may be such, that our good deeds must needs be done openly, so as to fall under the observation of others, and be commended by them; but the sin and danger is when we love it, and are pleased with it, because it feeds the proud humour. [2.] It is that they may be *seen of men*; not that God might accept them, but that men might admire and applaud them; and that they might easily get the estates of widows and orphans into their hands; (who would not trust such devout, praying men?) and that, when they had them, they might devour them without being suspected; (*ch.* 23. 14.) and effectually carry on their public designs to enslave the people.

(4.) The *product* of all this, *they have their reward*; they have all the recompense they must ever expect from God for their service, and a poor recompense it is. What will it avail us to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master do not say, *Well done*. But if in so great a transaction as is between us and God, when we are at prayer, we can take in so poor a consideration as the praise of men is, it is just that that should be all our reward. They did it to be *seen of men*, and they are so; and much good may it do them. Note, Those that would approve themselves to God by their integrity in their religion, must have no regard to the praise of men; it is not to men that we pray, nor from them that we expect an answer; they are not to be our judges, they are dust and ashes like ourselves, and therefore we must not have our eye to them: what passes between God and our own souls must be out of sight. In our synagogue-worship, we must avoid every thing that tends to make our personal devotion remarkable, as they that caused their *voice to be heard on high*, Isa. 54. 8. Public places are not proper for private, solemn prayer.

2. What is the *will of Jesus Christ* in opposition to this. Humility and sincerity are the two great lessons that Christ teaches us; *Thou, when thou prayest*, do so and so; (*v.* 6.) *thou* in particular by thyself, and for thyself. Personal prayer is here supposed to be the duty and practice of all Christ's disciples. Observe,

(1.) The directions here given about it.

[1.] Instead of praying in the *synagogues* and in the *corners of the streets*, enter into thy closet, into some place of privacy and retirement. Isaac went into the field, (Gen. 24. 63.) Christ to a mountain, Peter to the house-top. No place amiss in point of ceremony, if it do but answer the end. Note, Secret prayer is to be performed in retirement, that we may be unobserved, and so may avoid ostentation; undisturbed, and so may avoid distraction; unheard, and so may use the greater freedom; yet if the circumstances be such that we cannot possibly avoid being taken notice of, we must not therefore neglect the duty, lest the omission be a greater scandal than the observation of it.

[2.] Instead of doing it to be *seen of men*, pray to thy Father which is in secret; to me, even to me, Zech. 7. 5, 6. The Pharisees prayed rather to men than to God; whatever was the form of their prayer, the scope of it was to beg the applause of men, and court their favours. "Well, do thou pray to God, and let that be enough for thee. Pray to him as a Father, ~~as thy~~ Father, ready to hear and answer, graciously inclined to pity, help, and succour thee. Pray to thy Father which is in secret." Note, In secret prayer we must have an eye to God, as present in all places; he is there in thy closet when no one else is there; there especially nigh to thee in what thou callest upon him for. By secret prayer we give God the glory of his universal presence, (Acts 17. 24.) and may take to ourselves the comfort of it.

(2.) The encouragements here given us to it.

[1.] Thy Father *seeth in secret*; his eye is upon thee to accept thee, when the eye of no man is upon thee to applaud thee; *under the fig-tree I saw thee*, said Christ to Nathaniel, John 1. 48. He saw Paul at prayer in such a street, at such a house, Acts 9. 11. There is not a secret, sudden breathing after God, but he observes it.

[2.] He *will reward thee openly*; they have their reward that do it openly, and thou shalt not lose thine for thy doing it in secret. It is called a *reward*, but it is of *grace*, not of *debt*; what merit can there be in begging? The reward will be open; they shall not only have it, but have it honourably: the open reward is that which hypocrites are fond of, but they have not patience to stay for it; it is that which the sincere are dead to, and they shall have it over and above. Sometimes secret prayers are rewarded openly in this world by signal answers to them, which manifest God's praying people in the consciences of their adversaries; however, at the great day there will be an open reward, when all praying people shall *appear in glory* with the great Intercessor. The Pharisees had their reward *before all the town*, and it was a mere flash and shadow; true Christians shall have theirs *before all the world*, angels and men, and it shall be a weight of glory.

II. We must not use *vain repetitions* in prayer. *v.* 7, 8. Though the life of prayer lies in *lifting up the soul and pouring out the heart*, yet there is some interest which words have in prayer, especially in joint prayer; for in that, words are necessary, and it should seem that our Saviour speaks here especially of that; for before he said, *when thou prayest*, here, when ye pray; and the Lord's prayer which follows is a joint prayer, and in that, he that is the mouth of others is most tempted to an ostentation of language and expression, against which we are here warned: *use not vain repetitions*, either alone or with others; the Pharisees affected this, *they made long prayers*, (*ch.* 23. 14.) all their care was to make them long. Now observe,

1. What the *fault* is that is here reprov'd and condemn'd: it is making a mere lip-labour of the duty of prayer, the service of the tongue, when it is not the service of the soul. This is expressed here by two words, *βαρλοχία, πονηροχία*. (1.) *Vain repetitions*. Tautology, battology, idle babbling over the same words again and again to no purpose, like *Battus, sub illis montibus erant, erant sub montibus illis*; like that imitation of the wordiness of a fool, Eccl. 10. 14. *A man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell?* Which is indecent and nauseous in any discourse, much more in speaking to God. It is not all repetition in prayer that is here condemn'd, but vain repetitions. Christ himself prayed, saying the same words. (*ch.* 26. 44.) out of a more than ordinary fervour and zeal, Luke 22. 44. So Daniel, *ch.* 9. 18, 19. And there is a very elegant repetition of the same words,

Ps. 136. It may be of use both to express our own affections, and to excite the affections of others. But the superstitious rehearsing of a tale of words, without regard to the sense of them, as the papists' saying by their beads so many Ave-Marys and Paternosters; or the barren and dry going over of the same things again and again, merely to drill out the prayer to such a length, and to make a show of affection when really there is none; these are the vain repetitions here condemned. When we would fain say much, but cannot say much to the purpose; this is displeasing to God and all wise men. (2.) *Much speaking*, and affectation of prolixity in prayer, either out of pride, or superstition, or an opinion that God needs either to be informed or argued with by us, or out of mere folly and impertinence, because men love to *hear themselves talk*. Not that all long prayers are forbidden; Christ prayed all night, Luke 6. 12. Solomon's was a long prayer. There is sometimes need of long prayers when our errands and our affections are extraordinary; but merely to prolong the prayer, as if that would make it more pleasing or more prevailing with God, is that which is here condemned; it is not much *praying* that is condemned; no, we are bid to *pray always*, but much *speaking*; the danger of this error is when we only *say* our prayers, not when we *pray* them. This caution is explained by that of Solomon, (Ecc. 5. 2.) *Let thy words be few*, considerate and well weighed; *take with you words*; (Hos. 14. 2.) *choose out words*, (Job 9. 14.) and do not say every thing that comes uppermost.

2. What reasons are given against this.

(1.) This is the way of the heathen, *as the heathen do*; and it ill becomes christians to worship their God as the Gentiles worship theirs. The heathen were taught by the light of nature to worship God; but becoming vain in their imaginations concerning the object of their worship, no wonder they became so concerning the manner of it, and particularly in this instance; thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, they thought he needed many words to make him understand what was said to him, or to bring him to comply with their requests; as if he were weak and ignorant, and hard to be entreated. Thus Baal's priests were hard at it from morning till almost night with their *vain repetitions*; *O Baal, hear us*; *O Baal, hear us*; and vain repetitions they were; but Elijah, in a grave, composed frame, with a very concise prayer, prevailed for fire from heaven first, and then water, 1 Kings 18. 26, 36. *Lih-labour* in prayer, though ever so well *laboured*, if that be all, is but *lost labour*.

(2.) "It need not be your way, *for your Father in heaven knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him*, and therefore there is no occasion for such abundance of words. It does not follow that therefore you need not pray; for God requires you by prayer to own your need of him and dependence on him, and to plead his promises; but therefore you are to open your case, and pour out your hearts before him, and then leave it with him." Consider, [1.] The God we pray to is our Father by creation, by covenant; and therefore our addresses to him should be easy, natural, and unaffected; children do not use to make long speeches to their parents when they want any thing; it is enough to say, *my head, my head*. Let us come to him with the disposition of children, with love, reverence, and dependence; and then they need not say many words, that are taught by the Spirit of adoption to say that one aright, *Abba, Father*. [2.] He is a Father that knows our case and knows our wants better than we do ourselves. *He knows what things we have need of*; his eyes run to and fro through the earth to observe the necessities of his people, (2 Chron. 16. 9.) and he often gives *before we call*, (Isa. 65. 24.) and

more than we ask for, (Eph. 3. 20.) and if he do not give his people what they ask, it is because he knows they do not need it, and that it is not for their good; and of that he is fitter to judge for us than we for ourselves. We need not be long, nor use many words in representing our case; God knows it better than we can tell him, only he will know it *from us*; (*what will ye that I should do unto you?*) and when we have told him what it is, we must refer ourselves to him, *Lord, all my desire is before thee*, Ps. 38. 9. So far is God from being wrought upon by the length or language of our prayers, that the most powerful intercessions are those which are made with *groanings that cannot be uttered*, Rom. 8. 26. We are not to *prescribe*, but *subscribe* to God.

9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: 10. Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: 11. Give us this day our daily bread: 12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: 13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. 14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs to do better; for his are reproofs of instruction. Because we know not what to pray for as we ought, he here helps our infirmities, by putting words into our mouths; *after this manner therefore pray ye*, v. 9. So many were the corruptions that had crept into this duty of prayer among the Jews, that Christ saw it needful to give a new directory for prayer, to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form; as the summary or contents of the several particulars of our prayers. Not that we are tied up to the use of this form only, or of this always, as if this were necessary to the consecrating of our other prayers; we are here bid to pray after this manner, with these words, or to this effect. That in Luke differs from this; we do not find it used by the apostles; we are not here taught to pray in that name of Christ, as we are afterward; we are here taught to pray that the kingdom might come which did come when the Spirit was poured out; yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it as a form, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages, at least (says Dr. Whitby) from the third century. It is our Lord's prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing; it is very compendious, yet very comprehensive. The matter is choice and necessary, the method instructive, and the expression very concise. It has much in a little, and it is requisite that we acquaint ourselves with the sense and meaning of it, for it is used acceptably, no further than it is used with understanding, and without vain repetition.

The Lord's prayer (as indeed every prayer) is a letter sent from earth to heaven. Here is the inscription of the letter, the person to whom it is directed, *our Father*; the place where, *in heaven*; the contents of it in several errands of request; the close, *for thine is the kingdom*; the seal, *Amen*; and if you will, the date too, *this day*.

Plainly thus: there are three parts of the prayer.

I. *The preface, Our Father which art in heaven.* Before we come to our business, there must be a solemn address to him with whom our business lies; *Our Father.* Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another, and are called into fellowship with each other. We are here taught to *whom to pray*, to God only, and not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, are not to have the honours we give in prayer, nor can give the favours we expect. We are taught how to address ourselves to God, and what title to give him, that which speaks him rather beneficent than magnificent, for we are to come boldly to the throne of grace.

1. We must address ourselves to him as *our Father*, and must call him so. He is a common Father to all mankind by creation, Mal. 2. 10. Acts 17. 28. He is in a special manner a Father to the saints, by adoption and regeneration; (Eph. 1. 5. Gal. 4. 6.) and an unspeakable privilege it is. Thus we must eye him in prayer, keep up good thoughts of him, such as are encouraging and not affrighting; nothing more pleasing to God, or pleasant to ourselves, than to call God *Father*. Christ in prayer mostly called God *Father*. If he be our Father, he will pity us under our weaknesses and infirmities, (Ps. 103. 13.) will spare us, (Mal. 3. 17.) will make the best of our performances, though very defective, will deny us nothing that is good for us, Luke 11. 11—13. We have access with boldness to him, as to a father, and have an *advocate with the Father*, and the Spirit of adoption. When we come repenting of our sins, we must eye God as a Father, as the prodigal did; (Luke 15. 18. Jer. 3. 19.) when we come begging for grace, and peace, and the inheritance and blessing of sons, it is an encouragement that we come to God, not as an unreconciled, avenging Judge, but as a loving, gracious, reconciled Father in Christ, Jer. 3. 4.

2. As our Father in heaven: so in heaven as to be every where else, for the heaven cannot contain him; yet so in heaven as there to manifest his glory, for it is his throne, (Ps. 103. 19.) and it is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, Heb. 8. 1. Heaven is out of sight, and a world of spirits, therefore our converse with God in prayer must be spiritual; it is on high, therefore in prayer we must be raised above the world, and lift up our hearts, Ps. 5. 1. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and we must therefore lift up pure hands, must study to sanctify his name, who is the Holy One, and dwells in that holy place, Lev. 10. 3. From heaven God beholds the children of men, Ps. 33. 13, 14. And we must in prayer see his eye upon us: thence he has a full and clear view of all our wants and burdens and desires, and all our infirmities. It is the firmament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, Ps. 150. 1. He is not only, as a father, willing to help us, but as a heavenly Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence, Eccl. 5. 2. Thus all our prayers should correspond with that which is our great aim as christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer we send before us thither, where we profess to be going.

II. *The petitions*, and those are six; the three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both tem-

poral and spiritual; as in the ten commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the six last our duty towards our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and then to hope that *other things shall be added*.

1. *Hallowed be thy name.* It is the same word that in other places is translated *sanctified*. But here the old word *hallowed* is retained, only because people were used to it in the Lord's prayer. In these words, (1.) We give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as an adoration; as that, *the Lord be magnified, or glorified*, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. Let him have the praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them. (2.) We fix our end, and it is the right end to be aimed at, and ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all our other requests must be in subordination to this and in pursuance of it. "*Father, glorify thyself* in giving me my daily bread and pardoning my sins," &c. Since all is of him and through him, all must be to him and for him. In prayer our thoughts and affections should be carried out most to the glory of God. The Pharisees made their own name the chief end of their prayers, (*7. 5. to be seen of men*.) in opposition to which we are directed to make the name of God our chief end; let all our petitions centre in this and be regulated by it. "Do so and so for me, *for the glory of thy name*, and as far as is for the glory of it." (3.) We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified both by us and others, and especially by himself. "Father, let thy name be glorified as a Father, and a Father in heaven; glorify thy goodness and thy highness, thy majesty and mercy. *Let thy name be sanctified*, for it is a holy name; no matter what becomes of our polluted names, but, Lord, *what wilt thou do to thy great name?*" When we pray that God's name may be glorified, [1.] We make a virtue of necessity; for God will *sanctify his own name*, whether we desire it or not; *I will be exalted among the heathen*, Ps. 46. 10. [2.] We ask for that which we are sure shall be granted; for when our Saviour prayed, *Father, glorify thy name*, it was immediately answered, *I have glorified it, and will glorify it again*.

2. *Thy kingdom come.* This petition has plainly a reference to the doctrine which Christ preached at this time, which John Baptist had preached before, and which he afterwards sent his apostles out to preach—the *kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The kingdom of your Father which is in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, this is at hand, pray that it may come. Note, We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, *surely I come quickly*, our hearts should answer, *even so, come*. Ministers should pray over the word: when they preach, *the kingdom of God is at hand*, they should pray, *Father, thy kingdom come*. What God has promised we must pray for; for promises are given, not to supercede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly; *thy kingdom come*; as Daniel set his face to pray for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of it was at hand, Dan. 9. 2. See Luke 19. 11. It was the Jews' daily prayer to God, *Let him make his kingdom reign, let his redemption flourish, and*

let his Messiah come and deliver his people. Dr. Whitby, *ex Vitruvia*. "Let thy kingdom come, let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all; let all be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel-church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it, and live as becomes their character."

3. *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. By this let it appear that Christ's kingdom is come, *let God's will be done*; and by this let it appear that it is come as a *kingdom of heaven*, let it introduce a *heaven upon earth*. We make Christ but a titular Prince, if we call him King, and do not do his will: having prayed that he may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Observe, (1.) The thing prayed for, *thy will be done*; "Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine; 1 Sam. 3. 18. I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed." In this sense Christ prayed, *not my will, but thine be done*. "Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace that is necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men, (1 Pet. 4. 2.) much less Satan's will, (John 8. 44.) that we may neither displease God in any thing we do, (*ut nihil nostrum displiceat Deo*,) nor be displeased at any thing God does," (*ut nihil Dei displiceat nobis*.) (2.) The pattern of it, that it may *be done on earth*, in this place of our trial and probation, (where our work must be done, or it never will be done,) *as it is done in heaven*, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like to heaven by the observance of God's will, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, is become so near akin to hell; and that saints may be made more like to the holy angels in their devotion and obedience. We are *on earth*, blessed be God, not yet *under the earth*; we pray for *the living* only, not for *the dead*, that are gone down into silence.

4. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world, therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary supports and comforts of this present life, which are the gifts of God, and must be asked of him, *τοῦτο ἡμεῖς αἰτούμεν*—*Bread for the day approaching*, for all the remainder of our lives. *Bread for the time to come*, or *bread for our being and subsistence*, that which is agreeable to our condition in the world, (Prov. 30. 8.) *food convenient for us* and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word here has a lesson in it: (1.) We ask for *bread*; that teaches us sobriety and temperance; we ask for *bread*, not dainties, not superfluities; that which is wholesome, though it be not nice. (2.) We ask for *our bread*; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the *bread of deceit*, (Prov. 20. 13.) not the *bread of idleness*, (Prov. 31. 27.) but the bread honestly gotten. (3.) We ask for our *daily bread*; which teaches us not to *take thought for the morrow*, (ch. 6. 34.) but constantly to depend upon divine providence, as those that live from hand to mouth. (4.) We beg of God to *give* it us, not sell it us, nor lend it us, but *give* it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their *daily bread*. (5.) We pray, "Give it to us; not to me only, but to others in common with me." This

teaches us charity, and a compassionate concern for the poor and needy. It intimates also, that we ought to pray with our families; we and our households eat together, and therefore ought to pray together. (6.) We pray that God would give it us *this day*; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we should as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

5. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* This is connected with the former: *and forgive*, intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. *Our daily bread* does but feed us *as lambs for the slaughter*, if our sins be not pardoned. It intimates likewise, that we must pray for *daily pardon*, as duly as we pray for *daily bread*. *He that is washed, needeth to wash his feet*. Here we have,

(1.) A petition; *Father in heaven, forgive us our debts*, our debts to thee. Note, [1.] Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator; we do not pray to be discharged from that, but, upon the non-payment of that there arises a debt of punishment; in default of obedience to the will of God, we became obnoxious to the *wrath of God*; and for not observing the precept of the law, we stand obliged to the penalty. A debtor is liable to process, so are we: a malefactor is a debtor to the law, so are we. [2.] Our heart's desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would *forgive us our debts*; that the obligation to punishment may be cancelled and vacated, that we may *not come into condemnation*; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. In suing out the pardon of our sins, the great plea we have to rely upon, is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Surety, or rather Bail to the action, that undertook our discharge.

(2.) An argument to enforce this petition; *as we forgive our debtors*. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Note, Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord's prayer. Our duty is to *forgive our debtors*; as to debts of money, we must not be rigorous and severe in exacting them from those that cannot pay them without ruining themselves and their families; but this means debts of injury; our debtors are those that *trespass against us*, that *smite us*, (ch. 5. 39, 40.) and, in strictness of law, might be prosecuted for it; we must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us; and this is a moral qualification for pardon and peace; it encourages to hope, that God will *forgive us*; for if there be in us this gracious disposition, it is wrought of God, and therefore is a perfection eminently and transcendently in himself; it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us, having wrought in us the condition of forgiveness.

6. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* This petition is expressed,

(1.) Negatively: *Lead us not into temptation*. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, we pray, as is fit, that we may never return again to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but "Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us; chain up that *roaring lion*, for he is subtle and spiteful; Lord, do not leave us to ourselves, (Ps. 19. 13.) for we are very weak; Lord, do not *lay stumbling-blocks* and snares before us, nor put us into such circumstances as may be an *occasion of falling*." Temptations are to be prayed against,

both because of the discomfort and trouble of them, and because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that then follow.

(2.) Positively : *But deliver us from evil*, ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ—*from the evil one*, the devil, the tempter ; “keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or we may not be overcome by those assaults :” Or *from the evil thing*, sin, the worst of evils ; an evil, an only evil ; that evil thing which God hates, and which Satan tempts men to and destroys them by. “Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust ; from the evil of every condition in the world ; from the evil of death, from the *sting of death which is sin* : deliver us from ourselves, from our own evil hearts : deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them.”

III. The conclusion : *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.* Some refer this to David’s doxology, 1 Chron. 29. 11. *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness.* It is,

1. A form of plea to enforce the foregoing petitions. It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments, (Job 23. 4.) not to move God, but to affect ourselves ; to encourage our faith, to excite our fervency, and to evidence both. Now the best pleas in prayer, are those that are taken from God himself, and from that which he has made known of himself. We must wrestle with God in his own strength, both as to the matter of our pleas and the urging of them. The plea here has special reference to the three first petitions : “*Father in heaven, thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom ; thy will be done, for thine is the power ; hallowed be thy name, for thine is the glory.*” And as to our own particular errands, these are encouraging : “*Thine is the kingdom ; thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it :*” God gives and saves like a king. “*Thine is the power, to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people.*” *Thine is the glory*, as the end of all that which is given to, and done for, the saints, in answer to their prayers ; for their *praise waiteth* for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

2. It is a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him ; it is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share, for *praise becometh the saints* ; they are to be to our God *for a name and for a praise*. It is just and equal ; we praise God, and give him glory, not because he needs it—he is praised by a world of angels, but because he deserves it ; and it is our duty to give him glory, in compliance with his design in revealing himself to us. Praise is the work and happiness of heaven ; and all that would go to heaven hereafter, must begin their heaven now. Observe, how full this doxology is, *The kingdom, and the power, and the glory*, it is all thine. Note, It becomes us to be copious in praising God. A true saint never thinks he can speak honourably enough of God : here there should be a gracious fluency, and this *for ever*. Ascribing glory to God *for ever*, intimates an acknowledgment, that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it, with angels and saints above, Ps. 71. 14.

Lastly, To all this we are taught to affix our *Amen*, so be it. God’s *Amen* is a grant ; his *fiat* is, it shall be so : our *Amen* is only a summary desire ; our *fiat* is, let it be so : it is in token of our desire and assurance to be heard, that we say, *Amen*. *Amen* refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the

whole in one word, and so to gather up, in the general, what we have lost and let slip in the particulars. It is good to conclude religious duties with some warmth and vigour, that we may go from them with a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of good people to say, *Amen*, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs, (1 Cor. 14. 16.) and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward impressions, answerable to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

Most of the petitions in the Lord’s prayer had been commonly used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect : but that clause in the fifth petition, *As we forgive our debtors*, was perfectly new, and therefore our Saviour here shows for what reason he added it, not with any personal reflection upon the peevishness, litigiousness, and ill nature of the men of that generation, though there was cause enough for it, but only from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those that have injured us ; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must mention our making conscience of that duty, not only to remind ourselves of it, but to bind ourselves to it. See that parable, *ch.* 18. 23—35. Selfish nature is loth to comply with this, and therefore it is here inculated, *v.* 14, 15.

1. In a promise. *If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive.* Not as if this were the only condition required ; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience ; but as where other graces are in truth, there will be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that relents toward his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called *debts*, are here called *trespasses*, *debts* of injury, wrongs done us in our bodies, goods, or reputation : *trespasses* ; it is an extenuating term for offences, παραπτώματα—*stumbles, slips, falls*. Note, It is a good evidence, and a good help of our forgiving others, to call the injuries done us by a mollifying, excusing name. Call them not *treasons*, but *trespasses* ; not wilful injuries, but casual inadvertences ; *peradventure it was an oversight*, (Gen. 43. 12.) therefore make the best of it. We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven ; and therefore must not only bear no malice, nor meditate revenge, but must not upbraid our brother with the injuries he has done us, nor rejoice in any hurt that befalls him, but must be ready to help him and do him good, and if he repent and desire to be friends again, we must be free and familiar with him, as before.

2. In a threatening. “*But if you forgive not those that have injured you, that is a bad sign you have not the other requisite conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon ; and therefore your Father, whom you call Father, and who, as a father, offers you his grace upon reasonable terms, will nevertheless not forgive you.*” And if other graces be sincere, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirits brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty.” Note, Those that would find mercy with God must show mercy to their brethren ; nor can we expect that he should stretch out the hands of his favour to us, unless we lift up to him *pure hands, without wrath*, 1 Tim. 2. 8.

If we pray in anger, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. It has been said, prayers made in wrath are written in gall. What reason is it that God should forgive us the talents we are indebted to him, if we forgive not our brethren the pence they are indebted to us ? Christ came into the world as the great Peace-Maker, not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another, and in this we must comply with

hian. It is great presumption and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of that which Christ here lays such a stress upon. Men's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

16. Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving, and in prayer.

1. It is here supposed that religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when God, in his providence, calls to it, and when the case of their own souls upon any account requires it; *when the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast, ch. 9. 15.* Fasting is here put last, because it is not so much a duty for its own sake, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Prayer comes in between almsgiving and fasting, as being the life and soul of both. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, as free-will offerings, commonly used among the pious Jews; some fasted one day, some two, every week; others seldomer, as they saw cause. On those days they did not eat till sun-set, and then very sparingly. It was not the Pharisee's fasting *twice in the week*, but his boasting of it, that Christ condemned, Luke 18. 12. It is a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament it, that it is so generally neglected among Christians. Anna was much in fasting, Luke 2. 37. Cornelius fasted and prayed, Acts 10. 30. The primitive Christians were much in it, see Acts 13. 3.—14. 23. Private fasting is supposed, 1 Cor. 7. 5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, a holy revenge upon ourselves, and humiliation under the hand of God. The most grown Christians must hereby own, they are so far from having any thing to be proud of, that they are unworthy of their daily bread. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fullness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was in *fastings often*, and so he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection.

2. We are cautioned not to do this *as the hypocrites* did it, lest we lose the reward of it; and the more difficulty attends the duty, the greater loss it is to lose the reward of it.

Now, (1.) *The hypocrites* pretended fasting, when there was nothing of that contrition and humiliation of soul in them, which is the life and soul of the duty. Theirs were mock-fasts, the show and shadow without the substance; they took on them to be more humbled than really they were, and so endeavoured to put a cheat upon God, than which they could not put a greater affront upon him. The fast that God has chosen, is *a day to afflict the soul, not to hang down the head like a bulrush, nor for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him*; we are quite mistaken, if we call this a fast, Isa. 58. 5. Bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little, since that is not fasting to God, even to him.

(2.) They proclaimed their fasting, and managed it so as that all who saw them might take notice that it was a fasting-day with them. Even on these days they appeared in the streets, whereas they should have been in their closets; and they affected a down-

cast look, a melancholy countenance, a slow and solemn pace; and perfectly disfigured themselves, that men might see how often they fasted, and might extol them for devout, mortified men. Note, It is sad that men, who have, in some measure, mastered their pleasure, which is sensual wickedness, should be ruined by their pride, which is spiritual wickedness, and no less dangerous. Here also *they have their reward*, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; *they have it*, and it is their all.

3. We are directed how to manage a private fast; we must keep it private, *v. 17, 18.* He does not tell us how often we must fast; circumstances vary, and wisdom is profitable therein to direct; the Spirit in the word has left that to the Spirit in the heart; but take this for a rule, whenever you undertake this duty, study therein to approve yourselves to God, and not to recommend yourselves to the good opinions of men; humility must evermore attend upon our humiliation. Christ does not direct to abate any thing of the reality of the fast; he does not say, "take a little meat, or a little drink, or a little cordial;" no, "let the body suffer, but lay aside the show and appearance of it; appear with thy ordinary countenance, guise, and dress; and while thou deniest thyself thy bodily refreshments, do it so as that it may not be taken notice of, no, not by those that are nearest to thee; look pleasant, *anoint thine head, and wash thy face*, as thou dost in ordinary days, on purpose to conceal thy devotion; and thou shalt be no loser in the praise of it at last; for though it be not of men, it shall be of God." Fasting is the humbling of the soul, (Ps. 35. 13.) that is the inside of the duty; let that therefore be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. If we be sincere in our solemn fasts, and humble, and trust God's omniscience for our witness, and his goodness for our reward, we shall find, both that he did *see in secret* and will *reward openly*. Religious fasts, if rightly kept, will shortly be recompensed with an everlasting feast. Our acceptance with God in our private fasts, should make us dead, both to the applause of men, (we must not do the duty in hopes of this,) and to the censures of men too: (we must not decline the duty for fear of them.) David's fasting was turned to his reproach, Ps. 69. 10. and yet, *v. 13. As for me*, let them say what they will of me, *my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time.*

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: 23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Worldly-mindedness is as common and as fatal a symptom of hypocrisy as any other, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul,

under the cloak of a visible and passable profession of religion, thereby this; and therefore Christ having warned us against coveting *the praise of men*, proceeds next to warn us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we be as the hypocrites are, and do as they do: the fundamental error that they are guilty of is, that they choose the world for *their reward*; we must therefore take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, in the choice we make of our treasure, our end, and our masters.

I. In choosing the *treasure we lay up*. Something or other every man has which he makes his *treasure*, his portion which his heart is upon, to which he carries all he can get, and which he depends upon for futurity. It is *that good*, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with such an emphasis, Eccl. 2. 3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has a complacency and confidence in above other things. Now Christ designs not to deprive us of our treasure, but to direct us in the choice of it; and here we have,

1. A *good caution against making the things that are seen, that are temporal, our best things, and placing our happiness in them. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.* Christ's disciples had left all to follow him, let them still keep in the same good mind. A *treasure* is an abundance of something that is in itself, at least in our opinion, precious and valuable, and likely to stand us in stead hereafter. Now we must *not lay up our treasures on earth*, that is, (1.) We must not count these things the best things, nor the most valuable in themselves, nor the most serviceable to us: we must not call them glory, as Laban's sons did, but see and own that they have no glory in comparison with *the glory that excelleth*. (2.) We must not covet an abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at more and more of them, and adding to them, as men do to that which is their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough. (3.) We must not confide in them for futurity, to be our security and supply in time to come; we must not say to the gold, *Thou art my hope*. (4.) We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire: we must be content with a little for our passage, but not with all for our portion. These things must not be made our *consolation*, (Luke 6. 24.) our *good things*, Luke 16. 25. Let us consider we are laying up, not for our *posterity* in this world, but for *ourselves* in the other world. We are put to our choice, and made in a manner our own carvers; that is ours which we *lay up for ourselves*. It concerns thee to choose wisely, for thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou chooseth. If we know and consider ourselves what we are, what we are made for, how large our capacities are, and how long our continuance, and that our souls are ourselves, we shall see it a foolish thing to *lay up* our *treasure on earth*.

Here is a good reason given why we should not look upon any thing *on earth as our treasure*, because it is liable to loss and decay: [1.] From corruption within. That which is treasure *upon earth moth and rust doth corrupt*. If the *treasure* be laid up in fine clothes, the *moth* frets them, and they are gone and spoiled insensibly, when we thought them most securely laid up. If it be in corn or other eatables, as his was who had his barns full, (Luke 12. 16, 17.) *rust* (so we read it) *corrupts* that: *ἔφασι*—eating, eaten by men, for *as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them*; (Eccl. 5. 11.) eaten by mice or other vermin; manna itself bred worms; or if it grows mouldy and musty; is struck, or smutted, or blasted; fruits soon rot. Or, if we understand it of silver and gold, they tarnish and canker; they grow less with using, and grow worse with keeping; (Jam.

5. 2, 3.) the *rust and the moth* breed in the metal itself and in the garment itself. Note, Worldly riches have in themselves a principle of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves and *make themselves wings*. [2.] From violence without. *Thieves break through and steal*. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where the *treasure* is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. *Nunquam ego fortunam credidi, etiam si videretur pacem agere; omnia illa quæ in me indulgentissime conferebat, pecuniam, honores, gloriam, eo loco posui, unde posset ea, sine metu meo, repetere*—*I never reposed confidence in fortune, even if she seemed propitious: whatever were the favours which her bounty bestowed, whether wealth, honours, or glory, I so disposed of them that it was in her power to recall them without occasioning me any alarm.* Seneca Consol. ad Helv. It is folly to make that our *treasure* which we may so easily be robbed of.

Good counsel, to make the joys and glories of the other world, those things *not seen that are eternal*, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.* Note, (1.) There are *treasures in heaven*, as sure as there are on this earth; and those in heaven are the only true *treasures*, the riches and glories and pleasures that are at God's right hand, which those that are sanctified truly arrive at, when they come to be sanctified perfectly. (2.) It is our wisdom to *lay up* our *treasure* in those *treasures*; to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below with a holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with it. We must firmly believe there is such a happiness, and resolve to be content with that, and to be content with nothing short of it. If we thus make those *treasures* ours, they are laid up, and we may trust God to keep them safe for us; thither let us then refer all our designs, and extend all our desires; thither let us send before our best effects and best affections. Let us not burden ourselves with the cash of this world, which will but load and defile us, and be liable to sink us, but lay up in store good securities. The promises are bills of exchange, by which all true believers return their *treasure to heaven*, payable in the future state: and thus we must make that sure that will be made sure. (3.) It is a great encouragement to us to *lay up* our *treasure in heaven*, that there it is safe; it will not decay of itself, *no moth nor rust will corrupt it*; nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it; *thieves do not break through and steal*. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, *an inheritance incorruptible*.

3. A *good reason* why we should thus choose, and an evidence that we have done so, (v. 21.) *Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will your heart be.* We are therefore concerned to be right and wise in the choice of our *treasure*, because the temper of our minds, and consequently the tenor of our lives, will be accordingly either carnal or spiritual, earthly or heavenly. The *heart* follows the *treasure*, as the needle follows the loadstone, or the sunflower the sun. *Where the treasure is, there the value and esteem is; there the love and affection is*, Col. 3. 2. That way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view. *Where the treasure is, there our cares and fears are, lest we come short of it; about that we are more solicitous; there our hope and trust is*; (Prov. 18. 10, 11.) *there our joys and delights will be*; (Ps. 119. 111.) *and there our thoughts will be; there the inward thought will be, the first thought, the free thought, the fixed thought, the frequent, the familiar thought.* The *heart* is God's due, (Prov. 23. 26.) and, that he may have it, our

treasure must be laid up with him, and then our souls will be lifted up to him.

This direction about laying up our *treasure*, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution, of not doing what we do in religion to be seen of men. Our *treasure* is our alms, prayers, and fastings, and the reward of them; if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, we have laid up this *treasure on earth*, have lodged it in the hands of men, and must never expect to hear any further of it. Now it is folly to do this, for the praise of men we covet so much, is liable to corruption; it will soon be rusted, and moth-eaten, and tarnished; a little folly, like a dead fly, will spoil it all, Eccl. 10. 1. Slander and calumny are thieves that break through and steal it away, and so we lose all the *treasure* of our performances; we have run in vain and laboured in vain, because we misplaced our intentions in doing of them. Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven; (Isa. 58. 3.) the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for, Job 27. 8. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms, in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him therein, we have laid up that *treasure in heaven*; a book of remembrance is written there, (Mal. 3. 16.) and being there recorded, they shall be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Hypocrites are written in the earth, (Jer. 17. 13.) but God's faithful ones have their names written in heaven, Luke 10. 20. Acceptance with God is *treasure in heaven*, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His well done shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our *treasure* with him, with him our hearts will be; and where can they be better?

II. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the end we look at. Our concern as to this is represented by two sorts of eyes which men have, a *single eye* and an *evil eye*, v. 22, 23. The expressions here are somewhat dark because concise; we shall therefore take them in some variety of interpretation. *The light of the body is the eye*, that is plain; *the eye* is discovering and directing; *the light of the world* would avail us little without this *light of the body*; it is the *light of the eye that rejoiceth the heart*, (Prov. 15. 30.) but what is that which is here compared to the eye in the body?

1. *The eye*, that is, *the heart*; (so some) if thine *eye be single*—ἀπλὴ—free and bountiful, (so the word is frequently rendered, as Rom. 12. 8. 2 Cor. 8. 2.—9. 11, 13. Jam. 1. 5. and we read of a *bountiful eye*, Prov. 22. 9.) If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to christian actions, the whole conversation will be full of light, full of the evidences and instances of true christianity, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father; (Jam. 1. 27.) full of light, of good works, which are our light shining before men; but if the heart be evil, covetous, and hard, and envious, grinding, and grudging, (such a temper of mind is often expressed by an *evil eye*, ch. 20. 15. Mark 7. 22. Prov. 23. 6, 7.) the body will be full of darkness, the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian. *The instruments of the churl are and always will be evil*, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa. 32. 5—8. If the light that is in us, those affections which should guide us to that which is good, be darkness, if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not so much as good nature in a man, not so much as a kind disposition, how great is the corruption of the man, and the darkness in which he sits! This sense seems to agree with the context: we must lay up treasure in heaven by liberality in giving alms, and that not grudgingly but with cheerfulness, Luke 12. 33. 2 Cor. 9. 7. But these words in the parallel place do not come in upon any such

occasion, Luke 11. 34. and therefore the coherence here does not determine that to be the sense of them.

3. *The eye*, that is, *the understanding*; (so some;) the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as the eye is to the body, to guide and direct their motions; now if the eye be single, if it make a true and right judgment, and discern things that differ, especially in the great concern of laying up the treasure so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be full of the light of grace and comfort; but if this be evil and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biassed by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be full of darkness, and the whole conversation corrupt. They that will not understand, are said to walk on in darkness, Ps. 82. 5. It is sad when the spirit of a man, that should be the candle of the Lord, is an ignis fatuus; when the leaders of the people, the leaders of the faculties, cause them to err, for then they that are led of them are destroyed, Isa. 9. 16. An error in the practical judgment is fatal, it is that which calls evil good and good evil; (Isa. 5. 20.) therefore it concerns us to understand things aright, to get our eyes anointed with eye-salve.

3. *The eye*, that is, *the aims and intentions*; by the eye we set our end before us, the mark we shoot at, the place we go to, we keep that in view, and direct our motion accordingly; in every thing we do in religion, there is something or other that we have in our eye; now if our eye be single, if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly towards them, if we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seek his honour and favour, and direct all entirely to him then the eye is single: Paul's was so when he said *To me to live is Christ*; and if we be right here, the whole body will be full of light, all the actions will be regular and gracious, pleasing to God and comfortable to ourselves; but if this eye be evil, if, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and our acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of seeking the things of Christ, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but confusion and every evil work in the superstructure. Draw the lines from the circumference to any other point but the centre, and they will cross. If the light that is in thee be not only dim, but darkness itself, it is a fundamental error, and destructive to all that follows. The end specifies the action. It is of the last importance in religion, that we be right in our aims, and make eternal things, not temporal, our scope, 2 Cor. 4. 18. The hypocrite is like the waterman, that looks one way and rows another; the true christian like the traveller, that has his journey's end in his eye. The hypocrite soars like the kite, with his eye upon the prey below, which he is ready to come down to when he has a fair opportunity; the true christian soars like the lark, higher and higher, forgetting the things that are beneath.

III. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the master we serve, v. 24. No man can serve two masters. Serving two masters is contrary to the single eye; for the eye will be to the master's hand, Ps. 123. 1, 2. Our Lord Jesus here exposes the cheat which those put upon their own souls, who think to divide between God and the world, to have a treasure on earth and a treasure in heaven too; please God and please men too. Why not? says the hypocrite; it is good to have two strings to one's bow. They hope to make their religion serve their secular interest, and so turn to account both ways. The pretending mother was for dividing the

child : the Samaritans will compound between God and idols. No, says Christ, this will not do ; it is but a supposition that *gain is godliness*, 1 Tim. 6. 5. Here is,

1. A general maxim laid down ; it is likely it was a proverb among the Jews, *No man can serve two masters*, much less two gods ; for their commands will some time or other cross or contradict one another, and their occasions interfere. While *two masters* go together, a servant may follow them both ; but when they part, you will see to which he belongs ; he cannot love, and observe, and cleave to both as he should. If to the one, not to the other ; either this or that must be comparatively hated and despised. This truth is plain enough in common cases.

2. The application of it to the business in hand. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* *Mammon* is a Syriac word, that signifies gain ; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be, *gain*, (Phil. 3. 7.) is *mammon*. *Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is mammon.* To some their belly is their *mammon*, and they serve that ; (Phil. 3. 19.) to others their ease, their sleep, their sports and pastimes are their *mammon* ; (Prov. 6. 9.) to others worldly riches ; (James 4. 13.) to others honours and preferences ; the praise and applause of men was the Pharisees' *mammon* ; in a word, self, the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self, is the *mammon* which cannot be served in conjunction with God ; for if it be served, it is in competition with him and in contradiction to him. He does not say, *We must not or we should not*, but *we cannot, serve God and Mammon ; we cannot love both* ; (1 John 2. 15. Jam. 4. 4.) or hold to both, or hold by both in observance, obedience, attendance, trust, and dependence, for they are contrary, the one to the other. God says, *My son, give me thy heart.* *Mammon* says, "No, give it me." God says, *Be content with such things as ye have.* *Mammon* says, "Grasp at all that ever thou canst. *Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem—Money, money ; by fair means or by foul, money.*" God says, *Defraud not, never lie, be honest and just in all thy dealings.* *Mammon* says, "Cheat thy own father, if thou canst gain by it." God says, *Be charitable.* *Mammon* says, "Hold thy own, this giving undoes us all." God says, *Be careful for nothing.* *Mammon* says, "Be careful for every thing." God says, *Keep holy the Sabbath-day.* *Mammon* says, "Make use of that day as well as any other for the world." Thus inconsistent are the commands of God and *Mammon*, so that *we cannot serve both*. Let us not then *halt between God and Baal*, but *choose ye this day whom ye will serve*, and abide by your choice.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? 26. Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? 27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ? 28. And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin : 29. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed

like one of these. 30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? 31. Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat ? or, what shall we drink ? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed ? 32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow : for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

There is scarcely any one sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, or against which he arms them with more variety of arguments, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of this life, which are a bad sign that both the *treasure* and the heart are *on the earth* ; and therefore he thus largely insists upon it. Here is,

1. The prohibition laid down. It is the counsel and command of the Lord Jesus, that *we take no thought* about the things of this world ; *I say unto you*. He says it as our Lawgiver, and the Sovereign of our hearts ; he says it as our Comforter, and the Helper of our joy. What is it that he says ? It is this, and *he that has ears to hear, let him hear it*. *Take no thought for your life, nor yet for your bodies ;* (v. 25.) *Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ?* (v. 31.) and again, (v. 34.) *Take no thought, $\mu\eta\ \mu\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\chi\tau\epsilon$ —Be not in care.* As against hypocrisy, so against worldly cares, the caution is thrice repeated, and yet no vain repetition : *precept* must be *upon precept*, and *line upon line*, to the same purport, and all little enough ; it is a *sin which doth so easily beset us*. It intimates how pleasing it is to Christ, and of how much concern it is to ourselves, that we should live without carefulness. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a *thought* concerning the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but duty, such as is commended in the virtuous woman, Prov. 27. 23. The word is used concerning Paul's care of the churches, and Timothy's care for the state of souls, 2 Cor. 11. 28 Phil. 2. 20.

But the care here forbidden is, 1. A disquieting, tormenting care, which hurries the mind hither and thither, and hangs it in suspense ; which disturbs our joy in God, and is a damp upon our hope in him ; which breaks the sleep, and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, of our friends, and of what God has given us. 2. A distrustful, unbelieving *thought*. God has promised to provide for those that are his, all things needful for life as well as godliness, *the life that now is*, food and a covering ; not dainties, but necessities. He never said, "They shall be feasted, but, *Verily they shall be fed.*" Now an inordinate care for time to come, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from a disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence ; and that is the evil of it. As to present sustenance, we may and must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God ; we must be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for *daily*

break! and if all other means fail, we may and must ask relief of those that are able to give it. He was none of the best of men that said, *To beg I am ashamed*; (Luke 16. 5.) as he was, who (v. 21.) *desired to be fed with the crumbs*; but for the future, we must cast our care upon God, and take no thought, because it looks like a jealousy of God, who knows how to give what we want when we know not how to get it. Let our souls dwell at ease in him! This gracious carelessness is the same with that sleep which God gives to his beloved, in opposition to the worldling's toil, Ps. 127. 2. Observe the cautions here,

(1.) *Take no thought for your life.* Life is our greatest concern for this world; *All that a man has will he give for his life*; yet take no thought about it. [1.] Not about the continuance of it; refer it to God to lengthen or shorten it as he pleases; *my times are in thy hand*, and they are in a good hand. [2.] Not about the comforts of this life; refer it to God to embitter or sweeten it as he pleases. We must not be solicitous, no not about the necessary support of this life, *food and raiment*; these God has promised, and therefore we may more confidently expect; say not, *What shall we eat?* It is the language of one at a loss, and almost despairing; whereas, though many good people have the prospect of little, yet there are few but have present support.

(2.) *Take no thought for the morrow*, for the time to come. Be not solicitous for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not boast of to-morrow, so we must not care for to-morrow, or the events of it.

II. The reasons and arguments to enforce this prohibition. One would think the command of Christ was enough to restrain us from this foolish sin of disquieting, distrustful care, independently of the comfort of our own souls, which is so nearly concerned; but to show how much the heart of Christ is upon it, and what *pleasure he takes* in those that *hope in his mercy*, the command is backed with the most powerful arguments. If reason may but rule us, surely we shall ease ourselves of these thorns. To free us from anxious thoughts, and to expel them, Christ here suggests to us *comforting* thoughts, that we may be filled with them. It will be worth while to take pains with our own hearts, to argue them out of their disquieting cares, and to make ourselves ashamed of them. They may be weakened by right reason, but it is by an active faith only that they can be overcome. Consider then,

1. *Is not this life more than meat, and the body than raiment?* v. 25. Yes, no doubt it is; so he says, who had reason to understand the true value of present things, for he made them, he supports them, and supports us by them; and the thing speaks for itself. Note, (1.) *Our life* is a greater blessing than our *livelihood*. It is true, life cannot subsist without a livelihood; but the meat and raiment which are here represented as inferior to the life and body, are such as are for ornament and delight; for about such we are apt to be solicitous. Meat and raiment are in order to life, and the end is more noble and excellent than the means. The daintiest food and finest raiment are from the earth, but life from the *breath of God*. Life is the *light of men*, meat is but the oil that feeds that light; so that the difference between rich and poor is very inconsiderable, since, in the greatest things, they stand on the same level, and differ only in the lesser. (2.) This is an encouragement to us to trust God for *food and raiment*, and so to ease ourselves of all perplexing cares about them. God has given us life, and given us the body; it was an act of power, it was an act of favour, it was done without our care: what can-

net he do for us, who did that—what will he not? If we take care about our souls and eternity, which are more than the body, and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against the evils we are exposed to, will supply us with the *good things* we are in need of. If he had been pleased to kill us, to starve us, he would not so often have given his angels a charge concerning us to keep us.

2. *Behold the fowls of the air, and consider the lilies of the field.* Here is an argument taken from God's common providence toward the inferior creatures, and their dependence, according to their capacities, upon that providence. A fine pass fallen man is come to, that he must be sent to school to the *fowls of the air*, and that they must *teach him*, Job 12. 7, 8.

(1.) Look upon the *fowls*, and learn to trust God for *food*, (v. 26.) and disquiet not yourselves with thoughts *what you shall eat*.

[1.] Observe the providence of God concerning them. Look upon them, and receive instruction. There are various sorts of fowls; they are numerous, some of them ravenous, but they are all fed, and fed with *food* convenient for them; it is rare that any of them perish for want of food, even in winter, and there goes no little to feed them all the year round. The fowls, as they are least serviceable to man, so they are least within his care; men often feed upon them, but seldom feed them; yet they are fed, we know not how, and some of them fed best in the hardest weather; and it is *your heavenly Father that feeds them*; he *knows all the wild fowls of the mountains*, better than you know the tame ones at your own barn-door, Ps. 50. 11. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without any care or project of their own; *they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*. The ant indeed does, and the bee, and they are set before us as examples of prudence and industry; but the fowls of the air do not; they make no provision for the future themselves, and yet every day, as duly as the day comes, provision is made for them, and their *eyes wait on God*, that great and good Housekeeper, who *provides food for all flesh*.

[2.] Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. *Are ye not much better than they?* Yes, certainly you are. Note, The *heirs of heaven* are much better than the *fowls of heaven*; nobler and more excellent beings, and, by faith, they soar higher; they are of a better nature and nurture, *wiser than the fowls of heaven*; (Job 35. 11.) though the children of this world, that *know not the judgement of the Lord*, are not so wise as the *stork*, and the *crane*, and the *swallow*, (Jer. 8. 7.) you are dearer to God, and nearer, though they fly in the open firmament of heaven. He is their Maker and Lord, their Owner and Master; but beside all this, he is your Father, and in his account *ye are of more value than many sparrows*; you are his children, his first born; now he that feeds his birds surely will not starve his babes. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they are careless for the morrow; and being so, they live the merriest lives of all creatures, they *sing among the branches*, (Ps. 104. 12.) and, to the best of their power, they praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; for it is worldly care that

mars our mirth, and damps our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

(2.) Look upon the *lilies*, and learn to trust God for *raiment*. That is another part of our care, *what we shall put on*; for decency, to cover us; for defence, to keep us warm; yea, and, with many, for dignity and ornament, to make them look great and fine; and so much concerned are they for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for their daily bread. Now to ease us of this care, let us *consider the lilies of the field*; not only *look upon* them, (every eye does that with pleasure,) but *consider* them. Note, There is a great deal of good to be learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it, Prov. 6. 6.—24. 32.

[1.] Consider how *frail* the lilies are; they are the *grass of the field*. Lilies, though distinguished by their colours, are still but *grass*. Thus *all flesh is grass*, though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; the grass of the field in nature and constitution; they stand upon the same level with others. Man's days, at best, are *as grass*, as the *flower of the grass*, 1 Pet. 1. 24. This grass *to-day is*, and *to-morrow is cast into the oven*; in a little while the place that *knows us*, will *know us no more*. The grave is the oven into which we shall be cast, and in which we shall be consumed as grass in the fire, Ps. 49. 14. This intimates a reason why we should not take thought for the morrow, what we shall put on, because perhaps, by to-morrow, we may have occasion for our grave-clothes.

[2.] Consider how *free from care* the lilies are: they *toil not* as men do, to earn clothing; as servants, to earn their liveries; *neither do they spin*, as women do, to make clothing. It does not follow that we must, therefore, neglect, or do carelessly, the proper business of this life; it is the praise of the virtuous woman, that *she lays her hand to the spindle, makes fine linen, and sells it*, Prov. 31. 19, 24. Idleness *tempts* God, instead of *trusting* him; but he that provides for the inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to *toil and spin*, God can furnish us with what is necessary for us.

[3.] Consider how *fair*, how *fine* the lilies are; *how they grow*; what they *grow from*. The root of the lily or tulip, as other bulbous roots, is, in the winter, lost and buried under ground, yet, when spring returns, it appears, and starts up in a little time; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they shall grow *as the lily*, Hos. 14. 5. Consider what they *grow to*. Out of that obscurity in a few weeks they come to be so very gay, that even *Solomon*, in *all his glory*, was not *arrayed like one of these*. The array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent: he that had the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces, and so studiously affected pomp and gallantry, doubtless had the richest clothing, and the best made up, that could be got; especially when he appeared in his glory on high days. And yet, let him dress himself as fine as he could, he comes far short of the beauty of the lilies, and a bed of tulips outshines him. Let us, therefore, be more ambitious of the *wisdom* of Solomon, in which he was outdone by none; wisdom to do our duty in our places, rather than the *glory* of Solomon, in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. Now God is here said thus to *clothe the grass of the field*. Note, All the excellences of the creature flow from God, the Fountain and Spring of them. It was he that gave the horse his strength, and the lily its beauty; every creature is in itself, as well as to us, what he makes it to be.

[4.] Consider how instructive all this is to us. v. 30.

First, As to *fine* clothing; this teaches us not to care for it at all, not to covet it, nor to be proud of it, not to make the *putting on of apparel* our *adorn- ing*, for after all our care in this the lilies will far outdo us; we cannot dress so fine as they do, why then should we attempt to vie with them? Their adorning will soon perish, and so will ours; they fade—*are to-day*, and *to-morrow are cast*, as other rubbish, *into the oven*; and the clothes we are proud of are wearing out, the gloss is soon gone, the colour fades, the shape goes out of fashion, or in a while the garment itself is worn out; such is man in all his pomp, (Isa. 40. 6, 7.) especially rich men; (Jam. 1. 10.) they *fade away in their ways*.

Secondly, As to *necessary* clothing; this teaches us to cast the care of it upon God—*Jehovah-jireh*; trust him that clothes the lilies, to provide for you what you shall *put on*. If he give such fine clothes to the grass, much more will he give fitting clothes to his own children; clothes that shall be warm upon them, not only *when he quieteth the earth with the south wind*, but when he disquiets it with the *north wind*, Job 37. 17. He shall much more clothe you; for you are nobler creatures, of a more excellent being; if so he clothe the short-lived grass, much more will he clothe you that are made for immortality. Even the children of Nineveh are preferred before the gourd, (Jonah 4. 10, 11.) much more the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. Observe the title he gives them. (v. 30.) *O ye of little faith*. This may be taken, 1. As an encouragement to true faith, though it be but weak; it entitles us to the divine care and a promise of suitable supply. Great faith shall be commended, and shall procure great things, but little faith shall not be rejected, even that shall procure food and raiment. *Sound* believers shall be provided for though they be *not strong* believers. The babes in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those that are grown up, and with a special care and tenderness; say not I am but a child, but a dry tree, (Isa. 56. 3, 5.) for though *poor and needy*, yet the *Lord thinketh on thee*. Or, 2. it is rather a rebuke to weak faith, though it be true, *ch. 14. 31*. It intimates what is at the bottom of all our inordinate care and thoughtfulness; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us. If we had but more faith, we should have less care.

3. *Which of you*, the wisest, the strongest of you, *by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?* (v. 27.) to his age, so some; but the measure of a cubit denotes it to be meant of the stature, and the age at longest is but a span, Ps. 39. 5. Let us consider, (1.) We did not arrive at the stature we are of, by our own care and thought, but by the providence of God. An infant of a span long is grown up to be a man of six feet, and how was one cubit after another added to his stature? Not by his own forecast or contrivance; he grew he knew not how, by the power and goodness of God. Now he that made our bodies and made them of such a size, surely will take care to provide for them. Note, God is to be acknowledged in the increase of our bodily strength and stature, and to be trusted for all needful supplies, because he has made it to appear, that he is for the body. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not he who reared us to this, provide for us now we are reared. (2.) We cannot alter the stature we are of, if we would: what a foolish and ridiculous thing would it be, for a man of low stature to perplex himself, to break his sleep, and beat his brains, about it, and to be continually taking thought how he might be a cubit higher; when, after all, he knows he cannot effect it, and therefore he had better be content and

take it as it is? We are not all of a size, yet the difference in stature between one and another is not material, nor of any great account; a little man is ready to wish he were as tall as such a one, but he knows it is to no purpose, and therefore does as well as he can with it. Now as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate. [1.] We should not covet an abundance of the wealth of this world, any more than we would covet the addition of a cubit to one's stature, which is a great deal in a man's height; it is enough to grow by inches; such an addition would but make one unwieldy, and a burden to one's self. [2.] We must reconcile ourselves to our state, as we do to our stature; we must set the conveniences against the inconveniences, and so make a virtue of necessity; what cannot be remedied must be made the best of. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce in them, accommodate ourselves to them, and relieve ourselves, as well as we can, against inconveniences, as Zacheus against the inconvenience of his stature, by climbing into the tree.

4. *After all these things do the Gentiles seek, v. 32.* Thoughtfulness about the world is a *heathenish* sin, and unbecoming *christians*. The *Gentiles* seek these things, because they know not better things; they are eager for this world, because they are strangers to a better; they seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are *without God in the world*, and understand not his providence. They fear and worship their idols, but know not how to trust them for deliverance and supply, and, therefore, are themselves full of care; but it is a shame for christians, who build upon nobler principles, and profess a religion which teaches them, not only that there is a Providence, but that there are promises made to the good of the life that now is, which teaches them a confidence in God and a contempt of the world, and gives such reasons for both; it is a shame for them to walk as Gentiles walk, and to fill their heads and hearts with these things.

5. *Your heavenly Father knows ye have need of all these things; these necessary things, food and raiment; he knows our wants better than we do ourselves; though he be in heaven, and his children on earth, he observes what the least and poorest of them has occasion for, (Rev. 2. 9.) I know thy poverty.* You think, if such a good friend did but know your wants and straits, you should soon have relief; your God knows them; and he is your Father that loves you and pities you, and is ready to help you; your heavenly Father, who has wherewithal to supply all your needs: away, therefore, with all disquieting thoughts and cares; go to thy Father; tell him, *he knows thou hast need of such and such things*; he asks you, *Children, have you any meat?* John 21. 5. Tell him whether you have or not. Though he knows our wants, he will know them from us; and when we have opened them to him, let us cheerfully refer ourselves to his wisdom, power, and goodness, for our supply. Therefore, we should ease ourselves of the burden of care, by casting it upon God, because it is he *that careth for us*, (1 Pet. 5. 7.) and what needs all this ado? If he care, why should we care?

6. *Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, v. 33.* Here is a double argument against the sin of *thoughtfulness*; take no thought for your life, the life of the body; for, (1.) You have greater and better things to take thought about; the life of your soul, your eternal happiness; that is the *one thing needful*, (Luke 10. 42.) about which you should employ your thoughts, and which is commonly neglected, in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendant. If we were but more careful to

please God, and to work out our own salvation, we should be less solicitous to please ourselves, and work out an estate in the world. Thoughtfulness for our souls, is the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world. (2.) You have a surer and easier, a safer and a more compendious way to obtain the necessities of this life, than by barking, and caring, and fretting about them; and that is, by *seeking first the kingdom of God*, and making religion your business; say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. Observe here,

[1.] The great duty required; it is the sum and substance of our whole duty. "*Seek first the kingdom of God*; mind religion as your great and principal concern;" our duty is to seek; to desire, pursue, and aim at these things; it is a word that has in it much of the constitution of the new covenant in favour of us; *though we have not attained*, but in many things fail, and come short, sincere seeking, a careful concern and earnest endeavour, are accepted. Now observe, *First*, The object of this seeking; *The kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; we must mind heaven as our end, and holiness as our way. "*Seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace and glory as your felicity; aim at the kingdom of heaven*"; press towards it, give diligence to make it sure; resolve not to take up short of it; seek for this glory, honour, and immortality; prefer heaven and heavenly blessings far before earth and earthly delights." We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heaven of it. And with the *happiness* of this kingdom, seek the *righteousness* of it; *God's righteousness*, the righteousness which he requires to be wrought in us, and wrought by us, such as exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees; we must *follow peace and holiness*, Heb. 12. 14. *Secondly*, The order of it. *Seek first the kingdom of God*. Let your care for your souls and another world, take place of all other cares; and let all the concerns of this life be made subordinate to those of the life to come: we must seek the things of Christ more than our own things; and if ever they come in competition, we must remember to which we are to give the preference. "*Seek these things first*; first in thy days, let the morning of youth be dedicated to God. Wisdom must be sought early; it is god beginning betimes to be religious. Seek this first every day; let waking thoughts be of God." Let this be our principle, to do that first which is most needful, and let him that is the First, have the first.

[2.] The gracious promise annexed; *all these things, the necessary supports of life, shall be added unto you*; shall be given over and above; so it is in the margin. You shall have what you seek, the *kingdom of God and his righteousness*, for never any sought in vain, that sought in earnest; and besides that, you shall have food and raiment, by way of overplus; as he that buys goods has paper and packthread given him into the bargain. *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. Solomon asked wisdom, and had that and other things added to him, 2 Chron. 1. 11, 12. O what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and lives, did we but firmly believe this truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world! We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. If we give diligence to make sure to ourselves the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, as to all the things of this life, Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide as much of them as he sees good for us, and more we would not wish for. Have we trusted him for the *portion of our inheritance* at our end, and shall we not trust him for the *portion of our cup*, in the way to it? God's Israel

were not only brought to Canaan at last, but had their charges borne through the wilderness. O that we were more thoughtful about the things that are not seen, that are eternal, and then the less thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtful we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal! *Also regard not your stuff*, Gen. 45. 20, 23.

7. *The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*, v. 34. We must not perplex ourselves inordinately about future events, because every day brings along with it its own burden of cares and grievances, as if we look about us, and suffer not our fears to betray the succours which grace and reason offer, it brings along with it its own strength and supply too. So that we are here told,

(1.) That *thoughtfulness* for the morrow is *needless*; let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. If wants and troubles be renewed with the day, there are aids and provisions renewed likewise; *compassions*, that are *new every morning*, Lam. 3. 22. The saints have a Friend that is *their arm every morning*, and gives out fresh supply daily, (Isa. 33. 2.) according as the *business of every day requires*; (Ezra 3. 4.) and so he keeps his people in a constant dependence upon him. Let us refer it therefore to the morrow's strength, to do the morrow's work, and bear the morrow's burden. To-morrow, and the things of it, will be provided for without us; why need we thus anxiously care for that which is so wisely cared for already? This does not forbid a prudent foresight, and preparation accordingly, but a perplexing solicitude, and a prepossession of difficulties and calamities, which may perhaps never come, or if they do, may be easily borne, and the evil of them guarded against. The meaning is, let us *mind present duty*, and then *leave events to God*; do the *work of the day in its day*, and then let to-morrow bring its work along with it.

(2.) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is one of those *foolish and hurtful lusts*, which they that will be rich fall into, and one of the *many sorrows*, wherewith they *pierce themselves through*. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*. This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not *accumulate* burdens by *anticipating* our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from to-morrow's evils to add to those of this day. It is uncertain what to-morrow's evils may be, but whatever they be, it is time enough to take thought about them when they come. What a folly is it to take that trouble upon ourselves this day by care and fear, which belongs to another day, and will be never the lighter when it comes? Let us not pull that upon ourselves all together at once, which Providence has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels. The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by their apprehensions of troubles, than God has made it, by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us.

CHAP. VII.

This chapter continues and concludes Christ's sermon on the mount, which is purely practical, directing us to order our conversation aright, both toward God and man; for the design of the christian religion is to make men good, every way good. We have, I. Some rules concerning censure and reproof, v. 1. . 6. II. Encouragements given us to pray to God for what we need, v. 7. . 11. III. The necessity of strictness in conversation urged upon us, v. 13, 14. IV. A caution given us to take heed of false prophets, v.

15. . 20. V. The conclusion of the whole sermon, showing the necessity of universal obedience to Christ's commands, without which we cannot expect to be happy, v. 21. . 27. VI. The impression which Christ's doctrine made upon his hearers, v. 28, 29.

1. **J**UDGE not, that ye be not judged. 2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye: and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. 6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Our Saviour is here directing us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the faults of others; and his expressions seem intended as a reproof to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were very rigid and severe, very magisterial and supercilious, in condemning all about them, as those commonly are, that are proud and conceited in justifying themselves. We have here,

I. A caution *against judging*, v. 1, 2. There are those whose office it is to judge—magistrates and ministers. Christ, though he made not himself a Judge, yet came not to unmake them, for by him *princes decree justice*; but this is directed to private persons, to his disciples, who shall hereafter sit on *thrones judging*, but not now. Now observe,

1. The prohibition; *Judge not*: We must judge ourselves, and judge of our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, nor magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us; since our rule is, to be *subject to one another*. *Be not many masters*, Jam. 3. 1. We must not sit in the judgement-seat, to make our word a law to every body. We must not judge our brother, that is, we must not *speak evil* of him, so it is explained, Jam. 4. 11. We must not *despise him*, nor *set him at naught*, Rom. 14. 10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer such invidious things from their words and actions as they will not bear. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act, nor of what he is in himself by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are apt to be partial. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them *hypocrites*, *reprobates*, and *castaways*; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

2. The reason to enforce this prohibition; *that ye be not judged*. This intimates, (1.) That if we presume to judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. He who usurps the bench, shall be called to the bar; he shall be judged of men; commonly

none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; every one will have a stone to throw at them; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, *against every man*, shall, like him, have *every man's* hand and tongue *against him*; (Gen. 16. 12.) and no mercy shall be shown to the reputation of those that show no mercy to the reputation of others. Yet that is not the worst of it; they shall be judged of God; from him they shall receive the *greater condemnation*, Jam. 3. 1. Both parties must appear before him, (Rom. 14. 10.) who, as he will relieve the *humble sufferer*, will also resist the *haughty scorner*, and give him enough of judging. (2.) That if we be modest and charitable in our censures of others, and decline judging them, and judge ourselves rather, *we shall not be judged of the Lord*. As God will forgive those that forgive their brethren, so he will not judge those that will not judge their brethren; the *merciful shall find mercy*. It is an evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, and shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly. See Rom. 14. 10.

The judging of those that judge others, is according to the law of retaliation; *With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged*, v. 2. The righteous God, in his judgments, often observes a rule of proportion, as in the case of Adenibezek, Judg. 1. 7. See also Rev. 13. 10—18. 6. Thus will he be both justified and magnified in his judgments, and all flesh will be silenced before him. *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*; perhaps in this world, so that men may read their sin in their punishment. Let this deter us from all severity in dealing with our brother. *What then shall we do when God rises up? Job 31. 14.* What would become of us, if God should be as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging our brethren; if he should weigh us in the same balance? We may justly expect it, if we be extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return upon their own heads.

II. Some cautions about reproving. Because we must not judge others, which is a great sin, it does not therefore follow, that we must not reprove others, which is a great duty, and may be a means of *saving a soul from death*; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. Now observe here,

I. It is not every one who is fit to reprove. Those who are themselves guilty of the faults of which they accuse others, or of worse, bring shame upon themselves, and are not likely to do good to those whom they reprove, v. 3—5. Here is,

(1.) A just reproof to the censorious who quarrel with their brother for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones; who are quick-sighted to spy a *mote* in his eye, but are not sensible of a *beam* in their own; nay, and will be very officious to *pull out the mote out of his eye*, when they are as unfit to do it as if they were themselves quite blind. Note, [1.] There are degrees in sin: some sins are comparatively but as *motes*, while others are as *beams*; some as a *gnat*, others as a *camel*: not that there is any sin little, for there is no little God to sin against: if it be a *mote*, (or *splinter*, for so it might better be read,) it is in the eye; if a *gnat*, it is in the throat; both painful and perilous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out. [2.] Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the same sins in others: that which charity teaches us to call but a *splinter* in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a *beam* in our own; for the sin of others must be extenuated, but our own aggravated. [3.] There are many that have *beams* in their own eyes, and yet do not consider it. They are under the guilt and dominion of very great sins, and yet are not aware of it, but justify themselves,

as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world so artfully blinds their minds, that notwithstanding, with great assurance, they say, *We see*. [4.] It is common for those that are most sinful themselves, and least sensible of it, to be most forward and free in judging and censuring others: the Pharisees, who were most haughty in justifying themselves, were most scornful in condemning others. They were severe upon Christ's disciples for *eating with unwashed hands*, which was scarcely a *mote*, while they encouraged men in a contempt of their parents, which was a *beam*. Pride and uncharitableness are commonly *beams* in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. Nay, many are guilty of that in secret, which they have the face to punish in others when it is discovered. *Cygeta tecum, fortasse vitium de quo queris, si te diligenter excusseris, in sinu invenies; nique publice irascaris crimini tuo*—*Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime*. Seneca, de Beneficiis. But, [5.] Men's being so severe upon the faults of others, while they are indulgent of their own, is a mark of hypocrisy. *Thou hypocrite*, v. 5. Whatever such a one may pretend, it is certain that he is no enemy to sin, (if he were, he would be an enemy to his own sin,) and therefore he is not worthy of praise; nay, that it appears he is an enemy to his brother, and therefore worthy of blame. This spiritual charity must begin at home; *For how canst thou say, how canst thou for shame say, to thy brother, Let me help to reform thee, when thou takest no care to reform thyself?* Thy own heart will upbraid thee with the absurdity of it; thou wilt do it with an ill grace, and thou wilt expect every one to tell thee, that *vice corrects sin: physician, heal thyself*; *"I pray, sequar—Go you before, and I will follow."* See Rom. 2. 21. [6.] The consideration of what is amiss in ourselves, though it ought not to keep us from administering friendly reproof, ought to keep us from magisterial censuring, and to make us very candid and charitable in judging others. *"Therefore restore with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself"*; (Gal. 6. 1.) what thou hast been, what thou art, and what thou wouldst be, if God should leave thee to thyself.

(2.) Here is a good rule for reprovers, v. 5. Go in the right method, *first cast the beam out of thine own eye*. Our own badness is so far from excusing us in not reproving, that our being by it rendered unfit to reprove, is an aggravation of our badness; I must not say, *"I have a beam in my own eye, and therefore I will not help my brother with the mote out of his."* A man's offence will never be his defence: but I must first reform myself, that I may thereby help to reform my brother, and may qualify myself to reprove him. Note, Those who blame others, ought to be blameless and harmless themselves. Those who are *reprovers in the gate*, reprovers by office, magistrates and ministers, are concerned to *walk circumspectly*, and to be very regular in their conversation: an *elder must have a good report*, 1 Tim. 3. 2, 7. The snuffers of the sanctuary were to be of pure gold.

2. It is not every one that is fit to be reprov'd; *Give not that which is holy unto dogs*, v. 6. This may be considered, either, (1.) As a rule to the disciples in preaching the gospel; not that they must not preach it to any who were wicked and profane, (Christ himself preached to publicans and sinners,) but the reference is to such as they found obstinate after the gospel was preached to them, such as blas-

phemed it, and persecuted the preachers of it : let them not spend much time among such, for it would be lost labour, but let them turn to others, Acts 13. 41. So Dr. Whitby. Or, (2.) As a rule to all in giving reproof. Our zeal against sin must be guided by discretion, and we must not go about to give instructions, counsels, and rebukes, much less comforts, to hardened scorners, to whom it will certainly do no good, but who will be exasperated and enraged at us. Throw a pearl to a swine, and he will resent it, as if you threw a stone at him : *reproofs* will be called *reproaches*, as they were, (Luke 11. 45. Jer. 5. 19.) therefore give not to dogs and swine, (unclean creatures) holy things. Note, [1.] Good counsel and reproof are a holy thing, and a pearl : they are ordinances of God, they are precious ; as an *ear-ring of gold*, and an *ornament of fine gold*, so is the wise reproof, (Prov. 25. 12.) and a wise reproof is like an *excellent oil* ; (Ps. 141. 5.) it is a *tree of life*, Prov. 3. 18. [2.] Among the generation of the wicked, there are some that are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that they are looked upon as dogs and swine ; they are impudently and notoriously vile ; they have so long *walked in the way of sinners*, that they are sat down in the *seat of the scornful* ; they professedly hate and despise instruction, and set it at defiance, so that they are irrecoverably and irreclaimably wicked ; they return with the *dog to his vomit*, and with the *swine to her wallowing in the mire*. [3.] Reproofs of instruction are ill bestowed upon such, and expose the reprover to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that they will trample the reproofs under their feet, in scorn of them, and rage against them ; for they are impatient of control and contradiction ; and they will turn again and rend the reprovers ; rend their good names with their revilings, return them wounding words for their healing ones ; rend them with persecution ; Herod rent John Baptist for his faithfulness. See here what is the evidence of men's being *dogs and swine*. They are to be reckoned such, who *hate reproofs* and reprovers, and fly in the face of those who, in kindness to their souls, show them their sin and danger. These sin against the remedy ; who shall heal and help those that will not be healed and helped ? It is plain that God has determined to destroy such, 2 Chron. 25. 16. The rule here given is applicable to the distinguishing, sealing ordinances of the gospel : which must not be prostituted to those who are openly wicked and profane, lest holy things be thereby rendered contemptible, and unholy persons be thereby hardened. *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs*. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as dogs and swine, and not do it till after trial, and upon full evidence. Many a patient is lost, by being thought to be so, who, if means had been used, might have been saved. As we must take heed of calling the *good, bad*, by judging all professors to be hypocrites ; so we must take heed of calling the *bad, desperate*, by judging all the wicked to be *dogs and swine*. [4.] Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will turn again and rend them. Let them not be *righteous over much*, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and *precious is the blood* of his subjects to him.

7. Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : 8. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be

opened. 9. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? 10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? 11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?

Our Saviour, in the foregoing chapter, had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty, by which God is honoured, and which, if done aright, shall be rewarded ; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given, some of which are so displeasing to flesh and blood.

I. Here is a precept in three words to the same purport, *Ask, Seek, Knock* ; (v. 7.) that is, in one word, "Pray ; pray often, pray with sincerity and seriousness ; pray, and pray again ; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it ; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. *Ask*, as a beggar asks alms." They that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. "*Ask* ; represent your wants and burdens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his promise. *Ask* ; as a traveller asks the way ; to pray is to *inquire of God*, Ezek. 36. 37. *Seek*, as for a thing of value that we have lost ; or as the merchantman that *seeks goodly pearls*. *Seek by prayer* ; (Dan. 9. 3.) *Knock*, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door." We would be admitted to converse with God, would be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom ; sin has shut and barred the door against us ; by prayer, we knock ; *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Christ knocks at our door, (Rev. 3. 20. Cant. 5. 2.) and allows us to knock at his, which is a favour we do not allow to common beggars. Seeking and knocking imply something more than asking and praying. 1. We must not only *ask* but *seek* ; we must second our prayers with our endeavours ; we must in the use of the appointed means *seek* for that which we *ask* for, else we tempt God. When the dresser of the vineyard asked for a year's respite for the barren fig-tree, he added, *I will dig about it*, Luke 13. 7, 8. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates ; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it. 2. We must not only *ask*, but *knock* ; we must come to God's door, must *ask* importunately ; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God ; we must *seek* diligently, we must continue knocking ; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means ; must endure to the end in the duty.

II. Here is a promise annexed : *our labour in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, shall not be in vain* : where God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God ; *he shall give thee an answer of peace*. The precept is threefold, *ask, seek, knock* ; there is *precept upon precept* ; but the promise is sixfold, *one upon line*, for our encouragement ; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. Now here,

1. The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, v. 7. God will meet those that attend on him : *Ask, and it shall be given you* ; not lent you, not sold you, but *given you* ; and what is more free than gift ? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you *ask*, *shall be given you*, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more ? It is but *ask* and have : *ye have not, because ye ask not, or ask not aright* : what is not

worth asking, is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. *Seek, and ye shall find*, and then you do not lose your labour; God is himself *found of those that seek him*, and if we find him we have enough. "*Knock, and it shall be opened* ; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, *who is at the door?* If you be able to say, a friend, and have the ticket of the promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, doubt not of admission. If the door be not opened at the first knock, *continue instant in prayer* ; it is an affront to a friend to knock at his door, and then go away ; though he tarry, yet wait."

2. It is repeated, *v. 8*. It is to the same purpose, yet with some addition. (1.) It is made to extend to all that pray aright ; "*Not only you my disciples shall receive what you pray for, but every one that asketh, receiveth*, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith ; for God is no Respecter of persons. (2.) It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. *Every one that asketh, not only shall receive, but receiveth* ; by faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised ; so sure and inviolable are the promises of God, that they do, in effect, give present possession ; an active believer enters immediately, and makes the blessings promised his own. What we have in hope, according to the promise, is as sure, and should be as sweet, as what we have in hand. *God hath spoken in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine* ; (Ps. 108. 7. 8.) it is all mine own, if I can but make it so by believing it so. Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition ; so here, *he that asketh, receiveth*. Christ hereby puts his fiat to the petition ; and he having all power, that is enough.

3. It is illustrated, by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their innate readiness to give their children what they ask. Christ appeals to his hearers, *What man is there of you*, though never so morose and ill-humoured, *whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?* *v. 9, 10*. Whence he infers, (*v. 11*). *If ye then being evil, yet grant your children's requests, much more will your heavenly Father give you the good things you ask*. Now this is of use.

(1.) To direct our prayers and expectations. [1.] We must come to God, as children to a Father in heaven, with reverence and confidence. How naturally does the child in want or distress run to the father with its complaints ; *My head, my head* ; thus should the new nature send us to God for supports and supplies. [2.] We must come to him for good things, for those he gives to them that ask him ; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him : we know not what is good for ourselves, (Ecc. 6. 12.) but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him ; *Father, thy will be done*. The child is here supposed to ask bread, that is necessary, and a fish, that is wholesome ; but if the child should foolishly ask for a stone, or a serpent, for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us hurt if we had it ; he knows it, and therefore does not give it us. Denials in love are better than grants in anger ; we had been undone ere this, if we had had all we desired ; this is admirably well expressed by a heathen, Juvenal, *Sat. 10*.

*Permites ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris,*

*Nam pro jucundis aptissima quæque dabunt dii.
Carior est illis homo, quam sibi : nos animorum
Impulsu, et cæca magnæque cupidine ducti,
Conjugium petimus, fortisque uxoris ; at illis
Notum est, qui fueri, qualisque futura sit uxor.*

Intrust thy fortune to the pow'rs above.

Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want :

In goodness, as in greatness, they excel :

Ah, that we lov'd ourselves but half so well !

We, blindly by our headstrong passions led,

Seek a companion, and desire to wed ;

Then wish for heirs : but to the gods alone

Our future offspring, and our wives, are known.

(2.) To encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed : we shall not have a stone for bread, to break our teeth, (though we have a hard crust to employ our teeth,) nor a serpent for a fish, to sting us ; we have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. The world often gives stones for bread, and serpents for fish, but God never does ; nay, we shall be heard and answered, for children are by their parents. [1.] God has put into the hearts of parents a compassionate inclination to succour and supply their children, according to their need. Even they that have had little conscience of duty, yet have done it, as it were by instinct. No law was ever thought necessary to oblige parents to maintain their legitimate children, nor, in Solomon's time, their illegitimate ones. [2.] He has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children ; that from the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve our children, we may be encouraged to apply ourselves to him for relief. What love and tenderness fathers have, are from him ; not from nature, but from the God of nature ; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. He compares his concern for his people to that of a father for his children, (Ps. 103. 13.) nay, to that of a mother, which is usually more tender, Isa. 66. 13.—49. 14, 15. But here it is supposed, that his love, and tenderness, and goodness, far excel that of any earthly parent ; and therefore it is argued with a much more, and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are ; *his thoughts are above theirs*. Our earthly fathers have taken care of us ; we have taken care of our children ; much more will God take care of his ; for they are evil, originally so ; the degenerate seed of fallen Adam ; they have lost much of the good nature that belonged to humanity, and among other corruptions, have that of crossness and unkindness in them ; yet they give good things to their children, and they know how to give, suitably and seasonably ; much more will God, for he takes up when they forsake, Ps. 27. 10. And, First, God is more knowing ; parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so ; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. Secondly, God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into the bowels of one, yet compared with the tender mercies of our God, they would be but as a candle to the sun, or a drop to the ocean. God is more rich, and more ready, to his children, than the fathers of our flesh can be ; for he is the Father of our spirits, an ever-loving, ever-living Father : the bowels of fathers yearn even towards undutiful children, towards prodigals, as David's toward Absalom, and will not all this serve to silence unbelief ?

12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye
would that men should do to you, do ye

even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets. 13. Enter ye in at the strait gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : 14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life ; and few there be that find it.

Our Lord Jesus here presses upon us that righteousness toward men which is an essential branch of true religion, and that religion toward God, which is an essential branch of universal righteousness.

1. We must make righteousness our rule, and be ruled by it, v. 12. *Therefore*, lay this down for your principle, to do as you would be done by ; therefore, that you may conform to the foregoing precepts, which are particular, that you may not judge and censure others, go by this rule in general ; you would not be censured, therefore do not censure. Or, that you may have the benefit of the foregoing promises, fitly is the law of justice subjoined to the law of prayer, for unless we be honest in our conversation, God will not hear our prayers, Isa. 1. 15—17.—58. 6, 9. Zech. 7. 9, 13. We cannot expect to receive good things from God, if we do not *fair* things, and that which is *honest*, and *lovely*, and of good report, among men. We must not only be devout, but honest, else our devotion is but hypocrisy. Now here we have,

1. The rule of justice laid down : *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do ; what we are to do, not only toward God, but toward men ; not only towards our fellow-disciples, those of our party and persuasion, but toward men in general, all with whom we have to do. The golden rule of equity is, to do to others, as we would they should do to us. Alexander Severus, a heathen emperor, was a great admirer of this rule, had it written upon the walls of his closet, often quoted it in giving judgment, honoured Christ, and favoured christians, for the sake of it. *Quod tibi, hoc alteri—do to others as you would they should do to you.* Take it negatively, (*Quod tibi fieri non vis, ne alteri feceris ;*) or positively, it comes all to the same. We must not do to others the evil they have done to us, nor the evil which they would do to us, if it were in their power ; nor may we do that which we think, if it were done to us, we could bear contentedly, but what we desire should be done to us. This is grounded upon that great commandment, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* As we must bear the same affection to our neighbour, that we would have borne to ourselves, so we must do the same good offices. The meaning of this rule lies in three things. (1.) We must do that to our neighbour which we ourselves acknowledge to be fit and reasonable : the appeal is made to our own judgment, and the discovery of our judgment is referred to that which is our own will and expectation, when it is our own case. (2.) We must put other people upon the level with ourselves, and reckon we are as much obliged to them, as they to us. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as they, and they as much entitled to the benefit of it as we. (3.) We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and deal accordingly. If I were making such a one's bargain, labouring under such a one's infirmity and affliction, how would I desire and expect to be treated ? And this is a just supposition, because we know not how soon their case may really be ours : indeed we may fear, lest

God by his judgments should do to us as we have done to others, if we have not done as we would be done by.

2. A reason given to enforce this rule ; *This is the law and the prophets.* It is the summary of that second great commandment, which is one of the two, on which hang all the law and the prophets, ch. 22. 40. We have not this in so many words, either in the law or the prophets, but it is the concurring language of the whole. All that is there said concerning our duty towards our neighbour, (and that is no little,) may be reduced to this rule. Christ has here adopted it into this law ; so that both the Old Testament, and the New, agree in prescribing this to us, to do as we would be done by. By this rule the law of Christ is commended, but the lives of christians are condemned by comparing them with it. *Aut hoc non evangelium, aut hi non evangelici—Either this is not the gospel, or these are not christians.*

II. We must make religion our business, and be intent upon it ; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a strait gate, and walking on a narrow way, v. 13, 14. Observe here,

1. The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil ; the way to heaven, and the way to hell ; in the one of which we are all of us walking : no middle place hereafter, no middle way now : the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity.

Here is, (1.) An account given us of the way of sin and sinners ; both what is the best, and what is the worst of it.

[1.] That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it ; *the gate is wide, and the way broad*, and there are many travellers in that way. *First.* "You will have abundance of liberty in that way ; *the gate is wide*, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you ; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions : you may walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes ; that gives room enough." It is a broad way, for there is nothing to hedge in these that walk in it, but they wander endlessly ; a broad way, for there are many paths in it ; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this broad way. *Secondly.* "You will have abundance of company in that way ; *many there be that go in at this gate*, and walk in this way." If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil : if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream and do as the most do ; but it is too great a compliment to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us : if many perish, we should be the more cautious.

[2.] That which should affright us all from it, that it leads to destruction. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it, (and the way of sin tends to it),—everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

(2.) Here is an account given us of the way of holiness.

[1.] What there is in it that frightens many from it ; let us know the worst of it, that we may sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us,

First. That *the gate is strait.* Conversion and regeneration are *the gate*, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious

godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace, we must pass, by the new birth, 1 John 3. 3, 5. This is a *strait gate*, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, 1 Sam. 14. 4. There must be a *new heart*, and a *new spirit*, and *old things must pass away*. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days, must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a *strait gate*, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip, must deny ourselves, put off the world, *put off the old man*; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. *The gate is strait* to all, but to some straiter than to others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. *The gate is strait*; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, ch. 25. 10.

Secondly, That the way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we are got through the *strait gate*; not in Canaan as soon as we are got through the Red sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a *narrow way*, hedged in by the divine law, which is *exceeding broad*, and that makes the *way narrow*; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a *right eye* and a *right hand*; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination; we must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony; must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection; we must go *through much tribulation*. It is *his tribulation*, an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but *few* that find it and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. They that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eagle that were saved in the ark, 1 Kings 20. 27. *In via alter alterum tradimus; Quomodo ad salutem revocari posset quum nullus retrahit, et populus impellit—In the ways of vice men urge each other onward; how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forwards by the multitude, without any countervailing influence?* Seneca, Epist. 29. This discourages many, they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather if so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it: it *leads to life*, to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss; the hope of which at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together; (2 Pet. 1. 3.) *The gate is strait and the way narrow*, and up hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for all.

2. The great concern and duty of every one of us,

in consideration of all this; *Enter ye in at the strait gate*. The matter is fairly stated; life and death, good and evil, are set before us, both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in; nay, the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but *enter ye in at the strait gate*; knock at it by sincere and constant prayers and endeavours, and it shall be opened; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, Luke 13. 24.

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: 16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

We have here a caution against *false prophets*, to take heed that we be not deceived and imposed upon by them. *Prophets* are properly such as foretell things to come; there are some mentioned in the Old Testament, who pretended to that without warrant, and the event disproved their pretensions, as Zedekiah, 1 Kings 52. 11. and another Zedekiah, Jer. 29. 21. But *prophets* did also teach the people their duty, so that *false prophets* here are false teachers. Christ being a Prophet and a Teacher come from God, and designing to send abroad teachers under him, gives warning to all to take heed of counterfeiters, who, instead of healing souls with wholesome doctrine, as they pretend, would poison them.

They are false teachers and *false prophets*, 1. Who produce false commissions, who pretend to have immediate warrant and direction from God to set up for *prophets*, and to be divinely inspired, when they are not so. Though their doctrine may be true, we are to beware of them as *false prophets*. False apostles are those who say they are apostles, and are not; (Rev. 2. 2.) such are *false prophets*. "Take heed of those who pretend to revelation, and admit them not without sufficient proof, lest that one absurdity being admitted, a thousand follow." 2. Who preach false doctrine in those things that are essential to religion; who teach that which is contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, to the truth which is according to godliness. The former seems to be the proper notion, of *pseudopropheta*, a false or pretending prophet, but commonly the latter falls in with it; for who would hang out false colours, but with design, under pretence of them, the more successfully to attack the truth. "Well, beware of them, suspect them, try them, and when you have discovered their falsehood, avoid them, have nothing to do with them."

Stand upon your guard against this temptation, which commonly attends the days of reformation, and the breathings out of divine light in more than ordinary strength and splendour." When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. Here is,

1. A good reason for this caution: *Beware of them, for they are wolves in sheep's clothing*, v. 15.

1. We have need to be very cautious, because their pretences are very fair and plausible, and such as will deceive us, if we be not upon our guard. *They come in sheep's clothing*, in the habit of *prophets*, which was plain, and coarse, and unwrought; they wear a rough garment to deceive, Zech. 13. 4. Elijah's mantle the Septuagint calls *ἡ μαντήριον*—a sheep-skin mantle. We must take heed of being imposed upon by men's dress and garb, as by that of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, Luke 20. 46. Or it may be taken figuratively; they pretend to be sheep, and outwardly appear so innocent, harmless, meek, useful, and all that is good, as to be excelled by none; they feign themselves to be just men, and for the sake of their clothing are admitted among the sheep, which gives them an opportunity of doing them a mischief ere they are aware. They and their errors are gilded with the specious pretences of sanctity and devotion. Satan turns himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14. The enemy has horns like a lamb; (Rev. 13. 11.) faces of men, Rev. 9. 7, 8. Seducers in language and carriage are soft as wool, Rom. 16. 18. Isa. 30. 10.

2. Because under these pretensions their designs are very malicious and mischievous; inwardly they are ravening wolves. Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing, but a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing; not only not a sheep, but the worst enemy the sheep has, that comes not but to tear and devour, to scatter the sheep, (John 10. 12.) to drive them from God, and from one another, into crooked paths. They that would cheat us of any truth, and possess us with error, whatever they pretend, design mischief to our souls. Paul calls them *grievous wolves*, Acts 20. 29. They raven for themselves, serve their own belly, (Rom. 16. 18.) make a prey of you, make a gain of you. Now since it is so easy a thing, and withal so dangerous, to be cheated, *Beware of false prophets*.

II. Here is a good rule to go by in this caution; we must prove all things; (1 Thess. 5. 21.) try the spirits; (1 John 4. 1.) and here we have a touchstone; ye shall know them by their fruits, v. 16—20. Observe,

1. The illustration of this comparison, of the fruit's being the discovery of the tree. You cannot always distinguish them by their bark and leaves, nor by the spreading of their boughs, but by their fruits ye shall know them. The fruit is according to the tree. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them. Christ insists upon this, the agreeableness between the fruit and the tree, which is such, as that, (1.) If you know what the tree is, you may know what fruit to expect. Never look to gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; it is not in their nature to produce such fruits. An apple may be stuck, or a bunch of grapes may hang, upon a thorn; so may a good truth, a good word or action, be found in an ill man, but you may be sure it never grew there. Note, [1.] Corrupt, vicious, unsanctified hearts are like thorns and thistles, which came in with sin, are worthless, vexing, and for the fire at last. [2.] Good works are good fruit, like grapes and figs, pleasing to God and profitable to men. [3.] This good fruit is never to be expected from bad men, any more than a clean thing out of an unclean: they want an influencing, acceptable princi-

ple: out of an evil treasure will be brought forth evil things. (2.) On the other hand, if you know what the fruit is, you may, by that, perceive what the tree is. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; nay, it cannot but bring forth good fruit; and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; nay, it cannot but bring forth evil fruit; but then that must be reckoned the fruit of the tree, which it brings forth naturally, and which is its genuine product, and which it brings forth plentifully and constantly, and is its usual product. Men are known, not by particular acts, but by the course and tenor of their conversation, and by the more frequent acts, especially those that appear to be free, and most their own, and least under the influence of external motives and inducements.

2. The application of this to the false prophets.

(1.) By way of terror and threatening; (v. 19.) every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down. This very saying John the Baptist had used, ch. 3. 10. Christ could have spoken the same sense in other words; could have altered it, or given it a new turn; but he thought it no disparagement to him to say the same that John had said before him: let not ministers be ambitious of coining new expressions, nor people's ears itch for novelties; to write and speak the same things must not be grievous, for it is safe. Here is, [1.] The description of barren trees; they are trees that do not bring forth good fruit: though there be fruit, if it be not good fruit, (though that be done, which for the matter of it is good, if it be not done well, in a right manner, and for a right end,) the tree is accounted barren. [2.] The doom of barren trees; they are, that is, certainly they shall be, hewn down, and cast into the fire: God will deal with them as men use to deal with dry trees that cumber the ground: he will mark them by some signal tokens of his displeasure; he will bark them by stripping them of their parts and gifts, will cut them down by death, and cast them into the fire of hell, a fire blown with the bellows of God's wrath, and fed with the wood of barren trees. Compare this with Ezek. 31. 12, 13. Dan. 4. 14. John 15. 6.

(2.) By way of trial; by their fruits ye shall know them.

[1.] By the fruits of their persons, their words and actions, and the course of their conversation. If you would know whether they be right or not, observe how they live; their works will testify for them or against them. The Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's chair, and taught the law, but they were proud, and covetous, and false, and oppressive, and therefore Christ warned his disciples to beware of them and of their heaven, Mark 12. 38. If men pretend to be prophets and are immoral, that disproves their pretensions; they are no true friends to the cross of Christ, whatever they profess, whose God is their belly, and who mind earthly things, Phil. 3. 18, 19. They are not taught nor sent of the holy God, whose lives evidence that they are led by the unclean spirit. God puts the treasure into earthen vessels, but not into such corrupt vessels: they may declare God's statutes, but what have they to do to declare them?

[2.] By the fruits of their doctrine; their fruits as prophets: not that this is the only way, but it is one way of trying doctrines, whether they be of God or not. What do they tend to? What affections and practices will they lead those into, that embrace them? If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal

liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we may conclude, that this persuasion comes not of him that calleth us, Gal. 5. 8. *This wisdom is not from above*, James 3. 15. *Faith and a good conscience* are held together, 1 Tim. 1. 19.—3. 9. Note, *Doctrines of doubtful disputation* must be tried by graces and duties of confessed certainty: those opinions come not from God that lead to sin; but if we cannot know them by their fruits, we must have recourse to the great touchstone, to the law, and to the testimony: do they speak according to that rule?

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name! and in thy name have cast out devils! and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock: 26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. 28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

We have here the conclusion of this long and excellent sermon, the scope of which is to show the indispensable necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ; this is designed to clench the nail, that it might fix in a sure place: he speaks this to his disciples that sat at his feet, wherever he preached, and followed him wherever he went. Had he sought his own praise among men, he would have said, that was enough; but the religion he came to establish, is in power, not in word only, (1 Cor. 4. 20.) and therefore something more is necessary.

1. He shows, by a plain remonstrance, that an outward profession of religion, however remarkable, will not bring us to heaven, unless there be a correspondent conversation, v. 21—23. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; the keys are put into his hand; he has power to prescribe new terms of life and death, and to judge men according to them: now this is a solemn declaration pursuant to that power. Observe here,

1. Christ's law laid down, v. 21. *Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, into the kingdom of grace and glory.* It is an answer to that question, Psal. 15. 1. *Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?*—the church militant, and

who shall dwell in thy holy hill?—the church triumphant. Christ here shows,

(1.) That it will not suffice to say, *Lord, Lord*; in word and tongue to own Christ for our Master, and to make addresses to him, and professions of him accordingly; in prayer to God, in discourse with men, we must call Christ, *Lord, Lord*; we say well, for so he is; (John 13. 13.) but can we imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven, that such a piece of formality as this should be so recompensed, or that he who knows and requires the heart, should be so put off with shows for substance? Compliments among men are pieces of civility that are returned with compliments, but they are never paid as real services; and can they then be of any account with Christ? There may be a seeming importunity in prayer, *Lord, Lord*; but if inward impressions be not answerable to outward expressions, we are but as *sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*. This is not to take us off from saying, *Lord, Lord*; from praying, and being earnest in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the *form of godliness*, without the power.

(2.) That it is necessary to our happiness that we do the will of Christ, which is indeed the will of his Father in heaven. The will of God, as Christ's Father, is his will in the gospel, for there he is made known, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in him our Father. Now this is his will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. *This is his will, even our sanctification.* If we comply not with the will of God, we mock Christ in calling him *Lord*, as they did, who put on him a gorgeous robe, and said, *Hail, King of the Jews.* Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men: he that said, *I go, sir*, stirred never a step; (ch. 21. 30.) but these two things God has joined in his command, and let no man that puts them asunder think to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. The hypocrite's plea against the strictness of this law, offering other things in lieu of obedience, v. 22. The plea is supposed to be in that day, that great day, when every man shall appear in his own colours; *when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest*, and among the rest, the secret pretences with which sinners now support their vain hopes. Christ knows the strength of their cause, and it is but weakness: what they now harbour in their bosoms, they will then produce in arrest of judgment to stay the doom, but it will be in vain. They put in their plea with great importunity, *Lord, Lord*; and with great confidence, appealing to Christ concerning it; *Lord*, dost not thou know, (1.) *That we have prophesied in thy name?* Yes, it may be so, Balaam and Caiaphas were overruled to prophesy, and Saul was against his will among the prophets, yet that did not save them. These *prophesied in his name*, but he did not send them; they only made use of his name to serve a turn. Note, A man may be a preacher, may have gifts for the ministry, and an external call to it, and perhaps some success in it, and yet be a wicked man; may help others to heaven, and yet come short himself. (2.) *That in thy name we have cast out devils?* That may be too; Judas cast out devils, and yet a son of perdition. Origen says, that in his time so prevalent was the name of Christ to cast out devils, that sometimes it availed when named by wicked christians. A man might cast devils out of others, and yet have a devil, nay, and be a devil himself. (3.) *That in thy name we have done many wonderful works.* There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith; none of that *faith which works by love* and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is only real holiness and sanctification that is ac-

cepted of God. Grace and love are a *more excellent way than removing mountains, or speaking with the tongues of men and angels*, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace. Observe, That which their heart was upon, in doing these works, and which they confided in, was the wonderfulness of them. Simon Magus wondered at the miracles, (Acts 8. 13.) and therefore would give any money for power to do the like. Observe, They had not many good works to plead: they could not pretend to have done many gracious works of piety and charity; one such would have passed better in their account than *many wonderful works*, which availed not at all, while they persisted in disobedience. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion, have kept fasts and given alms, and have been preferred in the church; as if this would atone for their reigning pride, worldliness and sensuality, and want of love to God and man. *Bethel is their confidence*, (Jer. 48. 13.) they are *haughty because of the holy mountain*; (Zeph. 3. 11.) and boast that they are *the temple of the Lord*, Jer. 7. 4. Let us take heed of resting in external privileges and performances, lest we *deceive ourselves*, and perish eternally as multitudes do, *with a lie in our right hand*.

3. The rejection of this plea as frivolous. The same that is the Law-Maker, (v. 21.) is here the Judge according to that law, (v. 23.) and he will overrule the plea, will overrule it publicly; he *will profess to them with all possible solemnity*, as sentence is passed by the Judge, *I never knew you*, and therefore *depart from me, ye that work iniquity*. Observe, (1.) Why, and upon what ground, he rejects them and their plea—because they were *workers of iniquity*. Note, It is possible for men to have a great name for piety, and yet to be *workers of iniquity*; and those that are so will *receive the greater damnation*. Secret haunts of sin, kept up under the cloak of a visible profession, will be the ruin of hypocrites. Living in known sin nullifies men's pretensions, be they ever so specious. (2.) How it is expressed, *I never knew you*; “I never owned you as my servants, no, not when you *prophesied in my name*, when you were in the height of your profession, and were most extolled.” This intimates, that if he had ever known them, as *the Lord knows them that are his*, had ever owned them and loved them as his, he would have known them, and owned them, and *loved them, to the end*; but he *never did know them*, for he always knew them to be hypocrites, and rotten at heart, as he did Judas, therefore, says he, *depart from me*. Has Christ need of such guests? When he came in the flesh, he called sinners to him, (ch. 9. 13.) but *when he shall come again in glory*, he will drive sinners from him. They that would not *come to him* to be saved, must *depart from him* to be damned. To *depart from Christ* is the very hell of hell; it is the foundation of all the misery of the damned, to be cut off from all hope of benefit from Christ and his mediation. [Those that go no further in Christ's service than a bare profession, he does not accept, nor will he own them in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! How they may go to hell, by the gates of heaven! This should be an awakening word to all Christians. If a preacher, one that *cast out devils*, and wrought miracles, be disowned of Christ for *working iniquity*; what will become of us, if we be found such? And if we be such, we shall certainly be found such. At God's bar, a profession of religion will not bear out any

man in the practice and indulgence of sin: there fore let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.

II. He shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not make conscience of doing them; but that if we hear them and do them, we are *blessed in our deed*, v. 24—27.

1. The hearers of Christ's word are here divided into two sorts; some that hear, and do what they hear; others that hear, and do not. Christ preached now to a mixed multitude, and he thus *separates them one from the other*, as he will at the great day, when *all nations shall be gathered before him*. Christ is still speaking from heaven by his word and Spirit, speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts.

(1.) Some that *hear his sayings and do them*: blessed be God that there are any such, though comparatively few. To hear Christ, is not barely to give him the hearing, but to obey him. Note, It highly concerns us all to do what we *hear of the sayings of Christ*. It is a mercy that we *hear his sayings*: *Blessed are those ears*, ch. 13. 16, 17. But if we practise not what we hear we *receive that grace in vain*. To do Christ's sayings is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, must be conformable to the gospel of Christ: that is the doing he requires. [All the *sayings of Christ*, not only the laws he has enacted, but the truths he has revealed, must be done by us. *They are a light*, not only to our eyes, but to our feet, and are designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives: nor do we indeed believe them, if we do not live up to them.] Observe, It is not enough to *hear Christ's sayings*, and understand them, *hear them*, and remember them, *hear them*, and talk of them, repeat them, dispute for them; but we must *hear, and do them*. *This do and thou shalt live*. Those only that *hear, and do, are blessed*, (Luke 11. 28. John 13. 17.) and are akin to Christ, ch. 12. 50.

(2.) There are others who *hear Christ's sayings and do them not*; their religion rests in bare hearing, and goes no further; like children that have the rickets, their heads swell with empty notions, and indigested opinions, but their joints are weak, and they heavy and listless; they neither can stir, nor care to stir, in any good duty; *they hear God's words*, as if they desired to *know his ways*, like a people that *did righteousness*, but *they will not do them*, Ezek. 33. 30, 31. Isa. 58. 2. Thus they deceive themselves, as Micah, who thought himself happy, because he had a Levite to be his priest, though he had not the Lord to be his God. The seed is sown, but it never comes up; they see their spots in the glass of the word, but wash them not off, Jam. 1. 22, 24. Thus they put a cheat upon their own souls; for it is certain, if our hearing be not the means of our obedience, it will be the aggravation of our disobedience. Those who only *hear Christ's sayings, and do them not*, sit down in the midway to heaven, and that will never bring them to their journey's end. They are akin to Christ only by the half-blood, and our law allows not such to inherit.

2. These two sorts of hearers are here represented in their true characters, and the state of their case, under the comparison of two builders; one was *wise, and built upon a rock*, and his building stood in a storm; the other *foolish, and built upon the sand*, and his building fell.

Now, (1.) The general scope of this parable teaches us that the only way to make sure work for our souls and eternity is, to *hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus, these sayings of his in this sermon*

upon the mount, which is wholly practical ; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done ; and thus we *lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come* ; (1 Tim. 6. 19.) *a good bond*, so some read it ; a bond of God's making, which secures salvation upon gospel-terms, that is a *good bond* ; not one of our own devising, which brings salvation to our own fancies. They make sure the *good part*, who, like Mary, when they hear the word of Christ, *sit at his feet* in subjection to it : *Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*.

(2.) The particular parts of it teach us divers good lessons.

[1.] That we have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, *to make our calling and election sure*, and so we make our salvation sure ; to secure a title to heaven's happiness, and then to get the comfortable evidence of it ; to make it sure, and sure to ourselves, *that when we fail, we shall be received into everlasting habitations*. Many never mind this, it is the farthest thing from their thoughts ; they are building for this world, as if they were to be here always, but take no care to build for another world. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to inquire, what they shall *do to be saved* ; how they may get to heaven at last, and may have a well-grounded hope of it in the mean time.

[2.] That there is a *rock* provided for us to build this house upon, and that *rock is Christ*. He is *laid for a Foundation, and other foundation can no man lay*, Isa. 28. 16. 1 Cor. 3. 11. He is our *hope*, 1 Tim. 1. 1. Christ in us is so ; we must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fullness of Christ's merit, for the pardon of sin, the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature, and the prevalency of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as *he is made known*, and made over, to us in the *gospel*, which is sufficient to redress all our grievances, and to answer all the necessities of our case, so that he is a *Saviour to the uttermost*. The church is *built upon this Rock*, and so is every believer. He is strong and immovable as a *rock* ; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made ashamed of our hope.

[3.] That there is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the sayings of Christ, build their hopes upon this *Rock* ; and it is their wisdom. Christ is our only *Way to the Father*, and the obedience of faith is our only *way to Christ* ; for *to them that obey him, and to them only, he becomes the Author of eternal salvation*. Those build upon Christ, who, having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and *count every thing but loss and dung that they may win Christ*, and be found in him. Building upon a *rock* requires care and pains : they that would make their *calling and election sure*, must *give diligence*. They are wise builders, who *begin to build so as they may be able to finish*, (Luke 14. 30.) and therefore lay a firm foundation.

[4.] That there are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this *Rock*, and build their hopes upon the sand ; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if that were a sure token of God's favour, Hos. 12. 8. Others upon their external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through, in that profession, and the reputation they have got by it. They are called christians, were baptized, go to

church, hear Christ's word, say their prayers, and do nobody any harm, and, if they perish, God help a great many. This is the light of their own fire, which they walk in ; this is that, upon which, with a great deal of assurance, they venture ; but it is all sand, too weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

[5.] That there is a storm coming, that will try what our hopes are bottomed on ; *will try every man's work* ; (1 Cor. 3. 13.) *will discover the foundation*, Hab. 3. 13. *Ruin, and floods, and wind, will beat upon the house* ; the trial is sometimes in this world ; *when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word*, then it will be seen, who only heard the word, and who heard and practised it ; then when we have occasion to use our hopes, it will be tried, whether they were right, and well grounded, or not. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes, and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting fruition.

[6.] That those hopes which are built upon Christ, the Rock, will stand, and will stand the builder in stead when the storm comes ; they will be his preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing disquiet. His profession will not wither ; his comforts will not fail ; they will be his strength and song, *as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast*. When he comes to the last encounter, those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave ; will carry him cheerfully through that dark valley ; will be approved by the Judge ; will stand the test of the great day ; and will be crowned with endless glory, 2 Cor. 1. 12. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds so doing, so hoping*.

[7.] That those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will certainly fail them in a stormy day ; will yield them no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment ; will be no fence against temptations to apostasy, in a time of persecution. *When God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite ?* Job 27. 8. It is as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand, Job 8. 14, 15. It fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another : *when a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes* ; then, when he thought it would have been turned into fruition, it fell, and great was the fall of it. It was a great disappointment to the builder ; the shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been raised, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all that attends formal professors ; witness Capernaum's doom.

III. In the two last verses, we are told what impressions Christ's discourse made upon the auditory. It was an excellent sermon ; and it is probable that he said more than is here recorded ; and doubtless the delivery of it from the mouth of him, into whose lips grace was poured, did mightily set it off. Now, 1. *They were astonished at his doctrine* : it is to be feared that few of them were brought to follow him ; but for the present, they were filled with wonder. Note, It is possible for people to admire good preaching, and yet to remain in ignorance and unbelief ; to be astonished, and yet not sanctified. 2. The reason was because he taught them *as one having authority, and not as the Scribes*. The Scribes pretended to as much authority as any teachers whatsoever, and were supported by all the external advantages that could be obtained, but their preaching was mean, and flat, and jejune : they spake as those

that were not themselves masters of what they preached: the word did not come from them with any life or force; they delivered it as a school-boy says his lesson; but Christ delivered his discourse, as a judge gives his charge. He did indeed, *dominari in concionibus*—*deliver his discourses with a tone of authority*; his lessons were laws; his word a word of command. Christ, upon the mountain, showed more true authority, than the Scribes in Moses's seat. Thus when Christ teaches by his Spirit in the soul, he teaches with authority. He says, *Let there be light, and there is light.*

CHAP. VIII.

The evangelist having, in the foregoing chapters, given us a specimen of our Lord's preaching, proceeds now to give some instances of the miracles he wrought, which prove him a teacher come from God, and the great Healer of a diseased world. In this chapter we have, I. Christ's cleansing of a leper, v. 1. . 4. II. His curing a palsy and fever, v. 5. . 18. III. His communing with two that were disposed to follow him, v. 19. . 22. IV. His controlling the tempest, v. 23. . 27. V. His casting out devils, v. 28. . 34.

1. **WHEN** he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3. And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean: And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were *astonished at his doctrine*; and the effect was, that *when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him*; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reformer, they diligently attended him, and were loath to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be better acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to *follow the Lamb* whithersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that *unto him shall the gathering of the people be*; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

In these verses we have an account of Christ's *cleansing a leper*. It should seem by comparing Mark 1. 40. and Luke 5. 12. that this passage, though placed, by St. Matthew, after the sermon on the mount, because he would give account of his doctrines first, and then of his miracles, happened some time before; but that is not at all material. This is fitly recorded with the first of Christ's miracles. 1. Because the leprosy was looked upon, among the Jews, as a particular mark of God's displeasure: hence we find Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah, smitten with leprosy for some one particular sin; and therefore Christ, to show that he came to turn away the wrath of God, by taking away sin, began with the cure of a leper. 2. Because this disease, as it was supposed to come immediately from the hand of

God, so also it was supposed to be removed immediately by his hand, and therefore it was not at tempted to be cured by physicians, but was put under the inspection of the priests, the Lord's ministers, who waited to see what God would do. And its being in a garment, or in the walls of a house, was altogether supernatural; and it should seem to be a disease of a quite different nature from what we now call the leprosy. The king of Israel said, *Am I God, that I am sent to, to recover a man of a leprosy?* 2 Kings 5. 7. Christ proved himself God, by recovering many from the leprosy, and authorizing his disciples, in his name, to do so too, (*ch.* 10. 8.) and it is put among the proofs of his being the Messiah, *ch.* 11. 5. He also showed himself to be the Saviour of his people from their sins; for though every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it, as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was in a special manner so; for it contracted such a pollution, and obliged to such a separation from holy things, as no other disease did; and therefore in the laws concerning it, (*Lev.* 13. and 14.) it is treated, not as a sickness, but as an uncleanness; the priest was to pronounce the party clean or unclean, according to the indications; but the honour of making the lepers clean was reserved for Christ, who was to do it as the *High-Priest of our profession*: he comes to do that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *Rom.* 8. 3. The law discovered sin, (for by the law is the knowledge of sin,) and pronounced sinners unclean; it shut them up, (*Gal.* 3. 23.) as the priest did the leper, but could go no further; it could not *make the comers thereunto perfect*. But Christ takes away sin, cleanses us from it, and so *perfecteth for ever them that are sanctified*. Now here we have,

I. The leper's address to Christ. If this happened, as it is here placed, after the sermon on the mount, we may suppose that the leper, though shut out by his disease from the cities of Israel, yet got within hearing of Christ's sermon, and was encouraged by it, to make his application to him; for he that taught *as one having authority*, could heal so; and therefore he *came and worshipped him*, as one clothed with a divine power. His address is, *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*. The cleansing of him may be considered,

1. As a temporal mercy; a mercy to the body, delivering it from a disease, which, though it did not threaten life, imbibited it. And so it directs us, not only to apply ourselves to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply ourselves to him; with an assurance of his power, believing that he is as able to cure diseases now, as he was when on earth, but with a submission to his will; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst*. As to temporal mercies, we cannot be so sure of God's will to bestow them, as we may of his power, for his power in them is unlimited, but his promise of them is limited by a regard to his glory and our good: when we cannot be sure of his will, we may be sure of his wisdom and mercy, to which we may cheerfully refer ourselves; *Thy will be done*: and this makes the expectation easy, and the event, when it comes, comfortable.

2. As a typical mercy. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God; to which that we may be restored, it is necessary that we be cleansed from this leprosy, and this ought to be our great concern. Now observe, It is our comfort when we apply ourselves to Christ, as the great Physician, that if he will, he can make us clean; and we should, with an humble, believing boldness, go to him and tell him so. That is, (1.) We must rest ourselves upon his power; we must be confident of this, that Christ *can* make us clean. No

guilt is so great but that there is a sufficiency in his righteousness to atone for it; no corruption so strong, but there is a sufficiency in his grace to subdue it. God would not appoint a physician to his hospital that is not *par negotio*—every way qualified for the undertaking. (2.) We must recommend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour; “*Lord, if thou wilt. I throw myself at thy feet, and if I perish, I will perish there.*”

II. Christ's answer to this address, which was very kind, v. 3.

1. *He put forth his hand and touched him.* The leprosy was a noisome, loathsome disease, yet Christ touched him; for he did not disdain to converse with publicans and sinners, to do them good. There was a ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a leper; but Christ would show, that when he conversed with sinners, he was in no danger of being infected by them, for the prince of this world had nothing in him. If we touch pitch, we are defiled; but Christ was *separate from sinners*, even when he lived among them.

2. He said, *I will, be thou clean.* He did not say as Elisha to Naaman, *Go, wash in Jordan*; did not put him upon a tedious, troublesome, chargeable course of physic, but spake the word and healed him. (1.) Here is a word of kindness, *I will.* I am as willing to help thee, as thou art to be helped. Note, They who by faith apply themselves to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is willing, freely willing, to give them the mercy and grace they come to him for. Christ is a Physician, that does not need to be sought for, he is always in the way; does not need to be urged, while we are yet speaking he hears; does not need to be feed, he heals freely, not for price nor reward. He has given all possible demonstration, that he is as willing as he is able to save sinners. (2.) A word of power, *Be thou clean.* Both a power of authority, and a power of energy, are exerted in this word. Christ heals by a word of command to us; *Be thou clean*; “Be willing to be clean, and use the means; cleanse thyself from all filthiness;” but there goes along with this a word of command concerning us, a word that does the work; *I will that thou be clean.* Such a word as this is necessary to the cure, and effectual for it; and the almighty grace which speaks it, shall not be wanting to those that truly desire it.

III. The happy change hereby wrought. *Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately; he speaks, it is done; and yet he works effectually; he commands, and it stands fast. One of the first miracles Moses wrought, was curing himself of a leprosy, (Exod. 4. 7.) for the priests under the law offered sacrifice first for their own sin; but one of Christ's first miracles was curing another of leprosy, for he had no sin of his own to atone for.

IV. The after-directions Christ gave him. It is fit that they who are cured by Christ should ever after be ruled by him.

1. *See thou tell no man*; “Tell no man till thou hast showed thyself to the priest, and he has pronounced thee clean; and so thou hast a legal proof, both that thou wast before a leper, and art now thoroughly cleansed.” Christ would have his miracles to appear in their full light and evidence, and not to be published till they could appear so. Note, They that preach the truths of Christ should be able to prove them; to defend what they preach, and convince gain-sayers. “Tell no man, till thou hast showed thyself to the priest, lest if he hear who cured thee, he should out of spite deny to give thee a certificate of the cure, and so keep thee under confinement.” Such were the priests in Christ's

time, that they who had any thing to do with them had need to have been as wise as serpents.

2. *Go show thyself to the priest,* according to the law, Lev. 14. 2. Christ took care to have the law observed, lest he should give offence, and to show that he will have order kept up, and good discipline and respect paid to those that are in office. It may be of use to those that are cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, to have recourse to Christ's ministers, and to open their case to them, that they may assist them in their inquiries into their spiritual state, and advise, and comfort, and pray for them.

3. *Offer the gift that Moses commanded,* in token of thankfulness to God, and recompense to the priest for his pains; and this for a testimony unto them; either, (1.) Which *Moses commanded for a testimony*: the ceremonial laws were testimonies of God's authority over them, care of them, and of that grace which should afterwards be revealed. Or, (2.) “Do thou offer it for a testimony, and let the priest know who cleansed thee, and how; and it shall be a testimony, that there is one among them, who does that which the high-priest cannot do. Let it remain upon record as a witness of my power, and a testimony for me to them, if they will use it and improve it; but against them, if they will not?” for so Christ's word and works are testimonies.

5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him. 6. And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 11. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: 12. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

We have here an account of Christ's curing the centurion's servant of a palsy. This was done at Capernaum, where Christ now dwelt, ch. 4. 13. Christ went about doing good, and came home to do good too; every place he came to was the better for him. The persons Christ had now to do with were,

1. A centurion; he was a suppliant, a Gentile, a Roman, an officer of the army; probably commander in chief of that part of the Roman army which was quartered at Capernaum, and kept garrison there. (1.) Though he was a soldier, (and a little

piety commonly goes a great way with men of that profession,) yet he was a godly man; he was eminently so. Note, God has his remnant among all sorts of people. No man's calling or place in the world will be an excuse for his unbelief and impiety; none shall say in the great day, I had been religious, if I had not been a soldier; for such there are among the *ransomed of the Lord*. And sometimes where grace conquers the unlikely, it is more than a conqueror; this soldier that was good, was very good. (2.) Though he was a Roman soldier, and his very dwelling among the Jews was a badge of their subjection to the Roman yoke, yet Christ, who was *King of the Jews*, favoured him; and therein has taught us to do good to our enemies, and not needlessly to interest ourselves in national enmities. (3.) Though he was a Gentile, yet Christ countenanced him. It is true, he went not to any of the Gentile towns, (it was the land of Canaan that was Immanuel's land, Isa. 8. 8.) yet he received addresses from Gentiles; now good old Simeon's word began to be fulfilled, that he should be a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as *the glory of his people Israel*. Matthew, in annexing this cure to that of the leper, who was a Jew, intimates this; the leprous Jews Christ touched and cured, for he preached personally to them; but the paralytic Gentiles he cured at a distance; for to them he did not go in person, but *sent his word and healed them*; yet in them he was more magnified.

2. *The centurion's servant*; he was the patient. In this also it appears, that there is no respect of persons with God; for in *Christ Jesus*, as there is *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision*, so there is *neither bond nor free*. He is as ready to heal the poorest servant, as the richest master; for himself *took upon him the form of a servant*, to show his regard to the meanest.

Now in the story of the cure of this servant, we may observe an intercourse or interchanging of graces, very remarkable between Christ and the centurion. See here,

I. The grace of the centurion working towards Christ. Can any good thing come out of a Roman soldier? any thing tolerable, much less any thing laudable? Come and see, and you will find abundance of good coming out of this centurion that was eminent and exemplary. Observe,

1. His affectionate address to Jesus Christ, which speaks,

(1.) A pious regard to our great Master, as one able and willing to succour and relieve poor petitioners. He came to him *beseeching him*, not as Naaman the Syrian (a centurion too,) came to Elisha, demanding a cure, taking state and standing upon points of honour; but with cap in hand as an humble suitor. By this it seems, that he saw more in Christ than appeared at first view; saw that which commanded respect, though to those who looked no further, his visage was marred more than any man's. The officers of the army being compellers of the town, no doubt made a great figure, yet he lays by the thoughts of his post of honour, when he addresses himself to Christ, and comes *beseeching him*. Note, the greatest of men must turn beggars, when they have to do with Christ. He owns Christ's sovereignty, in calling him Lord, and referring the case to him, and to his will, and wisdom, by a modest remonstrance, without any formal and express petition. He knew he had to do with a wise and gracious physician, to whom the opening of the malady was equivalent to the most earnest request. A humble confession of our spiritual wants and diseases shall not fail of an answer of peace. Pour out thy complaint, and mercy shall be poured out.

(2.) A charitable regard to his poor servant. We

read of many that came to Christ for their children, but this is the only instance of one that came to him for a servant: *Lord, my servant lies at home sick*. Note, It is the duty of masters to concern themselves for their servants, when they are in affliction.—The palsy disabled the servant for his work, and made him as troublesome and tedious as any distemper could, yet he did not turn him away when he was sick, (as that Amalekite did his servant, 1 Sam. 30. 13.) did not send him to his friends, nor let him lie by neglected, but sought out the best relief he could for him; the servant could not have done more for the master, than the master did here for the servant. The centurion's servants were very dutiful to him, (v. 9.) and here we see what made them so; he was very kind to them, and that made them the more cheerfully obedient to him. As we must not despise the *cause of our servants, when they contend with us*, (Job 31. 13, 15.) so we must not despise their case when God contends with them; for we are made in the same mould, by the same hand, and stand upon the same level with them before God, and must not set them *with the dogs of our flock*. The centurion applies not to witches or wizards for his servant, but to Christ. The palsy is a disease in which the physician's skill commonly fails; it was therefore a great evidence of his faith in the power of Christ, to come to him for a cure, which was above the power of natural means to effect. Observe, how pathetically he represents his servant's case as very sad; he is *sick of the palsy*, a disease which commonly makes the patient senseless of pain, but this person was *grievously tormented*; being young, nature was strong to struggle with the stroke, which made it painful. (It was not *paralysis simplex*, but *scorbutica*.) We should thus concern ourselves for the souls of our children, and servants, that are spiritually sick of the palsy, the dead-palsy, the dumb-palsy; senseless of spiritual evils, inactive in that which is spiritually good; and bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, bring them to the means of healing and health.

2. Observe his great humility and self-abasement. After Christ had intimated his readiness to come and heal his servant, (v. 7.) he expressed himself with the more humbleness of mind. Note, Humble souls are made more humble, by Christ's gracious condescensions to them. Observe what was the language of his humility; *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*; (v. 8.) which speaks mean thoughts of himself, and high thoughts of our Lord Jesus. He does not say, "My servant is not worthy that thou shouldst come into his chamber, because it is in the garret;" but, *I am not worthy that thou shouldst come into my house*. The centurion was a great man, yet he owned his unworthiness before God. Note, Humility very well becomes persons of quality. Christ now made but a mean figure in the world, yet the centurion, looking upon him as a prophet, *yea, more than a prophet*, paid him this respect. Note, We should have a value and veneration for what we see of God, even in those who, in outward condition, are every way our inferiors. The centurion came to Christ with a petition, and therefore expressed himself thus humbly. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, and to God through Christ, it becomes us to abase ourselves, and to lie low in a sense of our own unworthiness, as mean creatures and as vile sinners, to do any thing for God, to receive any good from him, or to have any thing to do with him.

3. Observe his great faith. The more humility, the more faith; the more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith not only that Christ could cure his servant, but,

(1.) That he could cure him at a distance. There

needed not any physical contact, as in natural operations, nor any application to the part affected; but the cure, he believed, might be wrought, without bringing the physician and patient together. We read afterwards of those, who brought the *man sick of the palsy to Christ*, through much difficulty, and set him before him, and Christ commended their faith for a *working faith*. This centurion did not bring his *man sick of the palsy*, and Christ commended his faith for a *trusting faith*: true faith is accepted of Christ, though variously appearing; Christ puts the best construction upon the different methods of religion that people take, and thereby has taught us to do so too. This centurion believed, and it is undoubtedly true, that the power of Christ knows no limits, and therefore nearness and distance are alike to him. Distance of place cannot obstruct either the knowing, or working, of him that *fills all places*. *Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off?* Jer. 23. 23.

(2.) That he could cure him with a *word*, not send him a medicine, much less a charm; but *speak the word only*, and I do not question but *my servant shall be healed*. Herein he owns him to have a divine power, an authority to command all the creatures and powers of nature, which enables him to do whatsoever he pleases in the kingdom of nature; as at first he raised that kingdom by an almighty word, when he said, *Let there be light*. With men, saying and doing are two things; but not so with Christ, who is therefore the *Arm of the Lord*, because he is the *eternal Word*. His saying, *Be ye warned, and filled*, (Jam. 2. 16.) and healed, warmed, and fills, and heals.

The centurion's faith in the power of Christ he here illustrates by the dominion he had, as a centurion, over his soldiers, as a master over his servants; he says to one, *Go, and he goes, &c.* They were all at his beck and command, so as that he could by them execute things at a distance; his word was a law to them—*dictum factum*; well disciplined soldiers know that the commands of their officers are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Thus could Christ speak, and it is done; such a power had he over all bodily diseases. The centurion had this command over his soldiers, though he was himself a *man under authority*; not a commander in chief, but a subaltern officer; much more had Christ this power, who is the supreme and sovereign Lord of all. The centurion's servants were very obsequious, would go and come at every the least intimation of their master's mind. Now, [1.] Such servants we all should be to God: we must go and come at his bidding, according to the directions of his word, and the disposals of his providence; run where he sends us, return when he remands us, and do what he appoints. *What saith my Lord unto his servant?* When his will crosses our own, his must take place, and our own be set aside. [2.] Such servants bodily diseases are to Christ. They seize us when he sends them, they leave us when he calls them back; they have that effect upon us, upon our bodies, upon our souls, that he orders. It is a matter of comfort to all that belong to Christ, for whose good his power is exerted and engaged, that every disease has his commission, executes his command, is under his control, and is made to serve the intentions of his grace. They need not fear sickness, nor what it can do, who see it in the hand of so good a Friend.

II. Here is the grace of Christ appearing toward this centurion; for to the gracious he will show himself gracious.

1. He complies with his address at the first word. He did but tell him his servant's case, and was going on to beg a cure, when Christ prevented him, with this good word, and comfortable word, *I will come and heal him*; (v. 7.) not, *I will come and see*

him—that had evinced him a kind Saviour; but, *I will come and heal him*—that shows him a mighty, an almighty Saviour; it was a great word, but no more than he could make good; for he has *healing under his wings*; his coming is healing. They who wrought miracles by a derived power, did not speak thus positively, as Christ did, who wrought them by his own power, as one that had authority. When a minister is sent for to a sick friend, he can but say, *I will come and pray for him*; but Christ says, *I will come and heal him*; it is well that Christ can do more for us than our ministers can. The centurion desired he would heal his servant; he says, *I will come and heal him*; thus expressing more favour than he did either ask or think of. Note, Christ often outdoes the expectations of poor supplicants. See an instance of Christ's humility, that he would make a visit to a poor soldier. He would not go down to see a nobleman's sick child, who insisted upon his coming down, (John 4. 47—49.) but he proffers to go down to see a sick servant; thus does he regard the *low estate* of his people, and give more *abundant honour to that part which lacked*. Christ's humility, in being willing to come, gave an example to him, and occasioned his humility, in owning himself unworthy to have him come. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions to us, should make us the more humble and self-abasing before him.

2. He commends his faith, and takes occasion from it to speak a kind word of the poor Gentiles, v. 10—12. See what great things a strong but self-denying faith can obtain from Jesus Christ, even of general and public concern.

(1.) As to the centurion himself; he not only approved him and accepted him, (that honour have all true believers,) but he admired him and applauded him: that honour great believers have, as Job; there is *none like him in the earth*.

[1.] Christ admired him, not for his greatness, but for his graces. *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled*; not as if it were to him new and surprising, he knew the centurion's faith, for he wrought it; but it was great and excellent, rare and uncommon, and Christ spoke of it as wonderful, to teach us what to admire; not worldly pomp and decorations, but the beauty of holiness, and the ornaments which are *in the sight of God of great price*. Note, the wonders of grace should affect us more than the wonders of nature or providence, and spiritual attainments more than any achievements in this world. Of those that are *rich in faith*, not of those that are *rich in gold and silver*, we should say that they have *gotten all this glory*, Gen. 31. 1. But whatever there is admirable in the faith of any, it must redound to the glory of Christ, who will shortly be himself *admired in all them that believe*, as having done in and for them *marvellous things*.

[2.] He applauded him in what he said to *them that followed*. All believers shall be, in the *other world*, but some believers are, in *this world*, confessed and acknowledged by Christ before men, in his eminent appearances for them and with them. *Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*. Now this speaks, *First, Honour to the centurion*; who, though not a son of Abraham's loins, was an heir of Abraham's faith, and Christ found it so. Note, The thing that Christ seeks is *faith*, and wherever it is, he finds it, though but as a *grain of mustard-seed*. He had not found *so great faith*, all things considered, and in proportion to the means; as the poor widow is said to *cast in more than they all*, Luke 21. 3. Though the centurion was a Gentile, yet he was thus commended. Note, we must be so far from grudging, that we must be forward, to give those their due praise, that are not within our denomination or pale. *Secondly, It speaks shame to Israel*, to whom pertained the *adoption, the glory,*

the covenants, and all the assistances and encouragements of faith. Note, When the Son of Man comes, he finds little faith, and, therefore, he finds so little fruit. Note, The attainments of some, who have had but little helps for their souls, will aggravate the sin and ruin of many, that have had great plenty of the means of grace, and have not made a good improvement of them. Christ said this to those that followed him, if by any means he might provoke them to a holy emulation, as Paul speaks, Rom. 11. 14. They were Abraham's seed; in jealousy for that honour, let them not suffer themselves to be outstripped by a Gentile, especially in that grace for which Abraham was eminent.

(2.) As to others. Christ takes occasion from hence, to make a comparison between Jews and Gentiles, and tells them two things, which could not but be very surprising to them who had been taught that salvation was of the Jews.

[1.] That a great many of the Gentiles should be saved, v. 11. The faith of the centurion was but a specimen of the conversion of the Gentiles, and a preface to their adoption into the church. This was a topic our Lord Jesus touched often upon; he speaks it with assurance; *I say unto you*, "I that know all men;" and he could not say anything more pleasing to himself, or more displeasing to the Jews; an intimation of this kind enraged the Nazarenes against him, Luke 4. 27. Christ gives us here an idea, First, Of the persons that shall be saved; many from the east and the west: he had said, (ch. 7. 14.) Few there be that find the way to life; and yet here many shall come. Few at one time, and in one place; yet, when they come all together, they will be a great many. We now see but here and there one brought to grace; but we shall shortly see the Captain of our salvation bringing many sons to glory. Heb. 2. 10. He will come with ten thousands of his saints; (Jude 14.) with such a company as no man can number; (Rev. 7. 9.) with nations of them that are saved, Rev. 21. 24. They shall come from the east, and from the west; places far distant from each other; yet they shall all meet at the right hand of Christ, the centre of their unity. Note, God has his remnant in all places; from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, Mal. 1. 11. The elect will be gathered from the four winds, ch. 24. 31. They are sown in the earth, some scattered in every corner of the field. The Gentile world lay from east to west, and they are especially meant here; though they were strangers to the covenant of promise now, and had been long, yet who knows what hidden ones God had among them then? As in Elijah's time in Israel, (1 Kings 19. 14.) soon after which they flocked into the church in great multitudes, Isa. 60. 3. 4. Note, When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many there, that we thought had been going thither, so we shall meet a great many there, that we did not expect. Secondly, Christ gives us an idea of the salvation itself. They shall come, shall come together, shall come together to Christ, 2 Thess. 2. 1. 1. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace on earth, into the covenant of grace made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they shall be blessed with faithful Abraham, whose blessing comes upon the Gentiles, Gal. 3. 14. This makes Zaccheus a son of Abraham, Luke 19. 9. 2. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of glory in heaven. They shall come cheerfully, flying as doves to their windows; they shall sit down to rest from their labours, as having done their day's work; sitting denotes continuance; while we stand, we are going, where we sit, we mean to stay; heaven is a remaining rest, it is a continuing city; they shall sit down, as upon a throne; (Rev. 3. 21.) as at a table; that is the metaphor here; they shall sit down to be feasted; which denotes both fulness of communica-

tion, and freedom and familiarity of communion, Luke 22. 30. They shall sit down with Abraham. They who in this world were ever so far distant from each other in time, place, or outward condition, shall all meet together in heaven; ancients and moderns, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. The rich man in hell sees Abraham, but Lazarus sits down with him, leaning on his breast. Note, Holy society is a part of the felicity of heaven; and they on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are most obscure, shall share in glory with the renowned patriarchs.

[2.] That a great many of the Jews should perish, v. 12. Observe,

First, A strange sentence passed; *The children of the kingdom shall be cast out*; the Jews that persist in unbelief, though they were by birth children of the kingdom, yet shall be cut off from being members of the visible church: the kingdom of God, of which they boasted that they were the children, shall be taken from them, and they shall become not a people, not obtaining mercy, Rom. 11. 20.—9. 31. In the great day it will not avail men to have been children of the kingdom, either as Jews or Christians; for men will then be judged, not by what they were called, but by what they were. If children indeed, then heirs; but many are children in profession, in the family, but not of it, that will come short of the inheritance. Being born of professing parents denominates us children of the kingdom; but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to shew for heaven but that, we shall be cast out.

Secondly, A strange punishment for the workers of iniquity described; *They shall be cast into outer darkness*, the darkness of those that are without, of the Gentiles that were out of the church; into that the Jews were cast, and into worse: they were blinded, and hardened, and filled with terrors, as the apostle shews, Rom. 11. 8—10. A people so unchurched, and given up to spiritual judgments, are in utter darkness already: but it looks further, to the state of damned sinners in hell, to which the other is a dismal preface. *They shall be cast out from God*, and all true comfort, and cast into darkness. In hell there is fire, but no light; it is utter darkness; darkness in extremity; the highest degree of darkness, without any remainder, or mixture, or hope, of light; nor the least gleam or glimpse of it: it is darkness that results from their being shut out of heaven, the land of light; they who are without, are in the regions of darkness; yet this is not the worst of it, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 1. In hell there will be great grief floods of tears shed to no purpose: anguish of spirit preying eternally upon the vitals, in the sense of the wrath of God, is the torment of the damned. 2. Great indignation: damned sinners will gnash their teeth for spite and vexation, full of the fury of the Lord; seeing with envy the happiness of others, and reflecting with horror upon the former possibility of their own being happy, which is now past.

3. He cures his servant. He not only commends his application to him, but grants him that for which he applied, which was a real answer, v. 13. Observe,

(1.) What Christ said to him: he said that which made the cure as great a favour to him as it was to his servant, and much greater: *As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee*. The servant got a cure of his disease, but the master got the confirmation and approbation of his faith. Note, Christ often gives encouraging answers to his praying people, when they are interceding for others. It is kindness to us, to be heard for others. God turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42. 10. It was a great honour which Christ put upon this centurion, when he gave him a blank, as it were;

Be it done as thou believest. What could he have more? Yet what was said to him is said to us all, *Believe, and ye shall receive; only believe.* See here the power of Christ, and the power of faith. As Christ can do what he will, so an active believer may have what he will from Christ; the oil of grace multiplies, and stays not till the vessels of faith fail.

(2.) What was the effect of this saying: the prayer of faith was a prevailing prayer, it ever was so, and ever will be so; it appears, by the suddenness of the cure, that it was *miraculous*; and by its coincidence with Christ's saying, that the miracle was *his*; *he spake, and it was done*; and this was a proof of his omnipotence, that he has a long arm. It is the observation of a learned physician, that the diseases Christ cured were chiefly such as were the most difficult to be cured by any natural means, and particularly the palsy. *Omnis paralysis, præsertim vetusta, aut incurabilis est, aut difficilis curatu, etiam juvenis; atque solvo ego dicere, morbos omnes qui Christo curandi fuerunt propositi difficillimos sui naturæ curatu esse*—Every kind of palsy, especially of long continuance, is either incurable, or is found to yield, with the utmost difficulty, to medical skill, even in young subjects; so that I have frequently remarked, that all the diseases which were referred to Christ for cure, appear to have been of the most obstinate and hopeless kind. *Mercurialis de morbis puerorum, lib. 2. cap. 5.*

14. And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

They who pretend to be critical in the Harmony of the evangelists, place this passage, and all that follows to the end of *ch. 9.* before the sermon on the mount, according to the order which Mark and Luke observe in placing it. Dr. Lightfoot places only this passage before the sermon on the mount, and *v. 18, &c.* after. Here we have,

1. A particular account of the cure of *Peter's wife's mother*, who was ill of a fever; in which observe,

1. The *case*, which was nothing extraordinary; fevers are the most common distempers; but, the patient being a near relation of Peter's, it is recorded as an instance of Christ's peculiar care of, and kindness to, the families of his disciples. Here we find (1.) That Peter had a *wife*, and yet was called to be an *apostle of Christ*; and Christ countenanced the marriage state, by being thus kind to his *wife's* relations. The church of Rome, therefore, which forbids ministers to marry, goes contrary to that apostle from whom they pretend to derive an infallibility. (2.) That Peter had a *house*, though Christ had not, *v. 20.* Thus was the disciple better provided for than his Lord. (3.) That he had a house at Capernaum, though he was originally of Bethsaida; it is probable, he removed to Capernaum, when Christ removed thither, and made that his principal residence. Note, It is worth while to change our quarters, that we may be near to Christ, and have opportunities of converse with him. When

the ark removes, Israel must remove, and go after it. (4.) That he had his *wife's mother* with him in his family, which is an example to yoke-fellows to be kind to one another's relations as their own. Probably, this good woman was old, and yet was respected and taken care of, as old people ought to be, with all possible tenderness. (5.) That she lay ill of a *fever*. Neither the strength of youth, nor the weakness and coldness of age, will be a fence against diseases of this kind. The palsy was a chronic disease, the fever an acute disease, but both were brought to Christ.

2. The cure, *v. 15.* (1.) How it was *effected*, *He touched her hand*; not to know the disease, as the physicians do, by the pulse, but to heal it. This was an intimation of his kindness and tenderness; he is *himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities*: it likewise shews the way of spiritual healing, by the exerting of the power of Christ with his word, and the application of Christ to ourselves. The scripture *speaks the word*, the Spirit gives the touch, touches the heart, touches the hand. (2.) How it was *evidenced*: this shewed that the *fever left her*, she *arose*, and *ministered to them*. By this it appears, [1.] That the mercy was perfected. They that recover from fevers by the power of nature, are commonly weak and feeble, and unfit for business, a great while after; to shew therefore that this cure was above the power of nature, she was immediately so well as to go about the business of the house. [2.] That the mercy was sanctified; and the mercies that are so are indeed perfected. Though she was thus dignified by a peculiar favour, yet she does not assume importance, but is as ready to wait at table, if there be occasion, as any servant. They must be humble whom Christ has honoured; being thus delivered, she studies what she shall render. It is very fit that they whom Christ hath healed should minister unto him, as his humble servants, all their days.

II. Here is a general account of the many cures that Christ wrought. This cure of Peter's mother-in-law brought him abundance of patients. "He healed such a one; why not me? Such a one's friend, why not mine?" Now we are here told,

1. What he did, *v. 16.* (1.) *He cast out devils; cast out the evil spirits with his word.* There may be much of Satan's agency, by the divine permission, in those diseases of which natural causes may be assigned, as in Job's boils, especially in the diseases of the mind; but, about the time of Christ's being in the world, there seems to have been more than an ordinary letting loose of the devil, to possess and vex the bodies of people; he came, *having great wrath, for he knew that his time was short*; and God wisely ordered it so, that Christ might have the fairer and more frequent opportunities of shewing his power over Satan, and the purpose and design of his coming into the world, which was to disarm and dispossess Satan, to break his power, and to destroy his works; and his success was as glorious as his design was gracious. (2.) *He healed all that were sick*; all without exception, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad.

2. How the scripture was herein fulfilled, *v. 17.* The accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies was the great thing Christ had in his eye, and the great proof of his being the Messiah: among other things, it was written of him, (*Isa. 53. 4.*) *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows*: it is referred to, *1 Pet. 2. 24.* and there it is construed, *he hath borne our sins*: here it is referred to, and is construed, *he hath borne our sicknesses*: our sins make our sicknesses, our griefs: Christ bore away sin by the merit of his death, and bore away sickness by the miracles of his life; nay, though those miracles are ceased, we may say, that

he bore our sicknesses then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree; for sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body; and there is more, in this one line of the gospels, to support and comfort us under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers—that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; he bore them before us; though he was never sick, yet he was hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and troubled in spirit, sorrowful and very heavy: he bore them for us in his passion, and bears them with us in compassion, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and thus he bears them off from us, and makes them sit light, if it be not our own fault. Observe how emphatically it is expressed here: *Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*; he was both able and willing to interpose in that matter, and concerned to deal with our infirmities and sicknesses, as our Physician; that part of the calamity of the human nature was his particular cure, which he evidenced by his great readiness to cure diseases; and he is no less powerful, no less tender now, for we are sure that never were any the worse for going to heaven.

18. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19. And a certain Scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 21. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Here is,

1. Christ's removing to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, and his ordering his disciples, whose boats attended him, to get their transport-vessels ready, in order to it, v. 18. The influences of this Sun of righteousness were not to be confined to one place, but diffused all the country over; he must go about to do good; the necessities of souls called to him, *Come over, and help us*; (Acts 16. 9.) he removed when he saw great multitudes about him. Though by this it appeared that they were desirous to have him there, he knew there were others as desirous to have him with them, and they must have their share of him: his being acceptable and useful in one place, was no objection against, but a reason for, his going to another. Thus he would try the multitudes that were about him, whether their zeal would carry them to follow him, and attend on him, when his preaching was removed to some distance. Many would be glad of such helps, if they could have them at next door, who will not be at the pains to follow them to the other side; and thus Christ shook off those who were less zealous, and the perfect were made manifest.

II. Christ's communication with two, who, upon his remove to the other side, were loth to stay behind, and had a mind to follow him, not as others, who were his followers at large, but to come into close discipleship, which the most were shy of; for it carried such a face of strictness as they could not like, nor be well reconciled to; but here is an account of two who seemed desirous to come into communion, and yet were not right; which is here given, as a specimen of the hindrances by which many are

kept from closing with Christ, and cleaving to him; and a warning to us, to set out in following Christ, so as that we may not come short; to lay such a foundation, as that our building may stand.

We have here Christ's managing of two different tempers, one quick and eager, the other dull and heavy; and his instructions are adapted to each of them, and designed for our use.

1. Here is one that was *too hasty in promising*; and he was a *certain scribe*, (v. 19.) a scholar, a learned man, one of those that studied and expounded the law; generally we find them in the gospels to be men of no good character; usually coupled with the Pharisees, as enemies to Christ and his doctrine. *Where is the scribe?* 1 Cor. 1. 20. He is very seldom following Christ; yet here was one that bid pretty fair for discipleship, a *Saul among the prophets*. Now observe,

(1.) How he expressed his forwardness; *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*. I know not how any man could have spoken better. His profession of a self-dedication to Christ, is, [1.] Very ready, and seems to be *ex mero motu*—from his unbiassed inclination; he is not called to it by Christ, nor urged by any of the disciples, but, of his own accord, he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ; he is not a pressed man, but a volunteer. [2.] Very resolute; he seems to be at a point in this matter; he does not say, "I have a mind to follow thee," but "I am determined, I will do it." [3.] It was unlimited and without reserve; "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; not only to the other side of the country, but if it were to the utmost regions of the world." Now we should think ourselves sure of such a man as this; and yet it appears, by Christ's answer, that his resolution was rash, his ends low and carnal: either he did not consider at all, or not that which was to be considered: he saw the miracles Christ wrought, and hoped he would set up a temporal kingdom, and he wished to apply betimes for a share in it. Note, There are many resolutions for religion, produced by some sudden pangs of conviction, and taken up without due consideration, that prove abortive, and come to nothing: soon ripe, soon rotten.

(2.) How Christ tried his forwardness, whether it were sincere or not, v. 20. He let him know that this Son of man, whom he is so eager to follow, has not where to lay his head, v. 20. Now from this account of Christ's deep poverty, we observe,

[1.] That it is strange in itself, that the Son of God, when he came into the world, should put himself into such a very low condition, as to want the convenience of a certain resting-place, which the meanest of the creatures have. If he would take our nature upon him, one would think, he should have taken it in its best estate and circumstances: no, he takes it in its worst. See here, *First*, How well provided for the inferior creatures are: *The foxes have holes*; though they are not only not useful, but hurtful, to man, yet God provides holes for them, in which they are earthed: man endeavours to destroy them, but thus they are sheltered; their holes are their castles. *The birds of the air*, though they take no care for themselves, yet are taken care of, and have nests; (Ps. 104. 17.) nests in the field; some of them nests in the house; in God's courts, Ps. 84. 3. *Secondly*, How poorly the Lord Jesus was provided for. It may encourage us to trust God for necessities, that the beasts and birds have such good provision; and may comfort us, if we want necessities, that our Master did so before us. Note, Our Lord Jesus, when he was here in the world, submitted to the disgraces and distresses of extreme poverty; for our sakes he became poor, very poor. He had not a settlement, had not a place of repose, not a house of his own, to put his head in, not a pillow of his

to lay his head on. He and his disciples lived upon the charity of well-disposed people, that ministered to him of their substance, Luke 8. 2. Christ submitted to this, not only that he might in all respects humble himself, and fulfil the scriptures, which spake of him as *poor and needy*, but that he might shew us the vanity of worldly wealth, and teach us to look upon it with a holy contempt; that he might purchase better things for us, and so *make us rich*, 2 Cor. 8. 9.

[2.] It is strange that such a declaration should be made on this occasion. When a Scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he would have encouraged him, and said, *Come, and I will take care of thee*; one Scribe might be capable of doing him more credit and service than twelve fishermen: but Christ saw his heart, and answered to the thoughts of that, and therein teaches us all how to come to Christ. *First*, The Scribe's resolve seems to have been sudden; and Christ would have us, when we take upon us a profession of religion, to sit down, and count the cost, (Luke 14. 28.) to do it intelligently, and with consideration, and choose the way of godliness, not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is no advantage to religion, to take men by surprise, ere they are aware. They that take up a profession in a *hurry*, will throw it off again in a *fit*; let them, therefore, *take time*, and they will have *done the sooner*: let him that will follow Christ know the worst of it, and expect to lie hard, and fare hard. *Secondly*, His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle. He saw what abundance of cures Christ wrought, and concluded that he had large fees, and would get an estate quickly, and therefore, he would follow him in hopes of growing rich with him; but Christ rectifies his mistake, and tells him, he was so far from growing rich, that he had not a place to *lay his head on*; and that if he follow him, he cannot expect to fare better than he fared. Note, Christ will accept none for his followers that aim at worldly advantages in following him, or design to make any thing but heaven of their religion. We have reason to think that this Scribe, hereupon, *went away sorrowful*, being disappointed in a bargain which he thought would turn to account; he is not for following Christ, unless he can get by him.

1. Here is another that was too *slow in performing*. Delay in execution is as bad on the one hand, as precipitancy in resolution is on the other hand; when we have taken time to consider, and then have determined, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow, which we could do to-day. This candidate for the ministry was one of Christ's disciples already, (v. 21.) a follower of him at large. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, from an ancient tradition, that this was Philip; he seems to be better qualified and disposed than the former, because not so confident and presumptuous: a bold, eager, over-forward temper is not the most promising in religion; sometimes the last are first, and the first last. Now observe here,

(1.) The excuse that this disciple made, to defer an immediate attendance on Christ; (v. 21.) "*Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father*." Before I come to be a close and constant follower of thee, let me be allowed to perform this last office of respect to my father; and in the mean time, let it suffice to be a hearer of thee now and then, when I can spare time." His father (some think) was now sick, or dying, or dead; others think, he was only aged, and not likely in a course of nature to continue long; and he desired leave to attend upon him in his sickness, at his death, and to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed a reasonable request, and yet it was not right. He had not the zeal he should have had for the work, and therefore

pleaded this, because it seemed a plausible plea. Note, An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. The meaning of *Non vacat*, is, *Non placet*—The want of leisure is the want of inclination. We will suppose it to come from a true filial affection and respect for his father, yet still the preference should have been given to Christ. Note, Many are hindered *from* and *in* the way of serious godliness, by an over-concern for their families and relations; these lawful things undo us all, and our duty to God is neglected and postponed, under colour of discharging our debts to the world; here therefore we have need to double our guard.

(2.) Christ's disallowing of this excuse; (v. 22.) *Jesus said unto him, Follow me*; and, no doubt, power accompanied this word to him, as to others, and he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him, as Ruth to Naomi, when the Scribe, in the verses before, like Orpah, took leave of him. That said, *I will follow thee*; to this Christ said, *Follow me*; comparing them together, it is intimated that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promise to him; it is *not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*; he calls whom he will, Rom. 9. 16. And further, Note, Though chosen vessels may make excuses, and delay their compliance with divine calls a great while, yet Christ will at length answer their excuses, conquer their unwillingness, and bring them to his feet; when Christ calls, he will overcome, and make the call effectual, 1 Sam. 3. 10. His excuse is laid aside as insufficient; *Let the dead bury their dead*. It is a proverbial expression; "Let one dead man bury another: rather let them lie unburied, than that the service of Christ should be neglected. *Let the dead spiritually bury the dead corporally*; let worldly offices be left to worldly people; do not thou encumber thyself with them. Burying the dead, and especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time; it may be done as well by others, that are not called and qualified, as thou art, to be employed for Christ; thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that." Note, Piety to God must be preferred before piety to parents, though that is a great and needful part of our religion. The Nazarites, under the law, were not to mourn for their own parents, because they were *holy to the Lord*; (Numb. 6. 6—8.) nor was the High-Priest to *defile himself for the dead*, no, not for his own father, Lev. 21. 11, 12. And Christ requires of those who would follow him, that they *hate father and mother*; (Luke 14. 26.) love them less than God; we must comparatively neglect and disesteem our nearest relations, when they come in competition with Christ, and either our doing for him, or our suffering for him.

23. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 21. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful. O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Christ had given sailing orders to his disciples, (v. 18.) that they should *depart to the other side* of

the sea of Tiberias, into the country of Gadara, in the tribe of Gad, which lay east of Jordan; thither he would go to rescue a poor creature that was possessed with a legion of devils, though he foresaw how he should be affronted there. Now, 1. He chose to go by water. It had not been much about, if he had gone by land; but he chose to cross the lake, that he might have occasion to manifest himself the God of the sea as well as of the dry land, and to show that *all power is his, both in heaven and in earth*. It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in, and pray to, who knows what it is to be at sea, and to be in storms there. But observe, when he went to sea, he had no yacht or pleasure-boat to attend him, but made use of his disciples' fishing-boats; so poorly was he accommodated in all respects. 2. His disciples followed him; the twelve kept close to him, when others stayed behind upon the *terra firma*, where there was sure footing. Note, They, and they only, will be found the true disciples of Christ, that are willing to go to sea with him, to follow him into dangers and difficulties. Many would be content to go the land-way to heaven, that will rather stand still, or go back, than venture upon a dangerous sea; but those that would rest with Christ hereafter must follow him now wherever he leads them, into a ship or into a prison, as well as into a palace. Now observe here,

1. The peril and perplexity of the disciples in this voyage; and in this appeared the truth of what Christ had just now said, that those who follow him must count upon difficulties, *v. 20*.

1. There arose a very great storm, *v. 24*. Christ could have prevented this storm, and have ordered them a pleasant passage, but that would not have been so much for his glory and the confirmation of their faith as their deliverance was: this storm was *for their sakes*, as John 11. 4. One would have expected, that having Christ with them, they should have had a very favourable gale, but it is quite otherwise; for Christ would shew that they who were passing with him over the ocean of this world to the other side, must expect storms by the way. The church is *tossed with tempests*; (Isa. 54. 11.) it is only the upper region that enjoys a perpetual calm, this lower one is ever and anon disturbed and disturbing.

2. Jesus Christ was asleep in this storm. We never read of Christ's sleeping, but at this time; he was in watchings often, and continued all night in prayer to God: this was a sleep, not of security, like Jonah's in a storm, but of holy serenity, and dependence upon his Father: he slept, to shew that he was really and truly man, and subject to the sinless infirmities of our nature: his work made him weary and sleepy, and he had no guilt, no fear within, to disturb his repose. Those that can lay their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm, (Ps. 4. 8.) as Peter, Acts 12. 6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awakened.

3. The poor disciples, though used to the sea, were in a great fright, and in their fear came to their Master, *v. 25*. Whither else should they go? It was well they had him so near them. They awoke him with their prayers: *Lord, save us, we perish*. Note, They who would learn to pray must go to sea. Imminent and sensible dangers will drive people to him who alone can help in time of need. Their prayer has life in it, *Lord, save us, we perish*. (1.) Their petition is, *Lord, save us*. They believed he could save them; they begged he would. Christ's errand into the world was to save, but those only

shall be saved, that call on the name of the Lord, Acts 2. 21. They who by faith are interested in the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ, may with a humble confidence apply themselves to him for temporal deliverances. Observe, They call him, *Lord*, and then pray, *Save us*. Note, Christ will save none but those that are willing to take him for their Lord; for he is a Prince and a Saviour. (2.) Their plea is, *We perish*; which was, [1.] The language of their fear: they looked upon their case as desperate, and gave up all for lost; they had received a sentence of death within themselves, and this they plead, "*We perish*, if thou dost not save us; look upon us therefore with pity." [2.] It was the language of their fervency; they pray as men in earnest, that beg for their lives; it becomes us thus to strive and wrestle in prayer; therefore Christ slept, that he might draw out this importunity.

II. The power and grace of Jesus Christ put forth for their succour; then the Lord Jesus awaked, as one refreshed, Ps. 78. 65. Christ may sleep when his church is in a storm, but he will not out-sleep himself: the time, the set time to favour his distressed church, will come, Ps. 102. 13.

1. He rebuked the disciples; (*v. 26*.) *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?* He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears. Christ reproved them first, and then delivered them; this is his method, to prepare us for a mercy, and then to give it us. Observe, (1.) His dislike of their fears: "*Why are ye fearful?*" Ye, my disciples? Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let heathen mariners tremble in a storm, but you shall not be so. Inquire into the reasons of your fear, and weigh them." (2.) His discovery of the cause and spring of their fears; *O ye of little faith*. Many that have true faith are weak in it, and it does but little. Note, [1.] Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day, to torment themselves with jealousies that things are bad with them, and dismal conclusions that they will be worse. [2.] The prevalence of our inordinate fears in a stormy day is owing to the weakness of our faith, which would be as an anchor to the soul, and would ply the oar of prayer. By faith we might see through the storm to the quiet shore, and encourage ourselves with hope that we shall weather our point. [3.] The fearfulness of Christ's disciples in a storm, and their unbelief, the cause of it, are very displeasing to the Lord Jesus, for they reflect dishonour upon him, and create disturbance to themselves.

2. He rebukes the wind; the former he did as the God of grace, and the Sovereign of the heart, who can do what he pleases in us; this he did as the God of nature, the Sovereign of the world, who can do what he pleases for us. It is the same power that stills the noise of the sea, and the tumult of fear, Ps. 65. 7. See, (1.) How easily this was done, with a word's speaking. Moses commanded the waters with a rod; Joshua, with the ark of the covenant; Elisha, with the prophet's mantle; but Christ with a word. See his absolute dominion over all the creatures, which bespeaks both his honour, and the happiness of those that have him on their side. (2.) How effectually it was done; *There was a great calm*, all of a sudden. Ordinarily, after a storm, there is such a fret of the waters, that it is a good while ere they can settle; but if Christ speak the word, not only the storm ceases, but all the effects of it, all the remains of it. Great storms of doubt and fear of the soul, under the power of the spirit of bondage, sometimes end in a wonderful calm, created and spoken by the Spirit of adoption.

3. This excited their astonishment; (*v. 27*.) *The men marvelled*. They had been long acquainted with the sea, and never saw a storm so immediately

turned into a perfect calm, in all their lives. It has all the marks and signatures of a miracle upon it; *it is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in their eyes.* Observe, (1.) Their admiration of Christ; *What manner of man is this!* Note, Christ is a Nonsuch; every thing in him is admirable: none so wise, so mighty, so amiable, as he. (2.) The reason of it; *Even the winds and the sea obey him.* Upon this account, Christ is to be admired, that he has a commanding power even over *winds and seas.* Others pretended to cure diseases, but he only undertook to command the *winds.* We know not the way of the *wind*, (John 3. 8.) much less can we control it; but he that *bringeth forth the wind out of his treasury*, (Ps. 135. 7.) when it is out, gathers it into his fists, Prov. 30. 4. He that can do this, can do any thing, can do enough to encourage our confidence and comfort in him, in the most stormy day, within or without, Isa. 26. 4. *The Lord sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters.* Christ, by commanding the *seas*, showed himself to be the same that *made the world, when, at his rebuke, the waters fled*, (Ps. 104. 7, 8.) as now, *at his rebuke, they fell.*

29. And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. 30. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? 31. And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. 32. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. 33. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters: 34. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. 35. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devils out of two men that were possessed. The scope of this chapter is to show the divine power of Christ, by the instances of his dominion over bodily diseases, which to us are irresistible; over winds and waves, which to us are yet more uncontrollable; and lastly, over devils, which to us are most formidable of all. Christ has not only all *power in heaven and earth* and all deep places, but has the keys of hell too. *Principalities and powers were made subject to him*, even while he was in his estate of humiliation, as an earnest of what should be at his entrance into his glory; (Eph. 1. 21.) he spoiled them, Col. 2. 15. It was observed in general, (v. 16.) that *Christ cast out the spirits with his word*; here we have a particular instance of it, which had some circumstances more remarkable than the rest. This miracle was wrought in the country of the Gergesenes; some think, they were the remains of the old Girgashites, Deut. 7. 1. Though Christ was sent chiefly to the

lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet some sallies he made among the borderers, as here, to gain this victory over Satan, which was a specimen of the conquest of his legions in the Gentile world.

Now, beside the general instance which this gives us of Christ's power over Satan, and his designs against him to disarm and dispossess him, we have here especially discovered to us the way and manner of evil spirits in their enmity to man. Observe, concerning this legion of devils, *What work they made where they were, and where they went.*

1. What work they made where they were; which appears in the miserable condition of these two that were possessed by them; and some think, these two were man and wife, because the other Evangelists speak but of one.

1. They dwelt among the *tombs*; thence they came when they met Christ. The Devil having the *power of death*, not as judge, but as executioner, he delighted to converse among the trophies of his victory, the dead bodies of men; but there, where he thought himself in his greatest triumph and elevation, as afterwards in Golgotha, the place of a skull, did Christ conquer and subdue him. Conversing among the graves increased the melancholy and frenzy of the poor possessed creatures, and so strengthened the hold he had of them by their bodily distemper, and also made them more formidable to other people, who generally startle at any thing that stirs among the *tombs*.

2. They were *exceeding fierce*; not only ungovernable themselves, but mischievous to others, frightening many, having hurt some; *so that no man durst pass that way.* Note, The Devil bears malice to mankind, and shows it, by making men spiteful and malicious one to another. Mutual enmities, where there should be mutual endearments and assistances, are effects and evidences of Satan's enmity to the whole race: he makes one man a wolf, a bear, a devil, to another—*Homo homini lupus*. Where Satan rules in a man spiritually, by those lusts that war in the members, pride, envy, malice, revenge, they make him as unfit for human society, as unworthy of it, and as much an enemy to the comfort of it, as these poor possessed creatures were.

3. They bid defiance to Jesus Christ, and disclaimed all interest in him, v. 29. It is an instance of the power of God over the devils, that, notwithstanding the mischief they studied to do *by and to* these poor creatures, yet they could not keep them from meeting Jesus Christ, who ordered the matter so as to meet them. It was his overpowering hand that dragged these unclean spirits into his presence, which they dreaded more than any thing else: his chains could hold them, when the chains men made for them could not. But, being brought before him, they protested against his jurisdiction, and broke out into a rage, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?* Here is,

(1.) One word the Devil spoke like a saint; he addressed himself to Christ as *Jesus the Son of God*; a good word, and at this time, when it was a truth but in the proving, it was a great word too, what flesh and blood did not reveal to Peter, ch. 16. 16. Even the devils know and believe, and confess Christ to be the *Son of God*, and yet they are devils still, which makes their enmity to Christ so much the more wicked, and indeed a perfect torment to themselves; for how can it be otherwise, to oppose one they know, to be the *Son of God*? Note, It is not knowledge, but love, that distinguishes saints from devils. He is the first-born of hell, that knows Christ, and yet hates him, and will not be subject to him and his law. We may remember that not long since the Devil made a doubt whether Christ were the *Son of God* or not, and would have persuaded him to question it, (ch. 4. 3.) but now he readily owns it.

Note, Though God's children may be much disquieted in an hour of temptation, by Satan's questioning their relation to God as a Father, yet the Spirit of adoption shall at length clear it up to them so much to their satisfaction, as to set it even above the Devil's contradiction.

(2.) *Two* words that he said like a *devil*, like himself.

[1.] A word of defiance; *What have we to do with thee?* Now, *First*, It is true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour, *for he took not on him the nature of the angels* that fell, nor did he lay hold on them; (Heb. 2. 16.) they are in no relation to him, they neither have, nor hope for, any benefit by him. O the depth of this mystery of divine love, that fallen man hath so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! Surely here was torment enough before the time, to be forced to own the excellency that is in Christ, and yet that he has no interest in him. Note, It is possible for men to call Jesus the *Son of God*, and yet have nothing to do with him. *Secondly*, It is as true, that the devils desire not to have any thing to do with Christ as a Ruler; they hate him, they are filled with enmity against him, they stand in opposition to him, and are in open rebellion against his crown and dignity. See whose language they speak, that will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ, with his laws and ordinances, that throw off his yoke, that *break his bands in sunder, and will not have him to reign over them*; that say to the Almighty Jesus, *Depart from us: they are of their father the Devil, they do his lusts, and speak his language*. *Thirdly*, But it is not true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Judge, for they have, and they know it. These devils could not say, *What hast thou to do with us?* could not deny that the Son of God is the Judge of devils; to his judgment they are bound over in chains of darkness, which they would fain shake off, and shake off the thought of.

[2.] A word of dread and deprecation; "*Art thou come hither, to torment us*—to cast us out from these men, and to restrain us from doing the hurt we would do?" Note, To be turned out, and tied up, from doing mischief, is a torment to the Devil, all whose comfort and satisfaction are man's misery and destruction. Should not we then count it our heaven to be doing well, and reckon that our torment, whether within or without, that hinders us from well-doing? Now must we be tormented by thee *before the time*? Note, *First*, There is a time in which devils will be more tormented than they are, and they know it. The great assize at the last day is the time fixed for their complete torture, in that Tophet which is ordained of old, *for the king, for the prince of the devils, and his angels*; (Isa. 30. 33. Matt. 25. 41.) *for the judgment of that day they are reserved*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. These malignant spirits that are, by the divine permission, prisoners at large, walking to and fro through the earth, (Job 1. 7.) are even now in a chain; hitherto shall their power reach, and no further; they will then be made *close prisoners*; they have now some ease; they will then be in torment without ease. This they here take for granted, and ask not never to be tormented, (despair of relief is the misery of their case,) but they beg that they may not be tormented *before the time*; for though they knew not when the day of judgment should be, they knew it should not be yet. *Secondly*, The devils have a *certain fearful looking for of that judgment and fiery indignation*, upon every approach of Christ, and every check that is given to their power and rage. The very sight of Christ, and his word of command to come out of the man, made them thus apprehensive of their torment. Thus *the devils believe, and tremble*, Jam. 2. 19. It is their own enmity to God and man that puts them upon the rack,

and torments them before the time. The most desperate sinners, whose damnation is sealed, yet can not quite harden their hearts against the surprise of fearfulness, *when they see the day approaching*.

II. Let us now see what work they made where they went, when they were turned out of the men possessed, and that was into a *herd of swine*, which was a good way off, v. 30. These Gergesenes, though living on the other side Jordan, were Jews. What had they to do with *swine*, which by the law were unclean, and not to be eaten nor touched? Probably, lying in the outskirts of the land, there were many Gentiles among them, to whom this *herd of swine* belonged: or they kept them to be sold, or bartered, to the Romans, with whom they had now great dealings, and who were admirers of *swine's* flesh. Now observe,

1. How the devils seized the *swine*. Though they were a good way off, and, one would think, out of danger, yet the devils had an eye upon them, to do them a mischief: for they go up and down, seeking to devour, seeking an opportunity, and they seek not long but they find. Now here,

(1.) They asked leave to enter into the *swine*; (v. 31.) *they besought him*, with all earnestness, *If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine*. Hereby, [1.] They discover their own inclination to do mischief, and what a pleasure it is to them: those, therefore, are their children, and resemble them, *whose sleep departeth from them, except they cause some to fall*, Prov. 4. 16. "Let us go into the *herd of swine*, any where rather than into the place of torment, any where to do mischief." If they might not be suffered to hurt men in their bodies, they would hurt them in their goods, and in that too they intend hurt to their souls, by making Christ a burthen to them: such malicious devices hath that old subtle serpent! [2.] They own Christ's power over them; that, without his sufferance and permission, they could not so much as hurt a *swine*. This is comfortable to all the Lord's people, that, though the Devil's power be very great, yet it is limited, and not equal to his malice; (what would become of us, if it were?) especially that it is under the control of our Lord Jesus, our most faithful, powerful Friend and Saviour; that Satan and his instruments can go no further than he is pleased to permit; *here shall their proud waves be stayed*.

(2.) They had leave. Christ said unto them, *Go*, (v. 32.) as God did to Satan, when he desired leave to afflict Job. Note, God does often, for wise and holy ends, permit the efforts of Satan's rage, and suffer him to do the mischief he would, and even by it serve his own purposes. The devils are not only Christ's captives, but his vassals; his dominion over them appears in the harm they do, as well as in the hindrance of them from doing more. Thus even their wrath is made to praise Christ, and the remainder of it he does and will restrain. Christ permitted this, [1.] For the conviction of the Sadducees that were then among the Jews, who denied the existence of spirits, and would not own that there were such beings, because they could not see them. Now Christ would, by this, bring it as near as might be to an ocular demonstration of the being, multitude, power, and malice, of evil spirits, that, if they were not hereby convinced, they might be left inexcusable in their infidelity. We see not the wind, but it would be absurd to deny it, when we see trees and houses blown down by it. [2.] For the punishment of the Gadarenes, who perhaps, though Jews, took a liberty to eat *swine's* flesh, contrary to the law: however, their keeping *swine* bordered upon evil; and Christ would also shew what a hellish crew they were delivered from, which, if he had permitted it, would soon have choked them, as they did their *swine*. The devils, in obedience to Christ's

command, came out of the men, and, having permission, when they were come out, immediately they went into the herd of swine. See what an industrious enemy Satan is, and how expeditious; he will lose no time in doing mischief. Observe,

2. *Whither they hurried them*, when they had seized them. They were not bid to *save their lives*, and, therefore, they were made to *run violently down a steep place into the sea*, where they all perished, to the number of about *two thousand*, Mark 5. 13. Note, The possession which the Devil gets is for destruction. Thus the Devil hurries people to sin, hurries them to that which they have resolved against, and which they know will be shame and grief to them: with what a force doth the evil spirit work in the children of disobedience, when by so many foolish and hurtful lusts they are brought to act in direct contradiction, not only to religion, but to right reason, and their interest in this world! Thus, likewise, he hurries them to ruin, for he is Apollyon and Abaddon, the great destroyer. By his lusts which men do, they are *drowned in destruction and perdition*. This is Satan's will, to *swallow up* and to *devour*; miserable then is the condition of those that are led captive by him at his will. They are hurried into a worse lake than this, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Observe,

3. *What effect had this upon the owners*. The report of it was soon brought them by the swineherds, who seemed to be more concerned for the loss of the swine than any thing else, for they went not to tell what was befallen to the possessed of the devils, till the swine were lost, v. 35. Christ went not into the city, but the news of his being there did, by which he was willing to feel how their pulse beat, and what influence it had upon them, and then act accordingly.

Now, (1.) Their curiosity brought them out to see Jesus. The whole city came out to meet him, that they might be able to say, they had seen a man who did such wonderful works. Thus many go out, in profession, to meet Christ for company, that have no real affection for him, nor desire to know him.

(2.) Their covetousness made them willing to be rid of him. Instead of inviting him into their city, or bringing their sick to him to be healed, they desired him to depart out of their coasts, as if they had borrowed the words of the devils, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God?* And now the devils had what they aimed at in drowning the swine; they did it, and then made the people believe that Christ had done it, and so prejudiced them against him. He seduced our first parents, by possessing them with hard thoughts of God, and kept the Gadarenes from Christ, by suggesting that he came into their country to destroy their cattle, and that he would do more hurt than good; for though he had cured two men, yet he had drowned two thousand swine. Thus the Devil sows tares in God's field, does mischief in the christian church, and then lays the blame upon Christianity, and incenses men against that. They besought him that he would depart, lest, like Moses in Egypt, he should proceed to some other plague. Note, There are a great many who prefer their swine before their Saviour, and so come short of Christ, and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his word to have a place in them, because he and his word will be the destruction of their brutish lusts—those swine which they give up themselves to feed. And justly will Christ forsake those that thus are weary of him, and say to them hereafter, *Depart, ye cursed*, who now say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*.

CHAP. IX.

We have, in this chapter, remarkable instances of the power and pity of the Lord Jesus, sufficient to convince us that he

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is both able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, and as willing as he is able. His power and pity appear here in the good offices he did, 1. To the bodies of people, in curing the palsy; (v. 2. . 8.) raising to life the ruler's daughter, and healing the bloody issue; (v. 18. . 26.) giving sight to two blind men; (v. 27. . 31.) casting the Devil out of one possessed; (v. 32. . 34.) and healing all manner of sickness, v. 35. 11. To the souls of people; in forgiving sins; (v. 2.) calling Matthew, and conversing freely with publicans and sinners; (v. 9. . 13.) considering the frame of his disciples, with reference to the duty of fasting; (v. 14. . 17.) preaching the gospel, and, in compassion to the multitude, providing preacher for them; (v. 35. . 38.) Thus did he prove himself to be, as undoubtedly he is, the skilful, faithful Physician, both of soul and body, who has sufficient remedies for all the maladies of both; for which we must, therefore, apply ourselves to him, and glorify him both with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are his, in return to him for his kindness to both.

1. **A**ND he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. 2. And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. 3. And, behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. 4. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? 5. For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? Or to say, Arise, and walk? 6. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. 7. And he arose, and departed to his house. 8. But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The first words of this chapter oblige us to look back to the close of that which precedes it, where we find the Gadarenes so resenting the loss of their swine, that they were disgusted with Christ's company, and besought him to depart out of their coasts. Now here it follows, *He entered into a ship, and passed over*. They bid him begone, and he took them at their word, and we never read that he came into their coasts again. Now here observe, 1. His justice—that he left them. Note, Christ will not tarry long where he is not welcome. In righteous judgment, he forsakes those places and persons that are weary of him, but abides with these that covet and court his stay. *If the unbeliever will depart from Christ, let him depart*; it is at his peril, 1 Cor. 7. 15. 2. His patience—that he did not leave some destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved, for their contempt and contumacy. How easily, how justly, might he have sent them after their swine, who were already so much under the Devil's power. The provocation, indeed, was very great; but he put it up, and passed it by, and without any angry resentments or upbraidings, he entered into a ship, and passed over. This was the day of his patience; he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to kill, but to cure. Spiritual judgments agree more with the constitution of gospel-times; yet some observe, that in these bloody wars which the Romans made upon the Jews, which began not many years after this, they first besieged the town of Gadara, where these Gadarenes dwelt. Note, Those that drive Christ from

them, draw all miseries upon them. Wo unto us, if God depart from us.

He came into his own city, Capernaum, the principal place of his residence at present, (Mark 2. 1.) and therefore called his own city. He had himself testified, that a prophet is least honoured in his own country and city, yet thither he came; for he sought not his own honour; but, being in a state of humiliation, he was content to be despised of the people. At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are, therefore, put together here, though, in the harmony of the evangelists, other events intervened. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, they of Capernaum received him. If Christ be affronted by some, there are others in whom he will be glorious; if one will not, another will.

Now the first occurrence, after Christ's return to Capernaum, as recorded in these verses, was the cure of the man sick of the palsy. In which we may observe,

I. The faith of his friends in bringing him to Christ. His distemper was such, that he could not come to Christ himself, but as he was carried. Note, Even the halt and the lame may be brought to Christ, and they shall not be rejected by him. If we do as well as we can, he will accept of us. Christ had an eye to their faith. Little children cannot go to Christ themselves, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain. *Jesus saw their faith*, the faith of the paralytic himself, as well as of them that brought him; Jesus saw the habit of faith, though his distemper, perhaps, impaired his intellect, and obstructed the acting of it. Now their faith was, 1. A strong faith; they firmly believed that Jesus Christ both could and would heal him; else they would not have brought the sick man to him so publicly, and through so much difficulty. 2. A humble faith; though the sick man was unable to stir a step, they would not ask Christ to make him a visit, but brought him to attend on Christ. It is fitter that we should wait on Christ, than he on us. 3. An active faith; in the belief of Christ's power and goodness, they brought the sick man to him, *lying on a bed*, which could not be done without a deal of pains. Note, A strong faith regards no obstacles in pressing after Christ.

II. The favour of Christ, in what he said to him; *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*. This was a sovereign cordial to a sick man, and was enough to make all his bed in his sickness; and to make it easy to him. We read not of any thing said to Christ; probably the poor sick man could not speak for himself, and they that brought him chose rather to speak by actions than words; they set him before Christ; that was enough. Note, It is not in vain to present ourselves and our friends to Christ, as the objects of his pity. Misery cries as well as sin, and mercy is no less quick of hearing than justice. Here is in what Christ said, 1. A kind compellation; *Son*. Note, Exhortations and consolations to the afflicted speak to them as to sons, for afflictions are fatherly discipline, Heb. 12. 5. 2. A gracious encouragement; "*Be of good cheer. Have a good heart on it; cheer up thy spirits.*" Probably the poor man, when let down among them all in his bed, was put out of countenance, was afraid of a rebuke for being brought in so rudely; but Christ does not stand upon ceremony; he bids him *be of good cheer*; all would be well, he should not be laid before Christ in vain. Christ bids him *be of good cheer*; and then cures him. He would have those to whom he deals his gifts, to be cheerful in seeking him, and in trusting to him; to be of good courage. 3. A good reason for that encouragement; *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. Now this may be considered, (1.) As an intro-

duction to the cure of his bodily distemper; "*Thy sins are pardoned*, and therefore thou shalt be healed." Note, As sin is the cause of sickness, so the remission of sin is the comfort of recovery from sickness; not but that sin may be pardoned, and yet the sickness not removed; not but that the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned; but if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us, as to Hezekiah, Isa. 38. 17. Or, (2.) As a reason of the command to *be of good cheer*, whether he were cured of his disease or not; "*Though I should not heal thee, wilt thou not say, thou hast not sought in vain, if I assure thee that thy sins are pardoned; and wilt thou not look upon that as a sufficient ground of comfort, though thou shouldst continue sick of the palsy?*" Note, They who, through grace, have some evidence of the forgiveness of their sins, have reason to be of good cheer, whatever outward troubles or afflictions they are under; see Isa. 33. 24.

III. The cavil of the Scribes at that which Christ said; (v. 3.) *They said within themselves*, in their hearts, *among themselves*, in their secret whisperings, *This man blasphemeth*. See how the greatest instance of heaven's power and grace is branded with the blackest note of hell's enmity; Christ's pardoning sin is termed blasphemy; nor had it been less, if he had not had commission from God for it. They, therefore, are guilty of blasphemy, that have no such commission, and yet pretend to pardon sin.

IV. The conviction which Christ gave them of the unreasonableness of this cavil, before he proceeded.

1. He charged them with it. Though they did but say it within themselves, he knew their thoughts. Note, Our Lord Jesus has the perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. Thoughts are secret and sudden, yet naked and open before Christ, the eternal Word, (Heb. 4. 12, 13.) and he understands them afar off, Ps. 139. 2. He could say to them, (which no mere man could,) *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* Note, there is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. He being the Sovereign of the heart, sinful thoughts invade his right, and disturb his possession; therefore he takes notice of them, and is much displeased with them. In them lies the root of bitterness, Gen. 6. 5. The sins that begin and end in the heart, and go no further, are as dangerous as any other.

2. He argued them out of it, v. 5, 6. Where observe,

(1.) How he asserts his authority in the kingdom of grace. He undertakes to make out, that the Son of man, the Mediator, has power on earth to forgive sins; for therefore the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, and has given him this authority, because he is the Son of man, John 5. 22, 27. If he has power to give eternal life, as he certainly has, (John 17. 2.) he must have power to forgive sin; for guilt is a bar that must be removed, or we can never get to heaven. What an encouragement is this to poor sinners to repent, that the power of pardoning sin is put into the hands of the Son of man, who is Bone of our bone! And if he had this power on earth, much more now that he is exalted to the Father's right hand, to give repentance and remission of sins, and so to be both a Prince and a Saviour, Acts 5. 31.

(2.) How he proves it, by his power in the kingdom of nature; his power to cure diseases. Is it not as easy to say, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*, as to say, *Arise and walk*? He that can cure the disease, whether declaratively as a Prophet, or authoritatively as God, can, in like manner, forgive the sin. Now, [1.] This is a general argument to prove that

Christ had a divine mission. His miracles, especially his miraculous cures, confirm what he said of himself, that he was the Son of God; the *power* that appeared in his cures proved him *sent of God*; and the *faty* that appeared in them proved him *sent of God, to heal and save*. The God of truth would not set his seal to a lie. [2.] It had a particular cogency in this case. The palsy was but a symptom of the disease of sin; now he made it to appear, that he could effectually cure the original disease, by the immediate removal of that symptom; so close a connexion was there between the sin and the sickness. He that had power to remove the punishment, no doubt, had power to remit sin. The Scribes stood much upon a legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in it, and made no great matter of the *forgiveness of sins*, the doctrine upon which Christ hereby designed to put honour, and to show that his great errand to the world was, *to save his people from their sins*.

V. The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spake healing to him. The most necessary arguings must not divert us from doing the good that our *hand finds to do*. He saith to the sick of the palsy, *Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house*; and a healing, quickening, strengthening power accompanied this word; (v. 7.) *he arose and departed to his house*. Now, 1. Christ bid him *take up his bed*, to show that he was *perfectly cured*, and that not only he had no more occasion to be carried upon his bed, but that he had strength to *carry it*. 2. He sent him to *his house*, to be a blessing to his family, where he had been so long a burden; and did not take him along with him for a show, which those would do in such a case, who seek the honour that comes from men.

VI. The impression which this made upon the multitude, (v. 8.) they *marvelled and glorified God*. Note, All our wonder should help to enlarge our hearts in *glorifying God*, who alone does marvellous things. They glorified God for what he had done for this poor man. Note, Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give him thanks for them, for we are members one of another. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him, not as God, or the Son of God, but as a man to whom God had given such power. Note, God must be glorified in all the power that is given to men to do good. For all power is originally his; it is in him, as the Fountain, in men, as the cisterns.

9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. 10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. 11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? 12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In these verses we have an account of the grace and favour of Christ to poor publicans, particularly

to Matthew. What he did to the bodies of people was to make way for a kind design he had upon their souls. Now observe here,

I. The call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was ordinary for the same persons to have two names; perhaps Matthew was the name he was most known by as a publican, and, therefore, in his humility, he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honourable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave him the name of Matthew when he called him to be an Apostle; as Simon, he surnamed Peter. Matthew signifies, *the gift of God*. Ministers are God's gifts to the church; their ministry, and their ability for it, are God's gifts to them. Now observe,

1. The posture that Christ's call found Matthew in. He was *sitting at the receipt of custom*, for he was a publican, Luke 5. 27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, or an exciseman, or collector of the land-tax. Now, (1.) He was in his calling, as the rest of them whom Christ called, ch. 4. 18. Note, As Satan chooses to come, with his temptations, to those that are idle, so Christ chooses to come, with his calls, to those that are employed. But, (2.) It was a calling of ill fame among serious people; because it was attended with so much corruption and temptation, and there were so few in that business that were honest men. Matthew himself owns what he was before his conversion, as does St. Paul, (1 Tim. 1. 13.) that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show, that God has his remnant among all sorts of people. None can justify themselves in their unbelief, by their calling in the world; for there is no *sinful calling*, but some have been saved out of it, and no *lawful calling*, but some have been saved in it.

2. The preventing power of this call. We find not that Matthew looked after Christ, or had any inclination to follow him, though some of his kindred were already disciples of Christ, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness. He is found of those that seek him not. Christ *spoke first*; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. He said, *Follow me*; and the same divine, almighty power accompanied this word to convert Matthew, which attended that word, (v. 6.) *Arise and walk*, to cure the man sick of the palsy. Note, A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the *Author*, and his word as the *means*. His gospel is the *power of God unto salvation*, Rom. 1. 16. The call was effectual, for he came at the call; *he arose, and followed him immediately*; neither denied, nor deferred his obedience. The power of divine grace soon answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. *We conferred not with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1. 15, 16. He quitted his post, and his hopes of preferment in that way; and though we find the disciples that were fishers, occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

II. Christ's converse with publicans and sinners upon this occasion; Christ called Matthew, to introduce himself into an acquaintance with the people of that profession. *Jesus sat at meat in the house*, v. 10. The other evangelists tell us, that Matthew made a *great feast*, which the poor fishermen, when they were called, were not able to do. But when he comes to speak of this himself, he neither tells us that it was his own house, nor that it was a feast, but only that he *sat at meat in the house*; preserving the remembrance of Christ's favour to the publicans, rather than of the respect he had paid to Christ. Note, It well becomes us to speak sparingly of our own good deeds.

Now observe, 1. When Matthew invited Christ,

he invited his disciples to *come along with him*. Note, They that welcome Christ, must welcome all that are his, for his sake, and let them have a room in their hearts. 2. He invited many publicans and sinners to *meet him*. This was the chief thing Matthew aimed at in this treat, that he might have an opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience, what their temptations were, and pitied them; knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Note, They who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but be desirous, that others also may be brought to him, and ambitious of contributing something towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone, but will invite others. When by the conversion of Matthew the fraternity was broken, presently his house was filled with publicans, and surely some of them will *follow him*, as he *followed Christ*. Thus did Andrew and Philip, John 1. 41, 45.—4. 49. See Judges 14. 9.

III. The displeasure of the Pharisees at this, v. 11. They cavilled at it; *why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?* Here observe, 1. That Christ was quarrelled with. It was not the least of his sufferings, that he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. None was more quarrelled with by men, than he that came to take up the great quarrel between God and man. Thus he denied himself the honour due to an incarnate Deity, which was to be justified in what he spake, and to have all he said readily subscribed to; for though he never spoke or did any thing amiss, every thing he said and did was found fault with. Thus he taught us to expect and prepare for reproach, and so bear it patiently. 2. They that quarrelled with him were the Pharisees; a proud generation of men, conceited of themselves, and censorious of others; of the same temper with those in the prophet's time, who said, *Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou*: they were very strict in avoiding sinners, but not in avoiding sin; none greater zealots than they, for the form of godliness, nor greater enemies to the power of it. They were for keeping up the traditions of the elders to a nicety, and so propagating the same spirit that they were themselves governed by. 3. They brought their cavil, not to Christ himself; they had not the courage to face him with it, but to his disciples. The disciples were in the same company, but the quarrel is with the master; for they would not have done it, if he had not; and they thought it worse in him who was a prophet, than in them; his dignity, they thought, should set him at a greater distance from such company than others. Being offended at the master, they quarrel with the disciples. Note, It concerns christians to be able to vindicate and justify Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be ready always to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of the hope that is in them, 1 Pet. 3. 15. While he is an advocate for us in heaven, let us be advocates for him on earth, and make his reproach our own. 4. The complaint was *his eating with publicans and sinners*: to be intimate with wicked people is against the law of God; (Ps. 119. 115.—1. 1.) and perhaps by accusing Christ of this to his disciples, they hoped to tempt them from him, to put them out of conceit with him, and so to bring them over to themselves to be their disciples, who kept better company; for they *compassed sea and land to make proselytes*. To be intimate with publicans, was against the tradition of the elders, and, therefore, they looked upon it as a heinous thing. They were angry with Christ for this, (1.) Because they *wished ill to him*, and sought occasion to misrepresent him. Note, It is an easy and very common thing to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions. (2.) Because they *wished no*

good to publicans and sinners, but envied Christ's favour to them, and were grieved to see them brought to repentance. Note, It may justly be suspected, that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace, who are not pleased with it.

IV. The defence that Christ made for himself and his disciples, in justification of their converse with publicans and sinners. The disciples, it should seem, being yet weak, were to seek for an answer to the Pharisees' cavil, and, therefore, bring it to Christ, and he heard it. (v. 12.) or perhaps overheard them whispering it to his disciples. Let him alone to vindicate himself and to plead his own cause, to answer for himself and for us too. Two things he urges in his defence.

1. The necessity and exigence of the case of the publicans, which called aloud for his help, and therefore justified him in conversing with them for their good. It was the extreme necessity of poor, lost sinners, that brought Christ from the pure regions above, to these impure ones; and the same was it, that brought him into this company which was thought impure. Now,

(1.) He proves the necessity of the case of the publicans: *they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*. The publicans are sick, and they need one to help and heal them, which the Pharisees think they do not. Note,

[1.] Sin is the sickness of the soul; sinners are spiritually sick. Original corruptions are the diseases of the soul, actual transgressions are its wounds, or the eruptions of the disease. It is deforming, weakening, disquieting, wasting, killing, but, blessed be God, not incurable. [2.] Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls. His curing of bodily diseases signified this, that he arose with *healing under his wings*. He is a skilful, faithful, compassionate Physician, and it is his office and business to heal the sick. Wise and good men should be as physicians to all about them; Christ was so. *Hunc affectum versus omnes habet sapiens, quem versus ægros suos medicus*—A wise man cherishes towards all around him, the feelings of a physician for his patient. Seneca de Const. [3.] Sin-sick souls have need of this Physician, for their disease is dangerous; nature will not help itself; no man can help us; such need have we of Christ, that we are undone, eternally undone, without him. Sensible sinners see their need, and apply themselves to him accordingly. [4.] There are multitudes who fancy themselves to be sound and whole, who think they have *no need of Christ*, but that they can shift for themselves well enough without him, as Laodicea, Rev. 3. 17. Thus the Pharisees desired not the knowledge of Christ's word and ways, not because they had no need of him, but because they thought they had none. See John 9. 40, 41.

(2.) He proves, that their necessity did sufficiently justify his conduct, in conversing familiarly with them, and that he ought not to be blamed for it; for that necessity made it *an act of charity*, which ought always to be preferred before the formalities of a religious profession, in which *beneficence and munificence* are far better than *magnificence*, as much as substance is, than shows or shadows. Those duties, which are of moral and natural obligation, are to take place even of those divine laws, which are positive and ritual, much more of those impositions of men, and traditions of the elders, which make God's law stricter than he has made it. This he proves, (v. 3.) by a passage quoted out of Hos. 6. 6. *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. That morose separation from the society of publicans, which the Pharisees enjoined, was *less than sacrifice*; but Christ's conversing with them was more than an act of common mercy, and therefore to be preferred before it.

If to do well ourselves is better than sacrifice, as Samuel shows, (1 Sam. 15. 22, 23.) much more to do good to others. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy : to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy imaginable ; it is *saving a soul from death*, Jam. 5. 20. Observe how Christ quotes this, *Go ye and learn what that meaneth*. Note, It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, but we must learn to understand the meaning of it. And they have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, that have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. This scripture which Christ quoted, served not only to vindicate him, but, [1.] To show wherein true religion consists ; not in external observances ; not in *meats and drinks* and shows of sanctity ; not in little particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others ; in righteousness and peace ; in *visiting the fatherless and widows*. [2.] To condemn the Pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals, *ch.* 23. 23. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent with, and perhaps subservient to, their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

2. He urges the nature and end of his own commission. He must keep to his orders, and prosecute that for which he was appointed to be the great Teacher ; now, says he, "*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, and therefore must converse with publicans." Observe, (1.) What his errand was ; it was to *call to repentance*. This was his first text, (*ch.* 4. 17.) and it was the tendency of all his sermons. Note, The gospel-call is a call to repentance ; a call to us to change our mind and to change our way. (2.) With whom his errand lay ; not with *the righteous*, but with *sinners*. That is, [1.] If the children of men had not been *sinners*, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as *man*, but of man as *fallen*. Had the first Adam continued in his original *righteousness*, we had not needed a second Adam. [2.] Therefore his *greatest business* lies with the *greatest sinners* ; the more dangerous the sick man's case is, the more occasion there is for the physician's help. Christ came into the world to *save sinners*, but especially *the chief* ; (1 Tim. 1. 15.) to call not those so much, who, though sinners, are comparatively righteous, but the worst of sinners. [3.] The more sensible any sinners are of their sinfulness, the more welcome will Christ and his gospel be to them ; and every one chooses to go where his company is desired, not to those who would rather have his room. Christ came not with an expectation of succeeding among *the righteous*, those who conceit themselves so, and therefore will sooner be sick of their Saviour, than sick of their sins, but among the convinced, humble *sinners* ; to them Christ will come, for to them he will be welcome.

14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not ? 15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. 16. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment : for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the

garment, and the rent is made worse. 17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles : else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish ; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples, gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses ; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gainsayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil. This is the third instance of it in this chapter ; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of Scribes and Pharisees ; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning a tenderness for it. Observe,

1. The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ's disciples, for not fasting so often as they did ; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners ; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. It appears by the other evangelists, (Mark 2. 18. and Luke 5. 33.) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they instigated them, making use of John's disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to set good men together by the ears : if the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to incense them one against another, and alienate them one from another, and so make an easy prey of them. If the disciples of John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand blowing the coals. Now the complaint is, *Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not ?* It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasion of strife and contention ; but they often are so, as here ; where we may observe,

1. How they boasted of their own fasting. *We and the Pharisees fast often*. Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion ; the Pharisees were much in it ; many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men. Note, False and formal professors often excel others in outward acts of devotion, and even of mortification. The disciples of John *fasted often*, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came *neither eating nor drinking* ; (*ch.* 11. 18.) and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle ; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most minded by those that are yet under the discipline of the spirit, as a *spirit of bondage*, whereas though these are good in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they *fasted often*, at least they thought it often. Note, *Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness*, Prov. 20. 6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performances in religion, especially if there be any thing extraordinary in them ; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to plead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.

2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did. *Thy disciples fast not.* They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not *appear unto men to fast*; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did *not fast*, because they did not proclaim their fasts. Note, We must not judge of people's religion, by that which falls under the eye and observation of the world. But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not fast so often or so long as they did, why truly they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were so far in the wrong; as if all that did less than they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too much; which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. *O Jesus, are these thy christians?* Therefore, as we tender the honour of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well. Observe, The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples, (v. 11.) the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ; (v. 14.) this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II. The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, *Why do ye fast often?* "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates the practice of his disciples; when they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom. What we do according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to bear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Herbert.

Two things Christ pleads in defence of their *not fasting*.

1. That it was not a season proper for that duty: (v. 15.) *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?* Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples. When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither. Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without condemning those that practise otherwise.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Judges 14. 17. Now, (1.) The disciples of Christ were the *children of the bride-chamber*, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but *children of the bond-woman*, (Gal. 4. 25, 31.) continuing under a dispensa-

tion of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have a continual feast, while they who have the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Hos. 9. 1. (2.) The disciples of Christ had the *bridegroom with them*, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to *fast often*. Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and *then should they fast*. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, John 16. 6. Tribulation and affliction befell them when he was gone, and gave them occasion of *mourning and praying*; that is, of religious fasting. Note, [1.] Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of his Church, and his disciples are the *children of the bride-chamber*. Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, John 3. 29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves. [2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment. [3.] It is merry or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, *they are troubled*, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day and summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. Christ is all in all to the church's joy. [4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Eccles. 7. 14. Jam. 5. 13. There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit in due season. In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he *mourns to us*, we must *lament*; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when *the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning*; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, ch. 17. 21. Acts 13. 2.

2. That they had not strength sufficient for that duty. This is set forth in two similitudes, one, of putting *new cloth into an old garment*, which does but pull the old to pieces; (v. 16.) the other of putting *new wine into old bottles*, which does but burst the bottles, v. 17. Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also *schools of the prophets*, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, and were unfit for them, and would by them be rather unfitted for their other work. Note, (1.) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like *new cloth*, and *new wine*, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood: such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it. (2.) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are *babes in Christ* and grown men. (3.) In

the enjoining of religious exercises, the weakness and infirmity of young christians ought to be considered: as the food provided for them must be such as is proper for their age, (1 Cor. 3. 2. Heb. 5. 12.) so must the work be that is cut out for them. Christ would not speak to his disciples that which they could not then bear, John 16. 12. Young beginners in religion must not be put upon the hardest duties at first, lest they be discouraged. Such as was God's care of his Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, not to lead them by the way of the Philistines, (Exod. 13. 17, 18.) and such as was Jacob's care of his children and cattle, not to overdrive them; (Gen. 33. 13.) such is Christ's care of the little ones of his family, and the lambs of his flock, he gently leads them: for want of this care, many times, *the bottles break, and the wine is spilled*; the profession of many miscarries and comes to nothing, through indiscretion at first. Note, There may be *over-doing* even in *well-doing*, a being *righteous over-much*; and such an *over-doing* as may prove an *undoing* through the subtilty of Satan.

18. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19. And Jesus arose and followed him, and *so did* his disciples. 20. (And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment: 21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22. But Jesus turned him about; and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.) 23. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise. 24. He said unto them, Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

We have here two passages of story put together; that of the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and that of the curing of the woman that had *the bloody issue*, as he was going to Jairus's house, which is introduced in a parenthesis, in the midst of the other: for Christ's miracles were thick sown, and interwoven; *the work of him that sent him* was his daily work. He was called to do these good works from speaking the things foregoing, in answer to the cavils of the Pharisees, v. 18. *While he spake these things*; and we may suppose it a pleasing interruption given to that unpleasant work of disputation, which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave, to go about a work of devotion or charity. Here is,

I. The ruler's address to Christ, v. 18. *A certain ruler*, a ruler of the synagogue, *came and worshipped him. Have any of the rulers believed on him?* Yes, here was one, a church-ruler, whose faith condemned the unbelief of the rest of the rulers. This ruler had a little daughter, of twelve years old, just dead, and this breach made upon his family com-

forts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. Note, In trouble we should visit God: the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life; it is well if anything will do it. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as Job, *fall down and worship*. Now observe,

1. His humility in this address to Christ. He came with his errand to Christ himself, and did not send a servant. Note, It is no disparagement to the greatest rulers, personally to attend on the Lord Jesus. He *worshipped him*, bowed the knee to him, and gave him all imaginable respect. Note, They that would receive mercy from Christ must give honour to Christ.

2. His faith in this address; "*My daughter is even now dead*, and though any other physician would now come too late, (nothing more absurd than *post mortem medicina*—*medicine after death*;) yet Christ comes not too late; he is a physician after death, for he is the resurrection and the life; O come then, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." This was quite above the power of nature, (*a friv-a-tione ad habitum non datur regressus*—*life once lost cannot be restored*;) yet within the power of Christ, who has *life in himself*, and quickeneth whom he will. Now Christ works in an ordinary way, by nature and not against it, and, therefore, we cannot in faith bring him such a request as this; while there is life there is hope, and room for prayer; but when our friends are dead, the case is determined; *we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us*. But while Christ was here upon earth working miracles, such a confidence as this was not only allowable but very commendable.

II. The readiness of Christ to comply with his address, v. 19. Jesus immediately *arose*, left his company, and *followed him*; he was not only willing to grant him what he desired, in raising his daughter to life, but to gratify him so far as to come to his house to do it. Surely *he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain*. He denied to go along with the nobleman, who said, *Sir, come down, ere my child die*, (John 4. 48, 49, 50.) yet he went along with the ruler of the synagogue, who said, *Sir, come down, and my child shall live*. The variety of methods which Christ took in working his miracles, is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind, which they were in who applied to him, which he *who searcheth the heart*, perfectly knew, and accommodated himself to. He knows what is in man, and what course to take with him. And observe, when *Jesus followed him, so did his disciples*, whom he had chosen for his constant companions; it was not for state, or that he might come with observation, that he took his attendants with him, but that they might be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to be the preachers of his doctrine.

III. The healing of the poor woman's bloody issue. I call her a poor woman, not only because her case was piteous, but because, though she had something in the world, she had *spent it all upon physicians*, for the cure of her distemper, and was never the better; which was a double aggravation of the misery of her condition, that she had been full, but was now empty; and that she had impoverished herself for the recovery of her health, and yet had not her health neither. This woman was diseased with a constant issue of blood twelve years; (v. 20.) a disease, which was not only weakening and wasting, and under which the body must needs languish; but which also rendered her ceremonially unclean, and shut her out from the courts of the Lord's house; but it did not cut her off from approaching to Christ. She applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him, by the way, as he followed the ruler, whose daughter was dead, to whom it would be a

great encouragement, and a help to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the ease, of weak believers. Observe,

1. The woman's great faith in Christ, and in his power. Her disease was of such a nature, that her modesty would not suffer her to seek openly to Christ for a cure, as others did, but, by a peculiar impulse of the Spirit of faith, she believed him to have such an overabounding fulness of healing virtue, that the very touch of his garment would be her cure. This, perhaps, had something of fancy mixed with faith; for she had no precedent for this way of application to Christ, unless, as some think, she had an eye to the raising of the dead man by the touch of Elisha's bones, 2 Kings 13. 21. But what *weakness of understanding* there was in it, Christ was pleased to overlook, and to accept the sincerity and strength of her faith; for he *eateth the honey-comb with the honey*, Cant. 4. 11. She believed she should be healed if she did but touch the very hem of his garment, the extremity of it. Note, There is virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ. The holy oil with which the high-priest was anointed, ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps. 133. 2. Such a fulness of grace is there in Christ, that from it we may all receive, John 1. 16.

2. Christ's great favour to this woman. He did not suspend (as he might have done) his healing influences, but suffered this bashful patient to steal a cure unknown to any one else, though she could not think to do it unknown to him. And now she was well content to be gone, for she had what she came for, but Christ was not willing to let her go; he will not only have his power magnified in her cure, but his grace magnified in her comfort and commendation: the triumphs of her faith must be to her praise and honour. He turned about to see for her, (v. 22.) and soon discovered her. Note, It is great encouragement to humble Christians, that they who hide themselves from men, are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications to heaven when most private. Now here,

(1.) He puts gladness into her heart, by that word *Daughter, be of good comfort*. She feared being chidden for coming clandestinely, but she is encouraged. [1.] He calls her *daughter*, for he spoke to her with the tenderness of a father, as he did to the man sick of the palsy, (v. 2.) whom he called son. Note, Christ has comforts ready for the daughters of Zion, that are of a sorrowful spirit, as Hannah was, 1 Sam. 1. 15. Believing women are Christ's daughters, and he will own them as such. [2.] He bids her *be of good comfort*: she has reason to be so, if Christ own her for a daughter. Note, the saints' consolation is founded in their adoption. This bidding her *be comforted*, brought comfort with it, as his saying *be ye whole*, brought health with it. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and it is his prerogative to command comfort to troubled spirits. He creates the fruit of his lips, *peace*, Isa. 57. 19.

(2.) He puts honour upon her faith. That grace of all others gives most honour to Christ, and therefore he puts most honour upon it; *Thy faith has made thee whole*. Thus, by faith she obtained a good report. And as of all graces Christ puts the greatest honour upon faith, so of all believers he puts the greatest honour upon those that are most humble; as here on this woman, who had more faith than she thought she had. She has reason to be of good comfort, not only because she was made whole, but because her faith had made her whole; that is, [1.] She was spiritually healed; that cure was wrought in her which is the proper fruit and effect of faith, the pardon of sin and the work of grace. Note, We may then be abundantly comforted in our temporal mer-

cies when they are accompanied with those spiritual blessings that resemble them: our food and raiment will be comfortable, when by faith we are fed with the bread of life, and clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ: our rest and sleep will be comfortable, when, by faith, we repose in God, and dwell at ease in him: our health and prosperity will be comfortable, when, by faith, our souls prosper and are in health. See Isa. 38. 16, 17. [2.] Her bodily cure was the fruit of faith, of her faith, and that made it a happy, comfortable cure indeed. They out of whom the devils were cast, were helped by Christ's sovereign power; some by the faith of others; (as v. 2.) but it is thy faith that has made thee whole. Note, Temporal mercies are then comforts indeed to us, when they are received by faith. If, when in pursuit of mercy, we pray for it in faith, with an eye to the promise, and in dependence upon that, if we desired it for the sake of God's glory, and with a resignation to God's will, and have our hearts enlarged by it in faith, love, and obedience, we may then say, it was received by faith.

IV. The posture in which he found the ruler's house, v. 13. He saw the people and the minstrels, or musicians, making a noise. The house was in a hurry; such work does death make, when it comes into a family; and, perhaps, the necessary cares that arise at such a time, when our dead is to be decently buried out of our sight, give some useful diversion to that grief which is apt to prevail and play the tyrant. The people in the neighbourhood came together to condole on account of the loss, to comfort the parents, to prepare for, and attend on, the funeral, which the Jews were not wont to defer long. The musicians were among them, according to the custom of the Gentiles, with their doleful, melancholy tunes, to increase the grief, and stir up the lamentations of those that attended on this occasion; as (they say) is usual among the Irish, with their Ahone, Ahone. Thus they indulged a passion that is apt enough of itself to grow intemperate, and affected to sorrow as those that had no hope. See how religion provides cordials, where irreligion administers corrosives. Heathenism aggravates that grief which christianity studies to assuage. Or perhaps these musicians endeavoured on the other hand to divert the grief and exhilarate the family; but as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart. Observe, The parents, who were immediately touched with the affliction, were silent, while the people and minstrels, whose lamentations were forced, made such a noise. Note, The loudest grief is not always the greatest; rivers are most noisy where they run shallow. *Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet*—That grief is most sincere, which shuns observation. But notice is taken of this to show that the girl was really dead, in the undoubted apprehension of all about her.

V. The rebuke that Christ gave to this hurry and noise, v. 24. He said, *Give place*. Note, Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. They that harden themselves in sorrow, and, like Rachel, refuse to be comforted, should think they hear Christ saying to their disquieting thoughts, *Give place*: "Make room for him who is the Consolation of Israel, and brings with him strong consolations, strong enough to overcome the confusion and tyranny of these worldly griefs, if he may but be admitted into the soul." He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves and one another: *The maid is not dead but sleepeth*. 1. This was eminently true of this maid, that was immediately to be raised to life; she was really dead, but not so to Christ, who knew within himself what he would do, and could do, and who had determined to make her death but as a sleep. There is little more difference between

sleep and death, but in continuance; whatever other difference there is, it is but a dream. This death must be but of short continuance, and therefore is but a sleep, like one night's rest. He that quickens the dead, may well call the things which be not as though they were, Rom. 4. 17. 2. It is in a sense true of all that die, chiefly of them that die in the Lord. Note, (1.) Death is a sleep. All nations and languages, for the softening of that which is so dreadful, and withal so unavoidable, and the reconciling of themselves to it, have agreed to call it so. It is said, even of the wicked kings, that they *slept with their fathers*; and of those that shall arise to everlasting contempt, that they *sleep in the dust*, Dan. 12. 2. It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapt up in darkness and obscurity. Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. But the death of the righteous in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa. 57. 2. They sleep in Jesus; (1 Thess. 4. 14.) they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but *rest in hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection*, when they shall wake refreshed, wake to a new life, wake to be richly dressed and crowned, and *wake to sleep no more*. (2.) The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death of our dear relations: "say not, they are *lost*; no, they are but *gone before*; say not, they are *slain*; no, they are but *fallen asleep*; and the apostle speaks of it as an absurd thing to imagine that *they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished*; (1 Cor. 15. 19.) *give place*, therefore, to those comforts which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future state, and the glory to be revealed."

Now could it be thought that such a comfortable word as this, from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, should be ridiculed as it was? *They laughed him to scorn*. These people lived in Capernaum, knew Christ's character, that he never spake a rash or foolish word; they knew how many mighty works he had done; so that if they did not understand what he meant by this, they might at least have been silent in expectation of the issue. Note, The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to the confirmation of the miracle: for it seems she was so apparently dead, that it was thought a very ridiculous thing to say otherwise.

VI. The raising of the damsel to life by the power of Christ, v. 25. *The people were put forth*. Note, Scorners that laugh at what they see and hear that is above their capacity, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ, the glory of which lies not in pomp, but in power. The widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus, were raised from the dead openly, but this damsel privately; for Capernaum, that had slighted the lesser miracles of restoring health, was unworthy to see the greater, of restoring life; these *pearls were not to be cast before those that would trample them under their feet*.

Christ went in and *took her by the hand*, as it were to awake her, and to help her up, prosecuting his own metaphor of her being asleep. The high-priest, that typified Christ, was not to come near the dead, (Lev. 21. 10, 11.) but Christ *toucheth the dead*. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and therefore keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ, having power to raise the dead, is above the infection, and therefore is not shy of touching them. He *took her by the hand, and the maid arose*. So easily, so effectually was the miracle wrought; not by pray-

er, as Elijah did, (1 Kings 17. 21.) and Elisna, (2 Kings 4. 33.) but by a touch. They did it as servants, he as a Son, as a God, to whom *belong the issues from death*. Note, Jesus Christ is the Lord of souls, he commands them forth, and commands them back, when and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ *take them by the hand*: it is done in the day of his power. He helps us up, or we lie still.

VII. The general notice that was taken of this miracle, though it was wrought privately; v. 26. *the fame thereof went abroad into all that land*; it was the common subject of discourse. Note, Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. And doubtless, they that heard only the report of Christ's miracles, were accountable for that as well as they that were eye-witnesses of them. Though we at this distance have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound, upon the credit of that, to receive his doctrine; and blessed are they that *have not seen, and yet have believed*, John 20. 29.

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us*. 28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* They said unto him, *Yea, Lord*. 29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, *According to your faith be it unto you*. 30. And their eyes were opened: and Jesus straitly charged them saying, *See that no man know it*. 31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. 32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. 33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitude marvelled, saying, *It was never so seen in Israel*. 34. But the Pharisees said, *He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils*.

In these verses we have an account of two more miracles wrought together by our Saviour.

I. The giving of sight to two blind men, v. 27—31. Christ is the Fountain of light as well as life; and as, by raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first *breathed into man the breath of life*, so, by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to be the same that at first *commanded the light to shine out of darkness*. Observe,

1. The importunate address of the blind men to Christ. He was returning from the ruler's house to his own lodgings, and these blind men followed him, as beggars do, with their incessant cries, v. 27. He that cured diseases so easily, so effectually, and, withal, at so cheap a rate, shall have patients enough. As for other things, so he is famed for an Oculist. Observe,

(1.) The title which these blind men gave to Christ; *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us*. The promise made to David, that of his loins the Messiah should come, was well known, and the Messiah was therefore commonly called *the Son of David*. At this time there was a general expectation of his appearing; these blind men knew, and own, and proclaim it in the streets of Capernaum, that he is come, and that this is he: which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and Pha-

risees who denied and opposed him. They could not see him and his miracles, but *faith comes by hearing*. Note, They who, by the providence of God, are deprived of bodily sight, may yet, by the grace of God, have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened, as to discern those great things of God, which are hid from the wise and prudent.

(2.) Their petition, *Have mercy on us*. It was foretold that the *Son of David* should be merciful, (Ps. 72. 12, 13.) and in him shines the tender mercy of our God, Luke 1. 78. Note, Whatever our necessities and burdens are, we need no more for supply and support, than a share in the mercy of our Lord Jesus. Whether he heal us or no, if he have mercy on us, we have enough; as to the particular instances and methods of mercy, we may safely and wisely refer ourselves to the wisdom of Christ. They did not each of them say for himself, *Have mercy on me*, but both for one another, *Have mercy on us*. Note, It becomes those that are under the same affliction, to concur in the same prayers for relief. Fellow-sufferers should be joint-petitioners. In Christ there is enough for all.

(3.) Their importunity in this request; they followed him, crying. It seems, he did not take notice of them at first, for he would try their faith, which he knew to be strong; would quicken their prayers, and make his cures the more valued, when they did not always come at the first word; and would teach us to continue instant in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint; and, though the answer do not come presently, yet to wait for it, and to follow providence, even in those steps and outgoings of it which seem to neglect or contradict our prayers. Christ would not heal them publicly in the streets, for this was a cure he would have kept private, (v. 30.) but when he came into the house, they followed him thither, and came to him. Note, Christ's doors are always open to believing and importunate petitioners; it seemed rude in them to rush into the house after him, when he desired to retire; but, such is the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, that they were not more bold than welcome.

2. The confession of faith, which Christ drew from them upon this occasion. When they came to him for mercy, he asked them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* Note, Faith is the great condition of Christ's favours. They who would receive the mercy of Christ, must firmly believe the power of Christ. What we would have him do for us, we must be fully assured that he is able to do. They followed Christ, and followed him crying, but the great question is, *Do ye believe?* Nature may work fervency, but it is only grace that can work faith: spiritual blessings are obtained only by faith. They had intimated their faith in the office of Christ as *Son of David*, and in his mercy; but Christ demands likewise a profession of faith in his power. *Believe ye that I am able?* Note, Christ will have the glory of his power ascribed to him, by all those who hope to have the benefit of it. *Believe ye that I am able to do this;* to bestow this favour; to give sight to the blind, as well as to cure the palsy and raise the dead? Note, It is good to be particular in the exercise of faith, to apply the general assurances of God's power and good will, and the general promises, to our particular exigencies. *All shall work for good*, and if all, then this. "*Believe ye that I am able*, not only to prevail with God for it, as a prophet, but that *I am able to do it* by my own power?" This will amount to their belief of his being not only the *Son of David*, but the *Son of God*; for it is God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind; (Ps. 146. 8.) he makes the seeing eye, Exod. 4. 11. Job was eyes to the blind; (Job 29. 15.) was to them instead of eyes, but he could not give eyes to the blind. Still it is put to us, *Believe we that*

Christ is able to do for us, by the power of his merit and intercession in heaven, of his Spirit and grace in the heart, and of his providence and dominion in the world? To believe the power of Christ, is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to commit ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they give an immediate answer, without hesitation: they said, *Yea, Lord*. Though he had kept them in suspense a while, and had not helped them at first, they honestly imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability. Note, The treasures of mercy that are laid up in the power of Christ, are laid out and wrought for those that trust in him, 1's. 31. 19.

3. The cure that Christ wrought on them; he touched their eyes, v. 29. This he did to encourage their faith, which, by his delay, he had tried, and to show that he gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, *anointing the eyes with eye-salve*; and he put the cure upon their faith, *According to your faith be it unto you*. When they begged for a cure, he inquired into their faith, (v. 28.) *Believe ye that I am able?* He did not inquire into their wealth, whether they were able to pay him for a cure; nor into their reputation, should he get credit by curing them; but into their faith; and now they had professed their faith he referred the matter to that: "*I know you do believe, and the power you believe in shall be exerted for you; According to your faith be it unto you.*" This speaks, (1.) His knowledge of the sincerity of their faith, and his acceptance and approbation of it. Note, It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith, and is well pleased with it. Though it be weak, though others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to him. (2.) His insisting upon their faith as necessary; "*If you believe, take what you come for.*" Note, They who apply themselves to Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with according to their faith; not according to their fancies, not according to their profession, but, according to their faith; that is, unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all that favour which is offered in the gospel; and our comforts ebb or flow, according as our faith is stronger or weaker; we are not straitened in Christ, let us not then be straitened in ourselves.

4. The charge he gave them to keep it private, (v. 30.) *See that no man know it*. He gave them this charge, (1.) To set us an example of that humility and lowliness of mind, which he would have us to learn of him. Note, In the good we do, we must not seek our own praise, but only the glory of God: It must be more our care and endeavour to be useful, than to be known and observed to be so, Prov. 20. 6.—25. 27. Thus Christ seconded the rule he had given, *Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth*. (2.) Some think that Christ, in keeping it private, showed his displeasure against the people of Capernaum, who had seen so many miracles, and yet believed not. Note, The silencing of those who should proclaim the works of Christ, is a judgment to any place or people: and it is just with Christ, to deny the means of conviction to these that are obstinate in their infidelity; and to shroud the light from those that shut their eyes against it. (3.) He did it in discretion for his own preservation; because the more he was proclaimed, the more jealous would the rulers of the Jews be of his growing interest among the people. (4.) Dr. Whitby gives another reason, which is very considerable, why Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, and afterwards forbid the publishing of his transfiguration; because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their

Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt the setting up of his kingdom, by tumults and seditions, as they offered to do, John 6. 15. But when, after his resurrection, (which was the full proof of his mission,) his spiritual kingdom was set up, then that danger was over, and they must be published to all nations. And he observes, that the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Gadarenes, were ordered to be published, because with them there was not that danger.

But honour is like the shadow, which, as it flees from those that follow it, so it follows those that flee from it; (v. 31.) *They spread abroad his fame.* This was more an act of zeal, than of prudence; and though it may be excused as honestly meant for the honour of Christ, yet it cannot be justified, being done against a particular charge. Whenever we profess to direct our attention to the glory of God, we must see to it that the action be according to the will of God.

11. The healing of a *dumb man*, that was *possessed with a devil*. And here observe,

1. His case, which was very sad. He was under the power of the devil in this particular instance, that he was disabled from speaking, v. 32. See the calamitous state of this world, and how various the afflictions of the afflicted are! We have no sooner dismissed *two blind men*, but we meet with a *dumb man*. How thankful should we be to God for our sight and speech! See the malice of Satan against mankind, and how many ways he shows it! This man's dumbness was the effect of his being *possessed with a devil*; but it was better he should be unable to say any thing, than be forced to say, as those demons did, (ch. 8. 29.) *What have we to do with thee?* Of the two, better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. When the devil gets possession of a soul, it is made silent as to any thing that is good; dumb in prayers and praises, which the devil is a sworn enemy to. This poor creature *they brought to Christ*, who entertained not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those that were brought to him by their friends in the faith of others. Though the *just shall live eternally by his faith*, yet temporal mercies may be bestowed on us with an eye to their faith who are intercessors on our behalf. They brought him in just as the *blind man went out*. See how unwearied Christ was in doing good; how closely one good work followed another! Treasures of mercy, wondrous mercy, are hid in him; which may be continually communicated, but can never be exhausted.

2. His cure, which was very sudden, (v. 33.) *When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake.* Note, Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. In sanctification he heals the waters by casting salt into the spring. When Christ, by his grace, *casts the devil out of a soul*, presently *the dumb speaks*. When Paul was converted, *behold, he prays*; then the *dumb spake*.

3. The consequences of this cure.

(1.) *The multitudes marvelled*; and well they might; though *few believed, many wondered*. The admiration of the common people is sooner raised than any other affection. It was foretold, that the new song, the New-Testament song, should be sung for *marvellous works*, Ps. 98. 1. They said, *It was never so seen in Israel*, and therefore never so seen any where; for no people experienced such wonders of mercy as Israel did. There had been those in Israel that were famous for working miracles, but Christ excelled them all. The miracles Moses wrought, had reference to Israel as a people, but Christ's were brought home to particular persons.

(2.) *The Pharisees blasphemed*, v. 34. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they fathered them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion: *he casteth out devils* (say they) *by the prince of the devils*—a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it; (ch. 12. 25.) only observe here, how *evil men and seducers were worse and worse*, (2 Tim. 3. 13.) and it is both their sin and their punishment. Their quarrels with Christ for taking upon him to *forgive sin*, (v. 3.) for *conversing with publicans and sinners*, (v. 11.) for *not fasting*, (v. 14.) though spiteful enough, yet had some colour of piety, purity, and devotion in them; but this (which they are left to, to punish them for these,) breathes nothing but malice and falsehood, and hellish enmity in the highest degree; it is diabolism all over, and was therefore justly pronounced unpardonable. Because the people marvelled, they must say something to diminish the miracle, and this was all they could say.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: 38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into the harvest.

Here is,

1. A conclusion of the foregoing account of Christ's preaching and miracles; (v. 35.) *He went about all the cities teaching and healing.* This is the same we had before, ch. 4. 23. There it ushers in the more particular record of Christ's preaching, (ch. 5. 6. and 7.) and of his cures, (ch. 8. and 9.) and here it is elegantly repeated in the close of these instances, as the *quod erat demonstrandum*—the point to be proved; as if the evangelist should say, "Now I hope I have made it out, by an induction of particulars, that Christ preached and healed; for you have had the heads of his sermons, and some few instances of his cures, which were wrought to confirm his doctrine; and these were written that you might believe." Some think that this was a second perambulation in Galilee, like the former; he visited again those whom he had before preached to. Though the Pharisees cavilled at him and opposed him, he went on with his work; he *preached the gospel of the kingdom*. He told them of a kingdom of grace and glory, now to be set up under the government of a Mediator; this was gospel indeed, *good news, glad tidings of great joy*.

Observe how Christ in his preaching had respect,

1. To the private towns. He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of those that are meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of these that make the greatest figure. *Rich and poor meet together* in him, citizens and heathens; his *righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages* must be rehearsed, Judg. 5. 11.

2. To the public worship. He taught in *their synagogues*, (1.) That he might bear a testimony in solemn assemblies, even then when there were cer

ruptions in them. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. (2.) That he might have an opportunity of preaching there, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel-church was founded, and christian meetings erected, the apostles often preached in the synagogues of the Jews. It is the wisdom of the prudent, to make the best of that which is.

11. A preface, or introduction, to the account in the following chapter, of his sending forth his apostles. He took notice of the multitude; (v. 36.) not only of the crowds that followed him, but of the vast numbers of people with whom (as he passed along) he observed the country to be replenished; he noticed what nests of souls the towns and cities were, and how thick of inhabitants; what abundance of people there were in every synagogue, and what places of concourse the openings of the gates were: so very populous was that nation now grown; and it was the effect of God's blessing on Abraham. Seeing this,

1. He pitied them, and was concerned for them; (v. 36.) *He was moved with compassion on them*; not upon a temporal account, as he pitied the blind, and lame, and sick; but upon a spiritual account; he was concerned to see them ignorant and careless, and ready to perish for lack of vision. Note, Jesus Christ is a very compassionate Friend to precious souls; here his bowels do in a special manner yearn. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the object of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-destroying souls, are the greatest miseries: Christ pities those most that pity themselves least; so should we. The most christian compassion is compassion to souls; it is most Christ-like.

See what moved this pity. (1.) *They fainted*; they were destitute, vexed, wearied. *They strayed*, so some; were loosed one from another; *The staff of bands was broken*, Zech. 11. 14. They wanted help for their souls, and had none at hand that was good for any thing. The Scribes and Pharisees filled them with vain notions, burdened them with the traditions of the elders, deluded them into many mistakes, while they were not instructed in their duty, nor acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law; therefore *they fainted*; for what spiritual health, and life, and vigour can there be in those souls, that are fed with husks and ashes, instead of the bread of life? Precious souls faint when duty is to be done, temptations to be resisted, afflictions to be borne, being not nourished up with the word of truth. (2.) *They were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*. That expression is borrowed from 1 Kings 22. 17. and it sets forth the sad condition of those that are destitute of faithful guides to go before them in the things of God. No creature is more apt to go astray than a sheep, and when gone astray, more helpless, shiftless, and exposed, or more unapt to find the way home again: sinful souls are as lost sheep; they need the care of shepherds to bring them back. The teachers the Jews then had, pretended to be shepherds, yet Christ says they had no shepherds, for they were worse than none; idol-shepherds that led them away, instead of leading them back, and fleeced the flock, instead of feeding it: such shepherds as were described, Jer. 23. 1, &c. Ezek. 34. 2, &c. Note, The case of those people is very pitiable, who either have no ministers at all, or those that are as bad as none; that seek their own things, not the things of Christ and souls.

2. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity put him upon devising means for the good of these people. It appears, (Luke 6. 12, 13.) that upon this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he did himself spend a great deal of time in prayer. Note,

These we pity we should pray for. Having spoken to God for them, he turns to his disciples, and tells them,

(1.) How the case stood; (v. 37.) *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few*. People desired good preaching, but there were few good preachers. There was a great deal of work to be done, and a great deal of good likely to be done, but there wanted hands to do it. [1.] It was an encouragement, that the harvest was so plenteous. It was not strange, that there were multitudes that needed instruction, but it was what does not often happen, that they who needed it, desired it, and were forward to receive it. They that were ill taught were desirous to be better taught; people's expectations were raised, and there was such a moving of affections as promised well. Note, It is a blessed thing, to see people in love with good preaching. The valleys are then covered over with corn, and there are hopes it may be well gathered in. That is a gale of opportunity, that calls for a double care and diligence in the improvement of; a harvest-day should be a busy day. [2.] It was pity when it was so, that the labourers should be so few; that the corn should shed and spoil, and rot upon the ground for want of reapers: loiterers many, but labourers very few. Note, It is ill with the church, when good work stands still, or goes slowly on, for want of good workmen; when it is so, the labourers that there are, have need to be very busy.

(2.) What was their duty in this case, (v. 38.) *Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest*. Note, The melancholy aspect of the times, and the deplorable state of precious souls, should much excite and quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. And we should adapt our prayers to the present exigences of the church; such an understanding we ought to have of the times, as to know, not only what Israel ought to do, but what Israel ought to pray for. Note, [1.] *God is the Lord of the harvest; my Father is the husbandman*, John 15. 1. It is the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, Isa. 5. 7. It is for him, and to him, and to his service and honour, that the harvest is gathered in. *Ye are God's husbandry*; (1 Cor. 3. 9.) *his threshing, and the corn of his floor*, Isa. 21. 10. He orders every thing concerning the harvest as he pleases; when and where the labourers shall work, and how long; and it is very comfortable to those who wish well to the harvest-work, that God himself presides in it, who will be sure to order all for the best. [2.] Ministers are, and should be, labourers in God's harvest; the ministry is a work, and must be attended to accordingly; his harvest-work, which is needful work; work that requires every thing to be done in its season, and diligence to do it thoroughly; but it is pleasant work; they reap in joy, and the joy of the preachers of the gospel is likened to the joy of harvest; (Isa. 9. 2, 3.) and he that reapeth, receiveth wages; the hire of the labourers that reap down God's field, shall not be kept back, as theirs was, Jam. 5. 4. [3.] It is God's work to send forth labourers; Christ makes ministers; (Eph. 4. 11.) the office is of his appointing, the qualifications of his working, the call of his giving. They will not be owned nor paid as labourers, that run without their errand, unqualified, uncalled. *How shall they preach except they be sent?* [4.] All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth more skilful, faithful, wise, and industrious labourers into his harvest; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; that he would give them wisdom to win souls,

that he would thrust forth labourers, so some; intimating unwillingness in them to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men that endeavour to thrust them out of the harvest; but we should pray that all contradiction from within, and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends apostles forth to labour in the harvest. Note, It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it, Ps. 10. 17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as labourers. They must pray, First, That God would send them forth. *Here am I, send me*, Isa. 6. 8. Note, Commissions, given in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful; Paul is a chosen vessel, for *behold he prays*, Acts 9. 11, 15. Secondly, That he would send others forth. Note, Not the people only, but those who are themselves ministers, should pray for the increase of ministers. Though self-interest makes those that seek their own things desirous to be placed alone, (the fewer ministers the more preferments,) yet those that seek the things of Christ, desire more workmen, that more work may be done, though they be eclipsed by it.

CHAP. X.

This chapter is an ordination sermon, which our Lord Jesus preached, when he advanced his twelve disciples to the degree and dignity of apostles. In the close of the foregoing chapter, he had stirred up them and others to pray that God would send forth labourers, and here we have an immediate answer to that prayer; while they are yet speaking he hears and performs. What we pray for, according to Christ's direction, shall be given. Now here we have, I. The general commission that was given them, v. 1. II. The names of the persons to whom this commission was given, v. 2. III. The instructions that were given them, which are very full and particular: 1. Concerning the services they were to do; their preaching; their working miracles; to whom they must apply themselves; how they must behave themselves; and in what method they must proceed, v. 5. 15. 2. Concerning the sufferings they were to undergo. They are told what they should suffer, and from whom; counsel is given them what course to take when persecuted, and encouragements to bear up cheerfully under their sufferings, v. 16. 42. These things, though primarily intended for direction to the apostles, are of use to all Christ's ministers, with whom, by his word, Christ is, and will be always to the end of the world.

1. **AND** when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. 2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother: James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother: 3. Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus; and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; 4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Here we are told,

I. Who they were that Christ ordained to be his apostles or ambassadors; they were his disciples, v. 1. He had called them some time before to be disciples, his immediate followers and constant attendants, and he then told them that they should be made fishers of men, which promise he now performed. Note, Christ commonly confers honours and graces by degrees; the light of both, like that

of the morning, shines more and more. All this while Christ had kept these twelve, 1. In a state of probation. Though he knows what is in man, though he knew from the first what was in them, (John 6. 70.) yet he took this method to give an example to his church. Note, The ministry being a great trust, it is fit that men should be tried for a time, before they are intrusted with it. Let them first be *proved*, 1 Tim. 3. 10. Therefore hands must not be laid suddenly on any man, but let him first be observed as a candidate and probationer, a propositant, (that is the term the French churches use,) because some men's sins go before, others follow, 1 Tim. 5. 22. 2. In a state of preparation. All this while he had been fitting them for this great work. Note, These whom Christ intends for, and calls to, any work, he first prepares and qualifies, in some measure, for it. He prepared them, (1.) By taking them to be with him. Note, The best preparative for the work of the ministry, is acquaintance and communion with Jesus Christ. They that would serve Christ, must first be with him, (John 12. 26.) Paul had Christ revealed, not only to him, but in him, before he went to preach him among the Gentiles, Gal. 1. 16. By the lively acts of faith, and the frequent exercise of prayer and meditation, that fellowship with Christ must be maintained and kept up, which is a requisite qualification for the work of the ministry. (2.) By teaching them; they were with him as scholars or pupils, and he taught them privately, besides the benefit they derived from his public preaching: he opened the scriptures to them, and opened their understandings to understand the scriptures: to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and to them they were made plain. Note, They that design to be teachers must first be learners; they must receive, that they may give; they must be able to teach others, 2 Tim. 2. 2. Gospel-truths must be first committed to them, before they be commissioned to be gospel-ministers. To give men authority to teach others, that have not an ability, is but a mockery to God and the church; it is sending a message by the hand of a fool, Prov. 26. 6. Christ taught his disciples before he sent them forth, (ch. 5. 2.) and afterwards, when he enlarged their commission, he gave them more ample instructions, Acts 1. 3.

II. What the commission was that he gave them.

1. He called them to him, v. 1. He had called them to come after him before, now he calls them to come to him, admits them to a greater familiarity, and will not have them to keep at such a distance as they had hitherto observed. They that humble themselves shall thus be exalted. The priests under the law were said to draw near and approach unto God, nearer than the people; the same may be said of gospel-ministers: they are called to draw near to Christ, which, as it is an honour, so should strike an awe upon them, remembering that Christ will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. It is observable, that when the disciples were to be instructed, they came unto him of their own accord, ch. 5. 1. But now they were to be ordained, he called them. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ to be more forward to learn than to teach. In the sense of our own ignorance, we must seek opportunities to be taught; and in the same sense we must wait for a call, a clear call, ere we take upon us to teach others; for no man ought to take this honour to himself.

2. He gave them power, *ἐξουσίαν*, authority in his name, to command men to obedience, and for the confirmation of that authority, to command devils too into a subjection. Note, All rightful authority is derived from Jesus Christ. All power is given to him without limitation, and the subordinate powers that he, are ordained of him. Some of his honour

he put on his ministers, as Moses put some of his on Joshua. Note, It is an undeniable proof of the fullness of power which Christ used as Mediator, that he could impart his power to those he employed, and enable them to work the same miracles that he wrought in his name. He gave them *power over unclean spirits* and *over all manner of sickness*. Note, The design of the gospel was to *conquer the devil and to cure the world*. These preachers were sent out destitute of all external advantages to recommend them; they had no wealth, nor learning, nor titles of honour, and they made a very mean figure; it was therefore requisite that they should have some extraordinary power to advance them above the Scribes.

(1.) He gave them *power against unclean spirits, to cast them out*. Note, The power that is committed to the ministers of Christ, is directly levelled against the devil and his kingdom. The devil, as an *unclean spirit*, is working both in doctrinal errors, (Rev. 16. 13.) and in practical debauchery; (2 Pet. 2. 10.) and in both these, ministers have a charge against him. Christ gave them power to cast him out of the bodies of people; but that was to signify the destruction of his *spiritual kingdom*, and all the works of the devil; for which purpose the *Son of God* was manifested.

(2.) He gave them power to *heal all manner of sickness*. He authorized them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, to prove that it was of God; and they were to work useful miracles for the illustration of it, to prove that it is not only faithful, but well *worthy of all acceptance*; that the design of the gospel is to heal and save. Moses's miracles were many of them for destruction; those Mahomet pretended to, were for ostentation; but the miracles Christ wrought, and appointed his apostles to work, were all for edification, and evince him to be, not only the great Teacher and Ruler, but the great Redeemer, of the world. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon the extent of their power to *all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease*, without the exception even of those that are reckoned incurable, and the reproach of physicians. Note, In the grace of the gospel there is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady. There is no spiritual disease so malignant, so inveterate, but there is a sufficiency of power in Christ for the cure of it. Let none therefore say there is no hope, or that the breach is wide as the sea that cannot be healed.

III. The number and names of those that were commissioned; they are made apostles, that is, messengers. An angel, and an apostle, both signify the same thing—one *sent on an errand*, an ambassador. All faithful ministers are sent of Christ, but they that were first, and immediately, sent by him, are eminently called *apostles*, the prime ministers of state in his kingdom. Yet this was but the infancy of their office; it was when Christ *ascended on high* that he gave some *apostles*, Eph. 4. 11. Christ himself is called an Apostle, (Heb. 3. 1.) for he was *sent by the father*, and so sent them, John 20. 21. The prophets were called God's messengers.

1. Their number was twelve, referring to the number of the tribes of Israel, and the sons of Jacob that were the patriarchs of those tribes. The gospel church must be the Israel of God; the Jews must be first invited into it; the apostles must be spiritual fathers, to beget a seed to Christ. Israel after the flesh is to be rejected for their infidelity, these twelve, therefore, are appointed to be the fathers of another Israel. These twelve, by their doctrine, were to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Luke 22. 30. These were the twelve stars that made up the church's crown; (Rev. 12. 1.) the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem, (Rev. 21.

12, 14.) typified by the twelve precious stones in Aaron's breast-plate, the twelve loaves on the table of shew-bread, the twelve wells of water at Elim. This was that famous jury (and to make it a grand jury, Paul was added to it) that was impanelled to inquire between the King of kings, and the body of mankind; and, in this chapter, they have their charge given them, by him to whom *all judgment was committed*.

2. Their names are here left upon record, and it is their honour; yet in this they had more reason to rejoice, that their names were *written in heaven*, (Luke 10. 20.) while the high and mighty names of the great ones of the earth are *buried in the dust*. Observe,

(1.) There are some of these twelve apostles, of whom we know no more, from the scripture, than their names; as Bartholomew, and Simon the Canaanite; and yet they were faithful servants to Christ and his church. Note, All the good ministers of Christ are not alike famous, nor their actions alike celebrated.

(2.) They are named by couples; for at first they were sent forth *two and two*, because *two are better than one*; they would be serviceable to each other, and the more serviceable jointly to Christ and souls; what one forgot the other would remember, and *out of the mouth of two witnesses every word would be established*. Three couple of them were brethren; Peter and Andrew, James and John, and the other James and Lebbeus. Note, Friendship and fellowship ought to be kept up among relations, and to be made serviceable to religion. It is an excellent thing, when brethren by nature are brethren by grace, and those two bonds strengthen each other.

(3.) Peter is named first, because he was first called; or because he was the most forward man among them, and upon all occasions made himself the mouth of the rest, and because he was to be the apostle of the circumcision; but that gave him no power over the rest of the apostles, nor is there the least mark of any supremacy that was given to him, or ever claimed by him, in this sacred college.

(4.) Matthew, the penman of this gospel, is here joined with Thomas, (v. 3.) but in two things there is a variation from the accounts of Mark and Luke, Mark 3. 18. Luke 6. 15. There, Matthew is put first; in that order it appears he was ordained before Thomas; but here, in his own catalogue, Thomas is put first. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, in honour to prefer one another. There, he is only called Matthew, here Matthew the publican, the toll-gatherer or collector of the customs, who was called from that infamous employment to be an apostle. Note, it is good for those who are advanced to honour with Christ, to look *unto the rock whence they were hewn*; often to remember what they were before Christ called them, that thereby they may be kept humble, and divine grace may be the more glorified. Matthew the apostle was Matthew the publican.

(5.) Simon is called the Canaanite, or rather the Canite, from Cana of Galilee, where probably he was born; or Simon the Zealot, which some make to be the signification of *Kananius*.

(6.) Judas Iscariot is always named last, and with that black brand upon his name, *who also betrayed him*; which intimates, that from the first, Christ knew what a wretch he was, that he had a devil, and would prove a traitor; yet Christ took him among the apostles, that it might not be a surprise and discouragement to his church, if, at any time, the vilest scandals should break out in the best societies. Such spots there have been in our feasts of charity; tares among the wheat, wolves among the sheep; but there is a day of discovery and separation coming, when hypocrites shall be unmasked

and discarded. Neither the apostleship, nor the rest of the apostles, were ever the worse for Judas's being one of the twelve, while his wickedness was concealed and did not break out.

5. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7. And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. 9. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses: 10. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. 11. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy: and there abide till ye go thence. 12. And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

We have here the instructions that Christ gave to his disciples, when he gave them their commission. Whether this charge was given them in a continued discourse, or the several articles of it hinted to them at several times, is not material: in this he *commanded them*. Jacob's blessing his sons, is called his *commanding them*, and with these commands Christ commanded a blessing. Observe,

I. The people to whom he sent them. These ambassadors are directed what places to go to.

1. Not to the Gentiles nor the Samaritans. They must not *go into the way of the Gentiles*, nor into any road out of the land of Israel, whatever temptations they might have. The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have first refused it. As to the Samaritans, who were the posterity of that mongrel people that the king of Assyria planted about Samaria, their country lay between Judea and Galilee, so that they could not avoid *going into the way of the Samaritans*, but they must not *enter into any of their cities*. Christ had declined manifesting himself to the Gentiles or Samaritans, and therefore the apostles must not preach to them. If the gospel be hid from any place, Christ thereby hides himself from that place. The restraint was upon them only in their first mission, afterwards they were appointed to go *into all the world*, and teach *all nations*.

2. But *to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. To them Christ appropriated his own ministry, (ch. 15. 24.) for he was a *Minister of the circumcision*; (Rom. 15. 8.) and, therefore, to them the apostles, who were but his attendants and agents, must be confined. The first offer of salvation must be made to the Jews, Acts 3. 26. Note, Christ had a particular and very tender concern for the *house of Israel*;

they were *beloved for the fathers' sakes*, Rom. 11. 28. He looked with compassion upon them as *lost sheep*, whom he, as a shepherd, was to gather out of the by-paths of sin and error, into which they were gone astray, and in which, if not brought back, they would wander endlessly: see Jer. 1. 6. The Gentiles also had been as *lost sheep*, 1 Pet. 2. 25. Christ gives this description of those to whom they were sent, to quicken them to diligence in their work; they were sent to the house of Israel, (of which number they themselves lately were,) whom they could not but pity, and be desirous to help.

II. The preaching work which he appointed them. He did not send them forth without an errand; no, *As ye go, preach*, v. 7. They were to be itinerant preachers; wherever they come they must proclaim the beginning of the gospel, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Not that they must say nothing else, but this must be their text; on this subject they must enlarge: let people know that the kingdom of the Messiah, who is the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must *repent* of their sins and forsake them, that they might be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. It is said, (Mark 6. 12.) they went out and preached that men should *repent*; which was the proper use and application of this doctrine, concerning the approach of the *kingdom of heaven*. They must, therefore, expect to hear more of this long looked for Messiah shortly, and must be ready to receive his doctrine, to believe in him, and to submit to his yoke. The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun. How unlike was this to the preaching of Jonah, which proclaimed ruin at hand! Jonah 3. 4. This proclaims salvation at hand, *nigh them that fear God*; *mercy and truth meet together*, (Ps. 85. 9, 10.) that is, *the kingdom of heaven at hand*: not so much the personal presence of the king; that must not be deoted upon; but a spiritual kingdom which is to be set up, when his bodily presence is removed, in the hearts of men.

Now this was the same that John the Baptist and Christ had preached before. Note, People need to have good truths pressed again and again upon them, and if they be preached and heard with new affections, they are as if they were fresh to us. Christ, in the gospel, is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 8. Afterwards, indeed, when the Spirit was poured out, and the christian church was formed, this *kingdom of heaven came*, which was now spoken of as *at hand*; but the *kingdom of heaven* must still be the subject of our preaching: now it is come, we must tell people it is come to them, and must lay before them the precepts and privileges of it; and there is a kingdom of glory yet to come, which we must speak of as *at hand*, and quicken people to diligence from the consideration of that.

III. The power he gave them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, v. 8. When he sent them to preach the same doctrine that he had preached, he empowered them to confirm it, by the same divine seals, which could never be set to a lie. This is not necessary now the kingdom of God is come; to call for miracles now, is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The point being settled, and the doctrine of Christ sufficiently attested, by the miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. They are directed here.

1. To use their power in doing good; not, "Go and remove mountains," or "fetch fire from heaven," but *heal the sick, cleanse the lepers*. They are sent abroad as public blessings, to intimate to the world, that love and goodness were the spirit and

genius of that gospel which they came to preach, and of that kingdom which they were employed to set up. By this it would appear, that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is *over all his works*; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to *raise* those that were *dead in sin*; and therefore, perhaps, that of *raising the dead* is mentioned; for though we read not of their raising any to life before the *resurrection of Christ*, yet they were instrumental to *raise many to spiritual life*.

2. In *doing good freely; freely ye have received, freely give*. Those that had power to heal all diseases, had an opportunity to enrich themselves; who would not purchase such easy, certain cures at any rate? Therefore they are cautioned not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles: they must cure *gratis*, further to exemplify the nature and complexion of the gospel-kingdom, which is made up, not only of grace, but of free grace. *Gratia gratis data*, (Rom. 3. 24.) *freely by his grace*. Buy medicines *without money and without price*, Isa. 55. 1. And the reason is, because *freely you have received*. Their power to heal the sick cost them nothing, and, therefore, they must not make any secular advantage to themselves of it. Simon Magnus would not have given money for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, if he had not hoped to get money by them; Acts 8. 18. Note, The consideration of Christ's freeness in doing good to us, should make us free in doing good to others.

IV. The provision that must be made for them in this expedition; it is a thing to be considered in sending an ambassador, who must bear the charge of the embassy. As to that,

1. They must make no provision for it themselves, v. 9, 10. *Provide neither gold nor silver*. As, on the one hand, they shall not raise estates by their work, so, on the other hand, they shall not spend what little they have of their own upon it. This was confined to the present mission, and Christ would teach them, (1.) To act *under the conduct of human prudence*. They were now to make but a short excursion, and were soon to return to their Master, and to their head-quarters again, and, therefore, why should they burden themselves with that which they would have no occasion for? (2.) To act in *dependence upon Divine Providence*. They must be taught to live, without *taking thought for life*, ch. 6. 25, &c. Note, They who go upon Christ's errand, have, of all people, most reason to trust him for *food convenient*. Doubtless he will not be wanting to those that are working for him. Those whom he employs, as they are taken under special protection, so they are entitled to special provisions. Christ's hired servants shall have *bread enough and to spare*: while we abide faithful to God and our duty, and are in care to do our work well, we may cast all our other care upon God; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide for us and ours as he thinks fit.

2. They might expect that those to whom they were sent, would *provide for them* what was necessary, v. 10. *The workman is worthy of his meat*. They must not expect to be fed by miracles, as Elijah was: but they might depend upon God to incline the hearts of those they went among, to be kind to them, and provide for them. Though they who *serve at the altar* may not expect to grow rich by the altar, yet they may expect to live, and to live comfortably upon it, 1 Cor. 9. 13, 14. It is fit they should have their maintenance from their work. Ministers are, and must be, workmen, labourers, and they that are so are *worthy of their meat*, so as not to be forced to any other labour for the earning of it. Christ would have disciples, as not to distrust their God, so not to distrust their

countrymen, so far as to doubt of a comfortable subsistence among them. If you preach to them, and endeavour to do good among them, surely they will give you meat and drink enough for your necessities; and if they do, never desire dainties; God will pay you your wages hereafter, and it will be running on in the mean time.

V. The proceedings they were to observe in dealing with any place, v. 11—15. They went abroad they knew not whither, uninvited, unexpected, knowing none, and known of none; the land of their nativity was to them a strange land; what rule must they go by; what course must they take? Christ would not send them out without full instructions, and here they are.

1. They are directed how to conduct themselves toward those that were *strangers to them*: How to do,

(1.) In *strange towns and cities*; when you come to a town, *inquire who in it is worthy*. [1.] It is supposed that there were some such in every place, as were better disposed than others to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy. Note, In the worst of times and places, we may charitably hope, that there are some who distinguish themselves, and are better than their neighbours; some who swim against the stream, and are as wheat among the chaff. There were saints in Nero's household. Inquire who is worthy, who there are that have some fear of God before their eyes, and have made a good improvement of the light and knowledge they have; the best are far from meriting the favour of a gospel-offer; but some would be more likely than others to give the apostles and their message a favourable entertainment, and would not trample these pearls under their feet. Note, Previous dispositions to that which is good, are both directions and encouragements to ministers, in dealing with people. There is most hope of the word being profitable to those who are already so well inclined, as that it is acceptable to them; and there is here and there one such. [2.] They must inquire out such; not inquire for the best inns; public houses were no proper places for them that neither took money with them, (v. 9.) nor expected to receive any; (v. 8.) but they must look out for accommodations in private houses, with those that would entertain them well, and expect no other recompense for it but a prophet's reward, an apostle's reward, their praying and preaching. Note, They that entertain the gospel, must neither grudge the expense of it, nor promise themselves to get by it in this world. They must inquire, not who is rich, but who is worthy: not who is the best gentleman, but who is the best man. Note, Christ's disciples, wherever they come, should ask for the good people of the place, and be acquainted with them: when we took God for our God, we took his people for our people, and like will rejoice in its like. Paul in all his travels found out the brethren, if there were any, Acts 28. 14. It is implied, that if they did inquire who was worthy, they might discover them. They that were better than their neighbours would be taken notice of, and any one could tell them, there lives an honest, sober, good man; for this is a character which, like the ointment of the right hand, betrays itself, and fills the house with its odours. Every body knew where the seer's house was, 1 Sam. 9. 18. 3. In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue; which intimates that they were to make so short a stay at each town, that they needed not change their lodging, but whatever house providence brought them to at first, there they must continue till they left that town. They are justly suspected, as having no good design, that are often changing their quarters. Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to

make the best of that which is, to abide by it, and not be for shifting upon every dislike or inconvenience.

(2.) In strange houses. When they had found the house of one they thought worthy, they must at their entrance salute it. "In those common civilities, be beforehand with people, in token of your humility. Think it not a disparagement, to invite yourselves into a house, nor stand upon the *punctilio* of being invited. Salute the family, [1.] To draw on further discourse, and so introduce your message." (From matters of common conversation, we may insensibly pass into that communication which is good to the use of edifying.) [2.] "To try whether you are welcome or not; you will take notice whether the salutation be received with shyness and coldness, or with a ready return. He that will not receive your salutation kindly, will not receive your message kindly; for he that is unskilful and unfaithful in a little, will also be in much, Luke 16. 10. [3.] To insinuate yourselves into their good opinion. *Salute the family*, that they may see that though you are serious, you are not morose." Note, Religion teaches us to be courteous and civil, and obliging to all with whom we have to do. Though the apostles went out backed with the authority of the Son of God himself, yet their instructions were, when they came into a house, not to command it, but to salute it; for *love's sake rather to beseech*, is the evangelical way, Philemon 8. 9. Souls are first drawn to Christ with the *cords of a man*, and kept to him by the *bands of love*, Hos. 11. 4. When Peter made the first offer of the gospel to Cornelius a Gentile, Peter was first saluted; see Acts 10. 25. for the Gentiles courted that which the Jews were courted to.

When they had saluted the family after a godly sort, they must, by the return, judge concerning the family, and proceed accordingly. Note, The eye of God is upon us, to observe what entertainment we give to good people and good ministers; *if the house be worthy, let your peace come and rest upon it; if not, let it return to you*, v. 13. It seems then that after they had inquired for the *most worthy*, (v. 11.) it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy. Note, Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon, common report and opinion; we ought to use a judgment of discretion, and to see with our own eyes. *The wisdom of the prudent is himself to understand his own way*. Now this rule is intended,

First, For satisfaction to the apostles. The common salutation was, *peace be unto you*; this, as they used it, was turned into gospel; it was the *peace of God*, the peace of the kingdom of heaven that they wished. Now lest they should make a scruple of pronouncing this blessing upon all promiscuously, because many were utterly unworthy of it, this is to clear them of that scruple; Christ tells them that this gospel-prayer (for so it was now become) should be put up for all, as the gospel-proffer was made to all indefinitely, and that they should leave it to God who knows the heart and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. If the house be worthy, it will reap the benefit of your blessing; if not, there is no harm done, you will not lose the benefit of it; *it shall return to you*, as David's prayers for his ungrateful enemies did, Ps. 35. 13. Note, It becomes us to judge charitably of all, to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all, for that is our part, and then to leave it with God to determine what effect it shall have upon them, for that is his part.

Secondly, For direction to them. "If, upon your salutation, it appear that they are indeed worthy, let them have more of your company, and so let your peace come upon them; preach the gospel to

them, peace by Jesus Christ; but if otherwise, i. they carry it rudely to you, and shut their doors against you, *let your peace*, as much as in you lies, *return to you*. Retract what you have said, and turn your backs upon them; by slighting this, they have made themselves unworthy of the rest of your favours, and cut themselves short of them." Note, Great blessings are often lost by a neglect seemingly small and inconsiderable, when men are in their probation and upon their behaviour. Thus Esau lost his birthright, (Gen. 25. 34.) and Saul his kingdom, 1 Sam. 13. 13, 14.

2. They are here directed how to carry it toward those that were refusers of them. The case is put, (v. 14.) of those that *would not receive them, nor hear their words*. The apostles might think that now they had such a doctrine to preach, and such a power to work miracles for the confirmation of it, no doubt but they should be universally entertained and made welcome: they are, therefore, told before, that there would be those that would slight them, and put contempt on them and their message. Note, The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with some, that will not so much as give them the hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Many turn a *draf ear*, even to the *joyful sound*, and will not *hearken to the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely*. Observe, "They will not receive you, and they will not hear your words." Note, Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel-ministers, commonly go together, and they will either of them be construed into a contempt of Christ, and will be reckoned for accordingly.

Now in this case we have here,

(1.) The directions given to the apostles what to do. They must *depart out of that house or city*. Note, The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. At their departure they must *shake off the dust of their feet*, [1.] In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be *shaken off* as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. *The work of them that turn aside shall not cleave to me*, Ps. 101. 3. The prophet was not to *eat or drink in Bethel*, 1 Kings 13. 9. [2.] As a denunciation of wrath against them. It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would *shake them off*. The dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mark 6. 11. Compare Jam. 5. 3. See this practised, Acts 13. 51.—18. 6. Note, They who *despise* God and his gospel shall be *lightly esteemed*.

(2.) The *doom passed upon such wilful recusants*, v. 15. It shall be *more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom*, as wicked a place as it was. Note, [1.] There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will certainly be called to account for it; however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. Their judgment is respited till *that day*. [2.] There are different degrees of punishment in that day. All the pains of hell will be *intolerable*, but some will be more so than others. Some sinners sink deeper into hell than others, and are beaten with more stripes. [3.] The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be severer and heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom is said to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. But that *vengeance* will come with an aggravation upon those that despise the great salvation. Sodom and Go-

morrah were exceedingly wicked, (Gen. 13. 13.) and that which filled up the measure of their iniquity was, that they *received not* the angels that were sent to them, but abused them, (Gen. 19. 4, 5.) and *hearkened not to their words*, ver. 14. And yet it will be more tolerable for them, than for those who receive not Christ's ministers, and hearken not to their words. God's wrath against them will be more flaming, and their own reflections upon themselves more cutting. *Son, remember*, will sound most dreadfully in the ears of such as had a fair offer made them of *eternal life*, and chose death rather. The iniquity of Israel, when God sent them his servants the prophets, is represented, as upon that account, more heinous than the iniquity of Sodom, (Ezek. 16. 48, 49.) much more now he sent them his Son the great prophet.

16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22. And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come. 24. The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his Lord. 25. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? 26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the house-tops. 28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. 32. Whosoever therefore shall confess me

before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. 34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. 37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. 40. He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. 41. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are here taught to expect, and prepare for; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on with their work in the midst of them. This part of the sermon looks further than to their present mission: for we find not that they met with any great hardships or persecutions while Christ was with them, nor were they well able to bear them; but they are here forewarned of the troubles they should meet with, when, after Christ's resurrection, their commission should be *enlarged*, and the kingdom of heaven, which was now *at hand*, should be actually set up; they dreamed of nothing then, but outward pomp and power; but Christ tells them, they must expect greater sufferings than they were yet called to; that they should then be made prisoners, when they expected to be made princes. It is good to be told what troubles we may hereafter meet with, that we may provide accordingly, and may not boast, as if we had put off the harness, when we are yet but girding it on.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble: and, II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble, which the disciples should meet with in their work; Christ foresaw *their* sufferings as well as his own, and yet will have them go on, as he went on himself; and he foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise to them, and so a shock to their faith, but that, being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith.

He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

1. *What they should suffer*: hard things to be sure; for, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves*, v. 16. And what may a flock of

poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn. Note, Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people, and especially his ministers, are like sheep among them, of a contrary nature and disposition, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey to them. It looked unkind in Christ to expose them to so much danger, who had left all to follow him; but he knew that the glory reserved for his sheep, when in the great day they shall be set on his right hand, would be a recompense sufficient for sufferings as well as services. They are *as sheep among wolves*; that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth, that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth, will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

(1.) They must expect to be hated, *v. 22.* *Ye shall be hated for my name's sake*: that is the root of all the rest, and a bitter root it is. Note, Those whom Christ loves, the world hates; as whom the court blesses the country curses. *If the world hated Christ without cause*, (John 15. 25.) no marvel if it hated those that bore his image and served his interests. We hate what is nauseous, and they are counted as the *offscouring of all things*, 1 Cor. 4. 13. We hate what is noxious, and they are counted the *troublers of the land*, (1 Kings 18. 17.) and the tormentors of their neighbours, Rev. 11. 10. It is grievous to be hated, and to be the object of so much ill-will, but it is *for thy name's sake*; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to them who are thus hated; it is for a good cause, and they have a good friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself.

(2.) They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors. Their restless malice is resistless malice, and they will not only attempt, but will prevail, to *deliver you up to the councils*, (*v. 17, 18.*) to the bench of aldermen or justices, that take care of the public peace. Note, A deal of mischief is often done to good men, under colour of law and justice. *In the place of judgment there is wickedness*, persecuting wickedness, Eccl. 5. 16. They must look for trouble, not only from inferior magistrates in the councils, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous; *for the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion*. We find this often fulfilled in the acts of the apostles.

(3.) They must expect to be put to death; (*v. 21.*) *They shall deliver them to death*, to death in state, with pomp and solemnity, when it shows itself most as the *king of terrors*. The malice of the enemies rages so high as to inflict this; it is the *blood of the saints* that they thirst after: the faith and patience of the saints stand so firm as to expect this; *Neither count I my life dear to myself*: the wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs the *seed of the truth*, and the *seed of the church*. By this noble army's not loving their lives to the death, Satan has been vanquished, and the kingdom of Christ and its interests greatly advanced, Rev. 11. 11. They were put to death as criminals, so the enemies meant it, but really as sacrifices, (Phil. 2. 17. 2 Tim. 4. 6.) as burnt-offerings, sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God, and in his truth and cause.

(4.) They must expect, in the midst of these sufferings, to be branded with the most odious and ignominious names and characters that could be. Persecutors would be ashamed in this world, if they did not first dress up those in bear-skins whom they

thus bait, and represent them in such colours as may serve to justify such cruelties. The blackest of all the ill characters they give them is here stated; they call them *Beelzebub*, the name of the prince of the devils, *v. 25.* They represent them as ring-leaders of the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and since every one thinks he hates the devil, thus they endeavour to make them odious to all mankind. See, and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon: [1.] Satan's sworn enemies are represented as his friends: the apostles, who pulled down the devil's kingdom, were called devils. *Thus men laid to their charge, not only things which they knew not, but things which they abhorred*, and were directly contrary to, and the reverse of. [2.] Satan's sworn servants would be thought to be his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many times they who themselves are nearest akin to the devil, are most apt to father others upon him; and those that paint him on others' clothes, have him reigning in their own hearts. It is well there is a day coming, when (as it follows here, *v. 26.*) that which is hid will be brought to light.

(5.) These sufferings are here represented by a sword and division, *v. 34, 35.* *Think not that I am come to send peace*, temporal peace and outward prosperity; they thought Christ came to give all his followers wealth and power in the world; "no," says Christ, "I did not come with a view to give them *peace*; *peace* in heaven they may be sure of, but not *peace* on earth." Christ came to give us *peace* with God, *peace* in our consciences, *peace* with our brethren, but *in the world ye shall have tribulation*. Note, They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession of it will secure them from, for it will certainly expose them to, trouble in this world. If all the world would receive Christ, there would then follow a universal *peace*, but while there are and will be so many that reject him, (and those not only the *children of this world*, but the *seed of the serpent*,) the children of God, that are called out of the world, must expect to feel the fruits of their enmity.

[1.] Look not for *peace*, but a *sword*. Christ came to give the *sword of the word*, with which his disciples fight against the world, and *conquering* work this sword has made, (Rev. 6. 4.—19. 21.) and the *sword of persecution*, with which the world fights against the disciples, being *cut to the heart* with the *sword of the word*, (Acts 7. 54.) and tormented by the testimony of Christ's witnesses, (Rev. 11. 10.) and *cruel* work this sword made. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of this sword, and so may be said to send this sword; he orders his church into a suffering state for the trial and praise of his people's graces, and the *filling up of the measure of their enemies' sins*.

[2.] Look not for *peace*, but division, (*v. 35.*) *I am come to set men at variance*. This effect of the preaching of the gospel, is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. When some *believe the things that are spoken*, and others *believe them not*, the faith of those that believe condemns those that believe not, and therefore, they have an enmity against them that believe. Note, The most violent and implacable feuds have ever been those that have arisen from difference in religion; no enmity like that of the persecutors, no resolution like that of the persecuted. Thus Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing. Note, Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.

2. They are here told from whom, and by whom, they should suffer these hard things. Surely hell itself must be let loose, and devils, those desperate and despairing spirits, that *have no part nor lot in the great salvation*, must become incarnate, ere such spiteful enemies could be found to a doctrine, the substance of which was *good will toward men*, and the *reconciling of the world to God*; no, would you think it? All this mischief arises to the preachers of the gospel, from those to whom they came to preach salvation. Thus *the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul*, (Prov. 29. 10.) and therefore heaven is so much opposed on earth, because earth is so much under the power of hell, Eph. 2. 2.

These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer,

(1.) From men, (v. 17.) "*Beware of men*; you will have need to stand upon your guard, even against those who are of the same nature with you"—such is the depravity and degeneracy of that nature, (*homo homini lupus*—*man is a wolf to man*,) crafty and politic as men, but cruel and barbarous as beasts, and wholly divested of the thing called humanity. Note, Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils; Paul at Ephesus fought with beasts in the shape of men, 1 Cor. 15. 32. It is a sad pass that the world is come to, when the best friends it has, have need to *beware of men*. It aggravates the troubles of Christ's suffering servants, that they arise from those who are *bone of their bone*, made of the same blood. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind; *Sævis inter se convenit uris*—*Even savage bears agree among themselves*. It is very grievous to have *men rise up against us*, (Ps. 124.) from whom we might expect protection and sympathy; *men*, and no more: mere *men*; *men*, and not saints; *natural men*, (1 Cor. 2. 14.) *men of this world*, Ps. 17. 14. Saints are more than *men*, and are *redeemed from among men*, and therefore are *hated by them*. The nature of man, if it be not sanctified, is the worst nature in the world next to that of devils. *They are men*, and therefore subordinate, dependent, dying creatures; *they are men*, but *they are but men*, (Ps. 9. 20.) and *who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die*? Isa. 51. 12. *Beware of the men*, So Dr. Hammond; those you are acquainted with, the men of the Jewish sanhedrim, which disallowed Christ, 1 Pet. 2. 4.

(2.) From professing men, men that *have a form of godliness*, and make a show of religion. *They will scourge you in their synagogues*, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church-discipline: so that they looked upon the scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was *five times scourged in the synagogues*, 2 Cor. 11. 24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were the most bitter persecutors of Christ and christianity, and placed those outrages to the score of their religion. Note, Christ's disciples have suffered much from conscientious persecutors, that *scourge them in their synagogues*, cast them out and kill them, and *think they do God good service*, (John 16. 2.) and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. 66. 5. Zech. 11. 4, 5. But the synagogue will be so far from consecrating the persecution, that the persecution, doubtless, profanes and desecrates the synagogue.

(3.) From great men, and men in authority. The Jews did not only scourge them, which was the utmost their remaining power extended to, but when they could go no further themselves, they delivered them up to the Roman powers, as they did Christ, John 18. 30. *Ye shall be brought before governors and kings*, (v. 18.) who, having more power, are in a capacity of doing the more mischief. *Governors and kings* receive their power from Christ, (Prov.

8. 15.) and should be his servants, and his church's protectors and nursing-fathers, but they often use their power against him, and are rebels to Christ, and oppressors of his church. *The kings of the earth set themselves against his kingdom*, Ps. 2. 1, 2. Acts 4. 25, 26. Note, It has often been the lot of good men to have great men for their enemies.

(4.) From all men, (v. 22.) *Ye shall be hated of all men*, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men, *for the whole world lies in wickedness*. So few are there that love, and own, and countenance Christ's righteous cause, that we may say, the friends of it are *hated of all men*; they are *all gone astray*, and, therefore, *eat up my people*, Ps. 14. 3. As far as the apostacy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more general than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all *the children of disobedience*. *The world hates you, for it wonders after the beast*, Rev. 13. 3. *Every man is a liar*, and therefore a hater of truth.

(5.) From those of their own kindred. *The brother shall deliver up the brother to death*, v. 21. *A man shall be*, upon this account, *at variance with his own father*; nay, and those of the weaker and tenderer sex too shall become persecutors and persecuted; *the persecuting daughter will be against the believing mother*, where natural affection and filial duty, one would think, should prevent or soon extinguish the quarrel; and then, no marvel if *the daughter-in-law be against the mother-in-law*; where, too often, the coldness of love seeks occasion of contention, v. 35. In general, (v. 36.) *A man's foes shall be they of his own household*. They who should be his friends, will be incensed against him for embracing christianity, and especially for adhering to it when it comes to be persecuted, and will join with his persecutors against him. Note, The strongest bonds of relative love and duty have often been broken through, by an enmity against Christ and his doctrine. Such has been the power of prejudice against the true religion, and zeal for a false one, that all other regards, the most natural and sacred, the most engaging and endearing, have been sacrificed to these Molochs. They who *rage against the Lord, and his anointed ones*, break even these bands in sunder, and cast away even these cords from them, Ps. 2. 2, 3. Christ's spouse suffers hard things from the anger of *her own mother's children*, Cant. 1. 6. Sufferings from such are more grievous; nothing cuts more than this, *It was thou, a man, mine equal*; (Ps. 55. 12, 13.) and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; *a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city*, Prov. 18. 19. The martyrologies, both ancient and modern, are full of instances of this. Upon the whole matter, it appears, that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution*; and through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God.

II. With these predictions of trouble, we have here prescriptions of counsels and comforts for a time of trial. He sends them out exposed to danger in deed, and expecting it, but well armed with instructions and encouragements, sufficient to bear them up, and bear them out, in all these trials. Let us gather up what he says,

1. By way of counsel and direction in several things.

(1.) *Be ye wise as serpents*, v. 16. "You may be so;" (so some take it, only as a permission;) "you may be as wary as you please, provided you be harmless as doves." But it is rather to be taken as a precept, recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. "Therefore, because you are exposed, as sheep among wolves;

be ye wise as serpents; not wise as foxes, whose cunning is to deceive others, but as *serpents*; whose policy is only to defend themselves, and to shift for their own safety." The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as *serpents*, and their ruin is sought, and, therefore, they need the *serpent's* wisdom. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people and ministers, being so much exposed to troubles in this world, as they usually are, should not needlessly expose themselves, but use all fair and lawful means for their own preservation. Christ gave us an example of this wisdom, *ch.* 21. 24, 25.—22. 17, 18, 19. John 8. 6, 7. besides the many escapes he made out of the hands of his enemies, till his hour was come. See an instance of St. Paul's wisdom, Acts 23. 6, 7. In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them. It is the wisdom of the *serpent*, to secure his head, that that may not be broken, to *stop his ear to the voice of the charmer*, (Ps. 58. 4, 5.) and to *take shelter in the clefts of the rocks*; and herein we may be *wise as serpents*. We must be *wise*, not to pull trouble upon our own heads; *wise* to keep silence in an evil time, and not to give offence, if we can help it.

(2.) *Be ye harmless as doves*. "Be mild, and meek, and dispassionate; not only do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill-will; be without gall, as *doves* are; this must always go along with the former." They are *sent forth among wolves*, therefore must be as *wise as serpents*, but they are *sent forth as sheep*, therefore must be *harmless as doves*. We must be *wise*, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else; must use the harmlessness of the *dove* to bear twenty injuries, rather than the subtlety of the *serpent* to offer or to return one. Note, It must be the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially in consideration of the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a *dove-like* spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them, nor be provoked by them: David coveted the *wings of a dove*, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. The *Spirit descended on Christ as a dove*, and all believers partake of the *Spirit of Christ*, a *dove-like* spirit, made for love, not for war.

(3.) *Beware of men*, v. 17. "Be always upon your guard, and avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; *trust not in a friend*, no, not in the *wife of thy bosom*," Micah 7. 5. Note, It becomes those who are gracious to be cautious, for we are taught to *cease from man*. Such a wretched world do we live in, that we know not whom to trust. Ever since our Master was betrayed with a kiss, by one of his own disciples, we have need to *beware of men, of false brethren*.

(4.) *Take no thought, how or what ye shall speak*, v. 19. "When ye are brought before magistrates, conduct yourselves decently, but afflict not yourselves with care how you shall come off. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this *care be cast upon God*, as well as that—*what you shall eat and what you shall drink*. Do not study to make fine speeches, *ad captandam benevolentiam—to ingratiate yourselves*; affect not quaint expressions, flourishes of wit, and laboured periods, which only serve to gild a bad cause, the gold of a good one needs it not. It argues a diffidence of your cause, to be solicitous in this matter, as if it were not sufficient to speak for itself. You know upon what grounds you go, and then *verbaque prævisam rem non invita sequentur—suitable expressions will readily occur*." Never any spoke better before governors and kings than those three champions, who took *no thought before,*

what they should speak: O *Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter*, Dan. 3. 16. See Ps. 119. 46. Note, The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful, how to *do well*, than how to *speak well*; how to *keep their integrity*, than how to *vindicate it*. *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus—Our lives, not boasting words, form the best apology*.

(5.) *When they persecute you in this city, flee to another*, v. 23. "Thus reject them who reject you and your doctrine, and try whether others will not receive you and it. Thus shift for your own safety." Note, In case of imminent peril, the disciples of Christ may and must secure themselves by flight, when God, in his providence, opens to them a *door of escape*. He that flies may fight again. It is no inglorious thing for Christ's soldiers to quit their ground, provided they do not quit their colours: They may go out of the way of *danger*, though they must not go out of the way of *duty*. Observe Christ's care of his disciples, in providing places of retreat and shelter for them; ordering it so, that persecution rages not in all places at the same time; but *when one city is made too hot for them, another is reserved for a cooler shade, and a little sanctuary*; a favour to be used and not to be slighted; yet always with this proviso, that no sinful, unlawful means be used to make the escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history both of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases, *wisdom and integrity are profitable to direct*.

(6.) *Fear them not*, (v. 26.) because they can but *kill the body*, v. 28. Note, It is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples, not to fear the greatest of their adversaries. They who truly fear God, need not fear man; and they who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. *The fear of man brings a snare*, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be carefully watched, and striven, and prayed against. Be the times never so difficult, enemies never so outrageous, and events never so threatening, yet need we not fear, *yet will we not fear, though the earth be removed*, while we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so *good a hope through grace*.

Yes, this is soon said, but when it comes to the trial, racks and tortures, dungeons and gallies, axes and gibbets, fire and faggot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, and to start back, especially when it is plain, that they may be avoided by a few declining steps, and, therefore, to fortify us against this temptation, we have here,

[1.] A good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies; they *kill the body*, that is the utmost their rage can extend to; hitherto they can go, if God permit them, but no further; they are *not able to kill the soul*, nor to do it any hurt, and the soul is the man. By this it appears, that the soul does not (as some dream) fall asleep at death, nor is deprived of thought and perception; for then the killing of the body would be the killing of the soul too. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath; now this is out of the reach of their power. *Tribulation, distress, and persecution* may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God, cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Rom. 8. 35, 37. If, therefore, we were more concerned about our souls, as our jewels, we should be less afraid of men, whose power cannot rob us of them: they can but *kill the body*, which would quickly die of itself, *not the soul*, which will enjoy itself and its God in spite of them. They can but crush the cabinet: a heathen set the tyrant at defiance with this, *Tunde corpus*

Anaxarchi, Anaxarchum non lædis—you may abuse the case of Anaxarchus, you cannot injure Anaxarchus himself. The pearl of price is untouched. Seneca undertakes to make it out, that you cannot hurt a wise and good man, because death itself is no real evil to him. *Si maximum illud ultra quod nihil habent iratæ leges, aut severissimi domini minantur, in quo imperium suum fortuna consumit, æquo placidoque animo accipimus, et scimus mortem malum non esse ob hoc ne injuriam quidem—If with calmness and composure we meet that last extremity, beyond which injured laws and merciless tyrants have nothing to inflict, and in which fortune terminates her dominion, we know that death is not an evil, because it does not occasion the slightest injury.* Seneca de Constantia.

[2.] A good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. *Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* Note, First, *Hell* is the destruction both of soul and body; not of the being of either, but the well being of both; it is the ruin of the whole man; if the soul be lost, the body is lost too. They sinned together; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin, and they must eternally suffer together. Secondly, This destruction comes from the power of God: he is able to destroy; it is a destruction from his glorious power; (2. Thess. 1. 9.) *he will in it make his power known*; not only his authority to sentence, but his ability to execute the sentence, Rom. 9. 22. Thirdly, *God is therefore to be feared, even by the best saints in this world. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to stand in awe of him.* If, according to his fear, so is his wrath, then according to his wrath so should his fear be, especially, because none knows the power of his anger, Ps. 90. 11. When Adam, in innocence, was awed by a threatening, let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. *Hapily is the man that fears always.* The God of Abraham, who was then dead, is called the Fear of Isaac, who was yet alive, Gen. 31. 42, 53. Fourthly, The fear of God and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world, than under God's frowns, and therefore, as it is most right in itself, so it is most safe for us, to obey God rather than men, Acts 4. 19. They who are afraid of a man that shall die, forget the Lord their Maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13. Neh. 4. 14.

(7.) *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light:* (v. 27.) "whatever hazards you run, go on with your work, publishing and proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all the world; that is your business, mind that. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy you, but to suppress that, and, therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish that." *What I tell you, that speak ye.* Note, That which the apostles have delivered to us, is the same that they received from Jesus Christ, Heb. 2. 3. They spake what he told them—that, all that, and nothing but that. Those ambassadors received their instructions in private, in darkness, in the ear, in corners, in parables. *Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret* varying from what he preached in public, John 18. 20. But the particular instructions which he gave his disciples after his resurrection, concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were whispered in the ear, (Acts 1. 3.) for then he never showed himself openly. But they must deliver their embassy publicly, in the light, and upon the house-tops; for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in, (Prov. 1. 20, 21.—8. 2, 3.) therefore he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The first indication of the reception of the Gentiles into the church, was upon a house-top, Acts 10. 9. Note, There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; the whole

counsel of God must be revealed, Acts 20. 27. In never so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

2. By way of comfort and encouragement. Here is very much said to that purpose, and all little enough, considering the many hardships they were to grapple with, throughout the course of their ministry, and their present weakness, which was such, as that, without some powerful support, they could scarcely bear even the prospect of such usage; Christ therefore shows them why they should be of good cheer.

(1.) Here is one word peculiar to their present mission, v. 23. *Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.* They were to preach that the kingdom of the Son of man, the Messiah, was at hand; they were to pray, *Thy kingdom come*: now they should not have gone over all the cities of Israel, thus praying and thus preaching, before that kingdom should come, in the exaltation of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit. It was a comfort, [1.] That what they said should be made good; they said the Son of man is coming, and behold, he comes. Christ will confirm the word of his messengers, Isa. 44. 26. [2.] That it should be made good quickly. Note, It is matter of comfort to Christ's labourers, that their working time will be short, and soon over; the hireling has his day; the work and warfare will in a little time be accomplished. [3.] That then they should be advanced to a higher station. *When the Son of man comes, they shall be endued with greater power from on high*; now they were sent forth as agents and envoys, but in a little time their commission should be enlarged, and they should be sent forth as plenipotentiaries into all the world.

(2.) Here are many words that relate to their work in general, and the troubles they were to meet with in it; and they are good words, and comfortable words.

[1.] That their sufferings were for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, v. 18. When the Jewish consistories transfer you to the Roman governors, that they may have you put to death, your being hurried thus from one judgment-seat to another, will help to make your testimony the more public, and will give you an opportunity of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; nay, you will testify to them, and against them, by the very troubles you undergo. Note, God's people, and especially God's ministers, are his witnesses, (Isa. 43. 10.) not only in their doing work, but in their suffering work. Hence they are called Martyrs—witnesses for Christ, that his truths are of undoubted certainty and value; and being witnesses for him, they are witnesses against those who oppose him and his gospel. The sufferings of the martyrs, as they witness to the truth of the gospel they profess, so they are testimonies of the enmity of their persecutors, and both ways they are a testimony against them, and will be produced in evidence in the great day, when the saints shall judge the world; and the reason of the sentence will be, *Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me.* Now if their sufferings be a testimony, how cheerfully should they be borne; for the testimony is not finished till those come, Rev. 11. 7. If they be Christ's witnesses, they shall be sure to have their charges borne.

[2.] That, upon all occasions, they should have God's special presence with them, and the immediate assistance of his Holy Spirit, particularly when they should be called out to bear their testimony before governors and kings; it shall be given you (said Christ) in that same hour what ye shall speak. Christ's disciples were chosen from among the foolish of the world, unlearned and ignorant men, and, therefore, might justly distrust their own abilities.

especially when they were called before great men. When Moses was sent to Pharaoh he complained, *I am not eloquent*, Exod. 4. 10. When Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, he objected, *I am but a child*, Jer. 1. 6, 10. Now, in answer to this suggestion, First, they are here promised, that *it should be given them*, not some time before, but *in that same hour, what they should speak*. They shall speak *ex tempore*, and yet shall speak as much to the purpose, as if it had been never so well studied. Note, When God calls us out to speak for him, we may depend upon him to teach us what to say; even then, when we labour under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements. Secondly, They are here assured, that the blessed Spirit should draw up their plea for them. *It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you*, v. 20. They were not left to themselves upon such an occasion, but God undertook for them; his Spirit of wisdom spoke *in them*, as sometimes his providence wonderfully spoke *for them*, and by both together they were manifested in the consciences even of their persecutors. God gave them an ability, not only to speak to the purpose, but what they did say, to say it with holy zeal. The same Spirit that assisted them in the pulpit, assisted them at the bar. They cannot but come off well, who have such an advocate; to whom God says, as he did to Moses, (Exod. 4. 12.) *Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and with thy heart*.

[3.] That *he that endures to the end shall be saved*, v. 22. Here it is very comfortable to consider, First, that there will be *an end* of these troubles; they may last long, but will not last always. Christ comforted himself with this, and so may his followers; *The things concerning me have an end*, Luke 22. 37. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem*—*These also will God bring to a termination*. Note, A believing prospect of the period of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. *The weary will be at rest, when the wicked cease from troubling*, Job 3. 17. God will give an expected end, Jer. 29. 11. The troubles may seem tedious, *like the days of a hireling*, but blessed be God, they are not everlasting. Secondly, that while they continue; they may be *endured*; as they are not *eternal*, so they are not *intolerable*; they may be borne, and borne *to the end*, where the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms: *The strength shall be according to the day*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. Thirdly, Salvation will be the eternal recompense of all these *that endure to the end*. The weather stormy, and the way foul, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18. Heb. 10. 34. This is not only an encouragement to us to *endure*, but an engagement to *endure to the end*. They who *endure but a while, and in time of temptation fall away*, have run in vain, and lose all that they have attained; but they who persevere, are sure of the prize, and they only. *Be faithful unto death, and then thou shalt have the crown of life*.

[4.] That whatever hard usage the disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than what their Master met with before, (v. 24, 25.) *The disciple is not above his master*. We find this given them as a reason, why they should not hesitate to perform the meanest duties, no, not washing one another's feet, John 13. 16. Here it is given as a reason why they should not stumble at the hardest sufferings. They are reminded of this saying, John 15. 20. It is a proverbial expression, *The servant is not better than his master*, and, therefore, let him not expect to fare better. Note, First, Jesus Christ is our Master, our teaching Master, and we are his disciples, to learn of him; our ruling Master, and we are his servants to obey him: He is Master of the house, *κύριος τοῦ οἴκου*,

has a despotic power in the church, which is his family. Secondly, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, met with very hard usage from the world; they called him Beelzebub, the god of lies, the name of the chief of the devils, with whom they said he was in league. It is hard to say, which is here more to be wondered at, the wickedness of men who thus abused Christ, or the patience of Christ, who suffered himself to be thus abused; that he who was the God of glory should be stigmatized as the god of lies; the King of Israel, as the god of Ekron; the Prince of light and life, as the prince of the powers of death and darkness; that Satan's greatest Enemy and Destroyer, should be run down as his confederate, and yet *endure such contradiction of sinners*. Thirdly, The consideration of the ill treatment which Christ met with in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently. Let us not think it strange, if they who hated him, hate his followers, for his sake; nor think it hard if they who are shortly to be made *like him in glory*, be now made *like him in sufferings*. Christ began in the *bitter cup*, let us be willing to pledge him; his bearing the cross made it easy for us.

[5.] That *there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed*, v. 26. We understand this, First, Of the revealing of the gospel to all the world. "Do you *publish it*, (v. 27.) for it shall be published. The truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known, to all nations, in their own language," Acts 2. 11. *The ends of the earth must see his salvation*. Note, It is a great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. It is a plough which God will speed. Or, Secondly, Of the clearing up of the innocency of Christ's suffering servants, that are called Beelzebub; their true character is now invidiously disguised with false colours, but however their innocency and excellency are now *covered*, they shall be *revealed*: sometimes it is in a great measure done in this world, when the righteousness of the saints is made, by subsequent events, to *shine forth as the light*: however, it will be done at the great day, when their glory shall be manifested to all the world, angels and men, to whom they are now *made spectacles*, 1 Cor. 4. 9. All their reproach shall be rolled away, and their graces and services, that are now *covered*, shall be *revealed*, 1 Cor. 4. 5. Note, It is a matter of comfort to the people of God, under all the calumnies and censures of men, that there will be a resurrection of *names* as well as of *bodies*, at the last day, when *the righteous shall shine forth as the sun*. Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity.

[6.] That the providence of God is in a special manner conversant about the saints, in their sufferings, v. 29—31. It is good to have recourse to our first principles, and particularly to the doctrine of God's universal providence, extending itself to all the creatures, and all their actions, even the smallest and most minute. The light of nature teaches us this, and it is comfortable to all men, but especially to all good men, who can in faith call this God their Father, and for whom he has a tender concern. See here,

First, the general extent of providence to all the creatures, even the least, and least considerable, to the *sparrows*, v. 29. These little animals are of so small account, that one of them is not valued; there must go two to be worth *a farthing*, (nay, you shall have five for a halfpenny, Luke 12. 6.) and yet they are not shut out of the divine care; *One of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father*: That is, 1. They do not light on the ground for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but your heavenly Father, by his providence, laid it ready for them. In the

parallel place, Luke 12. 6, it is thus expressed, *Not one of them is forgotten before God*, forgotten to be provided for; *he feedeth them*, ch. 6. 26. Now he that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints. 2. They do not *fall to the ground* by death, either a natural or a violent death, without the notice of God: though they are so small a part of the creation, yet even their death comes within the notice of the divine providence, much more does the death of his disciples. Observe, The birds that soar above, when they die, *fall to the ground*; death brings the highest to the earth. Some think that Christ here alludes to the *two sparrows* that were used in cleansing the Leper; (Lev. 14. 4, 5, 6.) the two birds, in the margin, are called *sparrows*; of these one was killed, and so *fell to the ground*, the other was let go. Now it seemed a casual thing, which of the two was killed; the persons employed, took which they pleased, but God's providence designed, and determined which. Now this God, who has such an eye to the sparrows, because they are his creatures, much more will have an eye to you who are his children. If a sparrow die not *without your Father*, surely a man does not,—a christian,—a minister,—my friend,—my child. A bird falls not into the fowler's net, nor by the fowler's shot, and so comes not to be sold in the market, but according to the direction of providence; your enemies, like subtle fowlers, *lay snares for you*, and *privily shoot at you*, but they cannot take you, they cannot hit you, unless God give them leave. Therefore be not afraid of death, for your enemies have no power against you, but what is *given them from above*. God can break their bows and snares, (Ps. 37. 14, 15.—64. 4, 7.) and make our souls to *escape as a bird*; (Ps. 124. 7.) *Fear ye not, therefore*, v. 31. Note, There is enough in the doctrine of God's providence, to silence all the fears of God's people: *Ye are of more value than many sparrows*. All men are so, for the other creatures were made for man, and *put under his feet*; (Ps. 8. 4, 5, 8.) much more the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are the excellent ones of the earth, however contemned, as if not worth one sparrow.

Secondly, the particular cognizance which providence takes of the disciples of Christ, especially in their sufferings, (v. 30.) *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the account which God takes and keeps, of all the concerns of his people, even of those that are most minute, and least regarded. This is not to be made a matter of curious enquiry, but of encouragement to live in a continual dependence upon God's providential care, which extends itself to all occurrences, yet without disparagement to the infinite glory, or disturbance to the infinite rest, of the Eternal Mind. If God numbers their hairs, much more does he number their heads, and take care of their lives, their comforts, their souls. It intimates, that God takes more care of them, than they do of themselves. They who are solicitous to number their money, and goods, and cattle, yet were never careful to number their hairs, which fall and are lost, and they never miss them: but God *numbers the hairs of his people*, and *not a hair of their head shall perish*; (Luke 21. 18.) not the least hurt shall be done them, but upon a valuable consideration: so precious to God are his saints, and their lives and deaths!

[7.] That he will shortly, in the day of triumph, own those who now own him, in the day of trial, when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and rejected by him, v. 32, 33. Note, First, It is our duty, and if we do it, it will hereafter be our unspeakable honour and happiness, to *confess Christ before men*. 1. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him,

when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. We must never be ashamed of our relation to Christ our attendance on him, and our expectations from him: hereby the sincerity of our faith is evidenced, his name glorified, and others edified. 2. However this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we shall be abundantly recompensed for that, in the *resurrection of the just*, when it will be our unspeakable honour and happiness to hear Christ say; (what would we more?) "*Him will I confess*, though a poor worthless worm of the earth; this is one of mine, one of my friends and favourites, who loved me, and was beloved by me; and the purchase of my blood, the workmanship of my Spirit; *I will confess him before my Father*, when it will do him the most service; I will speak a good word for him, when he appears before *my Father* to receive his doom; I will present him, will represent him to *my Father*." Those who honour Christ he will thus honour. They honour him *before men*; that is a *poor thing*; he will honour them *before his Father*, that is a *great thing*. Secondly, It is a dangerous thing for any to deny and disown Christ *before men*; for they who do so, will be disowned by him in the *great day*, when they have most need of him: he will not own them for his servants, who would not own him for their Master: *I tell you, I know you not*, ch. 7. 23. In the first ages of christianity, when for a man to *confess Christ*, was to venture all that was dear to him in this world, it was more a trial of sincerity, than it was afterwards, when it had secular advantages attending it.

[8.] That the foundation of their discipleship was laid in such a temper and disposition, as would make sufferings very light and easy to them; and it was upon the condition of a preparedness for suffering, that Christ took them to be his followers, v. 37—39. He told them at first, that they were *not worthy of him*, if they were not willing to part with all for him. Men hesitate not at those difficulties which necessarily attend their profession, and which they counted upon, when they undertook that profession; and they will either cheerfully submit to those fatigues and troubles, or disclaim the privileges and advantages of their profession. Now, in the christian profession, they are reckoned unworthy the dignity and felicity of it, that put not such a value upon their interest in Christ, as to prefer that before any other interests. They cannot expect the gains of a bargain, who will not come up to the terms of it. Now thus the terms are settled; if religion be worth *any thing*, it is worth *every thing*; and, therefore, all who believe the truth of it, will soon come up to the price of it; and they who make it their business and bliss, will make every thing else to yield to it. They who like not Christ on these terms, may leave him at their peril. Note, It is very encouraging to think, that whatever we leave, or lose, or suffer, for Christ, we do not make a hard bargain for ourselves. Whatever we part with for this pearl of price, we may comfort ourselves with this persuasion, that it is well worth what we give for it. The terms are, that we must prefer Christ,

First, Before our nearest and dearest relations; *father or mother, son or daughter*. Between these relations, because there is little room left for envy, there is commonly more room for love, and, therefore, these are instanced in, as relations which are most likely to affect. Children must love their parents, and parents must love their children; but if they love them better than Christ, they are unworthy of him. As we must not be *deterred* from Christ by the hatred of our relations which he spoke of, (v. 21. 35, 36.) so we must not be *drawn* from him, by their love. Christians must be as Levi, who said *to his father, I have not seen him*, Deut. 33. 9.

Secondly, Before our ease and safety. We must

take up our cross and follow him, else we are not *worthy of him*. Here observe, 1. They who would *follow Christ*, must expect *their cross* and *take it up*. 2. In *taking up the cross* we must *follow Christ's example*, and bear it as he did. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we meet with crosses, that in bearing them we *follow Christ*, who has showed as the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like him, to glory with him.

Thirdly, Before life itself, v. 39. *He that findeth his life shall lose it*; he that thinks he has found it, when he has saved it, and kept it, by denying Christ, *shall lose it* in an eternal death; but *he that loseth his life for Christ's sake*, that will part with it, rather than deny Christ, *shall find it*, to his unspeakable advantage, in an eternal life. They are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life.

[9.] That Christ himself would so heartily espouse their cause, as to show himself a friend to all their friends, and to repay all the kindnesses that should at any time be bestowed upon them, v. 40—42. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*.

First, It is here implied, that though the generality would reject them, yet that they should meet with some, who would receive and entertain them, would bid the message welcome to their hearts, and the messengers to their houses, for the sake of it. Why was the gospel-market made, but that if some will not, others will. In the worst of times there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Christ's ministers shall not *labour in vain*.

Secondly, Jesus Christ takes what is done to his faithful ministers, whether in kindness or in unkindness, as done to himself, and reckons himself *treated* as they are *treated*. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me*. Both honours and contempt put upon an ambassador, reflect honour or contempt upon the prince that sends him, and ministers are *ambassadors for Christ*. See how Christ may still be entertained by those who would testify their respects to him: his people and ministers we have always with us; and he is *with them always*, even to the end of the world. Nay, the honour rises higher, *He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me*. Not only Christ takes it as done to himself, but through Christ God does so too. By entertaining Christ's ministers, they entertain not *angels unawares*, but Christ, nay, and God himself, and *unawares* too, as appears, ch. 25. 37. *When saw we thee an hungred?*

Thirdly, That though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be never so small, yet that if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted, though it be *but a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones*, v. 42. 'They are *little ones*, poor and weak, and often stand in need of refreshment, and glad of the least. The extremity may be such, that a *cup of cold water* may be a great favour. Note, Kindnesses shown to Christ's disciples are valued in Christ's books, not according to the cost of the gift, but according to the love and affection of the giver. On that score the widow's mite not only passed current, but was stamped high, Luke 21. 3, 4. Thus they who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world.

Fourthly, That kindness to Christ's disciples which he will accept, must be done with an eye to Christ, and for his sake. A prophet must be received *in the name of a prophet*, and a *righteous man* in the name of a *righteous man*, and one of those *little ones* in the name of a *disciple*; not because they are learned, or witty, nor because they are our relations or neighbours, but because they are righteous, and so bear Christ's image; because they are prophets and disciples, and so are sent on

Christ's errand. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his ministers. Christ does not interest himself in the matter, unless we first interest him in it. *Ut tibi debeam aliquid pro eo quod prestat, debes non tantum mihi preestare, sed tanquam mihi—If you wish me to feel an obligation to you for any service you render, you must not only perform the service, but you must convince me that you do it for my sake.* Seneca.

Fifthly, That kindnesses shown to Christ's people and ministers, shall not only be accepted, but richly and suitably rewarded. There is a great deal to be gotten, by doing good offices to Christ's disciples. If it be done to the Lord, he will repay them again with interest; for he is *not unrighteous to forget any labour of love*, Heb. 6. 10. 1. They shall *receive a reward*, and in no wise *lose it*. He does not say, that they *deserve* a reward; we cannot merit any thing as wages, from the hand of God; but they shall *receive a reward* from the free gift of God: and they shall *in no wise lose it*, as good services often do among men: because they who should reward them are either false or forgetful. The reward may be deferred, the full reward will be deferred, till the resurrection of the just; but it shall in no wise be *lost*, nor shall they be any *losers* by the delay. 2. This is a *prophet's reward*, and a *righteous man's*. That is, either, (1.) The reward that God gives to prophets and righteous men: the blessings conferred upon them shall distil upon their friends. Or, (2.) The reward he gives by prophets and righteous men; in answer to their prayers; (Gen. 20. 7.) *He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee*, that is a prophet's reward: and by their ministry; when he gives the instructions and comforts of the word, to those who are kind to the preachers of the word, then he sends a *prophet's reward*. Prophets' rewards are spiritual blessings in heavenly things, and if we know how to value them, we shall reckon them good payment.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter we have, I. The constant and unwearied diligence of our Lord Jesus in his great work of preaching the gospel, v. 1. II. His discourse with the disciples of John concerning his being the Messiah, v. 2. . 6. The honourable testimony that Christ bore to John Baptist, v. 7. . 15. IV. The sad account he gives of that generation in general, and of some particular places, with reference to the success, both of John's ministry, and of his own, v. 16. . 24. V. His thanksgiving to his Father for the wise and gracious method he had taken in revealing the great mysteries of the gospel, v. 25, 26. VI. His gracious call and invitation to poor sinners to come to him, and to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, v. 27. . 30. No where have we more of the terror of gospel-woes for warning to us, or of the sweetness of gospel-grace for encouragement to us, than in this chapter, which sets before us life and death, the blessing and the curse.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and to preach in their cities. 2. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? 4. Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6. And

blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

The first verse of this chapter some join to the foregoing chapter, and make it (not unfitly) the close of that.

1. The ordination sermon which Christ preached to his disciples in the foregoing chapter, is here called his commanding them. Note, Christ's commissions imply commands. Their preaching of the gospel was not only permitted them, but it was enjoined them. It was not a thing respecting which they were left at their liberty, but *necessity was laid upon them*, 1 Cor. 9. 16. The promises he made them are included in these commands, for the covenant of grace is a *word which he hath commanded*, Ps. 105. 8. He made an end of commanding, ἐτέλειεν διδάσκειν. Note, The instructions Christ gives are full instructions. He goes through with his work.

2. When Christ had said what he had to say to his disciples, he departed *thence*. It should seem they were very loth to leave their master, till he departed and separated himself from them; as the nurse withdraws the hand, that the child may learn to go by itself. Christ would now teach them how to live, and how to work, without his bodily presence. It was expedient for them, that Christ should thus go away for a while, that they might be prepared for his long departure, and that by the help of the Spirit, their own hands might be sufficient for them, (Deut. 33. 7.) and they might not be always children. We have little account of what they did now pursuant to their commission. They went abroad, no doubt; probably into Judea, (for in Galilee the gospel had been mostly preached hitherto,) publishing the doctrine of Christ, and working miracles in his name; but still in a more immediate dependence upon him, and not being long from him; and thus they were trained up, by degrees, for their great work.

3. Christ departed to teach and preach in the cities whither he sent his disciples before him to work miracles, (ch. 10. 1, 8.) and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment. Thus was the way of the Lord prepared; John prepared it by bringing people to repentance, but he did no miracles. The disciples go further, they work miracles for the confirmation. Note, Repentance and faith prepare people for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ gives. Observe, When Christ empowered them to work miracles, he employed himself in teaching and preaching, as if that were the more honourable of the two. That was but in order to do this. Healing the sick was the saving of bodies, but preaching the gospel was to the saving of souls. Christ had directed his disciples to preach, (ch. 10. 7.) yet he did not leave off preaching himself. He set them to work, not for his own ease, but for the ease of the country, and was not the less busy for employing them. How unlike are they to Christ, who yoke others only that they may themselves be idle. Note, The increase and multitude of labourers in the Lord's work should be made not an excuse for our negligence, but an encouragement to our diligence. The more busy others are, the more busy we should be, and all little enough, so much work is there to be done. Observe, He went to preach in their cities, which were populous places; he cast the net of the gospel where there were most fish to be inclosed. Wisdom cries in the cities, (Prov. 1. 21.) at the entry of the city, (Prov. 8. 3.) in the cities of the Jews, even of them who made light of him, who notwithstanding had the first offer.

What he preached we are not told, but it was probably to the same purpose with his sermon on the mount. But here is next recorded a message which

John Baptist sent to Christ, and his return to it, v. 2—6. We heard before that Jesus heard of John's sufferings, ch. 4. 12. Now we are told that John, in prison, hears of Christ's doings. He heard in the prison the works of Christ; and no doubt he was glad to hear of them, for he was a true friend of the Bridegroom, John 3. 29. Note, When one useful instrument is laid aside, God knows how to raise up many others in the stead of it. The work went on, though John was in prison, and it added no affliction, but a great deal of consolation to his bonds. Nothing more comfortable to God's people in distress, than to hear of the works of Christ; especially to experience them in their own souls. This turns a prison into a palace. Some way or other Christ will convey the notices of his love to those that are in trouble for conscience sake. John could not see the works of Christ, but he heard of them with pleasure. And blessed are they who have not seen, but only heard, and yet have believed.

Now John Baptist, hearing of Christ's works, sent two of his disciples to him; and what passed between them and him we have here an account of. Here is,

1. The question they had to propose to him: *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* This was a serious and important question; *Art thou the Messiah promised, or not? Art thou the Christ? Tell us.* 1. It is taken for granted that the Messiah should come. It was one of the names by which he was known to the Old-Testament saints, *he that cometh or shall come*, Ps. 118. 26. He is now come, but there is another coming of his which we still expect. 2. They intimate, that if this be not he, they would look for another. Note, We must not be weary of looking for him that is to come; nor ever say, we will no more expect him till we come to enjoy him. Though he tarry, wait for him, for he that shall come will come, though not in our time. 3. They intimate likewise, that if they be convinced that this is he, they will not be sceptics, they will be satisfied, and will look for no other. 4. They therefore ask, *art thou he?* John had said for his part, *I am not the Christ*, John 1. 20. Now, (1.) Some think that John sent this question for his own satisfaction. It is true he had borne a noble testimony to Christ; he had declared him to be the Son of God, (John 1. 34.) the Lamb of God, (v. 29.) and he that should baptize us with the Holy Ghost, (v. 33.) and sent of God, (John 3. 34.) which were great things. But he desired to be further and more fully assured, that he was the Messiah that had been so long promised and expected. Note, In matters relating to Christ and our salvation by him, it is good to be sure. Christ appeared not in that external pomp and power in which it was expected he should appear; his own disciples stumbled at this, and perhaps John did so; Christ saw something of this at the bottom of this inquiry, when he said, *blessed is he, who shall not be offended in me.* Note, It is hard, even for good men, to bear up against vulgar errors, (2.) John's doubt might arise from his own present circumstances. He was a prisoner, and might be tempted to think, if Jesus be indeed the Messiah, whence is it that I, his friend and fore-runner, am brought into this trouble, and am left to be so long in it, and he never looks after me, never visits me, nor sends to me, inquires not after me, does nothing either to sweeten my imprisonment or hasten my enlargement? Doubtless there was a good reason why our Lord Jesus did not go to John in prison, lest there should seem to have been a compact between them: but John construed it into a neglect, and it was perhaps a shock to his faith in Christ. Note, [1.] Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief. The best are not always alike strong. [2.] Troubles for Christ,

especially when they continue long unrelieved, are such trials of faith as sometimes prove too hard to be borne up against. [3.] The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation, strike at the root, and call in question the most fundamental truths which were thought to be well settled. *Will the Lord cast off forever?* But we will hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, only he desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Note, The best saints have need of the best helps they can get for the strengthening of their faith, and the arming of themselves against temptations to infidelity. Abraham believed, and yet desired a sign, (Gen. 15. 6, 8.) so did Gideon, Judg. 6. 36, 37. But, (3.) Others think that John sent his disciples to Christ with this question, not so much for his own satisfaction as for theirs. Observe, Though he was a prisoner they adhered to him, attended on him, and were ready to receive instructions from him; they loved him, and would not leave him. Now, [1.] They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith, and needed instruction and confirmation; and in this matter they were somewhat prejudiced; being jealous for their master, they were jealous of our Master; they were loth to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, because he eclipsed John, and are loth to believe their own master when they think he speaks against himself and them. Good men are apt to have their judgments biased by their interest. Now John would have their mistakes rectified, and wished them to be as well satisfied as he himself was. Note, The strong ought to consider the infirmities of the weak, and to do what they can to help them: and such as we cannot help ourselves we should send to those that can. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.* [2.] John was all along industrious to turn over his disciples to Christ, as from the grammar-school to the academy. Perhaps he foresaw his death approaching, and therefore would bring his disciples to be better acquainted with Christ, under whose guardianship he must leave them. Note, Ministers' business is to direct every body to Christ. And those who would know the certainty of the doctrine of Christ, must apply themselves to him, who is come to give an understanding. They who would grow in grace must be inquisitive.

II. Here is Christ's answer to this question, *v. 4—6.* It was not so direct and express, as when he said, *I that speak unto thee am he;* but it was a real answer, an answer in fact. Christ will have us to spell out the convincing evidences of gospel-truths, and to take pains in digging for knowledge.

1. He points them to what they heard and saw, which they must tell John, that he might from thence take occasion, the more fully to instruct and convince them out of their own mouths. Go and tell him *what you hear and see.* Note, Our senses may and ought to be appealed to in those things that are their proper objects. Therefore the popish doctrine of the real presence agrees not with the truth *as it is in Jesus;* for Christ refers us to the things we *hear and see.* Go and tell John,

(1.) *What you see of the power of Christ's miracles;* you see how, by the word of Jesus, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c. Christ's miracles were done openly, and in the view of all; for they feared not the strongest and most impartial scrutiny. *Veritas non querit angulos—Truth seeks not concealment.* They are to be considered, [1.] *As the acts of a divine power.* None but the God of nature could thus overrule and outdo the power of nature. It is particularly spoken of as God's prerogative to *open the eyes of the blind,* Psal. 146. 8. Miracles are therefore the broad seal of heaven, and the doctrine they are affixed to must be of God, for

his power will never contradict his truth; nor can it be imagined that he should set his seal to a lie; however *lying wonders* may be vouched for, in proof of *false doctrines, true miracles* evince a divine commission; such Christ's were, and they leave no room to doubt that he was sent of God, and that his doctrine was his that sent him. [2.] *As the accomplishment of a divine prediction.* It was foretold, (Isa. 35. 5, 6.) that our God should come, and that then the *eyes of the blind should be opened.* Now if the works of Christ agree with the words of the prophet, as it is plain they do, then no doubt but this is our God whom we have waited for, who shall come *with a recompense;* this is he who is so much wanted.

(2.) Tell him *what you hear of the preaching of his gospel,* which accompanies his miracles. Faith, though confirmed by seeing, comes by hearing. Tell him, [1.] That *the poor preach the gospel;* so some read it. It proves Christ's divine mission, that those whom he employed in founding his kingdom were poor men, destitute of all secular advantages, who, therefore, could never have carried their point, if they had not been carried on by a divine power. [2.] That *the poor have the gospel preached to them.* Christ's auditory is made up of such as the Scribes and Pharisees despised, and looked upon with contempt, and the rabbis would not instruct, because they were not able to pay them. The *Old-Testament* prophets were sent mostly to kings and princes, but Christ preached to the *congregations of the poor.* It was foretold that the *poor of the flock* should wait upon him, Zech. 11. 11. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions and compassions to the *poor*, are an evidence that it was he that should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God. It was foretold that the *Son of David* should be the *poor man's King*, Ps. 72. 2, 4, 12, 13. Or we may understand it, not so much of the *poor of the world*, as the *poor in spirit*, and so that scripture is fulfilled, Isa. 61. 1. *He hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek.* Note, It is a proof of Christ's divine mission that his doctrine is gospel indeed; good news to those who are truly humbled in sorrow for their sins, and truly humble in the denial of self; to them it is accommodated, for whom God always declared he had mercy in store. [3.] That *the poor receive the gospel,* and are wrought upon by it, they are evangelized, they receive and entertain the gospel, are leavened by it, and delivered into it as into a mould. Note, The wonderful efficacy of the gospel is a proof of its divine original. The poor are wrought upon by it. The prophets complained of the *poor*, that they *knew not the way of the Lord*, Jer. 5. 4. They could do no good upon them; but the gospel of Christ made its way into their untutored minds.

2. He pronounces a blessing on those that *were not offended in him*, *v. 6.* So clear are these evidences of Christ's mission, that they who are not wilfully prejudiced against him, and scandalized in him, (so the word is,) cannot but receive his doctrine, and so be *blessed in him.* Note, (1.) There are many things in Christ which they who are ignorant and unthinking are apt to be offended at some circumstances, for the sake of which they reject the substance of his gospel. The meanness of his appearance, his education at Nazareth, the poverty of his life, the despicableness of his followers, the slights which the great men put upon him, the strictness of his doctrine, the contradiction it gives to flesh and blood, and the sufferings that attend the profession of his name; these are things that keep many from him, who otherwise cannot but see much of God in him. Thus he is set for *the fall of many*, even in Israel, (Luke 2. 34.) a *Rock of offence*, 1 Pet. 2. 8. (2.) They are happy who get over these offences. *Blessed are they.* The expression intimates, that it is a difficult thing to conquer these prejudices, and a dan-

gerous thing not to conquer them; but as to those, who, notwithstanding this opposition, do believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more to *praise, and honour, and glory.*

7. And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. 9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. 10. For this is *he* of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 11. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. 13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come. 15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We have here the high encomium which our Lord Jesus gave of John the Baptist; not only to revive his honour, but to revive his work. Some of Christ's disciples might perhaps take occasion from the question John sent to reflect upon him, as weak and wavering, and inconsistent with himself, to prevent which Christ gives him this character. Note, It is our duty to consult the reputation of our brethren, and not only to remove, but to obviate and prevent, jealousies and ill thoughts of them; and we must take all occasions, especially such as discover any thing of infirmity, to speak well of those who are praise-worthy, and to give them that *fruit of their hands*. John the Baptist, when he was upon the stage, and Christ in privacy and retirement, bore testimony to Christ; and now that Christ appeared publicly, and John was under a cloud, he bore testimony to John. Note, They who have a confirmed interest themselves should improve it for the helping of the credit and reputation of others, whose character claims it, but whose temper or present circumstances put them out of the way of it. This is giving honour to whom honour is due. John had abased himself to honour Christ, (John 3. 29, 30. *ch.* 3. 11.) had made himself nothing, that Christ might be All, and now Christ dignifies him with this character. Note, They who humble themselves shall be exalted, and those that honour Christ he will honour; those that confess him before men, he will confess, and sometimes *before men* too, even in this world. John had now *finished his testimony*, and now Christ commends him. Note, Christ reserves honour for his servants when they *have done their work*, John 12. 26.

Now concerning this commendation of John, observe,

I. That Christ spoke thus honourably of John, not in the hearing of John's disciples, but *as they departed*, just after they were gone, Luke 7. 24. He would not so much as seem to flatter John, nor have these

praises of him reported to him. Note, Though we must be forward to give to all their due praise for their encouragement, yet we must avoid every thing that looks like flattery, or may be in danger of puffing them up. They who in other things are mortified to the world, yet cannot well bear their own praise. Pride is a corrupt humour, which we must not feed either in others or in ourselves.

II. That what Christ said concerning John, was intended not only for his praise, but for the people's profit, to revive the remembrance of John's ministry which had been well attended, but which was now (as other such things used to be) strangely forgotten: they did for a season, and but *for a season, rejoice in his light*, John 5. 35. "Now, consider, *what went ye out into the wilderness to see?* Put this question to yourselves." 1. John preached in the wilderness, and thither people flocked in crowds to him, though in a remote place, and an inconvenient one. If teachers be removed into corners, it is better to go after them than to be without them. Now if his preaching was worth taking so much pains to hear it, surely it was worth taking some care to recollect it. The greater the difficulties we have broken through to hear the word, the more we are concerned to profit by it. 2. They went out to him to see him; rather to feed their eyes with the unusual appearance of his person, than to feed their souls with his wholesome instructions; rather for curiosity than for conscience. Note, Many that attend on the word come rather to see and be seen, than to learn and be taught, to have something to talk of, than to be made wise to salvation. Christ puts it to them, *what went ye out to see?* Note, They who attend on the word will be called to an account, what their intentions and what their improvements were. We think when the sermon is done, the care is over; no, then the greatest of the care begins. It will shortly be asked, "What business had you such a time at such an ordinance? *What brought you thither?* Was it custom or company, or was it a desire to honour God and get good? *What have you brought thence?* What knowledge, and grace, and comfort? *What went you to see?*" Note, When we go to read and hear the word, we should see that we aim right in what we do.

III. Let us see what the commendation of John was. They knew not what answer to make to Christ's question; well, says Christ, "I will tell you what a man John the Baptist was."

1. "He was a firm, resolute man, and not a *reed shaken with the wind*; you have been so in your thoughts of him, but he was not so. He was not wavering in his principles, nor uneven in his conversation; but was remarkable for his steadiness and constant consistency with himself." They who are *weak* as reeds will be *shaken* as reeds; but John was *strong in spirit*, Eph. 4. 14. When the wind of popular applause on the one hand blew fresh and fair, when the storm of Herod's rage on the other hand grew fierce and blustering, John was still the same, the same in all weathers. The testimony he had borne to Christ was not the testimony of a *reed*, of a man who was of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow; it was not a weather-cock testimony; no, his constancy in it is intimated; (John 1. 20.) he *confessed, and denied not, but confessed*, and stood to it afterwards, John 3. 28. And therefore this question sent by his disciples was not to be construed into any suspicion of the truth of what he had formerly said: therefore the people flocked to him, because he was not as a reed. Note, There is nothing lost in the long run by an unshaken resolution to go on with our work, neither courting the smiles, nor fearing the frowns of men.

2. He was a *self-denying* man, and *mortified* to this world. "Was he a man clothed in soft raiment?"

If so, you would not have gone *into the wilderness* to see him, but to the *court*. You went to see one that had *his raiment of camel's hair*, and a *leathern girdle about his loins*; his mien and habit showed that he was dead to all the pomps of the world and the pleasures of sense; his clothing agreed with the *wilderness* he lived in, and the doctrine he preached there, that of repentance. Now you cannot think that he who was such a stranger to the pleasures of a court, should be brought to change his mind by the terrors of a prison, and now to question whether Jesus be the Messiah or not? Note, they who have lived a life of mortification, are least likely to be driven off from their religion by persecution. He was not a man clothed in *soft raiment*; such *there are*, but they are in *kings' houses*. Note, It becomes people in all their appearances to be consistent with their character, and their situation. They who are preachers must not affect to look like courtiers; nor must they whose lot is cast in common dwellings, be ambitious of the soft clothing which they wear who are in *kings' houses*. Prudence teaches us to be of a *piece*. John appeared rough and unpleasant, yet they flocked after him. Note, The remembrance of our former zeal in attending on the word of God, should quicken us to, and in, our present work: let it not be said that we have done and suffered so many things *in vain*, have *run in vain*, and *laboured in vain*.

3. His greatest commendation of all was his office and ministry, which was more his honour than any personal endowments or qualifications could be; and therefore this is most enlarged upon in a full encomium.

(1.) He was a *prophet*, yea, and *more than a prophet*; (v. 9.) so he said of him who was the great Prophet, to whom all the prophets bare witness. John said of himself, he was not *that prophet*, that great prophet, the Messiah himself; and now Christ (a very competent Judge) says of him, that he was *more than a prophet*. He owned himself inferior to Christ, and Christ owned him superior to all other prophets. Observe, The forerunner of Christ was not a king, but a prophet, lest it should seem that the kingdom of the Messiah had been laid in earthly power, but his immediate forerunner was as such, a *transcendent* prophet, more than an *Old-Testament* prophet; they all did *virtuously*, but John excelled them all; they *saw Christ's day* at a distance, and their vision was yet for a great while to come; but John saw the day dawn, he saw the sun rise, and told the people of the Messiah, as one that stood among them. They spake of Christ, but he pointed to him: they said, *A virgin shall conceive*, he said, *Behold the Lamb of God!*

(2.) He was the same that was predicted to be Christ's forerunner, (v. 10.) *This is he of whom it is written*. He was prophesied of by the other prophets, and therefore was greater than they. Malachi prophesied concerning John, *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face*. Herein some of Christ's honour was put upon him, that the *Old-Testament* prophets spake and wrote of him; and this honour have all the saints, that their names are *written in the Lamb's book of life*. It was great preferment to John above all the prophets, that he was Christ's harbinger. He was a messenger sent on a great errand; a messenger, *one among a thousand*, deriving his honour from him whose messenger he was; he is *my messenger*, sent of God, and sent before the *Son of God*. His business was to *prepare Christ's way*, to dispose people to receive the Saviour, by discovering to them their sin and misery, and their need of a Saviour. This he had said of himself, (John 1. 23.) and now Christ said it of him; intending hereby not only to put an honour upon John's ministry, but to revive people's regard to it, as mak-

ing way for the Messiah. Note, Much of the beauty of God's dispensations lies in their mutual connexion and coherence, and the reference they have one to another. That which advanced John above the *Old-Testament* prophets was, that he went immediately before Christ. Note, The nearer any are to Christ, the more truly honourable they are.

(3.) There was not a *greater born of women* than John the Baptist, v. 11. Christ knew how to value persons according to the degrees of their worth, and he prefers John before all that went before him, before all that were *born of women* by ordinary generation. Of all that God had raised up and called to any service in his church, John is the most eminent, even beyond Moses himself; for he began to preach the gospel-doctrine of remission of sin to those who are truly penitent; and he had more signal revelations from heaven than any of them had; for he *saw heaven opened*, and the *Holy Ghost descend*. He also had great success in his ministry; almost the whole nation flocked to him: none rose on so great a design, or came on so noble an errand, as John did, or had such claims to a welcome reception. Many had been born of women that made a great figure in the world, but Christ prefers John before them. Note, Greatness is not to be measured by appearances and outward splendour, but they are the greatest men who are the greatest saints, and the greatest blessings, who are, as John was, *great in the sight of the Lord*, Luke 1. 15.

Yet this high encomium of John has a surprising limitation, *notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*. [1.] In the kingdom of glory. John was a great and good man, but he was yet in a state of infirmity and imperfection, and therefore came short of glorified saints, and the *spirits of just men made perfect*. Note, First, There are degrees of glory in heaven, some that are less than others there; though every vessel is alike full, all are not alike large and capacious. Secondly, The least saint in heaven is *greater*, and knows more, and loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. The saints on earth are excellent ones, (Ps. 16. 3.) but those in heaven are much more excellent; the best in this world are *lower than the angels*, (Ps. 8. 5.) the least there are *equal with the angels*, which should make us long for that blessed state, where the *weak shall be as David*, Zech. 12. 8. [2.] By the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the perfection of grace, the gospel-dispensation in the perfection of its power and purity; and *ἐμπίστευτος*—he that is less in that is *greater than John*. Some understand it of Christ himself, who was younger than John, and, in the opinion of some, less than John, who always spoke diminishingly of himself; *I am a worm, and no man*, yet greater than John; so it agrees with what John the Baptist said, (John 1. 15.) *He that cometh after me is preferred before me*. But it is rather to be understood of the apostles and ministers of the *New-Testament*, the evangelical prophets; and the comparison between them and John, is not with respect to their personal sanctity, but to their office; John preached Christ coming, but they preached Christ not only come, but *crucified and glorified*. John came to the dawning of the gospel-day, and therein excelled the foregoing prophets, but he was taken off before the noon of that day, before the rending of the veil, before Christ's death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit; so that the least of the apostles and evangelists, having greater discoveries made to them, and being employed in a greater embassy, is *greater than John*. John did no miracles, the apostles wrought many. The ground of this preference is laid in the preference of the *New-Testament* dispensation to

that of the *Old Testament*. Ministers of the New Testament therefore excel, because their administration does so, 2 Cor. 3. 6, &c. John was a *maximum quod sic—the greatest of his order*; he went to the utmost that the dispensation he was under would allow; but *minimum maximi est majus maximo minimi—the least of the highest order is superior to the first of the lowest*: a dwarf upon a mountain sees further than a giant in the valley. Note, All the true greatness of men is derived from, and denominated by, the gracious manifestation of Christ to them. The best men are no better than he is pleased to make them. What reason have we to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the *kingdom of heaven*, under such advantages of light and love? And the greater the advantages, the greater will the account be, if we receive the *grace of God in vain*.

(4.) The great commendation of John the Baptist was, that God owned his ministry, and made it wonderfully successful for the breaking of the ice, and the preparing of people for the *kingdom of heaven*. From the days of the first appearing of John the Baptist, until now, (which was not much above two years,) a great deal of good was done; so quick was the motion when it came near to Christ the Centre: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence—βίαζεται—vim patitur*, like the violence of an army taking a city by storm, or of a crowd hursting into a house, so the *violent take it by force*. The meaning of this we have in the parallel place, Luke 16. 16. Since that time *the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseseth into it*. Multitudes are wrought upon by the ministry of John, and become his disciples. And it is,

[1.] An *improbable* multitude. Those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders, and to make a *tortious* entry, as our law calls it, a wrongful and forcible one. When the *children of the kingdom* are excluded out of it, and many come into it from the east and the west, then it *suffers violence*. Compare this with ch. 21. 31, 32. The publicans and harlots believed John, whom the Scribes and Pharisees rejected, and so went into the kingdom of God before them, *took it over their heads*, while they trifled. Note, It is no breach of good manners to go to heaven before our betters: and it is a great commendation of the gospel from the days of its infancy, that it has brought many to holiness that were very unlikely.

[2.] An *importunate* multitude. This violence denotes a strength, and vigour, and earnestness of desire and endeavour, in those who followed John's ministry, else they would not have come so far to attend upon it. It shows us also, what fervency and zeal are required of all those who design to make heaven of their religion. Note, They who would enter into the *kingdom of heaven*, must *strive to enter*; that kingdom suffers a holy violence; self must be denied, the bent and bias, the frame and temper, of the mind must be altered; there are hard services to be done, and hard sufferings to be undergone, a force to be put upon the corrupt nature; we must run, and wrestle, and fight, and be *in an agony*, and all little enough to win such a prize, and to get over such opposition from without and from within. *The violent take it by force*. They who will have an interest in the great salvation, are carried out towards it with a strong desire, will have it upon *any terms*, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing, Gen. 32. 26. They who will make their calling and election sure must give diligence. The kingdom of heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of them that labour. It is a blessed sight; Oh that we could see a greater number, not with an

angry contention, thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with a *holy* contention, thrusting themselves into it!

(5.) The ministry of John was the *beginning of the gospel*, as it is reckoned, Mark 1. 1. Acts 1. 22. This is shown here in two things:

[1.] In John the Old-Testament dispensation began to die, v. 13. So long that ministration continued in full force and virtue, but then it began to decline. Though the obligation of the law of Moses was not removed till Christ's death, yet the discoveries of the Old Testament began to be superseded by the more clear manifestation of the *kingdom of heaven as at hand*. Because the *light of the gospel* (as that of nature) was to precede and make way for its law, therefore the prophecies of the Old Testament came to an end (*finis perficiens, not interficiens—an end of completion, not of duration*;) before the precepts of it; so that when Christ says, *all the prophets and the law prophesied until John*, he shows us, First, How the light of the Old Testament was set up; it was set up in the law and the prophets, who spoke, though darkly, of Christ and his kingdom. Observe, The law is said to prophesy as well as the prophets, concerning him that was to come. Christ began at Moses; (Luke 24. 27.) Christ was foretold by the dumb signs of the Mosaic work, as well as by the more articulate voices of the prophets, and was exhibited, not only in the verbal predictions, but in the personal and real types. Blessed be God that we have both the New-Testament doctrine to explain the Old-Testament prophecies, and the Old-Testament prophecies to confirm and illustrate the New-Testament doctrine: (Heb. 1. 1.) like the two cherubim, they look at each other. The law was given by Moses long ago, and there had been no prophets for three hundred years before John, and yet they are both said to *prophesy until John*, because the law was still observed, and Moses and the prophets still read. Note, The scripture is teaching to this day, though the penmen of it are gone. Moses and the prophets are dead; the apostles and evangelists are dead, (Zech. 1. 5.) but the *word of the Lord endures forever*; (1 Pet. 1. 25.) the scripture is *speaking expressly*, though the writers are silent in the dust. Secondly, How this light was *laid aside*; when he says, they *prophesied until John*, he intimates, that their glory was eclipsed by the glory which excelled; their predictions superseded by John's testimony, *Behold the Lamb of God!* Even before the sun rises, the morning light makes candles to shine dim. Their prophecies of a Christ to come became cut of date, when John said, *He is come*.

[2.] In him the New-Testament day began to dawn; for, (v. 14.) *This is Elias, that was for to come*. John was as the loop that coupled the two Testaments; as Noah was *Fibula utriusque mundi—the link connecting both worlds*, so was he *utriusque Testamenti—the link connecting both Testaments*. The concluding prophecy of the Old Testament was, *Behold, I will send you Elijah*, Mal. 4. 5, 6. Those words prophesied until John, and then being turned into a history, they ceased to prophesy. First, Christ speaks of it as a great truth, that John the Baptist is the Elias of the New Testament; not Elias in *propria persona—in his own person*, as the carnal Jews expected; he denied that; (John 1. 21.) but one that should come in the spirit and power of Elias, (Luke 1. 17.) like him in temper and conversation, that should press repentance with terrors, and especially as it is in the prophecy, that should *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*. Secondly, He speaks of it as a truth, which would not be easily apprehended by those whose expectations fastened upon the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and introductions to it agreeable. Christ suspect's

the welcome of it, *if ye will receive it*. Not but that it was true, whether they would receive it or not, but he upbraids them with their prejudices, that they were backward to receive the greatest truths that were opposed to their sentiments, though never so favourable to their interests. Or, "*If you will receive him*, or if you will receive the ministry of John as that of the promised Elias, he will be an Elias to you, to turn you and prepare you for the Lord." Note, Gospel-truths are, as they are received, a savour of life or death. Christ is a Saviour, and John an Elias, to those who will receive the truth concerning them.

Lastly, Our Lord Jesus closes this discourse with a solemn demand of attention, (v. 15.) *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*: which intimates, that those things were dark and hard to be understood, and therefore needed attention, but of great concern and consequence, and therefore well deserved it. "Let all people take notice of this, if John be the Elias prophesied of, then certainly here is a great revolution on foot, the Messiah's kingdom is at the door, and the world will shortly be surprised into a happy change. These are things which require your serious consideration, and therefore you are all concerned to hearken to what I say." Note, The things of God are of great and common concern, every one that has ears to hear any thing, is concerned to hear this. It intimates, that God requires no more from us but the right use and improvement of the faculties he has already given us. He requires those to hear that have ears, those to use their reason that have reason. Therefore people are ignorant, not because they want power, but because they want will; therefore they do not hear, because, like the deaf adder, they *stop their ears*.

16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18. For John came neither eating nor drinking; and they say, He hath a devil. 19. The Son of man came eating and drinking; and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children. 20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. 21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Christ was going on in the praise of John the Baptist and his ministry, but here stops on a sudden, and turns that to the reproach of those who enjoyed both that, and the ministry of Christ, and his apostles too, in vain. As to that generation, we may observe to whom he *compares them*, (v. 16—19.) and as to the particular places he instances in, we may observe with whom he *compares them*, v. 20—24.

I. As to that generation, the body of the Jewish people at that time. There were many indeed that pressed into the kingdom of heaven; but the generality continued in unbelief and obstinacy. John was a great and good man, but the generation into which his lot was cast was as barren and unprofitable as could be, and unworthy of him. Note, The badness of the places where good ministers live serves for a foil to their beauty. It was Noah's praise that he was *righteous in his generation*. Having commended John, he condemns those who had him among them, and did not profit by his ministry. Note, The more praise-worthy the minister is, the more blame-worthy the people are, if they slight him, and so it will be found in the day of account.

This our Lord Jesus here sets forth in a parable, yet speaks as if he were at a loss to find out a similitude proper to represent this, *Whereunto shall I liken this generation?* Note, There is not a greater absurdity than that which they are guilty of who have good preaching among them, and are never the better for it. It is hard to say *what they are like*. The similitude is taken from some common custom among the Jewish children at their play, who, as is usual with children, imitated the fashions of grown people at their marriages and funerals, *re-joicing and lamenting*; but being all a jest, it made no impression; no more did the ministry either of John the Baptist or of Christ upon that generation. He especially reflects on the Scribes and Pharisees, who had a proud conceit of themselves, therefore to humble them he compares them to children, and their behaviour to children's play.

The parable will be best explained by opening it and the illustration of it together in these five observations.

Note, 1. The God of heaven uses a variety of proper means and methods for the conversion and salvation of poor souls; he would *have all men to be saved*, and therefore leaves no stone unturned in order to it. The great thing he aims at, is the *melting* of our *wills* into a compliance with the will of God, and in order to this, the affecting of us with the discoveries he has made of himself. Having various affections to be wrought upon, he uses various ways of working upon them, which, though differing one from another, all tend to the same thing, and God is in them all carrying on the same design. In the parable, this is called his *piping* to us, and his *mourning* to us; he hath *piped to us* in the precious promises of the gospel, proper to work upon hope, and mourned to us in the dreadful threatenings of the law, proper to work upon fear, that he might frighten us out of our sins and allure us to himself. He has *piped to us* in gracious and merciful providences, *mourned to us* in calamitous, afflicting providences, and has set the one over against the other. He has taught his ministers to *change their voice*: (Gal. 4. 20.) sometimes to speak in thunder from *mount Sinai*, sometimes in a still small voice from *mount Zion*.

In the explanation of the parable is set forth the different temper of John's ministry and of Christ's, who were the two great lights of that generation.

(1.) On the one hand, John came *mourning to them, neither eating nor drinking*; not conversing familiarly with people, nor ordinarily eating in company, but alone, in his cell in the wilderness, where *his meat was locusts and wild honey*. Now this, one

would think, should work upon them; for such an austere, mortified life as this, was very agreeable to the doctrine he preached; and that minister is most likely to do good, whose conversation is according to his doctrine; and yet the preaching even of such a minister is not always effectual.

(2.) On the other hand, the *Son of man came eating and drinking*, and so he *joined unto them*. Christ conversed familiarly with all sorts of people, not affecting any peculiar strictness or austerity; he was affable and easy of access, not shy of any company, was often at feasts, both with Pharisees and Publicans, to try if this would win upon those who were not wrought upon by John's reservedness: those who were not awed by John's frowns, would be allured by Christ's smiles; from whom St. Paul learned to become *all things to all men*, 1 Cor. 9. 22. Now our Lord Jesus, by this freedom, did not at all condemn John, any more than John did condemn him, though their deportment was so very different. Note, Though we are never so clear in the goodness of our own practice, yet we must not judge of others by it. There may be a *great diversity of operations*, where it is the *same God that worketh all in all*, (1 Cor. 12. 6.) and this *various manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*, v. 7. Observe especially, that God's ministers are variously gifted: the ability and genius of some lies one way, of others, another way: some are Boanergeses—*sons of thunder*; others, Barnabases—*sons of consolation*; yet all these *worketh that one and the self-same Spirit*, (1 Cor. 12. 11.) and therefore we ought not to condemn either, but to praise both, and praise God for both, who thus tries various ways of dealing with persons of various tempers, that sinners may be either made pliable or left inexcusable, so that whatever the issue is, God will be glorified.

Note, 2. The various methods which God takes for the conversion of sinners, are with many fruitless and ineffectual: "*Ye have not danced, ye have not lamented*; you have not been suitably affected either with the one or with the other." Particular means have, as in medicine, their particular intentions, which must be answered, particular impressions, which must be submitted to, in order to the success of the great and general design; now if people will be neither bound by laws, nor invited by promises, nor frightened by threatenings, will neither be awakened by the *greatest* things, nor allured by the *sweetest* things, nor startled by the most *terrible* things, nor be made sensible by the *plainest* things; if they will hearken to the voice neither of scripture, nor reason, nor experience, nor providence, nor conscience, nor interest, what more can be done? *The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed, the founder melteth in vain; reprobate silver shall men call them*, Jer. 6. 29. Ministers' labour is bestowed in vain, (Isa. 49. 4.) and, which is a much greater loss, *the grace of God received in vain*, 2 Cor. 6. 1. Note, It is some comfort to faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, that it is no new thing for the best preachers and best preaching in the world to come short of the desired end. *Who has believed our report? If from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty*, the bow of those great commanders, Christ and John, returned so often empty, (2 Sam. 1. 22.) no marvel if ours do so, and we prophesy to so little purpose upon dry bones.

Note, 3. That commonly those persons who do not profit by the means of grace, are perverse, and reflect upon the ministers of whom they enjoy those means; and because they do not get good themselves, they do all the hurt they can to others, by raising and propagating prejudices against the word, and the faithful preachers of it. Those who will not comply with God, and walk after him, confront him, and walk contrary to him. So *this generation did*;

because they were resolved not to believe Christ and John, and to own them as they ought to have done for the best of men, they set themselves to abuse them, and to represent them as the worst. (1.) As for John the Baptist, they say, *He has a devil*. They imputed his strictness and reservedness to melancholy, and some kind or degree of a possession of Satan. "Why should we heed him? he is a poor hypochondriacal man, full of fancies, and under the power of a crazed imagination." (2.) As for Jesus Christ, they imputed his free and obliging conversation to the more vicious habit of luxury and flesh-pleasing; *Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber*. No reflection could be more foul and invidious; it is the charge against the rebellious son, (Deut. 21. 20.) *He is a glutton and a drunkard*; yet none could be more false and unjust; for Christ *pleased not himself*, (Rom. 15. 3.) nor did ever any man live such a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, as Christ lived; he that was *undefiled, and separate from sinners*, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. Note, The most unspotted innocence, and the most unparalleled excellency, will not always be a fence against the reproach of tongues: nay, a man's best gifts and best actions, which are both well intended and well calculated for edification, may be made the matter of his reproach. The best of our actions may become the worst of our accusations, as David's fasting, Ps. 69. 10. It was true in some sense, that Christ was a *Friend to publicans and sinners*, the best Friend they ever had, for he *came into the world to save sinners*, great sinners, even the chief; so he said very feelingly, who had been himself not a *publican and sinner*, but a Pharisee and sinner; but this is, and will be to eternity, Christ's praise, and they forfeited the benefit of it who thus turned it to his reproach.

Note, 4. That the cause of this great unfruitfulness and perverseness of people under the means of grace, is because they are *like children sitting in the markets*; they are foolish as children, froward as children, mindless and playful as children; would they but *show themselves men* in understanding, there would be some hopes of them. *The market-place they sit in*, is to some a place of idleness; (ch. 20. 3.) to others a place of worldly business; (James 4. 13.) to all a place of noise or diversion; so that if you ask the reason why people get so little good by the means of grace, you will find it is, because they are slothful and trifling, and do not love to take pains; or because their heads, and hands, and hearts are full of the world, the cares of which *choke the word*, and choke their souls at last, (Ezek. 33. 31. Amos 8. 5.) and they study to divert their own thoughts from every thing that is serious. Thus in the *markets* they are, and there they sit; in these things their hearts rest, and by them they resolve to abide.

Note, 5. Though the means of grace be thus slighted and abused by many, by the most, yet there is a remnant that, through grace, do improve them, and answer the designs of them, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls. *But wisdom is justified of her children*. Christ is *Wisdom*; in him are *hid treasures of wisdom*; the saints are the *children God has given him*, Heb. 2. 13. The gospel is *wisdom*, it is the *wisdom from above*: true believers are begotten again by it, and born from above too: they are wise *children*, wise for themselves, and their true interests; not like the *foolish children that sat in the markets*. These *children of wisdom justify wisdom*; they comply with the designs of Christ's grace, answer the intentions of it, and are suitably affected with, and impressed by, the various methods it takes, and so evidence the wisdom of Christ in taking these methods. This is explained, Luke 7. 29. *The publicans justified God, being baptized with the bap-*

tism of John, and afterwards embracing the gospel of Christ. Note, The success of the means of grace justifies the wisdom of God, in the choice of these means, against those who charge him with folly therein. The cure of every patient, that observes the physician's orders, justifies the wisdom of the physician: and therefore Paul is *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*, because whatever it is to others, to them that believe it is the *power of God unto salvation*, Rom. 1. 16. When the cross of Christ, which to others is *foolishness and a stumbling-block*, is to them that are called the *wisdom of God, and the power of God*, (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.) so that they make the knowledge of that, the summit of their ambition, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) and the efficacy of that, the crown of their glorying, (Gal. 6. 14.) here is *wisdom justified of her children*. *Wisdom's children are wisdom's witnesses in the world*, (Isa. 43. 10.) and shall be produced as witnesses in that day, when *wisdom*, that is now *justified by the saints*, shall be *glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe*, 2 Thess. 1. 10. If the unbelief of some reproach Christ, by giving him the lie; the faith of others shall honour him, by setting to its seal that he is true, and that *he also is wise*, 1 Cor. 1. 25. Whether we do it or not, it will be done; not only God's equity, but his *wisdom, will be justified when he speaks, when he judges*.

Well, this is the account Christ gives of that *generation*, and that *generation is not passed away*, but remains in a succession of the like; for as it was then, it has been since and is still; *some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe not*, Acts 28. 24.

II. As to the particular *places* in which Christ was most conversant. What he said in general of that *generation*, he applied in particular to those *places*, to affect them. *Then began he to upbraid them*, v. 20. He began to preach to them long before, (ch. 4. 17.) but he did not *begin to upbraid* till now. Note, Rough and displeasing methods must not be taken, till gentler means have first been used. Christ is not apt to *upbraid*; he *gives liberally, and upbraideth not*, till sinners by their obstinacy extort it from him. *Wisdom* first invites, but when her invitations are slighted, then she *upbraids*, Prov. 1. 20, 24. Those do not go in Christ's method, who begin with upbraidings. Now observe,

1. The sin charged upon them; not any against the moral law, then an appeal would have lain to the gospel, which would have relieved, but a sin against the gospel, the remedial law, and that is impenitency: this was it he upbraided them with, or reproached them for, as the most shameful, ungrateful thing that could be, that *they repented not*. Note, Wilful impenitency is the great damning sin of multitudes that enjoy the gospel, and which (more than any other) sinners will be upbraided with to eternity. The great doctrine that both John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles preached, was repentance; the great thing designed, both in the *figging* and in the *mourning*, was to prevail with people to change their minds and ways, to leave their sins and turn to God; and this they would not be brought to. He does not say, because they *believed not*; for some kind of faith many of them had, that Christ was a *Teacher come from God*; but, because they *repented not*: their faith did not prevail to the transforming of their hearts, and the reforming of their lives. Christ reproved them for their other sins, that he might lead them to repentance; but when they *repented not*, He upbraided them with that, as their refusal to be healed: He upbraided them with it, that they might upbraid themselves, and might at length see the folly of it, as that which alone makes the sad case a desperate one, and the wound incurable.

2. The aggravation of the sin; they were *the cities in which most of his mighty works were done*; for thereabouts his principal residence had been for some time. Note, Some places enjoy the means of grace in greater plenty, power, and purity, than other places. God is a free Agent, and acts so in all his disposals, both as the God of nature, and as the God of grace, common and distinguishing grace. By Christ's *mighty works*, they should have been prevailed with, not only to receive his doctrine, but to obey his law; the curing of bodily diseases should have been the healing of their souls, but it had not that effect. Note, The stronger inducements we have to repent, the more heinous is the impenitency, and the severer will the reckoning be; for Christ keeps account of the *mighty works done* among us, and of the gracious works done for us too, by which also we should be led to repentance, Rom. 2. 4.

(1.) Chorazin and Bethsaida are here instanced, (v. 21, 22.) they have each of them their woe: *Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida*. Christ came into the world to bless us, but if that blessing be slighted, he has woes in reserve, and his woes are of all other the most terrible. These two cities were situate upon the sea of Galilee, the former on the east side, and the latter on the west, rich and populous places; Bethsaida was lately advanced to a city by Philip the tetrarch; out of it Christ took at least three of his apostles: thus highly were these places favoured! Yet because they *knew not the day of their visitation*, they fell under these woes, which stuck so close to them, that soon after this, they decayed, and dwindled into mean, obscure villages. So fatally does sin ruin cities, and so certainly does the word of Christ take place!

Now Chorazin and Bethsaida are here compared with Tyre and Sidon, two maritime cities we read much of in the Old Testament, that had been brought to ruin, but began to flourish again; these cities bordered upon Galilee, but were in a very ill name among the Jews for idolatry and other wickedness. Christ sometimes went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, (ch. 15. 21.) but never thither; the Jews would have taken it very heinously if he had; therefore Christ, to convince and humble them, here shows,

[1.] That Tyre and Sidon would not have been so bad as Chorazin and Bethsaida. If they had had the same word preached, and the same miracles wrought among them, *they would have repented*, and that long ago, as Nineveh did, in sackcloth and ashes. Christ, who knows the hearts of all, knew that if he had gone and lived among them, and preached among them, he should have done more good there, than where he was; yet he continued where he was for some time, to encourage his ministers to do so, though they see not the success they desire. Note, among the children of disobedience, some are more easily wrought upon than others; and it is a great aggravation of the impenitency of those who plentifully enjoy the means of grace, not only that there are many who sit under the same means that are wrought upon, but that there are many more that would have been wrought upon, if they had enjoyed the same means. See Ezek. 3. 6, 7. Our repentance is slow and delayed, but theirs would have been speedy; they would have repented long ago. Ours has been slight and superficial, theirs would have been deep and serious, in sackcloth and ashes. Yet we must observe, with an awful adoration of the divine sovereignty, that the Tyrians and Sidonians will justly perish in their sin, though, if they had had the means of grace, they would have repented; for God is a *debtor to no man*.

[2.] That therefore Tyre and Sidon shall not be so miserable as Chorazin and Bethsaida, but it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment,

v. 22. Note, First, At the *day of judgment* the everlasting state of the children of men will, by an unerring and unalterable doom, be determined; happiness or misery, and the several degrees of each. Therefore it is called the *eternal judgment*, (Heb. 6. 2.) because decisive of the eternal state. Secondly, In that judgment, all the means of grace that were enjoyed in the state of probation will certainly come into the account, and it will be inquired, not only how bad we were, but how much better we might have been, had it not been our own fault, Isa. 5. 3, 4. Thirdly, Though the damnation of all that perish will be intolerable, yet the damnation of those who had the fullest and clearest discoveries made them of the power and grace of Christ, and yet repented not, will be of all other the most intolerable. The gospel-light and sound open the faculties, and enlarge the capacities of all that see and hear it, either to receive the riches of *divine grace*, or (if that grace be slighted) to take in the more plentiful effusions of *divine wrath*. If self-reproach be the torture of hell, it must needs be hell indeed to those who had such a fair opportunity of getting to heaven. *Son, remember that.*

(2.) Capernaum is here condemned with an emphasis, (v. 23.) "*And thou, Capernaum, hold up thy hand, and hear thy doom.*" Capernaum, above all the cities of Israel, was dignified with Christ's most usual residence; it was like Shiloh of old, the place which he chose to put his name there, and it fared with it as with Shiloh, Jer. 7. 12, 14. Christ's miracles here were *daily bread*, and therefore, as the manna of old, were despised, and called light bread. Many a sweet and comfortable lecture of grace Christ had read them to little purpose, and therefore here he reads them a dreadful lecture of wrath: those who will not hear the former, shall be made to feel the latter.

We have here Capernaum's doom,

[1.] Put absolutely: Thou *which art exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell*. Note, First, Those who enjoy the gospel in power and purity, are thereby *exalted to heaven*; they have therein a great honour for the present, and a great advantage for eternity; they are lifted up toward *heaven*; but if, notwithstanding, they still *cleave to the earth*, they may thank themselves that they are not lifted up *into heaven*. Secondly, Gospel-advantages and advancements abused, will sink sinners so much the lower into hell. Our external privileges will be so far from saving us, that if our hearts and lives be not agreeable to them, they will but inflame the reckoning: the higher the precipice is, the more fatal is the fall from it: Let us *not therefore be high-minded, but fear*; not slothful, but diligent. See Joh 20. 6, 7.

[2.] We have it here put in comparison with the doom of Sodom—a place more remarkable, both for sin and ruin, than perhaps any other; and yet Christ here tells us,

First, That Capernaum's means would have saved Sodom. If these miracles had been done among the Sodomites, as bad as they were, they would have repented, and *their city would have remained unto this day a monument of sparing mercy*, as now it is of destroying justice, Jude 7. Note, Upon true repentance through Christ, even the greatest sin shall be pardoned and the greatest ruin prevented, that of Sodom not excepted. Angels were sent to Sodom, and yet it remained not; but if Christ had been sent thither, *it would have remained*: how well is it for us, then that the world to come is *put in subjection to Christ, and not to angels*! Heb. 2. 5. Lot would not have *seemed as one that mocked* if he had wrought miracles.

Secondly, That Sodom's ruin will therefore be less at the great day than Capernaum's. Sodom will have many sins to answer for, but not the sin of ne-

glecting Christ, as Capernaum will. If the gospel prove a *savour of death*, a killing saviour, it is doubly so; it is *of death unto death*, so great a death; (2 Cor. 2. 16.) Christ had said the same of all other places: that receive not his ministers nor bid his gospel well come; (ch. 10. 13.) *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for that city*. We that have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and the gospel-ordinances administered to us, and live under the dispensation of the Spirit, have advantages not inferior to those of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the account in the great day will be accordingly. It has therefore been justly said, that the professors of this age, whether they go to heaven or hell, will be the greatest debtors in either of these places; if to heaven, the greatest debtors to divine mercy, for those rich means that brought them thither; if to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice, for those rich means that would have kept them from thence.

25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: 26. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. 27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. 28. Come unto me all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls: 30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

In these verses we have Christ looking up to heaven, with thanksgiving to his Father for the sovereignty and security of the covenant of redemption; and looking around him upon this earth, with an offer to all the children of men, to whom these presents shall come, of the privileges and benefits of the covenant of grace.

I. Christ here returns thanks to God for his favour to those *babes*, who had the mysteries of the gospel revealed to them, (v. 25, 26.) *Jesus answered and said*. It is called an answer, though no other words are before recorded but his own, because it is so comfortable a reply to the melancholy considerations preceding, and is aptly set in the balance against them. The sin and ruin of those woful cities, no doubt, was a grief to the Lord Jesus; he could not but *weep over them*, as he did *over Jerusalem*; (Luke 19. 41.) with this thought therefore he refreshes himself; and to make it the more refreshing, he puts it into a thanksgiving; that for all this, *there is a remnant*, though but *babes*, to whom the things of the gospel are revealed: *though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious*. Note, we may take great encouragement in looking upward to God, when round about us we see nothing but what is discouraging. It is sad to see how regardless most men are of their own happiness, but it is comfortable to think that the wise and faithful God will, however, effectually secure the interests of his own glory. *Jesus answered and said, I thank thee*. Note, Thanksgiving is a proper answer to dark and disquieting thoughts, and may be an effectual means to silence them. Songs of praise are sovereign cordials to drooping souls, and will help to cure melancholy.

When we have no other answer ready to the suggestions of grief and fear, we may have recourse to this, *I thank thee, O Father*; let us bless God that it is not worse with us than it is.

Now in this thanksgiving of Christ, we may observe,

1. The titles he gives to God; *O Father, Lord of heaven and earth*. Note, (1.) In all our approaches to God, by praise as well as by prayer, it is good for us to eye him as a Father, and to fasten on that relation, not only when we ask for the mercies we want, but when we give thanks for the mercies we have received. Mercies are then doubly sweet, and powerful to enlarge the heart in praise, when they are received as tokens of a Father's love and gifts of a Father's hand: *Giving thanks to the Father*; Col. 1. 12. It becomes children to be grateful, and to say, *Thank you, father*, as readily as, *Pray, father*. (2.) When we come to God as a Father, we must withal remember, that he is *Lord of heaven and earth*; which obliges us to come to him with reverence, as to the sovereign Lord of all, and yet with confidence, as one able to do for us whatever we need or can desire; to defend us from all evil and to supply us with all good. Christ, in Melchizedec, had long since *blessed God* as the Possessor, or *Lord of heaven and earth*; and in all our thanksgivings for mercies in the stream, we must give him the glory of the all-sufficiency that is in the fountain.

2. The thing he gives thanks for: *Because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and yet revealed them to babes*. These things; he does not say what things, but means the great things of the gospel, *the things that belong to our peace*, Luke 19. 42. He speaks thus emphatically of them, *these things*, because they were things that filled him and should fill us: all other things are as nothing to these things.

Note, (1.) The great things of the everlasting gospel have been and are hid from many that were *wise and prudent*, that were eminent for learning and worldly policy; some of the greatest scholars and the greatest statesmen have been the greatest strangers to gospel mysteries: *The world by wisdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. 1. 21. Nay, there is an opposition given to the gospel, by a *science falsely so called*, 1 Tim. 6. 20. Those who are most expert in things sensible and secular, are commonly least experienced in spiritual things. Men may dive deep into the mysteries of nature, and the mysteries of state, and yet be ignorant of, and mistake about, the mysteries of the *kingdom of heaven*, for want of an experience of the power of them.

(2.) While the *wise and prudent* men of the world are in the dark about gospel mysteries, even the *babes in Christ* have the sanctifying, saving knowledge of them: *Thou hast revealed them unto babes*; such the disciples of Christ were: men of mean birth and education; no scholars, no artists, no politicians, unlearned and ignorant men. Acts 4. 13. Thus are the secrets of wisdom which are double to that which is, (John 11. 6.) made known to *babes and sucklings*, that out of their mouth strength might be ordained, (Ps. 8. 2.) and God's praise thereby perfected. The learned men of the world were not made choice of to be the preachers of the gospel, but the *foolish things of the world*, 1 Cor. 2. 6, 8, 10.

(3.) This difference between the *prudent* and the *babes* is of God's own making. [1.] It is he that has hid these things from the *wise and prudent*; he gave them parts, and learning, and much of human understanding above others, and they were proud of that, and rested in it, and looked no further; and therefore God justly denies them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and then, though they hear the sound of the gospel-tidings, they are to them as a *strange thing*. God is not the Author of their igno-

rance and error, but he leaves them to themselves, and their sin becomes their punishment, and the Lord is righteous in it. See John 12. 39, 40. Rom. 11. 7, 8. Acts 28. 26, 27. Had they honoured God with the wisdom and prudence they had, he would have given them the knowledge of these better things; but because they served the ir lusts with them, he has *hid their hearts from this understanding*. [2.] It is he that has *revealed them unto babes*. Things revealed belong to our children, (Deut. 29. 29.) and to them he gives an understanding to receive these things, and the impressions of them. Thus he *resists the proud*, and gives grace to the humble, Jam. 4. 6.

(4.) This dispensation must be resolved into the divine sovereignty: Christ himself referred it to that; *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. Christ here subscribes to the will of his Father in this matter; *Even so*. Let God take what way he pleases to glorify himself, and make use of what instruments he pleases for the carrying on of his own work; his grace is his own, and he may give or withhold it as he pleases. We can give no reason why Peter, a fisherman, should be made an apostle, and not Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, though he also believed in Christ; but *so it seemed good in God's sight*. Christ said this in the hearing of his disciples, to show them that it was not for any merit of their own, that they were thus dignified and distinguished, but purely from God's good pleasure: he made them to differ.

(5.) This way of dispensing divine grace is to be acknowledged by us, as it was by our Lord Jesus, with all thankfulness. We must thank God, [1.] That *these things are revealed*; the mystery hid from ages and generations is manifested; that they are *revealed*, not to a few, but to be published to all the world. [2.] That they are *revealed to babes*, that the meek and humble are beautified with this salvation; and this honour put upon those whom the world pours contempt upon. [3.] It magnifies the mercy to them, that *these things are hid from the wise and prudent*; distinguishing favours are most obliging. As Job adored the name of the Lord in taking away as well as in giving, so may we in *hiding these things from the wise and prudent*, as well as in *revealing them unto babes*; not as it is their misery, but as it is a method by which self is abased, proud thoughts brought down, all flesh silenced, and divine power and wisdom made to shine the more bright. See 1 Cor. 1. 27, 31.

II. Christ here makes a gracious offer of the benefits of the gospel to all, and these are the things which are *revealed to babes*, v. 27, &c. Observe here,

1. The solemn preface which ushers in this call or invitation, both to command our attention to it, and to encourage our compliance with it. That we *might have strong consolation*, in flying for refuge to this *hope set before us*, Christ prefixes his authority, produces his credentials; we shall see he is empowered to make this offer.

Two things he here lays before us, v. 27.

(1.) His commission from the Father: *All things are delivered unto me of my Father*. Christ, as God, is equal in power and glory with the Father; but as Mediator, he receives his power and glory from the Father; has *all judgment committed to him*. He is authorized to settle a new covenant between God and man, and to offer peace and happiness to the apostate world, upon such terms as he should think fit: he was sanctified and sealed to be the sole Plenipotentiary, to concert and establish this great affair. In order to this, he has *all power both in heaven and in earth*; (ch. 28. 18.) power over all flesh; (John 17. 2.) authority to execute judgment, John 5. 22, 27. This encourages us to come to Christ, that he is commissioned to receive

us, and to give us what we come for, and has *all things delivered to him* for that purpose, by him who is *Lord of all*. All powers, all treasures are in his hand. Observe, The father has delivered his all into the hands of the Lord Jesus; let us but deliver our all into his hand, and the work is done; God has made him the great Referee, the blessed Daysman, to lay his hand upon us both: that which we have to do is to agree to the reference, to submit to the arbitration of the Lord Jesus, for the taking up of this unhappy controversy, and to enter into bonds to stand to his award.

(2.) His intimacy with the Father: *No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son*. This gives us a further satisfaction, and an abundant one. Ambassadors use to have not only their commissions, which they produce, but their instructions, which they reserve to themselves, to be made use of as there is occasion in their negotiations: our Lord Jesus had both, not only authority, but ability, for his undertaking. In transacting the great business of our redemption, the Father and the Son are the parties principally concerned; *the counsel of peace is between them*, Zech. 6. 13. It must therefore be a great encouragement to us to be assured, that they understood one another very well in this affair; that the Father knew the Son, and the Son knew the Father, and both perfectly, (a mutual consciousness we may call it, between the Father and the Son,) so that there could be no mistake in the settling of this matter; as often there is among men to the overthrow of contracts, and the breaking of the measures taken, through their misunderstanding one another. The Son had *lain in the bosom of the Father* from eternity, he was a *secretarius*—of the cabinet-council, John 1. 18. He was by him, as one brought up with him, (Prov. 8. 30.) so that none knows the Father save the Son, he adds, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Note, [1.] The happiness of men lies in an acquaintance with God; it is *life eternal*, it is the perfection of rational beings. [2.] Those who would have an acquaintance with God, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ; for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. 4. 6. We are obliged to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father's will and love, ever since Adam sinned; there is no comfortable intercourse between a holy God and sinful man, but in and by a Mediator, John 14. 6.

2. Here is the offer itself that is made to us, and an invitation to accept of it. After so solemn a preface, we may well expect something very great; and it is so, a faithful saying, and well worthy of all acceptance; words whereby we may be saved. We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, in order to that, to be ruled and taught, by him.

(1.) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Rest, and repose ourselves in him, (v. 28.) *Come unto me, all ye that labour*. Observe, [1.] The character of the persons invited; *all that labour, and are heavy laden*. This is a word in season to him that is weary, Isa. 50. 4. Those who complain of the burden of the ceremonial law, which was an intolerable yoke, and was made much more so by the tradition of the elders, (Luke 11. 46.) let them come to Christ, and they shall be made easy; he came to free his church from this yoke, to cancel the imposition of those carnal ordinances, and to introduce a purer and more spiritual way of worship; but it is rather to be understood of the burden of sin, both the guilt and the power of it. Note, All those, and those only are invited to rest in Christ, that are sensible of sin as a burden, and groan under it, that are not only convinced of the evil of sin, of their own

sin, but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of their sins, weary of the service of the world and of the flesh; that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it, as Ephraim, (Jer. 31. 18—20.) the prodigal, (Luke 15. 17.) the publican, (Luke 18. 13.) Peter's hearers, (Acts 2. 37.) Paul, (Acts 9. 4, 6, 9.) the jailor, Acts 16. 29, 30. This is a necessary preparative for pardon and peace. The Comforter must first convince; (John 16. 8.) I have torn, and then will heal.

[2.] The invitation itself: *Come unto me*. That glorious display of Christ's greatness which we had, (v. 27.) as Lord of all, might frighten us from him, but see here how he holds out the golden sceptre, that we may touch the top of it and may live. Note, It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy laden sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to him, or in competition with him, we must accept of him, as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to his conduct and government; freely willing to be saved by him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. *Come and cast that burden upon him*, under which thou art heavy laden. This is the gospel-call, *The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; Let him that is athirst come: Whosoever will, let him come*.

[3.] The blessing promised to those that do come: *I will give you rest*. Christ is our Noah, whose name signifies rest, for this same shall give us rest. Gen. 5. 29.—8. 9. Truly rest is good, (Gen. 49. 15.) especially to those that labour, and are heavy laden, Eccl. 5. 12. Note, Jesus Christ will give assured rest to those weary souls, that by a lively faith come to him for it; rest from the terror of sin, in a well-grounded peace of conscience; rest from the power of sin, in a regular order of the soul, and its due government of itself: a rest in God, and a complacency of soul in his love, Ps. 11. 6, 7. This is that rest which remains for the people of God, (Heb. 4. 9.) begun in grace, and perfected in glory.

(2.) We must come to Jesus Christ as our ruler, and submit ourselves to him, (v. 29.) *Take my yoke upon you*. This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and Saviour, a Priest upon his throne. The rest he promises is a release from the drudgery of sin, not from the service of God, but an obligation to the duty we owe to him. Note, Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke he expects we should take upon us and draw in. To call those who are weary and heavy laden, to take a yoke upon them, looks like adding affliction to the afflicted; but the pertinency of it lies in the word *my*: "You are under a yoke which makes you weary, shake that off and try mine, which will make you easy." Servants are said to be under the yoke, (1 Tim. 6. 1.) and subjects, 1 Kings 12. 10. To take Christ's yoke upon us, is to put ourselves into the relation of servants and subjects to him, and then to conduct ourselves accordingly, in a conscientious obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful submission to all his disposals: it is to obey the gospel of Christ, to yield ourselves to the Lord: it is Christ's yoke; the yoke he has appointed; a yoke he has himself drawn in before us, for he learned obedience, and which he does by his Spirit draw in with us, for he helpeth our infirmities, Rom. 8. 26. A yoke speaks some hardship, but if the beast must draw, the yoke helps him. Christ's commands are all in our favour: we must take this yoke upon us to draw in it. We are yoked to work, and therefore must be diligent; we are yoked to submit, and therefore must be humble and patient: we are yoked together with our fellow-servants, and therefore must keep up the communion of saints: and the words

of the wise are as goods, to those who are thus yoked.

Now this is the hardest part of our lesson, and therefore it is qualified, (v. 30.) *My yoke is easy and my burden is light*; you need not be afraid of it.

[1.] The yoke of Christ's commands is an *easy yoke*; it is *ῥῆπτρον*, not only *easy*, but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant; there is nothing in it to gill the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but on the contrary, much to refresh us. It is a yoke that is lined with love. Such is the nature of all Christ's commands, so reasonable in themselves, so profitable to us, and all summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, love. So powerful are the assistances he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations that are to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. It is easy to the new nature, very *easy to him that understandeth*, Prov. 14. 6. It may be a little hard at first, but it is easy afterwards; the love of God and the hope of heaven will make it *easy*.

[2.] The burden of Christ's cross is a *light burden*, very *light*: afflictions from Christ, which befall us as men; afflictions for Christ, which befall us as christians; the latter are especially meant. This burden in itself is *not joyous, but grievous*; yet as it is Christ's, it is *light*. Paul knew as much of it as any man, and he calls it a *light affliction*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. God's presence, (Isa. 43. 2.) Christ's sympathy, (Isa. 63. 9. Dan. 3. 25.) and especially the Spirit's aids and comforts, (2 Cor. 1. 5.) make suffering for Christ *light and easy*. As afflictions abound, and are prolonged, consolations abound, and are prolonged too. Let this therefore reconcile us to the difficulties, and help us over the discouragements, we may meet with, both in doing work and suffering work; though we may lose for Christ, we shall not lose *by* him.

(3.) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of him, v. 29. Christ has erected a great school, and has invited us to be his scholars. We must enter ourselves, associate with his scholars, and daily attend the instructions he gives by his word and Spirit. We must converse much with what he said, and have it ready to use upon all occasions; we must conform to what he did, and follow his steps, 1 Pet. 2. 21. Some make the following words, *for I am meek and lowly in heart*, to be the particular lesson we are required to learn from the example of Christ. We must learn of him to be *meek and lowly*, and must mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to him. We must *so learn of Christ as to learn Christ*, (Eph. 4. 20.) for he is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way, and All in All.

Two reasons are given why we must learn of Christ.

[1.] *I am meek and lowly in heart*, and therefore fit to teach you.

First, He is *meek*, and can have compassion on the ignorant, whom others would be in a passion with. Many able teachers are hot and hasty, which is a great discouragement to those who are dull and slow; but Christ knows how to bear with such, and to open their understandings. His carriage toward his twelve disciples was a specimen of this; he was mild and gentle with them, and made the best of them; though they were heedless and forgetful, he was not extreme to mark their follies. Secondly, *He is lowly in heart*. He condescends to teach poor scholars, to teach novices; he chose disciples, not from the court, nor the schools, but from the sea-side. He teaches the first principles, such things as are milk for babes; he stoops to the meanest capacities; he taught Ephraim to go, Hos. 11. 3. Who teaches like him? It is an encouragement to us to

put ourselves to school to such a Teacher. This humility and meekness, as it qualifies him to be a Teacher, so it will be the best qualification of those who are to be taught by him; *for the meek will he guide in judgment*, Ps. 25. 9.

[2.] *You shall find rest to your souls*. This promise is borrowed from Jer. 6. 16. for Christ delighted to express himself in the language of the prophets, to show the harmony between the two Testaments. Note, First, Rest for the soul is the most desirable rest; to have the soul to dwell at ease. Secondly, The only way, and a sure way to find rest for our souls is, to sit at Christ's feet and hear his word. The way of duty is the way of rest. The understanding finds rest in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and is there abundantly satisfied, finding that wisdom in the gospel which has been sought for in vain throughout the whole creation, Job 28. 12. The truths Christ teaches are such as we may venture our souls upon. The affections find rest in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and meet with that in them which gives them an abundant satisfaction; quietness and assurance for ever. And those satisfactions will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven, where we shall see and enjoy God immediately, shall see him as he is, and enjoy him as he is ours. This rest is to be had with Christ for all those who learn of him.

Well, this is the sum and substance of the gospel-call and offer: we are here told, in a few words, what the Lord Jesus requires of us, and it agrees with what God said of him once and again. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's clearing of the law of the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath-day, and vindicating it from some superstitious notions advanced by the Jewish teachers; showing that works of necessity and mercy are to be done on that day, v. 1. . 13. II. The prudence, humility, and self-denial of our Lord Jesus in working his miracles, v. 14. . 21. III. Christ's answer to the blasphemous cavils and calumnies of the Scribes and Pharisees, who imputed his casting out devils to a compact with the Devil, v. 22. . 37. IV. Christ's reply to a tempting demand of the Scribes and Pharisees, challenging him to show them a sign from heaven, v. 38. . 45. V. Christ's judgment about his kindred and relations, v. 46. . 50.

1. **A**T that time Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. 2. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath-day. 3. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5. Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? 6. But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple. 7. But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned

the guiltless. 8. For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day. 9. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: 10. And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days? that they might accuse him. 11. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? 12. How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days. 13. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

The Jewish teachers had corrupted many of the commandments, by interpreting them more loosely than they were intended; a mistake which Christ discovered and rectified, (*ch. 5.*) in his sermon on the mount: but concerning the fourth commandment, they had erred in the other extreme, and interpreted it too strictly. Note, it is common for men of corrupt minds, by their zeal in rituals, and the external services of religion, to think to atone for the looseness of their morals. But they are cursed who *add to*, as well as they who *take from*, *the words of this book*, Rev. 22. 16, 19. Prov. 30. 6.

Now that which our Lord Jesus here lays down is, that the works of necessity and mercy are lawful on the Sabbath-day, which the Jews in many instances were taught to make a scruple of. Christ's industrious explanation of the fourth commandment, intimates its perpetual obligation to the religious observation of *one day in seven*, as a *holy sabbath*. He would not expound a law that was immediately to expire, but doubtless intended hereby to settle a point which would be of use to his church in all ages; and so it is to teach us, that our christian sabbath, though under the direction of the fourth commandment, is not under the injunctions of the Jewish elders.

It is usual to settle the meaning of a law by judgments given upon cases that happen in fact, and in like manner is the meaning of this law settled. Here are two passages of story put together for this purpose, happening at some distance of time from each other, and of a different nature, but both answering this intention.

I. Christ, by justifying his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, shows that *works of necessity are lawful* on that day. Now here observe,

1. What it was that the disciples did. They were following their Master one sabbath-day through a corn-field; it is likely they were going to the synagogue, (*v. 9.* for it becomes not Christ's disciples to take *idle walks* on that day,) and *they were hungry*: let it be no disparagement to our Master's house-keeping. But we will suppose they were so intent upon the sabbath-work, that they forgot to eat bread; had spent so much time in their morning worship, that they had no time for their morning meal, but came out fasting, because they would not come late to the synagogue. Providence ordered it that they *went through the corn*, and there they were supplied. Note, God has many ways of bringing suitable provision to his people when they need it, and will take particular care of them when they

are going to the synagogue, as of old for them that went up to Jerusalem to worship, (*Ps. 84. 6, 7.*) for whose use the rain filled the pools: while we are in the way of duty, *Jehovah-jireh*, let God alone to provide for us. Being in the corn-fields, they began to *pluck the ears of corn*; the law of God allowed this, (*Deut. 23. 25.*) to teach people to be neighbourly, and not to insist upon property in a small matter, whereby another may be benefited. This was but slender provision for Christ and his disciples, but it was the best they had, and they were content with it. The famous Mr. Ball, of Whitmore, used to say he had two dishes of meat to his sabbath-dinner, a dish of hot milk, and a dish of cold, and he had enough and enough.

2. What was the offence that the Pharisees took at this. It was but a dry breakfast, yet the Pharisees would not let them eat that in quietness. They did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, (they were no great zealots for justice,) but for doing it *on the sabbath-day*; for plucking and rubbing the ears of corn on that day, was expressly forbidden by the tradition of the elders, for this reason, because it was *a kind of reaping*. Note, it is no new thing for the most harmless and innocent actions of Christ's disciples to be evil spoken of and reflected upon as unlawful, especially by those who are zealous for their own inventions and impositions. The Pharisees complained of them to their Master for doing that which it was not *lawful to do*. Note, Those are no friends to Christ and his disciples, who make that to be unlawful which God has not made to be so.

3. What was Christ's answer to this cavil of the Pharisees. The disciples could say little for themselves, especially because those who quarrelled with them seemed to have the strictness of the sabbath-sanctification on their side; and it is safest to err on that hand: but Christ came to free his followers, not only from the corruptions of the Pharisees, but from their unscriptural impositions, and therefore has something to say for them, and justifies what they did, though it was a transgression of the canon.

(1.) He justifies them by precedents, which were allowed to be good by the Pharisees themselves.

[1.] He urges an ancient instance of David, who in a case of necessity did that which otherwise he ought not to have done; (*v. 3, 4.*) "*Have ye not read the story (1 Sam. 21. 6.) of David's eating the shew-bread, which by the law was appropriated to the priest? (Lev. 24. 5—9.) It is most holy to Aaron and his sons; and (Exod. 29. 33.) a stranger shall not eat of it; yet the priest gave it to David and his men;*" for though the exception of a case of necessity was not expressed, yet it was implied in that and all other ritual institutions. That which bore out David in eating the shew-bread was not his dignity, (Uzziah, that invaded the priest's office in the pride of his heart, though a king, was struck with a leprosy for it, 2 Chron. 26. 16, &c.) but his hunger. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, but the meanest shall have their wants considered. Hunger is a natural desire which cannot be mortified, but must be gratified, and cannot be put off with any thing but meat; therefore we say, *It will break through stone walls*. Now the Lord is for the body, and allowed his own appointment to be dispensed with in a case of distress; much more might the tradition of the elders be dispensed with. Note, That may be done in a case of necessity, which may not be done at another time; there are laws which necessity has not, but it is a law to itself. *Men do not despise, but pity, a thief that steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry*, Prov. 6. 30.

[2.] He urges a daily instance of the priests, which they likewise read in the law, and according to which was the constant usage, *v. 5.* *The priests*

in the temple did a great deal of servile work on the sabbath-day; killing, flaying, burning the sacrificed beasts, which in a common case would have been *profaning the sabbath*; and yet it was never reckoned any transgression of the fourth commandment, because the temple-service required and justified it. This intimates, that those labours are lawful on the sabbath-day which are necessary, not only to the support of life, but to the service of the day; as tolling a bell to call the congregation together, travelling to church, and the like. Sabbath-rest is to promote, not to hinder, sabbath-worship.

(2.) He justifies them by arguments, three cogent ones.

[1.] *In this place is one greater than the temple, v. 6.* If the temple-service would justify what the priests did in their ministration, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in their attendance upon him. The Jews had an extreme veneration for the temple, it *sanctified the gold*; Stephen was accused for *blaspheming that holy place*; (Acts 6. 13.) but Christ, in a corn-field, was *greater than the temple*, for in him dwelt not the presence of God symbolically, but all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Note, If, whatever we do, we do it *in the name of Christ, and as unto him*, it shall be graciously accepted of God, however it may be censured and cavilled at by men.

[2.] *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice, v. 7.* Ceremonial duties must give way to moral, and the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation must take place of ritual observances. This is quoted from Hos. 6. 6. It was used before, ch. 9. 13. in vindication of mercy to the souls of men; here, of mercy to their bodies. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man's good, in favour of the body, Deut. 5. 14. Now no law must be construed so as to contradict its own end. *If you had known what this means*, had known what it is to be of a merciful disposition, you would have been sorry that they were forced to do this to satisfy their hunger, and would not have condemned the guiltless. Note, First, Ignorance is the cause of our rash and uncharitable censures of our brethren. Secondly, It is not enough for us to know the scriptures, but we must labour to know the meaning of them. Let him that readeth understand. Thirdly, Ignorance of the meaning of the scripture is especially shameful in those who take up in them to teach others.

[3.] *The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day, v. 8.* That law, as all the rest, is put into the hand of Christ, to be altered, enforced, or dispensed with, as he sees good. It was by the Son that God made the world, and by him he instituted the sabbath in innocency; by him he gave the ten commandments at mount Sinai, and as Mediator he is intrusted with the institution of ordinances, and to make what changes he thought fit; and particularly, as being Lord of the sabbath, he was authorized to make such an alteration of that day, as that it should become the Lord's day, the Lord Christ's day. And if Christ be the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and all the work of it should be dedicated to him. By virtue of this power, Christ here enacts, that works of necessity, if they be really such, and not a pretended and self-created necessity, are lawful on the sabbath-day; and this explication of the law plainly shows that it was to be perpetual. *Excepio firmat regulam—The exception confirms the rule.*

Christ having thus silenced the Pharisees, and got clear of them, (v. 9.) departed, and went into their synagogue, the synagogue of these Pharisees, in which they presided, and toward which he was going, when they picked this quarrel with him. Note, First, We must take heed lest any thing that occurs in our way to holy ordinances unfit us for, or divert us from, our due attendances on them. Let

us proceed in the way of our duty, notwithstanding the artifices of Satan, who endeavours, by the *perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds*, and many other ways, to ruffle and discompose us. Secondly, We must not, for the sake of private feuds and personal piques, draw back from public worship. Though the Pharisees had thus maliciously cavilled at Christ, yet he went into their synagogue. Satan gains his point, if, by sowing discord among brethren, he prevail to drive them, or any of them, from the synagogue, and the communion of the faithful.

II. Christ, by healing the man that had the withered hand on the sabbath-day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day. The work of necessity was done by the disciples, and justified by him; the work of mercy was done by himself; the works of mercy were his works of necessity; it was his meat and drink to do good. I must preach, says he, Luke 4. 43. This cure is recorded for the sake of the time when it was wrought, on the sabbath.

Here is, 1. The affliction that this poor man was in; his hand was withered so that he was utterly disabled to get his living by working with his hands. St. Jerome says, that the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, adds this circumstance to this story of the man with the withered hand, that he was *Cementarius—a bricklayer*, and applied himself to Christ thus; "Lord, I am a bricklayer, and have got my living by my labour; (*manibus victum quaeritars;*) I beseech thee, O Jesus, restore me the use of my hand, that I may not be obliged to beg my bread," (*ne turpiter mendicem cibos.*) Hieron. in loc. This poor man was in the synagogue. Note, Those who can do but little, or have but little to do for the world, must do so much the more for their souls; as the rich, the aged, and the infirm.

2. A spiteful question which the Pharisees put to Christ upon the sight of this man. They asked him, saying, *Is it lawful to heal?* We read not here of any address this poor man made to Christ for a cure, but they observed Christ began to take notice of him, and knew it was usual for him to be found of those that sought him not, and therefore with their badness they anticipated his goodness, and started this case as a stumbling-block in the way of doing good: *Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day?* Whether it was lawful for physicians to heal on that day or not, which was the thing disputed in their books, one would think it past dispute, that it is lawful for prophets to heal, for him to heal who discovered a divine power and goodness in all he did of this kind, and manifested himself to be sent of God. Did ever any ask, whether it is lawful for God to heal, to send his word and heal? It is true, Christ was now made under the law, by a voluntary submission to it, but he was never made under the precepts of the elders. *Is it lawful to heal?* To inquire into the lawfulness and unlawfulness of actions is very good, and we cannot apply ourselves to any with such inquiries more fitly than to Christ; but they asked here, not that they might be instructed by him, but that they might accuse him. If he should say that it was lawful to heal on the sabbath-day, they would accuse him of a contradiction to the fourth commandment; to so great a degree of superstition had the Pharisees brought the sabbath-rest, that, unless in peril of life, they allowed not any medicinal operations on the sabbath-day. If he should say that it was not lawful, they would accuse him of partiality, having lately justified his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on that day.

3. Christ's answer to this question, by way of appeal to themselves, and their own opinion and practice, v. 11, 12. In case a sheep (though but one, of which the less would not be very great) should fall

into a pit on the sabbath-day, *would they not lift it out?* No doubt they might do it, the fourth commandment allows it; they must do it, for a *merciful man regardeth the life of his beast*, and for their parts they would do it, rather than lose a sheep; does Christ take care for sheep? Yes, he does; he preserves and provides for both man and beast. But here he says it for our sakes, (1 Cor. 9. 9, 10.) and hence argues, *How much then is a man better than a sheep?* Sheep are not only harmless but useful creatures, and are prized and tended accordingly; yet a man is here preferred far before them. Note, Man, in respect of his being, is a great deal better, and more valuable, than the best of the brute creatures: man is a reasonable creature, capable of knowing, loving, and glorifying God, and therefore is better than a sheep. The sacrifice of a sheep could therefore not atone for the sin of a soul. They do not consider this, who are more solicitous for the education, preservation, and supply of their horses and dogs than of God's poor, or perhaps their own household.

Hence Christ infers a truth, which, even at first sight, appears very reasonable and good-natured; that it is *lawful to do well on the sabbath-days*; they had asked, *Is it lawful to heal?* Christ proves it is lawful to do well, and let any one judge whether healing, as Christ healed, was not *doing well*. Note, There are more ways of *doing well* upon sabbath-days, than by the duties of God's immediate worship; attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who are fallen into sudden distress and call for speedy relief; this is *doing good*; and this must be done from a principle of love and charity, with humility and self-denial, and a heavenly frame of spirit, and this is *doing well*, and it *shall be accepted*, Gen. 4. 7.

4. Christ's curing of the man, notwithstanding the offence which he foresaw the Pharisees would take at it, v. 13. Though they could not answer Christ's arguments, they were resolved to persist in their prejudice and enmity; but Christ went on with his work notwithstanding. Note, Duty is not to be left undone, nor opportunities of doing good neglected, for fear of giving offence. Now the manner of the cure is observable; he said to the man, "*Stretch forth thy hand, exert thyself as well as thou canst;*" and he did so, and it was *restored whole*. This, as other cures Christ wrought, had a spiritual significance. (1.) By nature our hands are withered, we are utterly unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good. (2.) It is Christ only, by the power of his grace, that cures us; he heals the withered hand by putting life into the dead soul, works in us both to will and to do. (3.) In order to our cure, he commands us to *stretch forth our hands*, to improve our natural powers, and do as well as we can; to stretch them out in prayer to God, to stretch them out to lay hold on Christ by faith, to stretch them out in holy endeavours. Now this man could not stretch forth his withered hand of himself, any more than the impotent man could arise and carry his bed, or Lazarus come forth out of his grave; yet Christ bid him do it. God's commands to us to do the duty which of ourselves we are not able to do, are no more absurd or unjust, than this command to the man with the withered hand, to *stretch it forth*; for with the command, there is a promise of grace which is given by the word. *Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit*, Prov. 1. 23. Those who perish are as inexcusable as this man would have been, if he had not attempted to stretch forth his hand, and so had not been healed. But those who are saved have no more to boast of than this man had of contributing to his own cure, by stretching forth his hand, but are as much indebted to the power and grace of Christ as he was.

14. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. 15. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; 16. And charged them that they should not make him known: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18. Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

As in the midst of Christ's greatest humiliations, there were proofs of his dignity, so in the midst of his greatest honours, he gave proofs of his humility; and when the mighty works he did gave him an opportunity of making a figure, yet he made it appear that he *emptied himself*, and made himself of *no reputation*. Here we have,

1. The cursed malice of the Pharisees against Christ; (v. 14.) being enraged at the convincing evidence of his miracles, they *went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him*. That which vexed them was, not only that by his miracles his honour eclipsed theirs, but that the doctrine he preached was directly opposite to their pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly interest; but they pretended to be displeased at his breaking the sabbath-day, which was by the law a capital crime, Exod. 35. 2. Note, It is no new thing to see the vilest practices cloaked with the most specious pretences. Observe their policy; they took counsel about it, considered with themselves which way to do it effectually; they took counsel together in a close cabal about it, that they might both animate and assist one another. Observe their cruelty; they took counsel, not to imprison or banish him, but to destroy him, to be the death of him who came that *we might have life*. What an indignity was hereby put upon our Lord Jesus, to run him down as an outlaw, (*qui caput gerit lupinum—carries a wolf's head*;) and the plague of his country, who was the greatest Blessing of it, the Glory of his people Israel!

II. Christ's absconding upon this occasion, and the privacy he chose, to decline, not his work, but his danger; because *his hour was not yet come*, (v. 15.) *he withdrew himself from thence*. He could have secured himself by miracle, but chose to do it in the ordinary way of flight and retirement; because in this, as in other things, he would submit to the sinless infirmities of our nature. Herein he humbled himself, that he was driven to the common shift of those who are most helpless; thus also he would give an example to his own rule, *When they persecute you in one city, flee to another*. Christ had said and done enough to convince those Pharisees, if reason or miracles would have done it; but instead of yielding to the conviction, they were hardened and enraged, and therefore he left them as incurable, Jer. 51. 9.

Christ did not retire for his own ease, nor seek an excuse to leave off his work; no, his retirements were filled up with business, and he was even then doing good, when he was forced to flee for the same. Thus he gave an example to his ministers, to do what

they can, when they cannot do what they would, and to continue teaching, even when they are removed into corners. When the Pharisees, the great dons and doctors of the nation, forced Christ from them, and forced him to withdraw himself, yet the common people crowded after him, *great multitudes followed him* and found him out. This some would turn to his reproach, and call him the Ringleader of the mob; but it was really his honour, that all who were unbiassed and unprejudiced, and not blinded by the pomp of the world, were so hearty, so zealous for him, that they would follow him whithersoever he went, and whatever hazards they ran with him; as it was also the honour of his grace, that the poor were evangelized; that when they received him, he received them and healed them all. Christ came into the world to be a Physician-general, as the sun to the lower world, *with healing under his wings*. Though the Pharisees persecuted Christ for doing good, yet he went on in it, and did not let the people fare the worse for the wickedness of their rulers. Note, Though some are unkind to us, we must not on that account be unkind to others.

Christ studied to reconcile usefulness and privacy; he *healed them all*, and yet (v. 16.) *charged them that they should not make him known*; which may be looked upon, 1. As an act of prudence; it was not so much the miracles themselves, as the public discourse concerning them, that enraged the Pharisees; (v. 23, 24.) therefore Christ, though he would not omit doing good, yet would do it with as little noise as possible, to avoid offence to them and peril to himself. Note, Wise and good men, though they covet to do good, yet are far from coveting to have it talked of when it is done; because it is God's acceptance, not men's applause, that they aim at. And in suffering times, though we must boldly go on in the way of duty, yet we must contrive the circumstances of it so as not to exasperate, more than is necessary, those who seek occasion against us; *Be ye wise as serpents*, ch. 10. 16. 2. It may be looked upon as an act of righteous judgment upon the Pharisees, who were unworthy to hear of any more of his miracles, having made so light of those they had seen. By shutting their eyes against the light, they had forfeited the benefit of it. 3. As an act of humility and self-denial. Though Christ's intention in his miracles was to prove himself the Messiah, and so to bring men to believe on him, in order to which it was requisite that they should be known, yet sometimes he charged the people to conceal them, to set us an example of humility, and to teach us not to proclaim our own goodness or usefulness, or to desire to have it proclaimed. Christ would have his disciples to be the reverse of those who did all their works *to be seen of men*.

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in all this, v. 17. Christ retired into privacy and obscurity, that, though he was eclipsed, the word of God might be fulfilled, and so illustrated and glorified, which was the thing his heart was upon. The scripture here said to be fulfilled is Isa. 42. 1—4, which is quoted at large, v. 18—21. The scope of it is to show how mild and quiet, and yet how successful, our Lord Jesus should be in his undertaking; instances of both which we have in the foregoing passages. Observe here,

1. The pleasure of the Father in Christ; (v. 18.) *Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased*. Hence we may learn,

(1.) That our Saviour was God's Servant in the great work of our redemption. He therein submitted himself to the Father's will, (Heb. 10. 7.) and set himself to serve the designs of his grace and the interests of his glory, in repairing the breaches that had been made by man's apostasy. As a *Servant*,

he had a great work appointed him and a great trust reposed in him. This was a part of his humiliation, that though he *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, yet that in the work of our salvation he took upon him the form of a servant, received a law, and came into bonds. *Though he were a son, yet learned he this obedience*, Heb. 5. 8. The motto of this Prince is, *Ich dien—I serve*.

(2.) That Jesus Christ was chosen of God, as the only fit and proper Person for the management of the great work of our redemption. He is *my Servant whom I have chosen, as far as negation—equal to the undertaking*. None but he was able to do the Redeemer's work, or fit to wear the Redeemer's crown. He was *one chosen out of the people*, (Ps. 89. 19.) chosen by Infinite Wisdom to that post of service and honour, for which neither man nor angel was qualified; none but Christ, that he might in all things have the pre-eminence. Christ did not thrust himself upon this work, but was duly chosen into it; Christ was so God's Chosen as to be the Head of election, and of all other the Elect, for we are *chosen in him*, Eph. 1. 4.

(3.) That Jesus Christ is God's Beloved, his beloved Son; as God, he lay from eternity in his bosom; (John 1. 18.) he was *daily his Delight*, Prov. 8. 30. Between the Father and the Son there was before all time an eternal and inexpressible intercourse and interchanging of love, and thus *the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way*, Prov. 8. 22. As Mediator, the Father loved him; then when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he submitted to it, *therefore did the Father love him*, John 10. 17.

(4.) That Jesus Christ is one in whom the Father is well pleased, in whom his soul is pleased; which denotes the highest complacency imaginable. God declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; well pleased *in him*, because he was the ready and cheerful Undertaker of that work of wonder which God's heart was so much upon, and he is well pleased with us in him; for he has *made us accepted in the Beloved*, Eph. 1. 6. All the interest which fallen man has or can have in God, is grounded upon and owing to God's *well-pleasedness* in Jesus Christ; for there is *no coming to the Father but by him*, John 14. 6.

2. The promise of the Father to him in two things.

(1.) That he should be every way well qualified for his undertaking; *I will put my Spirit upon him*, as a Spirit of *wisdom and counsel*, Isa. 11. 2, 3. Those whom God calls to any service, he will be sure to fit and qualify for it; and by that it will appear that he called them to it, as Moses, Exod. 4. 12. Christ, as God, was equal in power and glory with the Father; as Mediator, he received from the Father power and glory, and received that he might give: and all that the Father gave him, to qualify him for his undertaking, was summed up in this, he *put his Spirit upon him*; this was that *oil of gladness* with which he was *anointed above his fellows*, Heb. 1. 9. He received the Spirit, not by measure, but *without measure*, John 3. 34. Note, Whoever they be that God has chosen, and in whom he is well pleased, he will be sure to *put his Spirit upon them*. Wherever he confers his love, he confers somewhat of his likeness.

(2.) That he should be abundantly successful in his undertaking. Those whom God sends he will certainly own. It was long since secured by promise to our Lord Jesus, that the *good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand*, Isa. 53. 10. And here we have an account of that prospering good pleasure.

[1.] He shall *show judgment to the Gentiles*. Christ in his own person preached to those who bordered upon the heathen nations, (see Mark 3. 6—8.) and by his apostles showed his gospel, called here,

his *judgment*, to the Gentile world. The way and method of salvation, the *judgment* which is committed to the Son, is not only wrought out by him as our great High-Priest, but showed and published by him as our great Prophet. The gospel, as it is a rule of practice and conversation, which has a direct tendency to the reforming and bettering of men's hearts and lives, shall be showed to the Gentiles. God's judgments had been the Jews' peculiar, (Psal. 147. 19.) but it was often foretold, by the Old-Testament prophets, that they should be *showed to the Gentiles*, which therefore ought not to have been such a surprise as it was to the unbelieving Jews, much less a vexation.

[2.] *In his name shall the Gentiles trust*, v. 21. He shall so show judgment to them, that they shall heed and observe what he shows them, and be influenced by it to depend upon him, to devote themselves to him, and conform to that judgment. Note, The great design of the gospel is to bring people to trust in the name of Jesus Christ; his name Jesus, a Saviour, that precious name whereby he is called, and which is as ointment poured forth; *The Lord our Righteousness*. The evangelist here follows the Septuagint; (or perhaps the latter editions of the Septuagint follow the evangelist:) the Hebrew (Isa. 42. 4.) is, *The isles shall wait for his law*. The isles of the Gentiles are spoken of (Gen. 10. 5.) as peopled by the sons of Japhet, of whom it was said, (Gen. 9. 27.) *God shall persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem*; which was now to be fulfilled, when the isles, (says the prophet,) *the Gentiles*, (says the evangelist,) *shall wait for his law*, and *trust in his name*: compare these together, and observe, that they, and they only, can with confidence *trust in Christ's name*, that *wait for his law* with a resolution to be ruled by it. Observe also, that the law we wait for is the law of faith, the law of trusting in his name. This is now his great commandment, that we *believe in Christ*, 1 John 3. 23.

3. The prediction concerning him, and his mild and quiet management of his undertaking, v. 19, 20. It is chiefly for the sake of this, that it is here quoted, upon occasion of Christ's affected privacy and concealment.

(1.) That he should carry on his undertaking without noise or ostentation. *He shall not strive, or make an outcry*. Christ and his kingdom come not with observation, Luke 17. 20, 21. When the First-Begotten was brought into the world, it was not with state and ceremony; he made no public entry, had no harbingers to proclaim him King. *He was in the world, and the world knew him not*. Those were mistaken, who fed themselves with hopes of a pompous Saviour. *His voice was not heard in the streets*; "Lo, here is Christ," or, "Lo, he is there:" he spake in a still small voice, which was alluring to all, but terrifying to none; he did not affect to make a noise, but came down silently like the dew. What he spake and did was with the greatest possible humility and self-denial. His kingdom was spiritual, and therefore not to be advanced by force, or violence, or by high pretensions. *No, the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*.

(2.) That he should carry on his undertaking without severity and rigour, (v. 20.) *A bruised reed shall he not break*. Some understand this of his patience in bearing with the wicked; he could as easily have broken these Pharisees as a bruised reed, and have quenched them as soon as smoking flax; but he will not do it till the judgment-day, when all his enemies shall be made his footstool. Others rather understand it of his power and grace in bearing up the weak. In general, the design of his gospel is to establish such a method of salvation as encourages sincerity, though there be much infirmity; it does not insist upon a sinless obedience, but accepts an upright, willing mind. As to particular persons, that follow Christ in meekness, and in fear, and in

much trembling, observe, [1.] How their case is here described—they are like a *bruised reed*, and *smoking flax*. Young beginners in religion are weak as a bruised reed, and their weakness offensive like smoking flax; some little life they have, but it is like that of a bruised reed; some little heat, but like that of smoking flax. Christ's disciples were as yet but weak, and many are so that have a place in his family. The grace and goodness in them are as a bruised reed, the corruption and badness in them are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle when it is put out and is yet smoking. [2.] What is the compassion of our Lord Jesus toward them. He will not discourage them, much less reject them or cast them off; the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as a strong cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up. The *day of small things* is the day of *precious things*, and therefore he will not despise it, but make it the *day of great things*, Zech. 4. 10. Note, Our Lord Jesus deals very tenderly with those who have true grace, though they be weak in it, Isa. 40. 11. Heb. 5. 2. He remembers not only that we are dust, but that we are flesh. [3.] The good issue and success of this, intimated in that, *till he send forth judgment unto victory*. That judgment which he showed to the Gentiles shall be victorious, he will go on conquering and to conquer, Rev. 6. 2. Both the preaching of the gospel in the world, and the power of the gospel in the heart, shall prevail. Grace shall get the upper hand of corruption, and shall at length be perfected in glory. Christ's judgment will be brought forth to victory, for when he judges he will overcome. He shall *bring forth judgment unto truth*; so it is, Isa. 42. 3. Truth and victory are much the same, for *great is the truth, and will prevail*.

22. Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24. But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 25. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29. Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. 30. He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. 31. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the

blasphemy against the *Holy Ghost* shall not be forgiven unto men. 32. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. 33. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. 34. O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things! For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. 36. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

In these verses, we have,

1. Christ's glorious conquest of Satan, in the gracious cure of one who, by the divine permission, was under his power, and in his possession, v. 22. Here observe,

1. The man's case was very sad: he was *possessed with a devil*. More cases of this kind occurred in Christ's time than usual, that Christ's power might be the more magnified, and his purpose the more manifested, in opposing and dispossessing Satan; and that it might the more evidently appear, that he came to destroy the works of the devil. This poor man that was possessed was blind and dumb; a miserable case! he could neither see to help himself, nor speak to others to help him. A soul under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing, to the purpose. Satan blinds the eye of faith, and seals up the lips of prayer.

2. His cure was very strange, and the more so, because sudden; he *healed him*. Note, The conquering and dispossessing of Satan is the healing of souls. And the cause being removed, immediately the effect ceased; the *blind and dumb both spake and saw*. Note, Christ's mercy is directly opposite to Satan's malice; his favours, to the devil's mischiefs. When Satan's power is broken in the soul, the eyes are opened to see God's glory, and the lips opened to speak his praise.

11. The conviction which this gave to the people, to all the people; they were amazed. Christ had wrought divers miracles of this kind before; but his works are not the less wonderful, nor the less to be wondered at, for their being often repeated. They inferred from it, "*Is not this the Son of David?*" The Messiah promised, that was to spring from the loins of David? Is not this he that should come?" We may take this, 1. As an *inquiring* question; they asked, *Is not this the Son of David?* But they did not stay for an answer; the impressions were cogent, but they were transient. It was a good question that they started; but, it should seem, it was soon lost, and was not prosecuted. Such convictions as these should be brought to a head, and then they are likely to be brought to the heart. Or, 2. As an *affirming* question; *Is not this the Son of David?* "Yes, certainly it is, it can be no other: such miracles as these

plainly evince that the kingdom of the Messiah is now in the setting up." And they were the people, the vulgar sort of the spectators, that drew this inference from Christ's miracles. Atheists will say, "That was because they were less prying than the Pharisees?" no, the matter of fact was obvious, and required not much search; but it was because they were less prejudiced and biassed by worldly interest. So plain and easy was the way made to this great truth of Christ's being the Messiah and Saviour of the world, that the common people could not miss it; the way-faring men, though fools, could not err thereon. See Isa. 35. 8. It was found of them that sought it. It is an instance of the condescensions of the divine grace, that the things that were hid from the wise and prudent were revealed unto babes. The world by wisdom knew not God, and by the foolish things the wise were confounded.

III. The blasphemous cavil of the Pharisees, v. 24. The Pharisees were a sort of men that pretended to more knowledge in, and zeal for, the divine law, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. They were proud of the reputation they had among the people; that fed their pride, supported their power, and filled their purses: and when they heard the people say, *Is not this the Son of David?* they were extremely irritated, more at that than at the miracle itself; this made them jealous of our Lord Jesus, and apprehensive, that as *his* interest in the people's esteem increased, *theirs* must of course be eclipsed and diminished; therefore they envied him, as Saul did his father David, because of what the women sang of him, 1 Sam. 18. 7, 8. Note, Those who bind up their happiness in the praise and applause of men, expose themselves to a perpetual uneasiness upon every favourable word that they hear said of any other. The shadow of honour followed Christ, who fled from it, and fled from the Pharisees, who were eager in the pursuit of it. They said, "*This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils*, and therefore is not the Son of David." Observe,

1. How scornfully they speak of Christ, *this fellow*; as if that precious name of his, which is as *ointment poured forth*, were not worthy to be taken into their lips. It is an instance of their pride and superciliousness, and their diabolical envy, that the more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vilify him. It is a bad thing to speak of good men with disdain because they are poor.

2. How blasphemously they speak of his miracles; they could not deny the matter of fact; it was as plain as the sun, that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny that it was an extraordinary thing, and supernatural. Being thus forced to grant the premises, they had no other way to avoid the conclusion, that *this is the Son of David*, than by suggesting that *Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub*; that there was a compact between Christ and the devil: pursuant to that, the devil was not cast out, but did voluntarily retire, and give back by consent and with design: or as if, by an agreement with the ruling devil, he had power to cast out the inferior devils. No surmise could be more palpably false and vile than this; that he, who is Truth itself, should be in combination with the father of lies, to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge rather, of an obstinate infidelity, that was resolved to stand it out against the clearest conviction. Observe, Among the devils there is a prince, the ringleader of the apostasy from God and rebellion against him; but this prince is Beelzebub—the god of a fly, or a dunghill-god. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an angel of light, to be a lord of flies! Yet this is the prince of the devils too, the chief of the gang of infernal spirits.

IV. Christ's reply to this base insinuation, *v. 23-30.* *Jesus knew their thoughts.* Note, Jesus Christ knows what we are thinking at any time, knows what is in man; he *understands our thoughts afar off.* It should seem that the Pharisees could not for shame speak it out, but kept it in their minds; they could not expect to satisfy the people with it, they therefore reserved it for the silencing of the convictions of their own consciences. Note, Many are kept off from their duty by that which they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ: yet it is probable that the Pharisees had whispered what they thought among themselves, to help to harden one another; but Christ's reply is said to be to their thoughts, because he knew with what mind, and from what principle, they said it; that they did not say it in their haste, but that it was the product of a rooted malignity.

Christ's reply to this imputation is copious and cogent, that *every mouth may be stopped* with sense and reason, before it be stopped with fire and brimstone. Here are three arguments by which he demonstrates the unreasonableness of this suggestion.

1. It would be very strange, and highly improbable, that Satan should be cast out by such a compact, because then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself; which, considering his subtlety, is not a thing to be imagined, *v. 25, 26.*

(1.) Here is a known rule laid down, that in all societies a common ruin is the consequence of mutual quarrels: *Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every family too: Quæ enim domus tam stabilis est, quæ tam firma civitas, quæ non odii atque dissidii funditus everti possit—For what family is so strong, what community so firm, as not to be overturned by enmity and dissension?* Cic. *Læl. 7.* Divisions commonly end in desolations; if we clash, we break; if we divide one from another, we become an easy prey to a common enemy; much more if we bite and devour one another, shall we be consumed one of another, *Gal. 5. 15.* Churches and nations have known this by sad experience.

(2.) The application of it to the case in hand, (*v. 26.*) *If Satan cast out Satan; if the prince of the devils should be at variance with the inferior devils, the whole kingdom and interest would soon be broken; nay, if Satan should come into a compact with Christ, it must be to his own ruin: for the manifest design and tendency of Christ's preaching and miracles was to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, as a kingdom of darkness, wickedness, and enmity to God; and to set up, upon the ruins of it, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love. The works of the devil, as a rebel against God, and a tyrant over the souls of men, were destroyed by Christ; and therefore it was the most absurd thing imaginable, to think that Beelzebub should at all countenance such a design, or come into it: if he should fall in with Christ, how should then his kingdom stand? He would himself contribute to the overthrow of it.* Note, The devil has a kingdom, a common interest, in opposition to God and Christ, which, to the utmost of his power, he will make to stand, and he will never come into Christ's interests; he must be conquered and broken by Christ, and therefore cannot submit and lend to him. *What concord or communion can there be between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, Christ and Beelzebub?* Christ will destroy the devil's kingdom, but he needs not do it by any such little arts and projects as that of a secret compact with Beelzebub; no, this victory must be obtained by nobler methods. Let the prince of the devils muster up all his forces, let him make use of all his powers and politics, and keep his interests in the closest confederacy, yet Christ will be too hard for his united force, and his kingdom shall not stand.

2. It was not at all strange, or improbable, that devils should be cast out by the Spirit of God; for,

(1.) *How otherwise do your children cast them out?* There were these among the Jews who, by invocation (of the name of the most high God, or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did sometimes cast out devils. Josephus speaks of some in his time that did it; we read of *Jewish exorcists*, (*Acts 19. 13.*) and of some that *in Christ's name cast out devils*, though they did not follow him, (*Mark 9. 38.*) or were not faithful to him, *ch. 7. 22.* These the Pharisees condemned not, but imputed what they did to the Spirit of God, and valued themselves and their nation upon it. It was therefore merely from spite and envy to Christ, that they would own that others cast out devils by the Spirit of God, but suggest that he did it by compact with Beelzebub. Note, It is the way of malicious people, especially the malicious persecutors of Christ and christianity, to condemn the same thing in those they hate, which they approve of and applaud in those they have a kindness for: the judgments of envy are made, not by things, but persons; not by reason, but prejudice. But those were very unfit to sit in Moses's seat, who knew faces, and knew nothing else in judgment: *Therefore they shall be your judges;* "This contradicting of yourselves will rise up in judgment against you at the great day, and will condemn you." Note, In the last judgment, not only every sin, but every aggravation of it, will be brought into the account, and some of our notions that were right and good will be brought in evidence against us, to convict us of partiality.

(2.) This casting out of devils was a certain token and indication of the approach and appearance of the kingdom of God; (*v. 28.*) "But if it be indeed that *I cast out devils by the Spirit of God*, as certainly I do, then you must conclude, that though you are unwilling to receive it, yet the kingdom of the Messiah is now about to be set up among you." Other miracles that Christ wrought proved him *sent of God*, but this proved him *sent of God* to destroy the Devil's kingdom and his works. Now that great promise was evidently fulfilled, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*, *Gen. 3. 15.* "Therefore that glorious dispensation of the kingdom of God, which has been long expected, is now commenced; slight it at your peril." Note, [1.] The destruction of the Devil's power is wrought by the Spirit of God; that Spirit who works to the obedience of faith, overthrows the interest of that spirit who works in the children of unbelief and disobedience. [2.] The casting out of devils is a certain introduction to the kingdom of God. If the Devil's interest in a soul be not only checked by custom or external restraints, but sunk and broken by the Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, no doubt but *the kingdom of God is come* to that soul, the kingdom of grace, a blessed earnest of the kingdom of glory.

3. The comparing of Christ's miracles, particularly this of casting out devils, with his doctrine, and the design and tendency of his holy religion, evidenced that he was so far from being in league with Satan, that he was at open enmity and hostility against him; (*v. 29.*) *How can one enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, and carry them away, except he first bind the strong man? And then he may do what he pleases with his goods.* The world, that sat in darkness, and lay in wickedness, was in Satan's possession, and under his power, as a house in the possession and under the power of a strong man; so is every unregenerate soul; there Satan resides, there he rules. Now, (1.) The design of Christ's gospel was to spoil the Devil's house, which, as a strong man, he kept in the world; to turn the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from this world to a better, from the power

of Satan unto God; (Acts 26. 18.) to alter the property of souls. (2.) Pursuant to this design, he bound the strong man, when he cast out unclean spirits by his word: thus he wrested the sword out of the Devil's hand, that he might wrest the sceptre out of it. The doctrine of Christ teaches us how to construe his miracles, and when he showed how easily and effectually he could cast the Devil out of people's bodies, he encouraged all believers to hope that, whatever power Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, Christ by his grace would break it; he will spoil him, for it appears that he can bind him. When nations were turned from the service of idols to serve the living God, when some of the worst of sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints, then Christ spoiled the Devil's house, and will spoil it more and more.

4. It is here intimated, that this holy war, which Christ was carrying on with vigour against the Devil and his kingdom, was such as would not admit of a neutrality, (*v.* 30.) *He that is not with me, is against me.* In the little differences that may arise between the disciples of Christ among themselves, we are taught to lessen the matters in variance, and to seek peace, by accounting those who are not against us, to be with us; (Luke 9. 50.) but in the great quarrel between Christ and the Devil, no peace is to be sought, nor any such favourable construction to be made of any difference in the matter; he that is not hearty for Christ, will be reckoned with as really against him: he that is cold in the cause, is looked upon as an enemy. When the dispute is between God and Baal, there is no halting between two, (1 Kings 18. 21.) there is no trimming between Christ and Belial; for the kingdom of Christ, as it is eternally opposite to, so it will be eternally victorious over, the Devil's kingdom; and therefore in this cause there is no sitting still with Gilead beyond Jordan, or Asher on the sea-shore; (Judg. 5. 16, 17.) we must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side: it is the right side, and will at last be the rising side; see Exod. 32. 26.

The latter clause is to the same purport; *He that gathereth not with me, scattereth.* Note, (1.) Christ's errand into the world was to gather, to gather in his harvest, to gather in those whom the Father had given him, John 11. 52. Eph. 1. 10. 2. Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they not only gather to him themselves, but do all they can in their places, to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest. (3.) Those who will not appear, and act, as furtherers of Christ's kingdom, will be looked upon, and dealt with, as hinderers of it; if we gather not with Christ, we scatter; it is not enough, not to do hurt, but we must do good. Thus is the breach widened between Christ and Satan, to show that there was no such compact between them as the Pharisees whispered.

V. Here is a discourse of Christ's upon this occasion, concerning tongue-sins; *Wherefore I say unto you.* He seems to turn from the Pharisees to the people, from disputing to instructing; and from the sin of the Pharisees he warns the people concerning three sorts of tongue-sins; for others' harms are admonitions to us.

1. Blasphemous words against the Holy Ghost are the worst kind of tongue-sins, and unpardonable, *v.* 31, 32.

(1.) Here is a gracious assurance of the pardon of all sin upon gospel-terms: this Christ says to us, and it is a comfortable saying, that the greatness of sin shall be no bar to our acceptance with God, if we truly repent and believe the gospel: *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.* Though the sin has been as scarlet and crimson,

(Isa. 1. 18.) though ever so heinous in its nature, ever so much aggravated by its circumstances, and ever so often repeated, though it reach up to the heavens yet with the Lord there is mercy, that reacheth beyond the heavens: mercy will be extended even to blasphemy, a sin immediately touching God's name and honour: Paul obtained mercy, who had been a blasphemer, 1 Tim. 1. 13. Well may we say, *Who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity?* Micah 7. 18. *Even words spoken against the Son of man shall be forgiven;* as theirs were who reviled him at his death, many of whom repented and found mercy. Christ herein has set an example to all the sons of men, to be ready to forgive words spoken against them: *I, as a deaf man, heard not.* Observe, *They shall be forgiven unto men, not to devils;* this is love to the whole world of mankind, above the world of fallen angels, that all sin is pardonable to them.

(2.) Here is an exception of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which is here declared to be the only unpardonable sin. See here,

[1.] What this sin is; it is speaking against the Holy Ghost. See what malignity there is in tongues, when the only unpardonable sin is so. But Jesus knew their thoughts, *v.* 25. It is not all speaking against the person or essence of the Holy Ghost, or some of his more private operations, or merely the resisting of his internal working in the sin or himself, that is here meant; for who then should be saved? It is adjudged in our law, that an act of indemnity shall always be construed in favour of that grace and clemency which is the intention of the act; and therefore the exceptions in the act are not to be extended further than needs must. The gospel is an act of indemnity; none are excepted by name, nor any by description, but these only that blaspheme the Holy Ghost; which therefore must be construed in the narrowest sense: all presuming sinners are effectually cut off by the conditions of the indemnity, faith and repentance; and therefore the other exceptions must not be stretched far; and this blasphemy is excepted, not for any defect of mercy in God or merit in Christ, but because it inevitably leaves the sinner in infidelity and impenitency. We have reason to think that none are guilty of this sin, who believe that Christ is the Son of God, and sincerely desire to have part in his merit and mercy; and those who fear they have committed this sin, give a good sign that they have not. The learned Dr. Whitby very well observes, that Christ speaks not of what was now said or done, but of what should be, (Mark 3. 28. Luke 12. 10.) *Whosoever shall blaspheme.* As for those who blasphemed Christ when he was here upon earth, and called him a Winebibber, a Deceiver, a Blasphemer, and the like, they had some colour of excuse, because of the meanness of his appearance, and the prejudices of the nation against him; and the proof of his divine mission was not perfected till after his ascension; and therefore, upon their repentance, they shall be pardoned: and it is hoped that they may be convinced by the pouring out of the Spirit, as many of them were, who had been his betrayers and murderers. But if, when the Holy Ghost is given, in his inward gifts of revelation, speaking with tongues, and the like, such as were the distributions of the Spirit among the apostles, if they continue to blaspheme the Spirit likewise, as an evil spirit, there is no hope of them, that they will ever be brought to believe in Christ; for, First, Those gifts of the Holy Ghost in the apostles were the last proof that God designed to make use of for the confirming of the gospel, and were still kept in reserve, when other methods preceded. Secondly, This was the most powerful evidence, and more apt to convince than miracles themselves. Thirdly, These therefore who

blaspheme this dispensation of the Spirit, cannot possibly be brought to believe in Christ; those who shall impute them to a collusion with Satan, as the Pharisees did the miracles, what can convince them? This is such a strong hold of infidelity as a man can never be beaten out of, and is therefore unpardonable, because hereby repentance is hid from the sinner's eyes.

[2.] What the sentence is that is passed upon it; *It shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* As in the then present state of the Jewish church, there was no sacrifice of expiation for the soul that sinned presumptuously; so neither under the dispensation of gospel-grace, which is often in scripture called *the world to come*, shall there be any pardon to such as tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and do despite to the Spirit of grace: there is no cure for a sin so directly against the remedy. It was a rule in our old law, No sanctuary for sacrilege. Or, *It shall be forgiven, neither now, in the sinner's own conscience, nor in the great day*, when the pardon shall be published. Or, This is a sin that exposes the sinner both to temporal and eternal punishment, both to present wrath and the wrath to come.

2. Christ speaks here concerning other wicked words, the products of corruption reigning in the heart, and breaking out thence, v. 33—35. It was said (v. 25.) that *Jesus knew their thoughts*, and here he spoke with an eye to them, showing that it was not strange that they should speak so ill, when their hearts were so full of enmity and malice; which yet they often endeavoured to cloak and cover, by feigning themselves just men. Our Lord Jesus therefore points to the springs, and heals them; let the heart be sanctified, and it will appear in our words.

(1.) The heart is the *root*, the language is the *fruit*; (v. 33.) if the nature of the tree be good, it will bring forth fruit accordingly. Where grace is the reigning principle in the heart, the language will be the language of Canaan; and, on the contrary, whatever lust reigns in the heart it will break out; diseased lungs make an offensive breath: men's language discovers what country they are of, so likewise *what manner of spirit they are of*: "*Either make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; get pure hearts and then you will have pure lips and pure lives; or else the tree will be corrupt, and the fruit accordingly.*" You may make a crab-stock to become a good tree, by grafting into it a shoot from a good tree, and then the fruit will be good; but if the tree be still the same, plant it where you will, and water it how you will, the fruit will be still corrupt." Note, Unless the heart be transformed, the life will never be thoroughly reformed. These Pharisees were shy of speaking out their wicked thoughts of Jesus Christ; but Christ here intimates, how vain it was for them to seek to hide that root of bitterness in them, that bore this gall and wormwood, when they never sought to mortify it. Note, It should be more our care to be good really, than to seem good outwardly.

(2.) The heart is the *fountain*, the words are the streams; (v. 34.) *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*, as the streams are the overflowings of the spring. A wicked heart is said to *send forth wickedness, as a fountain casts forth her waters*, Jer. 6. 7. *A troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring*, such as Solomon speaks of, (Prov. 25. 26.) must needs send forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Evil words are the natural, genuine product of an evil heart. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify the corrupt communication. This they wanted, they were evil; and how can ye, being evil, speak good things? They were a generation of vi-

fers; John Baptist had called them so, (ch. 3. 7.) and they were all still the same; for can the Ethiopian change his skin? The people looked upon the Pharisees as a generation of saints, but Christ calls them a *generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent*, that had an enmity to Christ and his gospel. New what could be expected from a *generation of vipers*, but that which is poisonous and malignant? Can the viper be otherwise than venomous? Note, Bad things may be expected from bad people, as said the proverb of the ancients, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, 1 Sam. 24. 13. *The vile person will speak villany*, Isa. 32. 6. Those who are themselves evil, have neither skill nor will to speak good things, as they should be spoken. Christ would have his disciples know what sort of men they were to live among, that they might know what to look for. They are as *Ezekiel among scorpions*, (Ezek. 2. 6.) and must not think it strange if they be stung and bitten.

(3.) The heart is the *treasury*, the words are the things brought out of that treasury; (v. 35.) and from hence men's characters may be drawn, and may be judged of.

[1.] It is the character of a *good man*, that he has a *good treasure in his heart*, and from thence brings forth good things, as there is occasion. Graces, comforts, experiences, good knowledge, good affections, good resolutions, these are a *good treasure in the heart*; the word of God hidden there, the law of God written there, divine truths dwelling and ruling there, are a treasure there, valuable and suitable, kept safe and kept secret, as the stores of the good house-holder, but ready for use upon all occasions. A good man, thus furnished, will bring forth, as Joseph out of his stores; will be speaking and doing that which is good, for God's glory, and the edification of others. See Prov. 10. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32. This is *bringing forth good things*. Some pretend to good expenses that have not a *good treasure*—such will soon be bankrupts: some pretend to have a good treasure within, but give no proof of it. they hope they have it in them, and thank God, whatever their words and actions are, they have good hearts; but *faith without works is dead*; and some have a *good treasure* of wisdom and knowledge, but they are not communicative, they do not bring forth out of it: they have a talent, but know not how to trade with it. The complete christian in this bears the image of God, that he both is good, and does good.

[2.] It is the character of an *evil man*, that he has an *evil treasure in his heart*, and out of it bringeth forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions dwelling and reigning in the heart, are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to the dishonour of God, and the hurt of others. See Gen. 6. 5. 12. Matth. 15. 18—20. Jam. 1. 15. But *treasures of wickedness* (Prov. 10. 2.) will be *treasures of wrath*.

3. Christ speaks here concerning *idle words*, and shows what evil there is in them; (v. 36, 37.) much more is there in such wicked words as the Pharisees spoke. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that that may be a check upon our tongues; and let us consider,

(1.) How particular the account will be of tonguesins in that day: even for every idle word, or discourse, that men speak, they shall give account. This intimates, [1.] That God takes notice of every word we say, even that which we ourselves do not take notice of. See Ps. 139. 4. *Not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it*: though spoken without regard or design, God takes cognizance of it. [2.] That vain, idle, impertinent talk is displeasing to God, which tends not to any good purpose, is not good to any use of edifying; it is the product of

a vain and trifling heart. These *idle words* are the same with that *foolish talking and jesting* which is forbidden, Eph. 5. 4. This is that sin which is seldom wanting in the *multitude of words, unprofitable talk*, Job 15. 3. [3.] We must shortly account for these idle words; they will be produced in evidence against us, to prove us unprofitable servants, that have not improved the faculties of reason and speech, which are part of the talents we are intrusted with. If we repent not of our idle words, and our account for them be not balanced by the blood of Christ, we are undone.

(2.) How strict the judgment will be upon that account; (v. 37.) *By thy words thou shalt be justified or condemned*; a common rule in men's judgments, and here applied to God's. Note, the constant tenor of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not gracious, will be an evidence for us, or against us, at the great day. Those who seemed to be religious, but bridled not their tongue, will then be found to have put a cheat upon themselves with a vain religion, Jam. 1. 26. Some think that Christ here refers to that of Eliphaz, (Job 15. 6.) *Thine own mouth condemns thee, and not I*; or, rather to that of Solomon, (Prov. 18. 21.) *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*.

38. Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 43. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

It is probable that these Pharisees with whom Christ is here in discourse, were not the same that cavilled at him, (v. 24.) and would not credit the signs he gave; but another set of them, who saw that there was no reason to discredit them, but would not content themselves with the signs he gave, nor admit the evidence of them unless he would give them such further proof as they should demand. Here

1. Their address to him, v. 38. They compliment him with the title of *Master*, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ's servants, who call him *Master*. Their request is, *We would see a sign from thee*. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove his divine mission: see Exod. 4. 8, 9. He came to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him *sent of God*. Note, It is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that an excuse for not subscribing to him; but a man's *effience* will never be his *defence*.

II. His answer to this address, this insolent demand.

1. He condemns the demand, as the language of *an evil and adulterous generation*, v. 39. He fastens the charge, not only on the Scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers; they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles. They were an *adulterous generation*, (1.) As an adulterous brood; so miserably degenerated from the faith and obedience of their ancestors, that Abraham and Israel acknowledged them not. See Isa. 57. 3. Or, (2.) As an adulterous wife; they departed from that God, to whom by covenant they had been espoused; they were not guilty of the whoredom of idolatry, as they had been before the captivity, but they were guilty of infidelity, and all iniquity, and that is whoredom too; they did not look after gods of their own making, but they looked for signs of their own devising; and that was adultery.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but *that of the prophet Jonas*. Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humours. Those who *ask amiss, ask, and have not*. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief.

Justly might Christ have said, They shall never see another miracle; but see his wonderful goodness; (1.) They shall have the same signs still repeated, for their further benefit, and more abundant conviction. (2.) They shall have one sign of a different kind from all these, and that is, *the resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power*, called here *the sign of the prophet Jonas*; this was yet reserved for their conviction, and was intended to be the greater proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be *the Son of God with power*, Rom. 1. 4. That was such a sign as surpassed all the rest, completed and crowned them. "If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this, (Exod. 4. 9.) and if this will not convince them, nothing will." And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, *His disciples came and stole him away*; for none are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see.

Now this sign of the prophet Jonas he further explains here; (v. 40.) *As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and then came out again safe and well, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then shall rise again*. [1.] The grave was to Christ as the belly of the fish was to Jonah; thither he was thrown, as a ransom for others ready to be lost in a storm; there he lay, as in the belly of hell, (Jonah 2. 2.) and seemed to be as *cast out of God's*

signu. [2.] He continued in the grave just as long as Jonah continued in the fish's belly, *three days and three nights*; not three whole days and nights: it is probable, Jonah did not lie so long in the whale's belly, but part of three natural days; (*ὡς ἡμερᾶς*, the Greeks called them;) he was buried in the afternoon of the sixth day of the week, and rose again in the morning of the first day; it is a manner of speech very usual; see 1 Kings 20. 29. Esth. 4. 16.—5. 1. Luke 2. 21. So long Jonah was a prisoner for his own sins, so long Christ was a Prisoner for ours. [3.] As Jonah in the whale's belly comforted himself with an assurance that yet he should look again *toward God's holy temple*, (Jonah 2. 4.) so Christ, when he lay in the grave, is expressly said to *rest in hope*, as one assured he should *not see corruption*, Acts 2. 26, 27. [4.] As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from *the congregation of the dead*, (for dead things are said to be *formed from under the water*, Job 26. 5.) so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave, to send abroad his gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Christ takes this occasion to represent the sad characters and condition of that generation in which he lived, a generation that would not be reformed, and therefore could not but be ruined; and he gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day. Persons and things now appear under false colours; characters and conditions are here changeable; if therefore we would make a right estimate, we must take our measures from the last judgment; things are really, what they are eternally.

Now Christ represents the people of the Jews,

(1.) As a generation that would be condemned by the men of Nineveh, whose *repenting at the preaching of Jonas would rise up in judgment against them*, v. 41. Christ's resurrection will be the sign of the prophet Jonas to them: but it will not have so happy an effect upon them, as that of Jonas had upon the Ninevites, for they were by it brought to such a repentance as prevented their ruin; but the Jews will be hardened in an unbelief that shall hasten their ruin; and in the day of judgment, the repentance of the Ninevites will be mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, and consequently the condemnation, of those to whom Christ preached then, and of those to whom Christ is preached now; for this reason, because Christ is greater than Jonah. [1.] Jonah was but a man, subject to like passions, to like sinful passions, as we are; but Christ is the Son of God. [2.] Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, he came among the strangers that were prejudiced against his country; but Christ came to his own, when he preached to the Jews, and much more when he is preached among professing Christians, that are called by his name. [3.] Jonah preached but one short sermon, and that with no great solemnity, but as he passed along the streets; Christ renews his calls, sat and taught, taught in the synagogues. [4.] Jonah preached nothing but wrath and ruin within forty days, gave no instructions, directions, or encouragements, to repent; but Christ, beside the warning given us of our danger, has showed wherein we must repent, and assured us of acceptance upon our repentance, because *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. [5.] Jonah wrought no miracle to confirm his doctrine, showed no good-will to the Ninevites; but Christ wrought abundance of miracles, and all miracles of mercy: yet the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but the Jews were not wrought upon by Christ's preaching. Note, the goodness of some, who have less helps and advantages for their souls, will aggravate the badness of those who have much greater. Those who by

the twilight discover *the things that belong to their peace*, will shame those who grope at noon-day.

(2.) As a generation that would be condemned by the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, v. 42. The Ninevites would shame them for not repenting, the queen of Sheba, for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is in every thing greater than Solomon. [1.] The queen of Sheba had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ, to sit at his feet, and hear his word. [2.] Solomon was but a wise man, but Christ is Wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. [3.] The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; she was a woman unfit for travel, the journey long and perilous; she was a queen, and what would become of her own country in her absence? We have no such cares to hinder us. [4.] She could not be sure that it would be worth her while to go so far on this errand; fame uses to flatter men, and perhaps she might have in her own country or court wise men sufficient to instruct her; yet, having heard of Solomon's fame, she would see him; but we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties. [5.] She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us: Behold, he stands at the door, and knocks. [6.] It should seem, the wisdom the queen of Sheba came for, was only philosophy and politics; but the wisdom that is to be had with Christ, is wisdom to salvation. [7.] She could only hear Solomon's wisdom; he could not give her wisdom; but Christ will give wisdom to those who come to him; nay, he will himself be made of God to them Wisdom: so that upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon.

(3.) As a generation that were resolved to continue in the possession, and under the power, of Satan, notwithstanding all the methods that were used to dispossess him and rescue them. They are compared to one out of whom the Devil is gone, but returns with double force, v. 43—45. The Devil is here called *the unclean spirit*, for he has lost all his purity, and delights in and promotes all manner of impurity among men. Now,

[1.] The parable represents his possessing men's bodies: Christ having lately cast out a devil, and they having said, *he had a devil*, gave occasion to show how much they were under the power of Satan. This is a further proof that Christ did not cast out devils by compact with the Devil, for then he would soon have returned again; but Christ's ejectment of him was final, and such as barred a re-entry: we find him charging the evil spirit to *go out, and enter no more*, Mark 9. 25. Probably the Devil was wont sometimes thus to sport with those he had possession of; he would go out, and then return again with more fury; hence the lucid intervals of these in that condition were commonly followed with the more violent fits. When the Devil is gone out, he is uneasy, for *he sleeps not except he have done mischief*; (Prov. 4. 16.) *he walks in dry places*, like one that is very melancholy; *he seeks rest, but finds none*, till he returns again. When Christ cast the legion out of the man, they begged leave to enter into the swine, where they went not long in dry places, but into the lake presently.

[2.] The application of the parable makes it to represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation: *So shall it be with this wicked generation, that now resist, and will finally reject, the gospel of Christ. The Devil, who by the labours of Christ*

and his disciples, had been cast out of many of the Jews, sought for rest among the heathen, from whose persons and temples the christians would every where expel him: so Dr. Whitby: or finding no where else in the heathen world such pleasant, desirable habitations, to his satisfaction, as here in the heart of the Jews; so Dr. Hammond: he shall therefore enter again into them, for Christ had not found admission among them, and they, by their prodigious wickedness and obstinate unbelief, were still more ready than ever to receive him; and then he shall take a durable possession here, and the state of this people is likely to be more desperately damnable (so Dr. Hammond) than it was before Christ came among them, or would have been if Satan had never been cast out.

The body of that nation is here represented, *First*, As an apostate people. After the captivity in Babylon, they began to reform, left their idols, and appeared with some face of religion; but they soon corrupted themselves again: though they never relapsed into idolatry, they fell into all manner of impiety and profaneness, grew worse and worse, and added to all the rest of their wickedness a wilful contempt of, and opposition to, Christ and his gospel. *Secondly*, As a people marked for ruin. A new commission was passing the seals against that hypocritical nation, the people of God's wrath, (like that, Isa. 10. 6.) and their destruction by the Romans was likely to be greater than any other, as their sins had been more flagrant: then it was that *wrath came upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Let this be a warning to all nations and churches, to take heed of leaving their first love, of letting fall a good work of reformation begun among them, and returning to that wickedness which they seemed to have forsaken; for *the last state of such will be worse than the first*.

46. While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him*. 47. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49. And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! 50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Many excellent, useful sayings came from the mouth of our Lord Jesus upon particular occasions; even his digressions were instructive, as well as his set discourses: as here,

Observe,
1. How Christ was interrupted in his preaching by *his mother and his brethren, that stood without, desiring to speak with him*; (v. 46, 47.) which desire of theirs was conveyed to him through the crowd. It is needless to inquire which of his brethren they were that came along with his mother: perhaps they were those *who did not believe in him*; (John 7. 5.) or what their business was; perhaps it was only designed to oblige him to break off, for fear he should fatigue himself, or to caution him to take heed of giving offence by his discourse to the Pharisees, and of involving himself in a difficulty, as if they could teach him wisdom.

1. He was as yet talking to the people. Note, Christ's preaching was talking; it was plain, easy,

and familiar, and suited to their capacity and case. What Christ had delivered had been cavilled at, and yet he went on. Note, The opposition we meet with in our work, must not drive us from it. He left off talking with the Pharisees, for he saw he could do no good with them; but continued to talk to the common people, who, not having such a conceit of their knowledge as the Pharisees had, were willing to learn.

2. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. They had the advantage of his daily converse in private, and therefore were less mindful to attend upon his public preaching. Note, Frequently these who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace are most negligent. Familiarity and easiness of access breed some degree of contempt. We are apt to neglect *this* day, which we think we may have any day, forgetting that it is only the present time we can be sure of; to-morrow is none of ours. There is too much truth in that common proverb, "The nearer the church, the further from God;" it is pity it should be so.

3. They not only would not hear him themselves, but they interrupted others that *heard him gladly*. The Devil was a sworn enemy to our Saviour's preaching. He had sought to baffle his discourse by the unreasonable cavils of the Scribes and Pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off, by the unreasonable visits of relations. Note, We often meet with hindrances and obstructions in our work, by our friends that are about us, and are taken off by civil respects from our spiritual concerns. These who really wish well to us and to our work, may sometimes, by their indiscretion, prove our back-friends, and impediments to us in our duty; as *Peter* was offensive to Christ, with his "*Master, spare thyself*," when he thought himself very officious. The mother of our Lord desired to speak with him; it seems she had not then learned to command her Son, as the iniquity and idolatry of the church of Rome has since pretended to teach her: nor was she so free from fault and folly as they would make her. It was Christ's prerogative, and not his mother's, to do every thing wisely, and well, and in its season. Christ once said to his mother, *How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not, that I must be about my Father's business?* And it was then said, *she laid up that saying in her heart*; (Luke 2. 49.) but if she had remembered it now, she would not have given him this interruption when he was about his Father's business. Note, There is many a good truth, that we thought was well laid up, when we heard it, which yet is out of the way, when we have occasion to use it.

II. How he resented this interruption, v. 48—50.

1. He would not hearken to it; he was so intent upon his work, that no natural or civil respects should take him off from it. *Who is my mother and who are my brethren?* Not that natural affection is to be put off, or that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents or unkind to other relations; but *every thing is beautiful in its season*, and the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. When our regard to our relations comes in competition with the service of God, and the improving of an opportunity to do good, in such a case, we must *say to our Father, I have not seen him*, as Levi did, Dent. 33. 9. The nearest relations must be comparatively hated, that is, we must love them less than Christ, (Luke 14. 26.) and our duty to God must have the preference. This Christ has here given us an example of; *the zeal of God's house* did so far *eat him up*, that it made him not only forget himself, but forget his dearest relations.

And we must not take it ill of our friends, nor put it upon the score of their wickedness, if they prefer the pleasing of God before the pleasing of us; but we must readily forgive those neglects, which may be easily imputed to a pious zeal for God's glory and others' good. Nay, We must deny ourselves and our own satisfaction, rather than do that which may any way divert our friends from, or distract them in, their duty to God.

2. He took that occasion to prefer his disciples, who were his spiritual kindred, before his natural relations as such; which was a good reason why he would not leave preaching to speak with his brethren. He would rather be profiting his disciples, than pleasing his relations. Observe,

(1.) The description of Christ's disciples. They are such as *do the will of his Father*; not only hear it, and know it, and talk of it, but *do it*; for doing the will of God is the best preparative for discipleship, (John 7. 17.) and the best proof of it; (*ch. 7. 21.*) that denominates us his disciples indeed. Christ does not say, "Whosoever shall do my will," for he came not to seek or do his own will distinct from his Father's: his will and his Father's are the same; but he refers us to his Father's will, because now in his present state and work he referred himself to it, John 6. 38.

(2.) The dignity of Christ's disciples: *The same is my brother, and sister, and mother.* His disciples, that had left all to follow him, and embraced his doctrine, were dearer to him than any that were akin to him according to the flesh. They had preferred Christ before relations; they *left their Father*, (*ch. 4. 22.—10. 37.*) and now to make them amends, and to show that there was no love lost, he preferred them before his relations. Did not they hereby receive, in point of honour, *an hundred fold*? *ch. 19. 29.* It was very endearing and very encouraging for Christ to say, *Behold my mother and my brethren*; yet it was not *their* privilege alone, *this honour have all the saints.* Note, All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, converses freely with them as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them; when he died, he left them rich legacies, now he is in heaven he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to *do the kinsman's part*, (Ruth 3. 13.) nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The favour which Christ did to his countrymen in preaching the kingdom of heaven to them, v. 1, 2. He preached to them in parables, and here gives the reason why he chose that way of instructing, v. 10.. 17. And the evangelist gives another reason, v. 34, 35. There are eight parables recorded in this chapter, which are designed to represent the kingdom of heaven, the method of planting the gospel-kingdom in the world, and of its growth and success. The great truths and laws of that kingdom are in other scriptures laid down plainly, and without parables; but some circumstances of its beginning and progress are here laid open in parables. 1. Here is one parable to show what are the great hindrances of people's profiting by the word of the gospel, and in how many it comes short of its end, through their own folly, and that is the parable of the four sorts of ground, delivered, v. 3.. 9. and expounded v. 18.. 23. 2. Here are two parables intended to show that there would be a mixture of good and bad in the gospel-church, which would continue till the great separation between them in the judgment-day: the parable of the tares put forth, (v. 24.. 30.) and expounded at the request of the disciples; (v. 36.. 43.) and that of the net cast into the sea, v. 47.. 50. 3. Here are two parables intended to show that the gospel-church should be very small at first, but that in process of time it

should become a considerable body; that of the grain of mustard-seed, (v. 31, 32.) and that of the leaven, v. 33. 4. Here are two parables, intended to show that those who expect salvation by the gospel must be willing to venture all, and quit all, in the prospect of it, and that they shall be no losers by the bargain; that of the treasure hid in the field, (v. 44.) and that of the pearl of great price, v. 45, 46. 5. Here is one parable intended for direction to the disciples, to make use of the instructions he had given them for the benefit of others; and that is the parable of the good householder, v. 51, 52. 11. The contempt which his countrymen put upon him on account of the meanness of his parentage, v. 53.. 58.

1. **T**HE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. 2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow: 4. And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell on the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. 5. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. 8. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. 9. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11. He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. 12. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. 13. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. 14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and *their* eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. 17. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard

them. 18. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side. 20. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it : 21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while ; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. 23. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it ; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

We have here Christ's preaching, and may observe,

1. *When* Christ preached this sermon ; it was the same day that he preached the sermon in the foregoing chapter ; so unwearied was he in doing good, and working the works of him that sent him. Note, Christ was for preaching both ends of the day, and has by his example recommended that practice to his church ; we must in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand, Eccl. 11. 6. An afternoon sermon well heard, will be so far from driving out the morning sermon, that it will rather clench it, and fasten the nail in a sure place. Though Christ had been in the morning opposed and cavilled at by his enemies, disturbed and interrupted by his friends, yet he went on with his work ; and in the latter part of the day, we do not find that he met with such discouragements. Those who with courage and zeal break through difficulties in God's service, will perhaps find them not so apt to recur as they fear. Resist them, and they will flee.

2. *To whom* he preached ; there were great multitudes gathered together to him, and they were the auditors ; we do not find that any of the Scribes or Pharisees were present. They were willing to hear him when he preached in the synagogue, (ch. 12. 9, 14.) but they thought it below them to hear a sermon by the sea-side, though Christ himself was the Preacher ; and truly he had better have their room than their company, for now they were absent, he went on quietly and without contradiction. Note, Sometimes there is most of the power of religion where there is less of the pomp of it : *The poor receive the gospel*. When Christ went to the sea-side, multitudes were presently gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court ; where Christ is, there is the church, though it be by the sea-side. Note, Those who would get good by the word, must be willing to follow it in all its removes ; when the ark shifts, shift after it. The Pharisees had been labouring, by base calumnies and suggestions, to drive the people off from following Christ, but they still flocked after him as much as ever. Note, Christ will be glorified in spite of all opposition ; he will be followed.

3. *Where* he preached this sermon.

(1.) His meeting-place was the sea-side. He went out of the house (because there was no room for the

auditory) into the open air. It was pity but such a Preacher should have had the most spacious, sumptuous, and convenient place to preach in, that could be devised, like one of the Roman theatres ; but he was now in his state of humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he denied himself the honours due to him : as he had not a house of his own to live in, so he had not a chapel of his own to preach in. By this he teaches us in the external circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences which God in his providence allots to us. When Christ was born, he was crowded into the stable, and now to the sea-side, upon the strand, where all persons might come to him with freedom. He that was Truth itself sought no corners, (no *adyta*,) as the pagan mysteries did. *Wisdom cries without*, Prov. 1. 20. John 18. 20.

(2.) His pulpit was a ship ; not like Ezra's pulpit, that was made for the purpose, (Neh. 8. 4.) but converted to this use for want of a better. No place amiss for such a Preacher, whose presence dignified and consecrated any place : let not those who preach Christ be ashamed, though they have mean and inconvenient places to preach in. Some observe, that the people stand upon dry ground and firm ground, while the Preacher was upon the water in more hazard. Ministers are most exposed to trouble. Here was a true rostrum, a ship-pulpit.

4. *What and how* he preached. (1.) *He spake many things unto them*. Many more it is likely than are here recorded, but all excellent and necessary things, things that belong to our peace, things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven ; they were not trifles, but things of everlasting consequence, that Christ spoke of. It concerns us to give a more earnest heed, when Christ has so many things to say to us, that we miss not any of them. (2.) *What he spake was in parables* : a parable sometimes signifies any wise, weighty saying that is instructive ; but here in the gospels it generally signifies a continued similitude or comparison, by which spiritual and heavenly things were described in language borrowed from the things of this life. It was a way of teaching used very much, not only by the Jewish Rabbins, but by the Arabians, and the other wise men of the east ; and it was found very profitable, and the more so for its being pleasant. Our Saviour used it much, and in it condescended to the capacities of people, and lisped to them in their own language. God had long used similitudes by his servants the prophets, (Hos. 12. 10.) and to little purpose ; now he uses similitudes by his Son ; surely they will reverence him who speaks from heaven, and of heavenly things, and yet clothes them with expressions borrowed from things earthly. See John 3. 12. So descending in a cloud. Now,

1. We have here the general reason why Christ taught in parables. The disciples were a little surprised at it, for hitherto, in his preaching, he had not much used it, and therefore they ask, *Why speakest thou to them in parables* ? Because they were truly desirous that the people might hear with understanding. They do not say, *Why speakest thou to us* ? (they knew how to get the parables explained,) but to *them*. Note, We ought to be concerned for the edification of others, as well as for our own, by the word preached ; and if ourselves be strong, yet to bear the infirmities of the weak.

To this question Christ answers largely, v. 11—17. where he tells them, that *therefore* he preached by parables, because thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to them who were willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant ; and thus the gospel would be a *savour of life* to some, and of *death* to others. A parable, like the pillar

of cloud and fire, turns a dark side towards Egyptians, which confounds them, but a light side towards Israelites, which comforts them, and so answers a double intention. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others. Now,

1. This reason is laid down, (*v. 11.*) *Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.* That is, (1.) The disciples had knowledge, but the people had not. You know already something of these mysteries, and need not in this familiar way to be instructed; but the people are ignorant, are yet but babes, and must be taught as such by plain similitudes, being yet incapable of receiving instruction in any other way: for though they have eyes, they know not how to use them; so some. Or, (2.) The disciples were well inclined to the knowledge of gospel-mysteries, and would search into the parables, and by them would be led into a more intimate acquaintance with those mysteries; but the carnal hearers that rested in bare hearing, and would not be at the pains to look further, nor to ask the meaning of the parables, would be never the wiser, and so would justly suffer for their remissness. A parable is a shell that keeps good fruit for the diligent, but keeps it from the slothful. Note, There are mysteries in the kingdom of heaven, and without controversy, *great is the mystery of godliness*: Christ's incarnation, satisfaction, intercession, our justification and sanctification by union with Christ, and indeed the whole work of redemption, from first to last, are *mysteries*, could never have been discovered but by divine revelation. (1. Cor. 15. 51.) were at this time discovered but in part to the disciples, and will never be fully discovered till the veil shall be rent; but the mysteriousness of gospel-truth should not discourage us from, but quicken us in, our inquiries after it and searches into it. [1.] It is graciously given to the disciples of Christ to be acquainted with these mysteries. Knowledge is the first gift of God, and it is a distinguishing gift: (Prov. 2. 6.) it was given to the apostles, because they were Christ's constant followers and attendants. Note, The nearer we draw to Christ, and the more we converse with him, the better acquainted we shall be with gospel-mysteries. [2.] It is given to all true believers, who have an experimental knowledge of the gospel-mysteries, and that is without doubt the best knowledge: a principle of grace in the heart is that which makes men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and in the faith of Christ, and so in the meaning of parables; and for want of that, Nicodemus, a master in Israel, talked of the *new birth* as a blind man of colours. [3.] There are those to whom this knowledge is not given, and a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from above; (John 3. 27.) and be it remembered, that God is debtor to no man; his grace is his own; he gives or withholds it at pleasure; (Rom. 11. 35.) the difference must be resolved into God's sovereignty, as before, *ch. 11. 25, 26.*

2. This reason is further illustrated by the rule God observes in dispensing his gifts; he bestows them on those who improve them, but takes them away from those who bury them. It is a rule among men, that they will rather intrust their money with those who have increased their estates by their industry, than with those who have diminished them by their slothfulness.

(1.) Here is a promise to him that has, that has true grace, pursuant to the election of grace, that has, and uses what he has; he shall have more abundance: God's favours are earnest of further favours; where he lays the foundation, he will build upon it. Christ's disciples used the knowledge they now had, and they had more abundance at the pouring out of the Spirit, Acts 2. They who have the truth of grace, shall have the *increase* of grace, even to an

abundance in glory, Prov. 4. 18. *Joseph—He will add*, Gen. 30. 24.

(2.) Here is a threatening to him that has not, that has no desire of grace, that makes no right use of the gifts and graces he has; has no root, no solid principle; that has, but uses not what he has; from him shall be taken away that which he has, or seems to have. His leaves shall wither, his gifts decay; the means of grace he has, and makes no use of, shall be taken from him; God will *call in* his talents out of their hands, that are likely to become bankrupts quickly.

3. This reason is particularly explained, with reference to the two sorts of people Christ had to do with.

(1.) Some were willingly ignorant; and such were amused by the parables, (*v. 13.*) *because they seeing, see not.* They had shut their eyes against the clear light of Christ's plainer preaching, and therefore were now left in the dark. Seeing Christ's person, they see not his glory, see no difference between him and another man; seeing his miracles, and hearing his preaching, they see not, they hear not with any concern or application, they understand neither. Note, [1.] There are many that see the gospel-light, and hear the gospel-sound, but it never reaches their hearts, nor has it any place in them. [2.] It is just with God to take away the light from those who shut their eyes against it; that such as will be ignorant, may be so; and God's dealing thus with them magnifies his distinguishing grace to his disciples.

Now in this scripture would be fulfilled, *v. 14, 15.* It is quoted from Isa. 6. 9, 10. The evangelical prophet that spoke most plainly of gospel-grace, foretold the contempt of it, and the consequences of that contempt. It is referred to no less than six times in the New Testament, which intimates, that in gospel-times spiritual judgments would be most common, which make least noise, but are most dreadful. That which was spoken of the sinners in Isaiah's time, was fulfilled in those in Christ's time, and it is still fulfilling every day; for while the wicked heart of man keeps up the same sin, the righteous hand of God inflicts the same punishment. Here is,

First, A description of sinners' wilful blindness and hardness, which is their sin. *This people's heart is waxed gross; it is fattened, so the word is; which denotes both sensuality and senselessness; (Ps. 119. 70.)* secure under the word and rod of God, and scornful as Jeshurun, that *waxed fat and kicked*, Deut. 32. 15. And when the heart is thus heavy, no wonder that the ears are dull of hearing; the whispers of the Spirit they hear not at all; the loud calls of the word, though the word be nigh them, they regard not, nor are at all affected with it: *They stop their ears*, Ps. 58. 4, 5. And because they are resolved to be ignorant, they shut both the learning senses; for their eyes also they have closed, resolved that they would not see light come into the world, when the Sun of righteousness arose, but they shut their windows, because they *loved darkness rather than light*, John 3. 19. 2 Pet. 3. 5.

Secondly, A description of that judicial blindness, which is the just punishment of this. *"By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand"*; what means of grace you have, shall be to no purpose to you; though, in mercy to others, they are continued, yet, in judgment to you, the blessing upon them is denied." The saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell, is to sit under the most lively ordinances with a dead, stupid, untouched heart. To hear God's word, and see his providences, and yet not to understand and perceive his will, either in the one or in the other, is the greatest sin and the greatest judgment that can be. Observe, It is God's work to *give an understanding heart*, and he often, in a way of righteous judgment, denies it to those to

whom he has given the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, in vain. Thus does God choose sinners' delusions, (Isa. 66. 4.) and binds them over to the greatest ruin, by giving them up to their own heart's lusts; (Ps. 81. 11, 12.) *Let them alone*; (Hos. 4. 17.) *My Spirit shall not always strive*, Gen. 6. 3.

Thirdly, The woeful effect and consequence of this; *Let at any time they should see*. They will not see, because they will not turn; and God says that they shall not see, because they shall not turn; *Let they should be converted, and I should heal them*.

Note, 1. That seeing, hearing, and understanding, are necessary to conversion; for God, in working grace, deals with men as men, as rational agents; he draws with the cords of a man, changes the heart by opening the eyes, and turns from the power of Satan into God, by turning first from darkness to light, Acts 26. 18. 2. All those who are truly converted to God, shall certainly be healed by him. "If they be converted I shall heal them, I shall save them:" so that if sinners perish, it is not to be imputed to God, but to themselves; they foolishly expected to be healed, without being converted. 3. It is just with God to deny his grace to those who have long and often refused the proposals of it, and resisted the power of it. Pharaoh, for a good while, hardened his own heart, (Exod. 8. 15, 32.) and afterwards God hardened it, ch. 9. 12.—10. 20. Let us therefore fear, lest by sinning against the divine grace, we sin it away.

(2.) Others were effectually called to be the disciples of Christ, and were truly desirous to be taught of him; and they were instructed, and made to improve greatly in knowledge, by these parables, especially when they were expounded; and by them the things of God were made more plain and easy, more intelligible and familiar, and more apt to be remembered, (v. 16, 17.) *Your eyes see, your ears hear*. They saw the glory of God in Christ's person; they heard the mind of God in Christ's doctrine; they saw much, and were desirous to see more, and thereby were prepared to receive further instruction; they had opportunity for it, by being constant attendants on Christ, and they should have it from day to day, and grace with it. Now this Christ speaks of,

[1.] As a blessing: "*Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear*; it is your happiness, and it is a happiness for which you are indebted to the peculiar favour and blessing of God." It is a promised blessing, that in the days of the Messiah the eyes of them that see, shall not be dim, Isa. 32. 3. The eyes of the meanest believer that knows experimentally the grace of Christ, are more blessed than those of the greatest scholars, the greatest masters in experimental philosophy, that are strangers to God; who, like the other gods they serve, have eyes, and see not. *Blessed are your eyes*. Note, True blessedness is entailed upon the right understanding and due improvement of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The hearing ear and the seeing eye are God's work in those who are sanctified; they are the work of his grace, (Prov. 20. 12.) and they are a blessed work, which shall be fulfilled with power, when those who now see through a glass darkly, shall see face to face. It was to illustrate this blessedness that Christ said so much of the misery of those who are left in ignorance; *they have eyes and see not*; but *blessed are your eyes*. Note, The knowledge of Christ is a distinguishing favour to those who have it, and upon that account it lays under the greater obligations: see John 14. 22. The apostles were to teach others, and therefore were themselves blessed with the clearest discoveries of divine truth: *The watchmen shall see eye to eye*, Isa. 52. 8.

[2.] As a transcendent blessing, desired by, but not granted to, many prophets and righteous men, v. 17. The Old-Testament saints, who had some glimpses, some glimmerings, of gospel-light, coveted earnestly further discoveries. They had the types, shadows, and prophecies, of those things, but longed to see the Substance, that glorious end of those things which they could not steadfastly look unto; that glorious inside of those things which they could not look into. They desired to see the great Salvation, the Consolation of Israel, but did not see it, because the fulness of time was not yet come. Note, First, Those who know something of Christ, cannot but covet to know more. Secondly, The discoveries of divine grace are made, even to prophets and righteous men, but according to the dispensation they are under. Though they were the favourites of Heaven, with whom God's secret was, yet they have not seen the things which they desired to see, because God had determined not to bring them to light yet; and his favours shall not anticipate his counsels. There was then, as there is still, a glory to be revealed; something in reserve, that *they without us should not be made perfect*, Heb. 11. 40. Thirdly, For the exciting of our thankfulness, and the quickening of our diligence, it is good for us to consider what means we enjoy, and what discoveries are made to us, now under the gospel, above what they had, and enjoyed, who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation, especially in the revelation of the atonement for sin; see what are the advantages of the New Testament above the Old; (2 Cor. 3. 7, &c. Heb. 12. 18.) and see that our improvements be proportionable to our advantages.

II. We have, in these verses, one of the parables which our Saviour put forth; it is that of the sower and the seed: both the parable itself, and the explanation of it. Christ's parables are borrowed from common, ordinary things, not from any philosophical notions or speculations, or the unusual phenomena of nature, though applicable enough to the matter in hand, but from the most obvious things that are of every day's observation, and come within the reach of the meanest capacity; many of them are fetched from the husbandman's calling, as this of the sower, and that of the tares. Christ chose to do thus, 1. That spiritual things might hereby be made more plain, and, by familiar similitudes, might be made the more easy to slide into our understandings. 2. That common actions might hereby be spiritualized, and we might take occasion from those things which fall so often under our view, to meditate with delight on the things of God; and thus when our hands are busiest about the world, we may not only notwithstanding that, but even with the help of that, be led to have our hearts in heaven. Thus the word of God shall talk with us, talk familiarly with us, Prov. 6. 22.

The parable of the sower is plain enough, v. 3—9. The exposition of it we have from Christ himself, who knew best what was his own meaning. The disciples, when they asked, *Why speakest thou to them in parables?* (v. 10.) intimated a desire to have the parable explained for the sake of the people; nor was it any disparagement to their own knowledge to desire it for themselves. Our Lord Jesus kindly took the hint, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the parable, directing his discourse to the disciples, but in the hearing of the multitude, for we have not the account of his dismissing them till v. 36. "*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower*"; (v. 18.) you have heard it, but let us go over it again." Note, It is of good use, and would contribute much to our understanding of the word and profiting by it, to hear over again what we have heard; (Phil. 3. 1.) "You have heard it, but hear the interpretation of it." Note, Then only we hear the word aright, and to good purpose, when we un-

derstand what we hear; it is no hearing at all, if it be not with understanding, Neh. 8. 2. It is God's grace indeed that gives the understanding, but it is our duty to give our minds to understanding.

Let us therefore compare the parable and the exposition.

(1.) The seed sown is the word of God, here called *the word of the kingdom*, (v. 19.) the kingdom of heaven, that is the kingdom; the kingdoms of the world, compared with that, are not to be called kingdoms. The gospel comes *from* that kingdom, and conducts to that kingdom; the word of the gospel is the word of the kingdom; it is the word of the King, and where that is, *there is power*; it is a law, by which we must be ruled and governed. This word is the seed sown, which seems a dead, dry thing, but all the product is virtually in it. It is *incorruptible seed*; (1 Pet. 1. 23.) it is the gospel that *brings forth fruit* in souls, Col. 1. 5, 6.

(2.) The sower that scatters the seed is our Lord Jesus Christ, either by himself, or by his ministers; see v. 37. The people are God's husbandry, his tillage, so the word is; and ministers are *labourers together with God*, 1 Cor. 3. 9. Preaching to a multitude is sowing the corn; we know not where it must light; only see that it be good, that it be clean, and be sure to give it seed enough. The sowing of the word is the sowing of a people for God's field, *the corn of his floor*, Isa. 21. 10.

(3.) The ground in which this seed is sown is the hearts of the children of men, which are differently qualified and disposed, and accordingly the success of the word is different. Note, Man's heart is like soil, capable of improvement, of bearing good fruit; it is pity it should lie fallow, or be like the field of the slothful, Prov. 24. 30. The soul is the proper place for the word of God to dwell, and work, and rule in; its operation is upon conscience, it is to light that candle of the Lord. Now according as we are, so the word is to us: *Recipitur ad modum recipientis*—*The reception depends upon the receiver*. As it is with the earth; some sort of ground, take ever so much pains with it, and throw ever so good seed into it, yet it brings forth no fruit to any purpose; while the good soil brings forth plentifully: so it is with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here represented by four sorts of ground, of which *three* are bad, and but one good. Note, The number of fruitless hearers is very great, even of those who heard Christ himself preach. *Who has believed our report?* It is a melancholy prospect which this parable gives us of the congregations of those who hear the gospel preached, that scarcely one in four brings forth fruit to perfection. Many are called with the common call, but in few is the eternal choice evidenced by the efficacy of that call, ch. 20. 16.

Now observe the characters of these four sorts of ground.

[1.] The highway ground, v. 4—19. They had pathways through their corn-fields, (ch. 12. 1.) and the seed that fell on them never entered, and so the birds picked it up. The place where Christ's hearers now stood, represented the characters of most of them, the sand on the sea-shore, which was to the seed like the highway ground.

Observe, *First*, What kind of hearers are compared to the *highway ground*; such as *hear the word and understand it not*; and it is their own fault that they do not. They take no heed to it, take no hold of it; they do not come with any design to get good, as the highway was never intended to be sown. They *come before God as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit*; but it is merely for fashion-sake, to see and be seen; they mind not what is said, it comes in at one ear and goes out at the other, and makes no impression.

Secondly, How they come to be unprofitable hear-

ers. The *wicked one*, that is, the devil, *cometh and catcheth away that which was sown*.—Such mindless, careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; who, as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word, if we take not care to keep it; as the birds pick up the seed that falls on the ground that is neither ploughed before, nor harrowed after. If we break not up the fallow ground, by preparing our hearts for the word, and humbling them to it, and engaging our own attention; and if we cover not the seed afterwards, by meditation and prayer; if we give not a *more earnest heed to the things which we have heard*, we are as the highway ground. Note, The devil is a sworn enemy to our profiting by the word of God; and none do more befriend his design than heedless hearers, who are thinking of something else, when they should be thinking of the things that belong to their peace.

[2.] The *stony ground*. *Some fell upon stony places*, (v. 6, 7.) which represents the case of hearers that go further than the former, who receive some good impressions of the word, but they are not lasting, v. 20, 21. Note, It is possible we may be a great deal better than some others, and yet not be so good as we should be; may go beyond our neighbours, and yet come short of heaven. Now observe concerning these hearers that are represented by the stony ground,

First, How far they went. 1. They *hear the word*; they turn neither their backs upon it, nor a deaf ear to it. Note, Hearing the word, though ever so frequently, ever so gravely, if we rest in that, will never bring us to heaven. 2. They are *quick in hearing*, swift to hear, *he anon receiveth it*, (εὐθὺς,) he is ready to receive it, *forthwith it sprung up*, (v. 5.) it sooner appeared above ground than that which was sown in the good soil. Note, Hypocrites often get the start of true christians in the shows of profession, and are often too hot to hold. He *receiveth it straightway*, without trying it; swallows it without chewing, and then there can never be a good digestion. Those are most likely to *hold fast that which is good*, that *prove all things*, 1 Thess. 5. 21. 3. They receive it with joy. Note, There are many that are very glad to hear a good sermon, that yet do not profit by it; they may be pleased with the word, and yet not changed and ruled by it; the heart may melt under the word, and yet not be melted down by the word, much less into it, as into a mould. Many *taste the good word of God*, (Heb. 6. 5.) and say they find sweetness in it, but some beloved lust is *rolled under the tongue*, which it would not agree with, and so they spit it out again. 4. They *endure for a while*, like a violent motion which continues as long as the impression of the force remains, but ceases when that has spent itself. Note, Many endure for a while, that do not endure to the end, and so come short of the happiness which is promised to them only that persevere; (ch. 10. 22.) they did run well, but something hindered them, Gal. 5. 7.

Secondly, How they fell away, so that no fruit was brought to perfection; no more than the corn, that having no depth of earth from which to draw moisture, is scorched and withered by the heat of the sun. And the reason is,

1. They have *no root in themselves*, no settled, fixed principles in their judgments; no firm resolution in their wills, nor any rooted habits in their affections; nothing firm that will be either the sap or the strength of their profession. Note, (1.) It is possible there may be the green blade of a profession, where yet there is not the root of grace; hardness prevails in the heart, and what there is of soil and softness is only in the surface; inwardly they are no more affected than a stone; they have no root, they are not by faith united to Christ who is

our Root; they derive not from him, they depend not on him. (2.) Where there is not a principle, though there be a profession, we cannot expect perseverance. Those who have no root will endure but a while. A ship without ballast, though she may at first out-sail the laden vessel, yet will certainly fail in stress of weather, and never make her port.

2. Times of trial come, and then they come to nothing. *When tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, he is offended*; it is a stumbling-block in his way which he cannot get over, and so he flies off, and this is all his profession comes to. Note, (1.) After a fair gale of opportunity usually follows a storm of persecution, to try who have received the word in sincerity, and who have not. When the word of Christ's kingdom comes to be the word of Christ's patience, (Rev. 3. 10.) then is the trial, who keeps it, and who does not, Rev. 1. 9. It is wisdom to prepare for such a day. (2.) When trying times come, those who have no root are soon offended; they first quarrel with their profession, and then quit it: first find fault with it, and then throw it off. Hence we read of the *offence of the cross*, Gal. 5. 11. Observe, Persecution is represented in the parable by the *scorching sun*; (v. 6.) the same sun which warms and cherishes that which was well rooted, withers and burns up that which wanted root. As the word of Christ, so the cross of Christ, is to some a *savour of life unto life*, to others a *savour of death unto death*: the same tribulation which drives some to apostacy and ruin, works for others a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Trials which shuke some, confirm others, Phil. 1. 12. Observe how soon they fall away, by and by; as soon rotten as they were ripe; a profession taken up without consideration is commonly left fall without it: "Light come, light go."

[3.] The thorny ground. *Some fell among thorns*, (which are a good guard to the corn when they are in the hedge, but a bad inmate when they are in the field,) *and the thorns sprung up*; which intimates that they did not appear, or but little, when the corn was sown, but afterwards they proved choking to it, v. 7. This went further than the former, for it had root; and it represents the condition of those who do not quite cast off their profession, and yet come short of any saving benefit by it; the good they gain by the word, being insensibly overcome and overborne by the things of this world. Prosperity destroys the word in the heart, as much as persecution does; and more dangerously, because more silently: the stones spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit.

Now what are these choking thorns?

First, The cares of this world. Care for another world would quicken the springing of this seed, but care for this world chokes it. Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that deals much in them; (2 Sam. 23. 6, 7.) they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, Heb. 6. 8. These thorns choke the good seed. Note, Worldly cares are great hindrances to our profiting by the word of God, and our proficiency in religion. They eat up that vigour of soul which should be spent in divine things; divert us from duty, distract us in duty, and do us most mischief of all afterwards; quenching the sparks of good affections, and bursting the cords of good resolutions: those who are *careful and cumbered about many things*, commonly neglect the *one thing needful*.

Secondly, The deceitfulness of riches. Those who, by their care and industry, have raised estates, and so the danger that arises from care seems to be over, and they *continue hearers of the word*, yet are still in a snare; (Jer. 5. 4, 5.) it is hard for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven; they are apt to promise

themselves that in riches which is not in them; to rely upon them, and to take an inordinate complacency in them; and this chokes the word as much as care did. Observe, It is not so much riches, as the *deceitfulness of riches*, that does the mischief: now they cannot be said to be deceitful to us unless we put our confidence in them, and raise our expectations from them, and then it is that they choke the good seed.

[4.] The good ground; (v. 18.) *Others fell into good ground*, and it is pity but that good seed should always meet with good soil, and then there is no loss; such are *good hearers of the word*, v. 23. Note, Though there are many that receive the grace of God, and the word of his grace, in vain, yet God has a remnant by whom it is received to good purpose; for *God's word shall not return empty*, Isa. 55. 10, 11.

Now that which distinguished this good ground from the rest, was, in one word, fruitfulness. By this true christians are distinguished from hypocrites, that they *bring forth the fruits of righteousness*; so shall ye be my disciples, John 15. 8. He does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but there were none that prevailed to hinder its fruitfulness. Saints, in this world, are not perfectly free from the remains of sin; but happily freed from the reign of it.

The hearers represented by the good ground are,

First, Intelligent hearers; they *hear the word and understand it*; they understand not only the sense and meaning of the words, but their own concern in them; they understand it as a man of business understands his business. God in his word deals with men as men, in a rational way, and gains possession of the will and affections by opening the understanding; whereas Satan, who is a *thief and a robber*, comes not in by that door, but *climbeth up another way*.

Secondly, Fruitful hearers, which is an evidence of their good understanding, which also beareth fruit. Fruit is to every seed its own body, a substantial product in the heart and life, agreeable to the seed of the word received. We then bear fruit, when we practise according to the word; when the temper of our minds and the tenor of our lives are conformable to the gospel we have received, and we do as we are taught.

Thirdly, Not all alike fruitful; *some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty*. Note, Among fruitful christians, some are more fruitful than others: where there is true grace, yet there are degrees of it; some are of greater attainments in knowledge and holiness than others; all Christ's scholars are not in the same form. We should aim at the highest degree, to bring forth an hundred-fold, as Isaac's ground did, (Gen. 23. 12.) *abounding in the work of the Lord*, John 15. 8. But if the ground be good, and the fruit right, the heart honest, and the life of a piece with it, those who bring forth but thirty-fold shall be graciously accepted of God, and it will be fruit abounding to their account, for *we are under grace, and not under the law*.

Lastly, He closes the parable with a solemn call to attention, (v. 9.) *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Note. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing the word of God. Some are for hearing sweet melody, their ears are only the *daughters of music*; (Eccl. 12. 4.) there is no melody like that of the word of God; others are for hearing new things; (Acts 10. 21.) no news like that.

24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the

wheat, and went his way. 26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? 28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. 31. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: 32. Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. 33. Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 34. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. 36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: 38. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: 39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

In these verses, we have,

I. Another reason given why Christ preached by parables, v. 34, 35. *All these things he spoke in parables*, because the time was not yet come, for the more clear and plain discoveries of the mysteries of the kingdom. Christ, to keep the people attending and expecting, preached in *parables*, and *without a parable spake he not unto them*; namely, at this time and in this sermon. Note, Christ tries all ways and methods to do good to the souls of men, and to make impressions upon them; if men will not be instructed and influenced by plain preaching, he will try them with parables; and the reason here given is, *That the scripture might be fulfilled*. The passage here quoted for it, is part of the preface to that historical Psalm, 78. 2. *I will open my mouth in a parable*. What the Psalmist David, or Asaph, says there of his narrative, is accommodated to Christ's sermons; and that great precedent would serve to vindicate this way of preaching from the offence which some took at it. Here is, 1. The matter of Christ's preaching; he preached *things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world*. The mystery of the gospel had been *hid in God*, in his councils and decrees, *from the beginning of the world*, Eph. 3. 9. Compare Rom. 16. 25. 1 Cor. 2. 7. Col. 1. 26. If we delight in the records of antient things, and in the revelation of secret things, how welcome should the gospel be to us, which has in it such antiquity and such mystery! It was *from the foundation of the world* wrapt up in types and shadows, which are *now done away*; and those secret things are now become such things revealed *as belong to us and to our children*, Deut. 29. 29. 2. The manner of Christ's preaching; he preached by parables; wise sayings, but figurative, and which help to engage attention and a diligent search. Solomon's sententious dictates, which are full of similitudes, are called *Proverbs*, or *parables*; it is the same word; but in this, as in other things, *Behold, a greater than Solomon is here, in whom are hid treasures of wisdom*.

II. The parable of the *tares*, and the exposition of it; they must be taken together, for the exposition explains the parable, and the parable illustrates the exposition.

Observe, 1. The disciples' request to their Master to have this parable expounded to them; (v. 36.) *Jesus sent the multitude away*; and it is to be feared many of them went away no wiser than they came; they had heard a sound of words, and that was all. It is sad to think how many go away from sermons with the word of grace in their ears, but not the work of grace in their hearts. Christ *went into the house*, not so much for his own repose, as for particular converse with his disciples, whose instruction he chiefly intended in all his preaching. He was ready to do good in all places, the disciples laid hold on the opportunity, and *they came to him*. Note, Those who would be wise for every thing else, must be wise to discern and improve their opportunities, especially of converse with Christ, of converse with him alone, in secret meditation and prayer. It is very good, when we return from the solemn assembly, to talk over what we have heard there, and by familiar discourse to help one another to understand and remember it, and to be affected with it; for we lose the benefit of many a sermon by vain and unprofitable discourse after it. See Luke 24. 32. Dent. 6. 7. It is especially good, if it may be, to ask of the ministers of the word the meaning of the word, for *their lips should keep knowledge*, Mal. 2. 7. Private conference would contribute much to our profiting by public preaching. Nathan's *Thou art the man*, was that which touched David to the heart.

The disciples' request to their Master was, *Declare unto us the parable of the tares*. This implies an acknowledgment of their ignorance, which they

were not ashamed to make. It is probable they apprehended the general scope of the parable, but they desired to understand it more particularly, and to be assured that they took it right. Note, Those are rightly disposed for Christ's teaching, that are sensible of their ignorance, and sincerely desirous to be taught. He will teach the humble, (Ps. 25. 8, 9.) but will for this be inquired of. *If any man lack instruction, let him ask it of God.* Christ had expounded the foregoing parable unasked, but for the exposition of this they ask him. Note, The mercies we have received must be improved, both for direction what to pray for, and for our encouragement in prayer. The first light and the first grace are given in a preventing way, further degrees of both which must be daily prayed for.

2. The exposition Christ gave of the parable, in answer to their request; so ready is Christ to answer such desires of his disciples. Now the drift of the parable is, to represent to us the present and future state of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel-church; Christ's care of it, the devil's enmity against it, the mixture that there is in it of good and bad in this world, and the separation between them in the other world. Note, The visible church is the kingdom of heaven; though there be many hypocrites in it, Christ rules in it as a King; and there is a remnant in it, that are the subjects and heirs of heaven, from whom, as the better part, it is denominated: the church is the *kingdom of heaven* upon earth.

Let us go over the particulars of the exposition of the parable.

(1.) *He that sows the good seed is the Son of man.* Jesus Christ is the Lord of the field, the Lord of the harvest, the Sower of good seed. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to the world; not only good ministers, but other good men. Note, Whatever good seed there is in the world, it all comes from the hand of Christ, and is of his sowing: truths preached, graces planted, souls sanctified, are good seed, and all owing to Christ. Ministers are instruments in Christ's hand to sow good seed; are employed by him and under him, and the success of their labours depend purely upon his blessing; so that it may well be said, It is Christ, and no other, that sows the good seed: *he is the Son of man*, one of us, that his terror might not make us afraid; *the Son of man*, the Mediator, and that has authority.

(2.) *The field is the world; the world of mankind,* a large field, capable of bringing forth good fruit; the more is it to be lamented that it brings forth so much bad fruit: the world here is the visible church, scattered all the world over, not confined to one nation. Observe, In the parable it is called *his field*; *the world* is Christ's field, for all things are delivered unto him of the Father: whatever power and interest the devil has in the world, it is usurped and unjust; when Christ comes to take possession, he comes whose right it is; it is his field, and because it is his he took care to sow it with good seed.

(3.) *The good seed are the children of the kingdom, true saints.* They are, [1.] *The children of the kingdom*: not in profession only, as the Jews were, (ch. 8. 12.) but in sincerity; Jews inwardly, Israelites indeed, incorporated in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ the great King of the church. [2.] They are the good seed, precious as seed, Ps. 126. 6. The seed is the substance of the field; so the holy seed, Isa. 6. 13. The seed is scattered, so are the saints; dispersed, here one and there another, though in some places thicker sown than in others. The seed is that from which fruit is expected; what fruit of honour and service God has from this world he has from the saints, whom he has sowed unto himself in the earth, Hos. 2. 23.

(4.) *The tares are the children of the wicked one.* Here is the character of sinners, hypocrites, and all

profane and wicked people. [1.] They are the children of the devil, as a wicked one. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image; do his lusts, and from him they have their education; he rules over them, he works in them, Eph. 2. 2. John 8. 44. [2.] They are tares in the field of this world; they do no good, they do hurt; unprofitable in themselves, and hurtful to the good seed, both by temptation and persecution: they are weeds in the garden, have the same ruin, and sunshine, and soil, with the good plants, but are good for nothing: the tares are among the wheat. Note, God has so ordered it, that good and bad should be mixed together in this world, that the good may be exercised, the bad left inexcusable, and a difference made between earth and heaven.

(5.) *The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil;* a sworn enemy to Christ and all that is good, to the glory of the good God, and the comfort and happiness of all good men. He is an enemy to the field of the world, which he endeavours to make his own, by sowing his tares in it. Ever since he became a wicked spirit himself, he has been industrious to promote wickedness, and has made it his business, and therein to counterwork Christ.

Now concerning the sowing of the tares, observe in the parable,

[1.] That they were sown *while men slept*. Magistrates slept, who by their power, ministers slept, who by their preaching, should have prevented this mischief. Note, Satan watches all opportunities, and lays hold on all advantages, to propagate vice and profaneness. The prejudice he does to particular persons is when reason and conscience sleep, when they are off their guard; we have therefore need to be sober, and vigilant. It was in the night for that is the sleeping time. Note, Satan rules in the darkness of this world; that gives him an opportunity to sow tares, Ps. 104. 20. It was *while men slept*; and there is no remedy but men must have some sleeping time. Note, It is as impossible for us to prevent hypocrites being in the church, as it is for the husbandman, when he is asleep, to hinder an enemy from spoiling his field.

[2.] The enemy, when he had sown the tares, *went his way*, (v. 25.) that it might not be known who did it. Note, When Satan is doing the greatest mischief, he studies most to conceal himself; for his design is in danger of being spoiled if he be seen in it; and therefore when he comes to sow tares, he *transforms himself into an angel of light*, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14. He *went his way*, as if he had done no harm; *such is the way of the adulterous woman*, Prov. 50. 20. Observe, Such is the proneness of fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may even go his way, they will spring up of themselves and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced, or it will come to nothing.

[3.] The tares appeared not till the blades sprang up, and brought forth fruit, v. 26. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the hearts of men, which is long hid under the cloak of a plausible profession, but breaks out at last. As the good seed, so the tares, lie a great while under the clods, and at first springing up, it is hard to distinguish them; but when a trying time comes, when fruit is to be brought forth, when good is to be done that has difficulty and hazard attending it, then you will return and discern between the sincere and the hypocrite; then you may say, This is wheat, and that is tares.

[4.] The servants, when they were aware of it, complained to their master: (v. 27.) *Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field?* No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not of Christ: considering the seed which Christ sows, we may well ask, with wonder, *Hence should*

these tares come? Note, The rise of errors, the breaking out of scandals, and the growth of profaneness, are matter of great grief to all the servants of Christ; especially to his faithful ministers, who are directed to complain of it to him whose the field is. It is sad to see such tares, such weeds, in the garden of the Lord; to see the good soil wasted, the good seed choked, and such a reflection cast on the name and honour of Christ, as if his field were no better than the *field of the slothful, all grown over with thorns.*

[5.] The master was soon aware whence it was; (v. 28.) *An enemy has done this.* He does not lay the blame upon the servants; they could not help it, but had done what was in their power to prevent it. Note, The ministers of Christ, that are faithful and diligent, shall not be judged of Christ, and therefore should not be reproached by men, for the mixture of bad with good, hypocrites with the sincere, in the field of the church. *It must needs be that such offences will come;* and they shall not be laid to our charge, if we do our duty, though it have not the desired success. Though they sleep, if they do not love sleep; though tares be sown, if they do not sow them nor water them, nor allow of them, the blame shall not lie at their door.

[6.] The servants were very forward to have these tares rooted up. *"Wilt thou that we go and do it presently?"* Note, The over hasty and inconsiderate zeal of Christ's servants, before they have consulted with their Master, is sometimes ready, with the hazard of the church, to root out all that they presume to be tares: *Lord, wilt thou that we call for fire from heaven?*

[7.] The Master very wisely prevented this; (v. 29.) *Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.* Note, It is not possible for any man infallibly to distinguish between tares and wheat, but he may be mistaken; and therefore such is the wisdom and grace of Christ, that he will rather permit the tares, than any way endanger the wheat. It is certain, scandalous offenders are to be censured, and we are to withdraw from them; those who are openly *the children of the wicked one*, are not to be admitted to special ordinances; yet it is possible there may be a discipline, either so mistaken in its rules, or so over-nice in the application of them, as may prove vexations to many that are truly godly and conscientious. Great caution and moderation must be used in inflicting and continuing church-censures, lest the wheat be trodden down, if not plucked up. *The wisdom from above, as it is pure, so it is peaceable,* and those who oppose themselves must not be cut off, but instructed, and with meekness, 2 Tim. 2. 25. The tares, if continued under the means of grace, may become good corn; therefore have patience with them.

[6.] *The harvest is the end of the world, v. 39.* This world will have an end; though it continue long, it will not continue always; time will shortly be swallowed up in eternity. At the end of the world, there will be a great harvest-day, a day of judgment; at harvest all is ripe and ready to be cut down, both good and bad are ripe at the great day, Rev. 6. 11. It is *the harvest of the earth*, Rev. 14. 15. At harvest the reapers cut down all before them; not a field, not a corner, is left behind; so at the great day all must be judged; (Rev. 20. 12, 13.) God has *set a harvest*, (Hos. 6. 11.) and it shall not fail, Gen. 8. 22. At harvest every man reaps as he sowed; every man's ground, and seed, and skill, and industry, will be manifested: see Gal. 6. 7, 8. Then they who *sowed precious seed, will come again with rejoicing*, (Ps. 126. 5, 6.) *with the joy of harvest*; (Isa. 9. 3.) *when the sluggard, who would not plough by reason of cold, shall beg, and have nothing*; (Prov. 20. 4.) shall cry, *Lord, Lord*, but in vain; which the har-

vest of those who sowed to the flesh, shall be *a day of grief, and desperate sorrow*, Isa. 17. 11.

[7.] *The reapers are the angels;* they shall be employed, in the great day, in executing Christ's righteous sentences, both of approbation and condemnation, as ministers of his justice, ch. 25. 31. The angels are skillful, strong, and swift, obedient servants to Christ, holy enemies to the wicked, and faithful friends to all the saints, and therefore fit to be thus employed. *He that reapeth receiveth wages,* and the angels will not be unpaid for their attendance; for *he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together*; (John 4. 36.) *that is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God.*

[8.] Hell torments are the fire, into which the tares shall then be cast, and in which they shall be burned. At the great day a distinction will be made, and with it a vast difference; it will be a notable day indeed.

[1.] The tares will then be gathered out: *The reapers* (whose primary work it is to gather in the corn) shall be charged first to *gather out the tares.* Note, Though good and bad are together in this world undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; no tares shall then be among the wheat; no sinners among the saints: then you shall plainly discern *between the righteous and the wicked*, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal. 3. 18.—4. 1. Christ will not bear always, Ps. 50. 1, &c. They shall *gather out of his kingdom all wicked things that offend, and all wicked persons that do iniquity: when he begins, he will make a full end.* All those corrupt doctrines, worships, and practices, which have offended, have been scandals to the church, and stumbling-blocks to men's consciences, shall be condemned by the righteous Judge in that day, and consumed by the brightness of his coming; *all the wood, hay, and stubble*; (1 Cor. 3. 12.) and then *woe to them that do iniquity, that make a trade of it, and persist in it*; not only those in the last age of Christ's kingdom upon earth, but those in every age. Perhaps here is an allusion to Zeph. 1. 3. *I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked.*

[2.] They will then be *bound in bundles*, v. 30. Sinners of the same sort will be bundled together in the great day: a bundle of atheists, a bundle of epicures, a bundle of persecutors, and a great bundle of hypocrites. Those who have been associates in sin, will be so in shame and sorrow; and it will be an aggravation of their misery, as the society of glorified saints will add to their bliss. Let us pray, as David, *Lord, gather not my soul with sinners*, (Ps. 26. 9.) but let it be bound in the *bundle of life, with the Lord our God*, 1 Sam. 25. 29.

[3.] They will be *cast into a furnace of fire*; such will be the end of wicked, mischievous people, that are in the church *as tares in the field*; they are fit for nothing but fire; to it they shall go, it is the fittest place for them. Note, Hell is a furnace of fire, kindled by the wrath of God, and kept burning by the bundles of tares cast into it, who will be ever in the consuming, but never consumed. But he slides out of the metaphor into a description of those torments that are designed to be set forth by it: *There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth*; comfortless sorrow, and an incurable indignation at God, themselves, and one another, will be the endless torture of damned souls. Let us therefore, *knowing these terrors of the Lord*, be persuaded not to do iniquity.

[9.] Heaven is the barn into which all God's wheat shall be gathered in that harvest-day. *But gather the wheat into my barn*: so it is in the parable, v. 30. Note, [1.] In the field of this world good people are the wheat, the most precious grain, and the valuable part of the field. [2.] This wheat shall shortly be gathered, gathered from among the tares and weeds; all gathered together in a general assembly,

all the Old-Testament saints, all the New-Testament saints, not one missing: *Gather my saints together to me*, Ps. 50. 5. [3.] All God's wheat shall be lodged together in God's barn; particular souls are housed at death as a shock of corn, (Job 5. 26.) but the general in-gathering will be at the end of time: God's wheat will then be put together, and no longer scattered; there will be sheaves of corn, as well as bundles of tares: they will then be secured, and no longer exposed to wind and weather, sin and sorrow: no longer afar off, and at a distance, in the field, but near, in the barn. Nay, heaven is a *garner*, (ch. 3. 12.) in which the wheat will not only be separated from the tares of ill companions, but sifted from the chaff of their own corruptions.

In the explanation of the parable, this is gloriously represented; (*τ. 43.*) *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* First, It is their present honour, that God is their Father. *Now are we the sons of God*; (1 John 3. 2.) *our Father in heaven* is King there. Christ, when he went to heaven, went to his *Father*, and *our Father*, John 20. 17. It is *our Father's house*, nay, it is *our Father's palace*, his throne, Rev. 3. 21. Secondly, The honour in reserve for them is, that they shall shine forth as the sun in that kingdom. Here they are obscure and hidden, (Col. 3. 3.) their beauty is eclipsed by their poverty, and the meanness of their outward condition; their own weaknesses and infirmities, and the reproach and disgrace cast upon them, cloud them; but then they shall shine forth as the sun from behind a dark cloud: at death they shall shine forth to themselves, at the great day they will shine forth publicly before all the world, *their bodies will be made like Christ's glorious body*; they shall shine by reflection, with a light borrowed from the Fountain of light: their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification published; God will own them for his children, and will produce the record of all their services and sufferings for his name: they shall shine as the sun, the most glorious of all visible beings. The glory of the saints is in the Old Testament compared to that of the firmament and the stars, but here to that of the sun; *for life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel*, than under the law. Those who shine as lights in this world, that God may be glorified, shall shine as the sun in the other world, that they may be glorified. Our Saviour concludes as before, with a demand of attention; *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* These are things which it is our happiness to hear of, and our duty to hearken to.

III. Here is the parable of the *grain of mustard-seed*, *τ. 31, 32.* The scope of this parable is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel-church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons.

Now concerning the work of the gospel, observe,

1. That it is commonly very weak and small at first, like a grain of mustard-seed, which is one of the least of all seeds. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, made but a small figure; Christ and the apostles, compared with the grandees of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed, the weak things of the world. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel-light is but as the dawning of the day; and in particular souls, it is at first the day of small things, like a bruised reed. Young converts are like lambs that must be carried in the arms, Isa. 40. 11. There is a little faith, but there is much lacking in it, (1 Thess. 2. 10.) and the groanings such as cannot be uttered,

they are so small; a principle of spiritual life, and some motion, but scarcely discernible.

2. That yet it is growing and coming on. Christ's kingdom strangely got ground; great accessions were made to it: nations were born at once, in spite of all the oppositions it met with from hell and earth. In the soul where grace is true, it will grow really, though perhaps insensibly. *A grain of mustard-seed* is small, but, however, it is seed, and has in it a disposition to grow. Grace will be getting ground, shining more and more, Prov. 4. 18. Gracious habits confirmed, actions quickened, and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more inflamed; here is the seed growing.

3. That it will at last come to a great degree of strength and usefulness; when it is grown to some maturity, it becomes a tree, much larger in those countries than in ours. The church, like the vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root, and filled the earth, Ps. 80. 9—11. The church is like a great tree, in which the fowls of the air do lodge; God's people have recourse to it for food and rest, shade and shelter. In particular persons, the principle of grace, if true, will persevere and be perfected at last: growing grace will be strong grace, and will bring much to pass. Grown christians must covet to be useful to others, as the mustard-seed when grown is to the birds; that those who dwell near or under their shadow, may be the better for them, Hos. 14. 7.

IV. Here is the parable of the leaven, *τ. 33.* The scope of this is much the same with that of the foregoing parable, to show that the gospel should prevail and be successful by degrees, but silently and insensibly: the preaching of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it.

1. *A woman took this leaven*, it was her work. Ministers are employed in leavening places, in leavening souls, with the gospel. *The woman is the weaker vessel*, and we have this treasure in such vessels.

2. The leaven was hid in three measures of meal. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumiliated and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The meal must be kneaded, before it receive the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it. This leaven must be hid in the heart, (Ps. 119. 11.) not so much for secrecy (for it will show itself) as for safety: our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it up, as Mary laid up the savings of Christ, Luke 2. 51. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may be sanctified by it, John 17. 17.

3. The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there. it ferments; the word is quick and powerful, Heb. 4. 12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. What a sudden change did Elisha's mantle make upon Elisha! 1 Kings 19. 20. It works silently and insensibly, (Mark 4. 26.) yet strongly and irresistibly: it does its work without noise, for so is the way of the Spirit, but does it without fail. Hide but the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish to it, and yet none sees how it is done, but by degrees the whole is leavened.

(1.) Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by their preaching, hid a handful of leaven in the great

mass of mankind, and it had a strange effect ; it put the world into a ferment, and in a sense turned it *upside down*, (Acts 17. 6.) and by degrees made a wonderful change in the taste and relish of it : the savour of the gospel was *manifested in every place*, 2 Cor. 2. 14. Rom. 15. 19. It was thus effectual, not by outward force, and therefore not by any such force resistible and conquerable, but by the *Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder*.

(2.) Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul, [1.] It works a change, not in the substance, the dough is the same, but in the quality ; it makes us to savour otherwise than we have done, and other things to savour with us otherwise than they used to do, Rom. 8. 5. [2.] It works a universal change ; it diffuses itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property even of the members of the body, Rom. 6. 13. [3.] This change is such as makes the soul to partake of the nature of the word, as the dough does of the leaven. We are delivered into it as into a mould, (Rom. 6. 17.) changed into the same image, (2 Cor. 3. 18.) like the impression of the seal upon the wax. The gospel savours of God, and Christ, and free grace, and another world, and these things now relish with the soul. It is a word of faith and repentance, holiness and love, and these are wrought in the soul by it. This savour is communicated insensibly, for *our life is hid* ; but inseparably, for grace is a *good part that shall never be taken away* from those who have it. When the dough is leavened, then to the oven with it ; trials and afflictions commonly attend this change ; but thus saints are fitted to be bread for our Master's table.

44. Again : The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45. Again : The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls : 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. 47. Again : The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind : 48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49. So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 51. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things ? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52. Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

We have four short parables in these verses :

I. That of the *treasure hid in the field*. Hitherto he had compared the *kingdom of heaven* to small things because its beginning was small ; but, lest any should thence take occasion to think meanly &

it, in this parable and the next he represents it as of great value in itself, and of great advantage to those who embrace it, and are willing to come up to its terms ; it is here likened to a *treasure hid in the field*, which, if we will, we may make our own.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Treasurer ; in him there is an abundance of all that which is rich and useful, and will be a portion for us ; *all fulness* ; (Col. 1. 19. John 1. 16.) *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, (Col. 2. 3.) of righteousness, grace, and peace ; these are laid up for us in Christ ; and, if we have an interest in him, it is all our own.

2. The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid ; it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament gospel. In gospel-ordinances he is hid as the milk in the breast, the marrow in the bone, the manna in the dew ; as the water in the well ; (Isa. 12. 3.) *as the honey in the honey-comb*. It is hid, not in a garden inclosed, or a spring shut up, but in a field, an open field ; *whosoever will, let him come, and search the scriptures* ; let him dig in this field ; (Prov. 2. 4.) and whatever royal mines we find, they are all our own, if we take the right course.

3. It is a great thing to discover the treasure hid in this field, and the unspeakable value of it. The reason why so many slight the gospel, and will not be at the expense, and run the hazard, of entertaining it, is because they look only upon the surface of the field, and judge by that, and so see no excellency in the christian institutes above those of the philosophers ; nay, the richest mines are often in grounds that appear most barren ; and therefore they will not so much as bid for the field, much less come up to the price. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved ?* What is the Bible more than other good books ? The gospel of Christ more than Plato's philosophy, or Confucius's morals ? But those who have *sought the scriptures*, so as in them to find Christ and *eternal life*, (John 5. 39.) have discovered such a treasure in this field as makes it infinitely more valuable.

4. Those who discern this treasure in the field, and value it aright, will never be easy till they have made it their own upon any terms. He that has found this treasure, hides it, which denotes a holy jealousy, *lest we come short*, (Heb. 4. 1.) *looking diligently*, (Heb. 12. 15.) lest Satan come between us and it. He rejoices in it, though as yet the bargain be not made ; he is glad there is such a bargain to be had, and that he is in a fair way to have an interest in Christ ; that the matter is in treaty : their hearts may rejoice, who are yet but seeking the Lord, Ps. 105. 3. He resolves to buy this field : they who embrace gospel-offers, upon gospel-terms, buy this field ; they make it their own, for the sake of the unseen treasure in it. It is Christ in the gospel that we are to have an eye to ; we need not go up to heaven, but Christ in the word is nigh us. And so intent he is upon it, that he sells all to buy this field : they who would have saving benefit by Christ, must be willing to part with all, that they may make it sure to themselves ; *must count every thing but loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him*.

II. That of the *pearl of price*, (v. 45, 46.) which is to the same purport with the former, of the treasure. *The dream is thus doubled, for the thing is certain*.

Note, 1. All the children of men are busy, *seeking goodly pearls* : one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned ; but the most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls.

2. Jesus Christ is a *Pearl of great price*, a Jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God : in having

him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever.

3. A true christian is a spiritual *merchant*, that seeks and finds this pearl of price; that does not take up with any thing short of an interest in Christ, and, as one that is resolved to be spiritually rich, trades high: *He went and bought that pearl*; did not only bid for it, but purchased it. What will it avail us to know Christ, if we do not know him as ours, *made to us Wisdom?* 1 Cor. 1. 30.

4. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ, must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him, for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us. A man may buy gold too dear, but not this pearl of price.

III. That of the net cast into the sea, v. 47—49.

1. Here is the parable itself. Where note, (1.) The world is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea, Ps. 104. 25. Men in their natural state are like the fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them, Hab. 1. 14. (2.) The preaching of the gospel is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for his glory who has the sovereignty of this sea. Ministers are *fishers of men*, employed in casting and drawing this net; and then they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise, they *toil and catch nothing*. (3.) This net gathers of every kind, as large drag-nets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish. (4.) There is a time coming when this net will be full, and drawn to the shore; a set time when the gospel shall have fulfilled that for which it was sent, and we are sure it shall not return void, Isa. 55. 10, 11. The net is now filling; sometimes it fills faster than at other times, but still it fills, and will be drawn to shore, when the *mystery of God shall be finished*. (5.) When the net is full and drawn to the shore, there shall be a separation between the good and bad that were gathered in it. Hypocrites and true christians shall then be parted; the good shall be gathered into vessels, as valuable, and therefore to be carefully kept, but the bad shall be cast away, as vile and unprofitable; and miserable is the condition of those who are cast away in that day. While the net is in the sea, it is not known what is in it, the fishermen themselves cannot distinguish; but they carefully draw it, and all that is in it, to the shore, for the sake of the good that is in it. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though they are mixed.

2. Here is the explanation of the latter part of the parable, the former is obvious and plain enough: we see gathered in the visible church, *some of every kind*; but the latter part refers to that which is yet to come, and is therefore more particularly explained, v. 49, 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world*: then, and not till then, will the dividing, discovering day be. We must not look for the net full of all good fish; the vessels will be so, but in the net they are mixed. See here, (1.) The distinguishing of the wicked from the righteous. The angels of heaven shall come forth to do that which the angels of the churches could never do; they shall *sever the wicked from among the just*; and we need not ask how they will distinguish them when they have both their commission and their instructions from him that knows all men, and particularly knows them that are *his*, and them that are *not*, and we may be sure there shall be no mistake or blunder either way. (2.) The doom of the wicked when they are thussevered. They shall be *cast into the furnace*. Note, Everlasting misery and sorrow will certainly be the portion

of those who live among sanctified ones, but themselves die unsanctified. This is the same with what we had before, v. 42. Note, Christ himself preached often of hell-torments, as the everlasting punishment of hypocrites; and it is good for us to be often reminded of this awakening, quickening truth.

IV. Here is the parable of the *good-householder*, which is intended to rivet all the rest.

1. The occasion of it was the good proficiency which the disciples had made in learning, and their profiting by this sermon in particular. (1.) He asked them, *Have ye understood all these things?* Intimating, that if they had not, he was ready to explain what they did not understand. Note, It is the will of Christ, that all those who read and hear the word should understand it; for otherwise, how should they get good by it? It is therefore good for us, when we have read or heard the word, to examine ourselves, or to be examined, whether we have understood it or not. It is no disparagement to the disciples of Christ to be catechised. Christ invites us to seek to him for instruction, and ministers should proffer their service to those who have any good question to ask concerning what they have heard. (2.) They answered him, *Yea, Lord*: and we have reason to believe they said true, because, when they did not understand, they asked for an explication, v. 36. And the exposition of that parable was a key to the rest. Note, The right understanding of one good sermon, will very much help us to understand another; for good truths mutually explain and illustrate one another; and *knowledge is easy to him that understandeth*.

2. The scope of the parable itself was to give his approbation and commendation of their proficiency. Note, Christ is ready to encourage willing learners in his school, though they are but weak; and to say, *Well done, well said*.

(1.) He commends them as *scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. They were now learning that they might teach, and the teachers among the Jews were the scribes. Ezra, who prepared his heart to teach in Israel, is called a *ready scribe*. Ezra 7. 6, 10. Now a skilful, faithful minister of the gospel is a scribe too; but for distinction, he is called a scribe *instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, well versed in the things of the gospel, and well able to teach those things. Note, [1.] Those who are to instruct others, have need to be well instructed themselves. If the priest's lips must keep knowledge, his head must first have knowledge. [2.] The instruction of a gospel-minister must be in the *kingdom of heaven*, that is it about which his business lies. A man may be a great philosopher and politician, and yet, if not instructed to the kingdom of heaven, he will make but a bad minister.

(2.) He compares them to a good householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old; fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, for the entertainment of his friends, Cant. 7. 13. See here, [1.] What should be a minister's furniture, a *treasure of things new and old*. Those who have so many and various occasions, need to stock themselves well in their gathering-days with truths new and old, out of the Old Testament and out of the New; with ancient and modern improvements, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. Old experiences, and new observations, all have their use; and we must not content ourselves with old discoveries, but must be adding new. Live and learn. [2.] What use he should make of this furniture; he should bring forth: laying up is in order to laying out, for the benefit of others. *Sic vos non vobis—You are to lay up, but not for yourselves*. Many are full, but they have no vent; (Job 32. 19.) have a talent, but they bury it; such are unprofitable

servants; Christ himself received that he might give; so must we, and we shall have more. In bringing forth things, new and old do best together; old truths, but new methods and expressions, especially new affections.

53. And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works? 55. Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56. And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things? 57. And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

We have here Christ in his own country. He went about doing good, yet left not any place till he had finished his testimony there at that time. His own countrymen had rejected him once, yet he came to them again. Note, Christ does not take refusers at their first word, but repeats his offers to those who have often repulsed them. In this, as in other things, Christ was like his brethren; he had a natural affection to his own country; *Patriam quisque amat, non quia fulchram, sed quia suam*—Every one loves his country, not because it is beautiful, but because it is his own. Seneca. His treatment this time was much the same as before, scornful and spiteful.

Observe,

1. How they expressed their contempt of him. When he taught them in their synagogue, they were astonished; not that they were taken with his preaching, or admired his doctrine in itself, but only that it should be his; looking upon him as unlikely to be such a teacher. Two things they upbraided him with:

1. His want of academical education. They owned that he had wisdom, and did mighty works; but the question was, Whence he had them? For they knew he was not brought up at the feet of their rabbins: he had never been at the university, nor taken his degree, nor was called of men, *Rabbi, Rabbi*. Note, Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men by their education, and to inquire more into their rise than into their reasons. "*Whence has this man these mighty works? Did he come honestly by them? Has he not been studying the black art?*" Thus they turned that against him, which was really for him; for if they had not been wilfully blind, they must have concluded him to be divinely assisted and commissioned, who without the help of education gave such proofs of extraordinary wisdom and power.

2. The meanness and poverty of his relations, v. 55, 56.

(1.) They upbraided him with his father. *Is not this the carpenter's son?* Yes, it is true he was reputed so: and what harm in that? No disparagement to him to be the son of an honest tradesman. They remember not (though they might have known it) that this carpenter was of the house of David, (Luke 1. 27.) a son of David; (ch. 1. 20.) though a carpenter, yet a person of honour. Those who are

willing to pick quarrels will overlook that which is worthy and deserving, and fasten upon that only which seems mean. Some sordid spirits regard no branch, no, not the Branch from the stem of Jesse, (Isa. 11. 1.) if it be not the top-branch.

(2.) They upbraided him with his mother; and what quarrel have they with her? Why, truly, *his mother is called Mary*, and that was a very common name, and they all knew her, and knew her to be an ordinary person; she was called *Mary*, not *Queen Mary*, nor *Lady Mary*, nor so much as *Mistress Mary*, but plain *Mary*; and this is turned to his reproach, as if men had nothing to be valued by but foreign extraction, noble birth, or splendid titles; poor things to measure worth by.

(3.) They upbraided him with his brethren, whose names they knew, and had them ready enough to serve this turn; James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, good men but poor men, and therefore despised; and Christ for their sakes. These brethren, it is probable, were Joseph's children by a former wife; or whatever their relation was to him, they seem to have been brought up with him in the same family. And therefore of the calling of three of these, who were of the twelve, to that honour (James, Simon, and Jude, the same with Thaddeus) we read not particularly, because they needed not such an express call into acquaintance with Christ who had been the companions of his youth.

(4.) His sisters too are all with us; they should therefore have loved him and respected him the more, because he was one of themselves, but therefore they despised him. They were offended in him: they stumbled at these stumbling-stones, for he was set for a *Sign that should be spoken against*, Luke 2. 34. Isa. 8. 14.

II. See how he resented this contempt, v. 57, 58.

1. It did not trouble his heart. It appears he was not much concerned at it; He *despised the shame*, Heb. 12. 2. Instead of aggravating the affront, or expressing an offence at it, or returning such an answer to their foolish suggestions as they deserved, he mildly imputes it to the common humour of the children of men, to undervalue excellences that are cheap, and common, and home-bred. It is usually so. *A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country*. Note, (1.) Prophets should have honour paid them, and commonly have; men of God are great men, and men of honour, and challenge respect. It is strange indeed if prophets have not honour. (2.) Notwithstanding this, they are commonly least regarded and revered in their own country, nay, and sometimes are most envied. Familiarity breeds contempt.

2. It did for the present, (to speak with reverence,) in effect, tie his hands; *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*. Note, Unbelief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. *All things are in general possible to God*, (ch. 19. 26.) but then it is to him that believes as to the particulars, Mark 9. 23. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but then it is to every one that believes, Rom. 1. 16. So that if mighty works be not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but for want of faith in us. *By grace ye are saved*, and that is a mighty work, but it is through faith, Eph. 2. 8.

CHAP. XIV.

John the Baptist had said concerning Christ, He must increase, but I must decrease, John 3. 30. The morning-star is here disappearing, and the Sun of righteousness rising to his meridian lustre. Here is, I. The martyrdom of John; his imprisonment for his faithfulness to Herod, (v. 1. . 5.) and the beheading of him to please Herodias, v. 6. . 12. II. The miracles of Christ. 1. His feeding five thousand men that came to him to be taught, with five loaves and two fishes, v. 13. . 21. 2. Christ's walking on the water to his

disciples in a storm, v. 22. . 33. 3. His healing the sick with the touch of the hem of his garment, v. 34. . 36. Thus he went forth, thus he went on, conquering and to conquer, or rather, curing and to cure.

1. **A**T that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus; 2. And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 3. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. 4. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. 5. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. 6. But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. 9. And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. 10. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. 11. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. 12. And his disciples came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

We have here the story of John's martyrdom. Observe,

I. The occasion of relating this story here, v. 1, 2. Here is,

1. The account brought to Herod of the miracles which Christ wrought. Herod, the tetrarch or chief governor of Galilee, *heard of the fame of Jesus*. At that time, when his countrymen slighted him, upon the account of his meanness and obscurity, he began to be famous at court. Note, God will honour those that are despised for his sake. And the gospel, like the sea, gets in one place what it loses in another. Christ had now been preaching and working miracles above two years; yet, it should seem, Herod had not heard of him till now, and now only heard the fame of him. Note, It is the unhappiness of the great ones of the world, that they are most out of the way of hearing the best things, (1 Cor. 2. 8.) *which none of the princes of this world knew*, 1 Cor. 1. 26. Christ's disciples were now sent abroad to preach, and to work miracles in his name, and this spread the fame of him more than ever; which was an indication of the spreading of the gospel by their means after his ascension.

2. The construction he puts upon this; (v. 2.) *He said to his servants, that told him of the fame of Jesus, As sure as we are here, this is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead.* Either the leaven of Herod was not Sadducism, for the Sadducees say, *There is no resurrection*; (Acts 23. 8.) or else Herod's guilty conscience (as is usual with Atheists) did at this time get the mastery of his opinion, and now he concludes, whether there be a general resurrection or no, that *John Baptist is certainly risen*, and therefore *mighty works do show forth themselves*

in him. John, while he lived, *did no miracles*; (John 10. 41.) but Herod concludes, that, being risen from the dead, he is clothed with a greater power than he had while he was living. And he very well calls the miracles he supposed him to work, *not his mighty works*, but *mighty works showing forth themselves in him*. Observe here concerning Herod,

(1.) How he was disappointed in what he intended by beheading John. He thought if he could get that troublesome fellow out of the way, he might go on in his sins, undisturbed and uncontrolled; yet no sooner is that effected, than he hears of Jesus and his disciples preaching the same pure doctrine that John preached; and, which is more, even the disciples confirming it by miracles in their master's name. Note, Ministers may be silenced, and imprisoned, and banished, and slain, but the word of God cannot be run down. The prophets *live not for ever, but the word takes hold*, Zech. 1. 5, 6. See 2 Tim. 2. 9. Sometimes God raises up many faithful ministers out of the ashes of one. *This hope there is of God's trees, though they be cut down*, Job 14. 7—9.

(2.) How he was filled with causeless fears, merely from the guilt of his own conscience. *Thus blood cries, not only from the earth on which it was shed, but from the heart of him that shed it, and makes him Magor-missabib—A terror round about, a terror to himself.* A guilty conscience suggests every thing that is frightful, and, like a whirlpool, gathers all to itself that comes near it. *Thus the wicked flee when none pursue*; (Prov. 28. 1.) are in *great fears, where no fear is*, Ps. 14. 5. Herod, by a little inquiry, might have found out that this Jesus was in being long before John Baptist's death, and therefore could not be *Johannes redivivus—John restored to life*; and so he might have undeceived himself; but God justly left him to this infatuation.

(3.) How, notwithstanding this, he was hardened in his wickedness; for though he was convinced that John was a prophet, and one owned of God, yet he does not express the least remorse or sorrow for his sin in putting him to death. The devils believe and tremble, but they never believe and repent. Note, There may be the terror of strong convictions, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion.

II. The story itself of the imprisonment and martyrdom of John. These extraordinary sufferings of him who was the first preacher of the gospel, plainly show that bonds and afflictions will abide the professors of it. As the first Old-Testament saint, so the first New-Testament minister, died a martyr. And if Christ's forerunner was thus treated, let not his followers expect to be caressed by the world. Observe here,

1. John's faithfulness in reproving Herod, v. 3, 4. Herod was one of John's hearers, (Mark 6. 20.) and therefore John might be the more bold with him. Note, Ministers, who are reprovers by office, are especially obliged to reprove those that are under their charge, and *not to suffer sin up in them*; they have the fairest opportunity of dealing with them, and with them may expect the most favourable acceptance.

The particular sin he reproveth him for, was, marrying his brother Philip's wife, not his widow, (that had not been so criminal,) but his wife. Philip was now living, and Herod inveigled his wife from him, and kept her for his own. Here was a complication of wickedness, adultery, incest, beside the wrong done to Philip, who had had a child by this woman; and it was an aggravation of the wrong, that he was his brother, his half brother by the father, but not by the mother. See Ps. 50. 20. For this sin John reproveth him; not by tacit and oblique terms, but in plain terms, *It is not lawful for thee to have her*. He charges it upon him as a sin; not, It

is not honourable, or, It is not safe, but, It is not *lawful*; the *sinfulness* of sin, as it is the *transgression of the law*, is the worst thing in it. This was Herod's own iniquity, his beloved sin, and therefore John Baptist tells him of this particularly. Note, (1.) That which by the law of God is unlawful to other people, is by the same law unlawful to princes and the greatest of men. They who rule over men must not forget that they are themselves but men, and subject to God. "*It is not lawful for thee, any more than for the meaneſt ſubject thou haſt, to debauch another man's wife.*" There is no prerogative, no, not for the greatest and moſt arbitrary kings, to break the laws of God. (2.) If princes and great men break the law of God, it is very fit they ſhould be told of it by proper perſons, and in a proper manner. As they are not above the commands of God's word, ſo they are not above the reproofs of his miniſters. *It is not fit indeed to ſay to a king, Thou art Belial,* (Job 34. 18.) any more than to call a brother *Raca*, or, *Thou fool*: it is not fit, while they keep within the ſphere of their own authority, to arraign them. But it is fit that, by thoſe whoſe office it is, they ſhould be told what is unlawful, and told with application, *Thou art the man*; for it follows there, (v. 19.) that God, (whoſe agents and ambaffadors faithful miniſters are) *accepteth not the perſons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.*

2. The imprisonment of John for his faithfulness, v. 3. *Herod laid hold on John* when he was going on to preach and baptize, put an end to his work, *bound him, and put him in priſon*; partly to gratify his own revenge, and partly to pleaſe Herodias, who of the two ſeemed to be moſt incenſed againſt him; it was *for her ſake* that he did it. Note, (1.) Faithful reproofs, if they do not profit, uſually provoke; if they do not do good, they are reſented as affronts, and they that will not bow to the reproof, will fly in the face of the reprover and hate him, as Ahab hated Micaiah, 1 Kings 22. 8. See Prov. 9. 8.—15. 10, 12. *Veritas odium parit—Truth produces hatred.* (2.) It is no new thing for God's miniſters to ſuffer ill for doing well. Troubles abide thoſe moſt that are moſt diligent and faithful in doing their duty, Acts 20. 20, 23. It was ſo with the Old Teſtament prophets, ſee 2 Chron. 16. 10.—24. 20, 21. Perhaps ſome of John's friends would blame him as indiſcreet in reproving Herod, and tell him he had better be ſilent than provoke Herod, whoſe character he knew very well, thus to deprive him of his liberty: but away with that diſcretion that would hinder men from doing their duty as magiſtrates, miniſters, or chriſtian friends; I believe John's own heart did not reproach him for it, but this teſtimony of his conſcience for him made his bonds eaſy, that he ſuffered for well-doing, and not as a *busy-body in other men's matters*, 2 Pet. 4. 15.

3. The reſtraint that Herod lay under from further venting of his rage againſt John, v. 5.

(1.) He would have put him to death. Perhaps that was not intended at firſt when he impriſoned him, but his revenge by degrees boiled up to that height. Note, The way of ſin, eſpecially the ſin of perſecution, is down-hill; and when once a reſpect to Chriſt's miniſters is caſt off and broken, though in one inſtance, that is at length done, which the man would ſooner have thought himſelf a dog than to have been guilty of, 2 Kings 8. 13.

(2.) That which hindered him was his *fear of the multitude, becauſe they counted John as a prophet*. It was not becauſe he feared God, (if the fear of God had been before his eyes he would not have impriſoned him,) nor becauſe he feared John, though formerly he had had a reverence for him, (his luſts had overcome that,) but becauſe he feared the people; he was afraid for himſelf, his own ſafety, and the

ſafety of his government, his abuſe of which he knew had already rendered him odious to the people, whoſe reſentments being ſo far heated already, would be apt, upon ſuch a provocation as the putting of a prophet to death, to break out into a flame. Note, [1.] Tyrants have their fears. Thoſe who are, and affect to be, *the terror of the mighty*, are many times the greateſt terror of all to themſelves; and when they are moſt ambitious to be feared by the people, are moſt afraid of them. [2.] Wicked men are reſtrained from the moſt wicked practices, merely by their ſecular intereſt, and not by any regard to God. A concern for their eaſe, credit, wealth, and ſafety, being their reigning principle, as it keeps them from many duties, ſo it keeps them from many ſins, which otherwiſe they would not be reſtrained from; and this is one means by which ſinners are kept from being overmuch wicked, Eccl. 7. 17. The danger of ſin that appears to ſenſe, or to fancy only, influences men more than that which appears to faith. Herod feared that the putting of John to death might raiſe a mutiny among the people, which it did not; but he never feared it might raiſe a mutiny in his own conſcience, which it did, v. 2. Men fear being hanged for that which they do not fear being damned for.

4. The contrivance of bringing John to his death. Long he lay in priſon; and, againſt the liberty of the ſubject, (which, bleſſed be God, is ſecured to us of this nation by law,) might neither be tried nor bailed. It is computed that he lay a year and a half a cloſe priſoner, which was about as much time as he had ſpent in his public miniſtry, from his firſt entrance into it. Now here we have an account of his release, not by any other diſcharge than death, the period of all a good man's troubles, that brings the priſoners to reſt together, ſo that they hear not *the voice of the oppreſſor*, Job 3. 18.

Herodias laid the plot; her implacable revenge thirſted after John's blood, and would be ſatisfied with nothing leſs. Croſs the carnal appetites, and they turn into the moſt barbarous paſſions; it was a woman, a whore, and the mother of harlots, that was *drunk with the blood of the ſaints*, Rev. 17. 5, 6. Herodias contrived how to bring about the murder of John ſo artificially as to ſave Herod's credit, and ſo to pacify the people. A ſorry excuſe is better than none. But I am apt to think, that if the truth were known, Herod was himſelf in the plot; and, for all his pretences of ſurpriſe and ſorrow, was privy to the contrivance, and knew before what would be aſked. And his pretending his oath, and reſpect to his gueſts, was all but ſham and grimace. But if he were trepanned into it ere he was aware, yet becauſe it was the thing he might have prevented, and would not, he is juſtly found guilty of the whole contrivance. Though Jezebel bring Naboth to his end, yet if Ahab take poſſeſſion, *he hath killed*. So, though Herodias contrive the beheading of John, yet, if Herod conſent to it, and take pleaſure in it, he is not only an acceſſary, but a principal murderer. Well, the ſcene being laid behind the curtain, let us ſee how it was acted upon the ſtage, and in what method. Here we have,

(1.) The humouring of Herod by the damſel's dancing upon his birth-day. It ſeems, Herod's birth-day was kept with ſome ſolemnity; in honour of the day, there muſt needs be, as uſual, a ball at court; and, to grace the ſolemnity, the daughter of Herodias danced before them; who, being the queen's daughter, it was more than ſhe ordinarily condeſcended to do. Note, Times of carnal mirth and jollity are convenient times for carrying on bad deſigns againſt God's people. When the king was *made ſick with bottles of wine, he ſtretched out his hand with ſcorners*, (Heſ. 7. 5.) for it is part of the *ſport of a fool* to do miſchief, Prov. 10. 23. The

Philistines, when their heart was merry, called for Sams in to abuse him. The Parisian massacre was at a wedding. This young lady's dancing pleased Herod. We are not told who danced with her, but none pleased Herod like her dancing. Note, A vain and graceless heart is apt to be greatly in love with the lusts of the flesh and of the eye, and when it is so, it is entering into further temptation; for by that Satan gets and keeps possession. See Prov. 23. 31, 33. Herod was now in a mirthful mood, and nothing was more agreeable to him than that which fed his vanity.

(2.) The rash and foolish promise which Herod made to this wanton girl, to give her whatsoever she would ask; and this promise confirmed with an oath, v. 7. It was a very extravagant obligation which Herod here entered into, and no way becoming a prudent man that is afraid of being *snared in the words of his mouth*, (Prov. 6. 2.) much less a good man that fears an oath, Eccl. 9. 2. To put this blank into her hand, and enable her to draw upon him at pleasure, was too great a recompense for such a sorry piece of merit; and, I am apt to think, Herod would not have been guilty of such an absurdity, if he had not been instructed of Herodias, as well as the damsel. Note, Promissory oaths are ensnaring things, and, when made rashly, are the products of inward corruption, and the occasions of many temptations. Therefore swear not so at all, lest thou have occasion to say, *It was an error*, Eccl. 5. 6.

(3.) The bloody demand the young lady made of John the Baptist's head, v. 8. She was before instructed of her mother. Note, The case of those children is very sad, whose parents are *their counsellors to do wickedly*, as Ahaziah's; (2 Chron. 22. 3.) who instruct them and encourage them in sin, and set them bad examples; for the corrupt nature will sooner be quickened by bad instructions than restrained and mortified by good ones. Children ought not to *obey their parents against the Lord*, but, if they command them to sin, must say, as Levi did to *father and mother, they have not seen them*.

Herod having given her her commission, and Herodias her instructions, she requires John the Baptist's head in a charger. Perhaps Herodias feared lest Herod should grow weary of her, (as lust useth to nauseate and be cloyed,) and then would make John Baptist's reproof a pretence to dismiss her; to prevent which she contrives to harden Herod in it, by engaging him in the murder of John. John must be beheaded then, that is the death by which he must glorify God; and because it was *his* who died first after the beginning of the gospel, though the martyrs died various kinds of deaths, and not so easy and honourable as this, yet this is put for all the rest, Rev. 20. 4. where we read of *the souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus*. Yet this is not enough, the thing must be humoured too, and not only a revenge, but a fancy must be gratified; it must be *given her in a charger*, served up in blood, as a dish of meat at the feast, or sauce to all the other dishes; it is reserved for the third course, to come up with the rarities. He must have no trial, no public hearing, no forms of law or justice must add solemnity to his death; but he is tried, condemned, and executed, in a breath. It was well for him he was so mortified to the world that death could be no surprise to him, though ever so sudden. It must be given her, and she will reckon it a recompense for her dancing, and desire no more.

(4.) Herod's grant of this demand; (v. 9.) *The king was sorry*, at least took on him to be so, but, *for the oath's sake, he commanded it to be given her*. Here is,

[1.] A pretended concern for John. *The king*
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was sorry. Note, Many a man sins with regret, that never has any true regret for his sin; is sorry to sin, yet is utterly a stranger to godly sorrow; sins with reluctance, and yet goes on to sin. Dr. Hammond suggests, that one reason of Herod's sorrow was, because it was his birth-day festival, and it would be an ill omen to shed blood on that day, which, as other days of joy, used to be graced with acts of clemency; *Natalum colimus, tacete lites—We are celebrating the birth-day, let there be no contentions*.

[2.] Here is a pretended conscience of his oath, with a specious show of honour and honesty; he must needs do something, for the oath's sake. Note, It is a great mistake, to think that a wicked oath will justify a wicked action. It was implied so necessarily, that it needed not be expressed, that he would do any thing for her that was lawful and honest; and when she demanded what was otherwise, he ought to have declared, and he might have done it honourably, that the oath was null and void, and the obligation of it ceased. No man can lay himself under an obligation to sin, because God has already so strongly obliged every man against sin.

[3.] Here is a real baseness in compliance with wicked companions. Herod yielding, not so much for the sake of the oath, but because it was public, and in compliment to them that sat at meat with him; he granted the demand, that he might not seem, before them, to have broken his engagement. Note, A point of honour goes much further with many than a point of conscience. Those who sat at meat with him, probably, were as well pleased with the damsel's dancing as he, and therefore would have her by all means to be gratified in a frolic, and perhaps were as willing as she to see John the Baptist's head off. However, none of them had the honesty to interpose, as they ought to have done, for the preventing of it, as Jehoiakim's princes did, Jer. 36. 25. If some of the common people had been here, they would have rescued this Jonathan, as 1 Sam. 14. 45.

[4.] Here is a real malice to John, at the bottom of this concession, or else he might have found out evasions enough to have gotten clear of his promise. Note, Though a wicked mind never wants an excuse, yet the truth of the matter is, that *every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, and enticed*, Jam. 1. 14. Perhaps Herod presently reflected upon the extravagance of his promise, on which she might ground a demand of some vast sum of money, which he loved a great deal better than John the Baptist, was glad to get clear of it so easily; and therefore immediately issues out a warrant for the beheading of John the Baptist, it should seem not in writing, but only by word of mouth; so little account is made of that precious life; *he commanded it to be given her*.

(5.) The execution of John, pursuant to this grant; (v. 10.) *He sent and beheaded John in the prison*. It is probable the prison was very near, at the gate of the palace; and thither an officer was sent to cut off the head of this great man. He must be beheaded with expedition, to gratify Herodias, who was in a longing condition till it was done. It was done in the night, for it was at supper-time, after supper it is likely. It was done in the prison, not at the usual place of execution, for fear of an uproar. A great deal of innocent blood, of martyrs' blood, has thus been huddled up in corners, which, when God comes to make inquisition for blood, the earth shall disclose, and shall no more cover, Isa. 26. 21. Ps. 9. 12.

Thus was that voice silenced, that burning and shining light extinguished; thus did that prophet, that Elias, of the New Testament, fall a sacrifice to the resentments of an imperious, whorish woman. Thus did he, who was great in the sight of the Lord,

die as a fool dieth, his hands were bound, and his feet put into fetters; and as a man falleth before wicked men, so he fell, a true martyr to all intents and purposes: dying, though not for the profession of his faith, yet for the performance of his duty. However, though his work was soon done, it was done, and his testimony finished, for till then none of God's witnesses are slain. And God brought this good out of it, that hereby his disciples, who, while he lived, though in prison, kept close to him, now after his death heartily closed with Jesus Christ.

5. The disposal of the poor remains of this blessed saint and martyr. The head and body being separated,

(1.) The damsel brought the head in triumph to her mother, as a trophy of the victories of her malice and revenge, *v. 11.* *Jerome ad Ruffin.* relates, that when Herodias had John the Baptist's head brought her, she gave herself the barbarous diversion of pricking the tongue with a needle, as Fulvia did Tully's. Note, Bloody minds are pleased with bloody sights, which those of tender spirits shrink and tremble at. Sometimes the insatiable rage of bloody persecutors has fallen upon the dead bodies of the saints, and made sport with them, *Ps. 79. 2.* When the witnesses are slain, they that *dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry*, *Rev. 11. 10.* *Ps. 14. 4, 5.*

(2.) The disciples *buried the body*, and brought the news in tears to our Lord Jesus. The disciples of John had fasted often while their master was in prison, *their bridegroom was taken away from them*, and they prayed earnestly for his deliverance, as the church did for Peter's, *Acts 12. 5.* They had free access to him in prison, which was a comfort to them, but they wished to see him at liberty, that he might preach to others; but now on a sudden all their hopes are dashed. Disciples weep and lament, when the world rejoices. Let us see what they did.

[1.] *They buried the body.* Note, There is a respect owing to the servants of Christ, not only while they live, but in their bodies and memories when they are dead. Concerning the two first New-Testament martyrs, it is particularly taken notice of, that they were decently buried, John the Baptist by his disciples, and Stephen by devout men; (*Acts 8. 2.*) yet there was no enshrining of their bones or other relics, a piece of superstition which sprung up long after, when the enemy had sowed tares. That over-doing, in respect to the bodies of the saints, is undoing; though they are not to be vilified, yet they are not to be deified.

[2.] *They went and told Jesus*; not so much that he might shift for his own safety, (no doubt he heard it from others, the country rang of it,) as that they might receive comfort from him, and be taken in among his disciples. Note, *First*, When any thing ails us at any time, it is our duty and privilege to make Christ acquainted with it. It will be a relief to our burdened spirits to unbosom ourselves to a friend we may be free with. Such a relation dead or unkind, such a comfort lost or imbibtered, go and tell Jesus, who knows already, but will know from us the trouble of *our souls in adversity*. *Secondly*, We must take heed, lest our religion and the profession of it die with our ministers; when John was dead, they did not return every man to his own, but resolved to abide by it still. When the shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the great Shepherd of the sheep to go to, who is still the same, *Heb. 13. 8, 20.* The removal of ministers should bring us nearer to Christ, into a more immediate communion with him. *Thirdly*, Comforts, otherwise highly valuable, are sometimes *therefore* taken from us, because they come between us and Christ, and are apt to carry away that love and esteem which are due to him only: John had

long since directed his disciples to Christ, and turned them over to him, but they could not leave their old master while he lived; therefore he is removed that they may go to Jesus, whom they had sometimes emulated and envied for John's sake. It is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all. If our masters be taken from our head, this is our comfort, we have a Master in heaven, who himself is our Head.

Josephus mentions this story of the death of John the Baptist, (*Antiquit. lib. 18. cap. 7.*) and adds, that a fatal destruction of Herod's army in his war with Aretas, king of Petrea, (whose daughter was Herod's wife, whom he put away to make room for Herodias,) was generally considered, by the Jews, to be a just judgment upon him, for putting John the Baptist to death. Herod having, at the instigation of Herodias, disobliged the emperor, was deprived of his government, and they were both banished to Lyons in France; which, says Josephus, was his just punishment for hearkening to her solicitations. And, lastly, it is storied of this daughter of Herodias, that going over the ice in winter, the ice broke, and she slipped in up to her neck, which was cut through by the sharpness of the ice. God requiring her head (says Dr. Whitby) for that of the Baptist; which, if true, was a remarkable providence.

13. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities. 14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. 15. And when it was evening his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18. He said, Bring them hither to me. 19. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake; and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

This passage of story, concerning Christ's feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, which, very few, if any, of Christ's miracles are; this intimates that there is something in it worthy of special remark. Observe,

I. The great resort of people to Christ, when he was retired into a desert place, *v. 13.* He withdrew into privacy when he heard, not of John's death, but of the thoughts Herod had concerning him, that he was *John the Baptist risen from the dead*, and therefore so feared by Herod as to be hated; he departed further off, to get out of Herod's jurisdiction. Note, In times of peril, when God opens a door of escape,

it is lawful to flee for our own preservation, unless we have some special call to expose ourselves. Christ's *hour was not yet come*, and therefore he would not thrust himself upon suffering. He could have secured himself by divine power, but because his life was intended for an example, he did it by human prudence; *he departed by ship*. But *a city on a hill cannot be hid; when the people heard it, they followed him on foot from all parts*. Such an interest Christ had in the affections of the multitude, that his withdrawing from them did but draw them after him with so much the more eagerness. Here, as often, *the scripture was fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be*. It should seem, there was more crowding to Christ after John's martyrdom than before. Sometimes *the sufferings of the saints* are made to further the gospel, (Phil. 1. 12.) and "*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*." Now John's testimony was finished, it was recollected, and more improved than ever. Note, 1. When Christ and his word withdraw from us, it is best for us (whatever flesh and blood may object to the contrary) to follow it, preferring opportunities for our souls before any secular advantages whatsoever. *When the ark removes, we shall remove, and go after it*, Josh. 3. 3. 2. *Those that truly desire the sincere milk of the word*, will not stick at the difficulties they may meet with in their attendance on it. The presence of Christ and his gospel makes a desert place not only tolerable, but desirable; it makes the wilderness an Eden, Isa. 51. 3.—41. 19, 20.

11. The tender compassion of our Lord Jesus toward those who thus followed him, v. 14. 1. He went forth, and appeared publicly among them. Though he retired for his own security, and his own repose, yet he went forth from his retirement, when he saw people desirous to hear him, as one willing both to toil himself, and to expose himself, for the good of souls; *for even Christ pleased not himself*. 2. *When he saw the multitude, he had compassion on them*. Note, The sight of a great multitude may justly move compassion. To see a great multitude, and to think how many precious, immortal souls here are, the greatest part of which, we have reason to fear, are neglected and ready to perish, would grieve one to the heart. None like Christ for pity to souls, *his compassions fail not*. 3. He did not only pity them, but he helped them: many of them were sick, and he, in compassion to them, healed them; for he came into the world to be the great Healer. After a while, they were all hungry, and he in compassion to them, fed them. Note, In all the favours Christ shows to us, he is moved with compassion, Isa. 63. 9.

III. The motion which the disciples made for the dismissing of the congregation, and Christ's setting aside the motion. 1. The evening drawing on, the disciples moved it to Christ to send the multitude away; they thought there was a good day's work done, and it was time to disperse. Note, Christ's disciples are often more careful to show their discretion, than to show their zeal; and their abundant consideration, rather than their abundant affection in the things of God. 2. Christ would not dismiss them hungry as they were, nor detain them longer without meat, nor put them upon the trouble and charge of buying meat for themselves, but orders his disciples to provide for them. Christ all along expressed more tenderness toward the people than his disciples did; for what are the compassions of the most merciful men, compared with the tender mercies of God in Christ? See how loath Christ is to part with those who are resolved to cleave to him! *They need not depart*. Note, Those who have Christ, have enough, and need not depart to seek a happiness and livelihood in the creature; they that have made sure of the one thing needful, need not be cum-

bered about much serving: nor will Christ put his willing followers upon a needless expense, but will make their attendance cheap to them.

But if they be hungry, they have need to depart, for that is a necessity which has no law, therefore *give you them to eat*. Note, *The Lord is for the body*, it is the work of his hands, it is part of his purchase; he was himself clothed with a body, that he might encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. But he takes a particular care of the body, when it is employed to serve the soul in his more immediate service. If we seek first the kingdom of God, and make that our chief care, we may depend upon God to add other things to us, as far as he sees fit, and may cast all our care of them upon him. These followed Christ but for a trial, in a present fit of zeal, and yet Christ took this care of them; much more will he provide for those who follow him fully.

IV. The slender provision that was made for this great multitude; and here we must compare the number of invited guests with the bill of fare.

1. The number of the guests was *five thousand men, beside women and children*; and it is probable the women and children might be as many as the men, if not more. This was a vast auditory that Christ preached to, and we have reason to think an attentive auditory; and yet, it should seem, far the greater part, notwithstanding all this seeming zeal and forwardness, came to nothing; they went off and followed him no more; for *many are called, but few chosen*. We would rather perceive the acceptableness of the word by the conversations, than by the crowds, of its hearers; though that also is a good sight and a good sign.

2. The bill of fare was very disproportionable to the number of the guests, but *five loaves, and two fishes*. This provision the disciples carried about with them for the use of the family, now they were retired into the desert. Christ could have fed them by miracle, but to set us an example of providing for those of our own households, he will have their own camp victualled in an ordinary way. Here is neither plenty, nor variety, nor dainty; a dish of fish was no rarity to them that were fishermen, but it was food convenient for the twelve; two fishes for their supper, and bread to serve them perhaps for a day or two: here was no wine or strong drink; fair water from the rivers in the desert was the best they had to drink with their meat; and yet out of this Christ will have the multitude fed. Note, Those who have but a little, yet when the necessity is urgent, must relieve others out of that little, and that is the way to make it more. *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* Yes, he can, when he pleases, a plentiful table.

V. The liberal distribution of this provision among the multitude; (v. 18, 19.) *Bring them hither to me*. Note, The way to have our creature-comforts converted indeed to us, is to bring them to Christ; for every thing is sanctified by his word, and by prayer to him: that is likely to prosper and do well with us, which we put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, that he may dispose of it as he pleases, and that we may take it back from his hand, and then it will be doubly sweet to us. What we give in charity, we should bring to Christ first, that he may graciously accept it from us, and graciously bless it to those to whom it is given; this is *doing it as unto the Lord*.

Now at this miraculous meal we may observe,

1. The seating of the guests; (v. 19.) *He commanded them to sit down*; which intimates, that while he was preaching to them they were standing, which is a posture of reverence, and readiness for motion. But what shall we do for chairs for them all? Let them sit down on the grass. When Ahasuerus would show the riches of his glorious kingdom,

and the honour of his excellent majesty, in a royal feast for the great men of all his provinces, the beds or couches they sat on were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble, Esther 1. 6. Our Lord Jesus did now show, in a divine feast, the riches of a more glorious kingdom than that, and the honour of a more excellent majesty, even a dominion over nature itself; but here is not so much as a cloth spread, no plates or napkins laid, no knives or forks, not so much as a bench to sit down on; but, as if Christ intended indeed to reduce the world to the plainness and simplicity, and so to the innocence and happiness, of Adam in paradise, he commanded them to sit down on the grass. By doing every thing thus, without any pomp or splendour, he plainly showed that his kingdom was not of this world, nor cometh with observation.

2. The craving of a blessing. He did not appoint one of his disciples to be his chaplain, but he himself looked up to heaven, and blessed, and gave thanks; he praised God for the provision they had, and prayed to God to bless it to them. His craving a blessing, was commanding a blessing; for as he preached, so he prayed, *like one having authority*; and in this prayer and thanksgiving, we may suppose, he had special reference to the multiplying of this food; but herein he has taught us that good duty of craving a blessing and giving thanks at our meals: God's good creatures must be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. 4. 4. Samuel blessed the feast, 1 Sam. 9. 13. Acts 2. 46, 47.—27. 34, 35. This is eating and drinking to the glory of God; (1 Cor. 10. 31.) giving God thanks, (Rom. 14. 6.) eating before God, as Moses, and his father-in-law, Exod. 18. 12, 15. When Christ blessed, he looked up to heaven, to teach us, in prayer, to eye God as a Father in heaven; and when we receive our creature-comforts to look thitherward, as taking them from God's hand, and depending on him for a blessing.

3. The carving of the meat. The Master of the feast was himself head-carver, for he brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Christ intended hereby to put honour upon his disciples, that they might be respected as workers together with him: as also to signify in what way the spiritual food of the word should be dispensed to the world; from Christ, as the original Author, by his ministers. What Christ designed for the churches, he signified to his servant John; (Rev. 1. 1, 4.) they delivered all that, and that only, which they received from the Lord, 1 Cor. 11. 23. Ministers can never fill the people's hearts, unless Christ first fill their hands: and what he has given to the disciples, they must give to the multitude; for they are stewards, to give to every one their portion of meat, ch. 24. 45. And, blessed be God, be the multitude ever so great, there is enough for all, enough for each.

4. The increase of the meat. This is taken notice of only in the effect, not in the cause or manner of it; here is no mention of any word that Christ spoke, by which the food was multiplied; the purposes and intentions of his mind and will shall take effect, though they be not spoken out: but this is observable, that the meat was multiplied, not in the heap at first, but in the distribution of it. As the widow's oil increased in the pouring out, so here the bread in the breaking. Thus grace grows by being acted, and, while other things perish in the using, spiritual gifts increase in the using. God ministers seed to the sower, and multiplies not the seed hoarded up, but the seed sown, 2 Cor. 9. 10. Thus there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; that scattereth, and so increaseth.

VI. The plentiful satisfaction of all the guests with this provision. Though the disproportion was so great, yet there was enough and to spare.

1. There was enough; *They did all eat and were filled*. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; so runs the promise, (Psal. 37. 19.) *They shall be satisfied*. As there was enough for all, they did all eat, so there was enough for each, they were filled; though there was but a little, there was enough, and that is as good as a feast. Note, The blessing of God can make a little go a great way; as, if God blasts what we have, *we eat, and have not enough*, Hag. 1. 9.

2. There was to spare; *They took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full*, one basket for each apostle: thus what they gave they had again, and a great deal more with it; and they were so far from being nice, that they could make this broken meat serve another time, and be thankful. This was to manifest and magnify the miracle, and to show that the provision Christ makes for those who are his is not bare and scanty, but rich and plenteous; *bread enough, and to spare*, (Luke 15. 17.) an overflowing fulness. Elisha's multiplying the loaves was somewhat like this, but far short of it; and then it was said, *They shall eat and leave*, 2 Kings 4. 43.

It is the same divine power, though exerted in an ordinary way, which multiplies the seed sown in the ground every year, and makes the earth yield her increase; so that what was brought out by handfuls, is brought home in sheaves: *This is the Lord's doing*; it is by Christ that all natural things consist, and by the word of his power that they are upheld.

22. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. 25. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 26. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. 28. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! 31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

We have here the story of another miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his friends and followers, his walking upon the water to his disciples. In the foregoing miracle he acted as the Lord of nature, improving its powers for the supply of those

who were in want; in this, he acted as the Lord of nature, correcting and controlling its powers for the succour of those who were in danger and distress. Observe,

1. Christ's dismissing of his disciples and *the multitude*, after he had fed them miraculously. He *constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side*, v. 22. St. John gives a particular reason for the hasty breaking up of this assembly, because the people were so affected with the miracle of the loaves, that they were about to take him by force, and make him a King; (John 6. 15.) to avoid which, he immediately scattered the people, sent away the disciples, lest they should join with them, and he himself withdrew, John 6. 15.

When they had *sat down to eat and drink*, they did not *rise up to play*, but each went to his business.

1. Christ sent the people away. It intimates somewhat of solemnity in the dismissing of them; he sent them away with a blessing, with some parting words of caution, counsel, and comfort, which might abide with them.

2. He *constrained the disciples to go into a ship* first, for till they were gone the people would not stir. The disciples were loath to go, and would not have gone, if he had not *constrained* them. They were loath to go to sea without him. *If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence*, Exod. 33. 15. They were loath to leave him alone, without any attendance, or any ship to wait for him; but they did it in pure obedience.

II. Christ's retirement hereupon; (v. 23.) *He went up into a mountain apart to pray*. Observe here,

1. That he was alone; *he went apart into a solitary place, and was there all alone*. Though he had so much work to do with others, yet he chose sometimes to be alone, to set us an example. Those are not Christ's followers that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy, but God and their own hearts.

2. That he was alone at prayer; that was his business in this solitude, to pray. Though Christ, as God, was Lord of all, and was prayed to, yet Christ, as Man, had the *form of a servant*, of a beggar, and prayed. Christ has herein set before us an example of secret prayer, and the performance of it secretly, according to the rule he gave, *ch. 6. 6*. Perhaps in this mountain there was some private oratory or convenience, provided for such an occasion; it was usual among the Jews to have such. Observe, When the disciples went to sea, their Master went to prayer; when Peter was to be *sifted as wheat*, Christ *prayed for him*.

3. That he was long alone; *there he was when the evening was come*, and, for aught that appears, there he was till towards morning, *the fourth watch of the night*. The night came on, and it was a stormy, tempestuous night, yet he continued *instant in prayer*. Note, It is good, at least sometimes, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and to take full scope in *pouring out our hearts before the Lord*. We must not *restrain prayer*, Job 15. 4.

III. The condition that the poor disciples were in at this time: *Their ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves*, v. 24. We may observe here,

1. That they were got into the midst of the sea when the storm rose. We may have fair weather at the beginning of our voyage, and yet meet with storms before we arrive at the port we are bound for. Therefore *let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off*, but after a long calm expect some storm or other.

2. The disciples were now where Christ sent

them, and yet met with this storm. Had they been flying from their Master, and their work, as Jonah was, when he was arrested by the storm, it had been a dreadful one indeed; but they had a special command from their Master to go to sea at this time, and were going about their work. Note, It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of their duty, and to be sent to sea then when their Master foresees a storm; but let them not take it unkindly; what he does they *know not now, but they shall know hereafter*, that Christ designs hereby to manifest himself with the more wonderful grace to them and for them.

3. It was a great discouragement to them now that they had not Christ with them, as they had formerly when they were in a storm; though he was then asleep indeed, yet he was soon awaked, (*ch. 8. 24*.) but now he was not with them at all. Thus Christ uses his disciples first to lesser difficulties, and then to greater, and so trains them up by degrees to live *by faith, and not by sense*.

4. Though *the wind was contrary*, and they were tossed with waves, yet being ordered by their Master *to the other side*, they did not tack about and come back again, but made the best of their way forward. Note, Though troubles and difficulties may disturb us in our duty, they must not drive us from it; but through the midst of them we must press forwards.

IV. Christ's approach to them in this condition; (v. 25.) and in this we have an instance,

1. Of his goodness, that he went unto them, as one that took cognizance of their case, and was under a concern about them, as a father about his children. Note, The extremity of the church and people of God is Christ's opportunity to visit them and appear for them; but he came not till the *fourth watch*, toward three o'clock in the morning, for then the fourth watch began. It was in the *morning-watch* that the Lord appeared for Israel in the Red sea, (Exod. 14. 24.) so was this. *He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps*, but, when there is occasion, *walks in darkness* for their succour; helps, and that right early.

2. Of his power, that he *went unto them, walking on the sea*. This is a great instance of Christ's sovereign dominion over all the creatures; they are all under his feet, and at his command; they forget their natures, and change the qualities that we called essential. We need not inquire how this was done, whether by condensing the surface of the water, (when God pleases, *the depths are congealed in the heart of the sea*, Exod. 15. 8.) or by suspending the gravitation of his body, which was transfigured as he pleased; it is sufficient that it proves his divine power, for it is God's prerogative to *tread upon the waves of the sea*, (Job 9. 8.) as it is to *ride upon the wings of the wind*. He that *made the waters of the sea a wall for the redeemed of the Lord*, (Isa. 51. 10.) here makes them a walk for the Redeemer himself, who, as Lord of all, appears with one foot on the sea and the other on dry land, Rev. 10. 2. The same power that made iron to swim, (2 Kings 6. 6.) did this. *What ailed thee, O thou sea?* Ps. 114. 5. *It was at the presence of the Lord. Thy way, O God, is in the sea*, Ps. 77. 19. Note, Christ can take what way he pleases to save his people.

V. Here is an account of what passed between Christ and his distressed friends upon his approach.

1. Between him and all the disciples. We are here told,

(1.) How their fears were raised; (v. 26.) *When they saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; πάντες αὐτὸν ἔστησαν—It is an apparition; so it might much better be rendered. It seems, the existence and appearance of spirits was generally believed by all except the Sadducees*

whose doctrine Christ had warned his disciples against; yet, doubtless, many supposed apparitions have been merely the creatures of men's own fear and fancy. These disciples said, *It is a spirit*; when they should have said, *It is the Lord*; it can be no other. Note, [1.] Even the appearances and approaches of deliverance are sometimes the occasions of trouble and perplexity to God's people, who are sometimes most frightened when they are least hurt; nay, when they are most favoured, as the Virgin Mary, Luke 1. 29. Exod. 3. 6, 7. The comforts of the Spirit of adoption are introduced by the terrors of the spirit of bondage, Rom. 8. 15. [2.] The appearance of a spirit, or the fancy of it, cannot but be frightful, and strike a terror upon us, because of the distance of the world of spirits from us, the just quarrel good spirits have with us, and the inveterate enmity evil spirits have against us: see Job 4. 14, 15. The more acquaintance we have with God, the Father of spirits, and the more careful we are to keep ourselves in his love, the better able we shall be to deal with those fears. [3.] The perplexing, disquieting fears of good people, arise from their mistakes and misapprehensions concerning Christ, his person, offices, and undertaking; the more clearly and fully we know his name, with the more assurance we shall trust in him, Ps. 9. 10. [4.] A little thing frightens us in a storm. When without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears. Perhaps the disciples fancied it was some evil spirit that raised the storm. Note, Most of our danger from outward troubles arises from the occasion they give for inward troubles.

(2.) How these fears were silenced, v. 27. He straightway relieved them, by showing them their mistake; when they were wrestling with the waves, he delayed his succour for some time; but he hastened his succour against their fright, as much the more dangerous; he straightway laid that storm with his word, *Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid*.

[1.] He rectified their mistake, by making himself known to them, as Joseph to his brethren; *It is I*. He does not name himself, as he did to Paul, *I am Jesus*; for Paul as yet knew him not; but to these disciples it was enough to say, *It is I*; they knew his voice, as his sheep, (John 10. 4.) as Mary Magdalene, John 20. 16. They need not ask, *Who art thou, Lord? Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?* They could say with the spouse, *It is the voice of my Beloved*, Cant. 2. 8.—5. 2. True believers know it by a good token. It was enough to make them easy, to understand who it was they saw. Note, A right knowledge opens the door to true comfort, especially the knowledge of Christ.

[2.] He encouraged them against their fright; *It is I*, and therefore, *First, Be of good cheer*; *Σπουδάζετε*—"Be courageous; pluck up your spirits, and be courageous." If Christ's disciples be not cheerful in a storm, it is their own fault, he would have them so. *Secondly, Be not afraid*; 1. "Be not afraid of me, now that you know it is I; surely you will not fear, for you know I mean you no hurt." Note, Christ will not be a terror to those to whom he manifests himself; when they come to understand him aright, the terror will be over. 2. "*Be not afraid* of the tempest, of the winds and waves, though noisy and very threatening; fear them not, while I am so near you. I am he that concerns himself for you, and will not stand by, and see you perish." Note, Nothing needs be a terror to those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; no, not death itself.

2. Between him and Peter, v. 28—31. where observe,

(1.) Peter's courage, and Christ's countenancing that.

[1.] It was very bold in Peter, that he would ven-

ture to come to Christ upon the water; (v. 28.) *Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee*. Courage was Peter's master-grace; and that made him so forward above the rest to express his love to Christ, though others perhaps loved him as well.

First, It is an instance of Peter's affection to Christ, that he desired to come to him. When he sees Christ, whom, doubtless, during the storm, he had many a time wished for, he is impatient to be with him. He does not say, *Bid me walk on the waters*, as desiring it for the miracle-sake; but, *Bid me come to thee*, as desiring it for Christ's sake; "Let me come to thee, no matter how." Note, True love will break through fire and water, if duly called to it, to come to Christ. Christ was coming to them, to succour and deliver them. *Lord*, said Peter, *bid me come to thee*. Note, When Christ is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty; and herein we must be willing and hold to venture with him and venture for him. Those that would have benefit by Christ as a Saviour, must thus by faith come to him. Christ had been now, for some time, absent, and hereby it appears why he absented himself; it was to endear himself so much the more to his disciples at his return, to make it highly seasonable and doubly acceptable. Note, When, for a small moment, Christ has forsaken his people, his returns are welcome, and most affectionately embraced; when gracious souls, after long seeking, find their Beloved at last, they hold him, and will not let him go, Cant. 3. 4.

Secondly, It is an instance of Peter's caution and due observance of the will of Christ, that he would not come without a warrant. Not, "If it be thou, I will come;" but, *If it be thou, bid me come*. Note, The boldest spirits must wait for a call to hazardous enterprises, and we must not rashly and presumptuously thrust ourselves upon them. Our will to services and sufferings is interpreted, not willingness, but willfulness, if it have not a regard to the will of Christ, and be not regulated by his call and command. Such extraordinary warrants as this to Peter we are not now to expect, but must have recourse to the general rules of the word, in the application of which to particular cases, with the help of providential hints, wisdom is profitable to direct.

Thirdly, It is an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and throw himself into the jaws of death, to despise the threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued a very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ. What difficulty or danger could stand before such a faith and such a zeal?

[2.] It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own him in it, v. 29. He might have condemned the preposal as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming; "Shall Peter pretend to do as his Master does?" But Christ knew that it came from a sincere and zealous affection to him, and graciously accepted of it. Note, Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities, and makes the best of them.

First, He bid him come. When the Pharisees asked a sign, they had not only a repulse, but a reproof, for it, because they did it with a design to tempt Christ; when Peter asked a sign, he had it, because he did it with a resolution to trust Christ. The gospel-call is, "*Come, come to Christ*"; venture all in his hand, and commit the keeping of your souls to him; venture through a stormy sea, a troublesome world, to Jesus Christ."

Secondly, He bore him out when he did come; *Peter walked upon the water*. The communion of true believers with Christ is represented by their

being quickened with him, raised up with him, made to sit with him, (Eph. 2. 5, 6.) and being crucified with him, Gal. 2. 20. Now, methinks, it is represented in this story by their walking with him on the water. Through the strength of Christ we are borne up above the world, enabled to trample upon it, kept from sinking into it, from being overwhelmed by it, obtain a victory over it, (1 John 3. 4.) by faith in Christ's victory, (John 16. 33.) and with him are crucified to it, Gal. 6. 14. See blessed Paul walking upon the water with Jesus, and more than a conqueror through him, and treading upon all the threatening waves, as not able to separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. 8. 35, &c. Thus the sea of the world is become like a sea of glass, congealed so as to bear; and they that have gotten the victory, stand upon it and sing, Rev. 15. 2, 3.

He walked upon the water, not for diversion or ostentation, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Note, When our souls are following hard after God, then it is that his right hand upholds us; it was David's experience, Ps. 65. 8. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, only in spiritual pursuits. When God bears his Israel upon eagles' wings, it is to bring them to himself; (Exod. 19. 4.) nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we be upheld by his power; it is in his own strength that we wrestle with him, that we reach after him, that we press forward toward the mark, being kept by the power of God, which power we must depend upon, as Peter when he walked upon the water; and there is no danger of sinking while underneath are the everlasting arms.

(2.) Here is Peter's cowardice, and Christ's reproving him and succouring him. Christ bid him come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know Christ's power, but that he might sink, and so know his own weakness; for as he would encourage his faith, so he would check his confidence, and make him ashamed of it. Observe then,

[1.] Peter's great fear; (v. 30.) *He was afraid*. The strongest faith and the greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those that can say, *Lord, I believe*; must say, *Lord, help my unbelief*. Nothing but perfect love will quite cast out fear. Good men often fall in those graces which they are most eminent for, and which they have then in exercise; to show that they have not yet attained. Peter was very stout at first, but afterwards his heart failed him. The lengthening out of a trial discovers the weakness of faith.

Here is, *First*, The cause of this fear; *He saw the wind boisterous*. While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, and upon his word and power, he walked upon the water well enough; but when he took notice withal of the danger he was in, and observed how the floods lift up their waves, then he feared. Note, Looking at difficulties with an eye of sense more than at precepts and promises with an eye of faith, is at the bottom of all our inordinate fears, both as to public and personal concerns. Abraham was strong in faith, because he considered not his own body; (Rom. 4. 19.) he minded not the discouraging improbabilities which the promise lay under, but kept his eye on God's power; and so, against hope, believed in hope, v. 18. Peter, when he saw the wind boisterous, should have remembered what he had seen, (ch. 8. 27.) when the winds and the sea obeyed Christ; but therefore we fear continually every day, because we forget the Lord our Maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13.

Secondly, The effect of this fear; *He began to sink*. While faith kept up, he kept above water: but when faith staggered, he began to sink. Note, The sinking of our spirits is owing to the weakness of our faith; we are upheld (but it is as we are

saved) through faith; (1 Pet. 1. 5.) and therefore, when our souls are cast down and disquieted, the sovereign remedy is, to hope in God, Ps. 43. 5. It is probable that Peter, being bred a fisherman, could swim very well; (John 21. 7.) and perhaps he trusted in part to that, when he cast himself into the sea, if he could not walk, he could swim; but Christ let him begin to sink, to show him that it was Christ's right hand and his holy arm, not any skill of his own, that was his security. It was Christ's great mercy to him, that, upon the failing of his faith, he did not leave him to sink outright, to sink to the bottom as a stone, (Exod. 15. 5.) but gave him time to cry, *Lord, save me*. Such is the care of Christ concerning true believers; though weak, they do but begin to sink! A man is never sunk, never undone, till he is in hell. Peter walked as he believed; to him, as to others, the rule held good, *According to your faith be it unto you*.

Thirdly, The remedy he had recourse to in this distress, the old tried, approved remedy, and that was prayer; he cried, *Lord, save me*. Observe, 1. The manner of his praying; it is fervent and importunate; *He cried*. Note, When faith is weak, prayer should be strong. Our Lord Jesus has taught us in the day of our fear to *offer up strong cries*, Heb. 5. 7. Sense of danger will make us cry, sense of duty and dependence on God should make us cry to him. 2. The matter of his prayer was pertinent and to the purpose; *He cried, Lord, save me*. Christ is the great Saviour, he came to save; these that would be saved, must not only come to him, but cry to him, for salvation; but we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking; sense of need will drive us to him.

[2.] Christ's great favour to Peter, in this fright. Though there was a mixture of presumption with Peter's faith in his first adventure, and of unbelief with his faith in his after-fainting, yet Christ did not cast him off; for,

First, He saved him; *he answered him with the saving strength of his right hand*, (Ps. 20. 6.) for immediately *he stretched forth his hand, and caught him*. Note, Christ's time to save is, when we sink, (Ps. 18. 4—7.) he helps at a dead lift. Christ's hand is still stretched out to all believers, to keep them from sinking. Those whom he hath once apprehended as his own, and hath snatched as brands out of the burning, he will catch out of the water too. Though he may seem to have left his hold, he doth but seem to do so, for they shall never perish, *neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand*, John 10. 28. Never fear, he will hold his own. Our deliverance from our own fears, which else would overwhelm us, is owing to the hand of his power and grace, Ps. 34. 4.

Secondly, He rebuked him; for as many as he loves and saves, he reproves and chides; *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Note, 1. Faith may be true, and yet weak; at first, like a grain of mustard-seed. Peter had faith enough to bring him upon the water, yet, because not enough to carry him through, Christ tells him he had but little. 2. Our discouraging doubts and fears are all owing to the weakness of our faith: therefore we doubt, because we are but of little faith. It is the business of faith to resolve doubts, the doubts of sense, in a stormy day, so as even then to keep the head above water. Could we but believe more, we should doubt less. 3. The weakness of our faith, and the prevalence of our doubts, are very displeasing to our Lord Jesus. It is true, he doth not cast off weak believers, but it is as true, that he is not pleased with weak faith, no, not in those that are nearest to him. *Wherefore didst thou doubt?* What reason was there for it? Note, Our doubts and fears would soon vanish before a strict inquiry into the

cause of them; for, all things considered, there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind, no, not in a stormy day, because he is ready to help them, *a very present help*.

VI. *The ceasing of the storm, v. 32.* When Christ was come into the ship, they were presently at the shore. Christ *walked upon the water* till he came to the ship, and then went into that, when he could as easily have walked to the shore; but when ordinary means are to be had, miracles are not to be expected. Though Christ needs not instruments for the doing of his work, he is pleased to use them. Observe, When Christ came into the ship, Peter came in with him. Companions with Christ in his patience, shall be companions in his kingdom, Rev. 1. 9. Those that walk with him, shall reign with him; those that are exposed, and that suffer with him, shall triumph with him.

When they were come into the ship, immediately the storm ceased, for it had done its work, its trying work. He that has *gathered the wind into his fists*, and *bound the waters in a garment*, is the same that *ascended and descended*; and his word even *stormy winds fulfil*, Ps. 148. 8. When Christ comes into a soul, he makes winds and storms to cease there, and commands peace. Welcome Christ, and *the noise of her waves will soon be quelled*. The way to be still is, to know that he is God, that he is the Lord with us.

VII. The adoration paid to Christ hereupon; (v. 33.) *They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, and said, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God.* Two good uses they made of this distress, and this deliverance.

1. It was a confirmation of their faith in Christ, and abundantly convinced them that *the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him*; for none but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea; they therefore yield to the evidence and make confession of their faith; *Thou truly art the Son of God.* They knew before that he was the Son of God, but now they know it better. Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active, and gets to greater degrees of strength by being exercised. Now they *know it of a truth*. Note, It is good for us to know more and more of the *certainly of those things wherein we have been instructed*, Luke 1. 4. Faith then grows, when it arrives at a full assurance, when it sees clearly, and saith, *Of a truth*.

2. They took occasion from it to *give him the glory due unto his name*. They not only owned that great truth, but were suitably affected by it; *they worshipped Christ*. Note, When Christ manifests his glory for us, we ought to return it to him; (Ps. 50. 15.) *I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*. Their worship and adoration of Christ were thus expressed, *Of a truth thou art the Son of God*. Note, The matter of our creed may and must be made the matter of our praise. Faith is the proper principle of worship, and worship the genuine product of faith. *He that comes to God must believe*; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb. 11. 6.

34. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, 35. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36. And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

We have here an account of miracles by whole sale, which Christ wrought on the other side the water, in the land of Gennesaret. Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. Gennesaret was a tract of land that lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, and either gave the name to, or took the name from, this sea, which is called, (Luke 5. 1.) *The lake of Gennesaret*; it signifies the valley of branches. Observe here,

1. The forwardness and faith of the *men of that place*. These were more noble than the Gergesenes, their neighbours, who were borderers upon the same lake. *Those besought Christ to depart from them*, they had no occasion for him; these besought him to help them, they had need of him. Christ reckons it the greatest honour we can do him, to make use of him. Now here we are told,

1. *How the men of that place were brought to Christ; they had knowledge of him*. It is probable that his miraculous passage over the sea, which they that were in the ship would industriously spread the report of, might help to make way for his entertainment in those parts; and perhaps it was one thing Christ intended in it, for he has great reaches in what he does. This they had knowledge of, and of the other miracles Christ had wrought, and therefore they flocked to him. Note, They that know Christ's name, will make their application to him: if Christ were better known, he would not be neglected as he is; he is trusted as far as he is known.

They had knowledge of him, that is, of his being among them, and that he would be but a while among them. Note, The discerning of the day of our opportunities is a good step toward the improvement of it. This was *the condemnation of the world*, that Christ *was in the world, and the world knew him not*; (John 1. 10.) Jerusalem knew him not, (Luke 19. 42.) but there were some who, when he was among them, *had knowledge of him*. It is better to know that there is a prophet among us than that there has been one, Ezek. 2. 5.

2. How they brought others to Christ, by giving notice to their neighbours of Christ's being come into those parts; *They sent out into all that country*. Note, Those that have got the knowledge of Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him too. We must not eat these spiritual morsels alone; there is in Christ enough for us all, so that there is nothing got by monopolizing. When we have opportunities of getting good to our souls, we should bring as many as we can to share with us. More than we think of would close with opportunities, if they were but called upon and invited to them. *They sent into their own country*, because it was their own, and they desired the welfare of it. Note, We can no better testify our love to our country than by promoting and propagating the knowledge of Christ in it. Neighbourhood is an advantage of doing good, which must be improved. Those that are near to us, we should contrive to do something for, at least by our example, to bring them near to Christ.

3. What their business was with Christ; not only, perhaps not chiefly, if at all, to be taught, but to have their sick healed; *They brought unto him all that were diseased*. If love to Christ and his doctrine will not bring them to him, yet self-love would. Did we but rightly seek our own things, the things of our own peace and welfare, we should seek the things of Christ. We should do him honour, and please him, by deriving grace and righteousness from him. Note, Christ is the proper Person to bring the diseased to; whether should they go but to the Physician, to the *Son of righteousness, that hath healing under his wings*?

4. How they made their application to him; *they besought him that they might only touch the hem of*

his garment, v. 36. They applied themselves to him, (1.) With great importunity; they besought him. Well may we beseech to be healed, when God by his ministers beseecheth us that we will be healed. Note, The greatest favours and blessings are to be obtained from Christ by entreaty; *Ask, and it shall be given*. (2.) With great humility; they came to him as those that were sensible of their distance, humbly beseeching him to help them; and their desiring to touch the hem of his garment, intimates that they thought themselves unworthy that he should take any particular notice of them, that he should so much as speak to their case, much less touch them for their cure; but they will look upon it as a great favour, if he will give them leave to *touch the hem of his garment*. The eastern nations show respect to their princes by kissing their sleeve or skirt. (3.) With great assurance of the all-sufficiency of his power, not doubting but they should be healed, even by touching the hem of his garment; that they should receive abundant communications from him by the smallest token or symbol of communion with him. They did not expect the formality of striking his hand over the place of persons diseased, as Naaman did; (2 Kings 5. 11.) but they were sure that there was in him such an overflowing fullness of healing virtue, that *they* could not fail of a cure, who were but admitted near him. It was in this country and neighbourhood that the woman with the bloody issue was cured by *touching the hem of his garment*, and was commended for her faith; (ch. 9. 20—22.) and thence, probably, they took occasion to ask this. Note, The experiences of others in their attendance upon Christ may be of use both to direct and to encourage us in our attendance on him. It is good using those means and methods which others before us have sped well in the use of.

II. The fruit and success of this their application to Christ. It was not in vain that these seed of Jacob sought him, for as many as *touch*ed, were made perfectly whole. Note, 1. Christ's cures are perfect cures. Those that he heals, he heals perfectly. He doth not do his work by halves. Though spiritual healing be not perfected at first, yet, doubtless, *he that has begun the good work, will perform it*, Phil. 1. 6. 2. There is abundance of healing virtue in Christ for all that apply themselves to him, be they ever so many. That precious ointment which was poured on his head, *ran down to the skirts of his garment*, Ps. 133. 2. The least of Christ's institutions, like the hem of his garment, is replenished with the overflowing fullness of his grace, and he is able to *save to the uttermost*. 3. The healing virtue that is in Christ, is put forth for the benefit of those that by a true and lively faith touch him. Christ is in heaven, but his word is nigh us, and he himself in that word. When we mix faith with the word, apply it to ourselves, depend upon it, and submit to its influences and commands, then we touch the hem of Christ's garment. It is but thus touching, and we are made whole. On such easy terms are spiritual cures offered by him, that he may truly be said to *heal freely*; so that if our souls die of their wounds, it is not owing to our Physician, it is not for want of skill or will in him; but it is purely owing to ourselves. He *could* have healed us, he *would* have healed us, but we *would not be healed*; so that our blood will lie upon our own heads.

CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, we have our Lord Jesus, as the great Prophet teaching, as the great Physician healing, and as the great Shepherd of the sheep feeding; as the Father of spirits instructing them; as the Conqueror of Satan dispossessing him; and as concerned for the bodies of his people, providing for them. Here is, I. Christ's discourse with the Scribes and Pharisees about human traditions and injunctions, v. 1. . 9. II. His discourse with the multitude, and with his

disciples, concerning the things that defile a man, v. 10. . 20. III. His casting of the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter, v. 21. . 28. IV. His healing of all that were brought to him, v. 29. . 31. V. His feeding of four thousand men, with seven loaves and a few little fishes, v. 32. . 39.

1. **T**HEN came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2. Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4. For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is a gift*, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6. And honour not his father or his mother, *he shall be free*. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. 9. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. The intemperate heat of the Jewish teachers for the support of their hierarchy, occasioned many excellent discourses of our Saviour's for the settling of the truth, as here,

I. Here is the cavil of the Scribes and Pharisees at Christ's disciples, for *eating with unwashen hands*. The Scribes and Pharisees were the great men of the Jewish church, men whose gain was godliness, great enemies to the gospel of Christ, but colouring their opposition with a pretence of zeal for the law of Moses; when really nothing was intended but the support of their own tyranny over the consciences of men. They were men of learning and men of business. These Scribes and Pharisees here introduced were of Jerusalem, the holy city, the head-city, whither the tribes went up, and where were set the thrones of judgment; they should therefore have been better than others, but they were worse. Note, External privileges, if they be not duly improved, commonly swell men up the more with pride and malignity. Jerusalem, which should have been a pure spring, was now become a poisoned sink. *How is the faithful city become a harlot!*

Now if these great men be the accusers, pray what is the accusation? What articles do they exhibit against the disciples of Christ? Why, truly, the thing laid to their charge, is, nonconformity to the canons of their church; (v. 2.) *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?* This charge they make good in a particular instance; *They wash not their hands when they eat bread*. A very high misdemeanor! It was a sign that Christ's disciples conducted themselves inoffensively, when this was the worst thing they could charge them with.

Observe, 1. What was the *tradition of the elders*.—That people should often wash their hands, and always at meat. This they placed a great deal of religion in, supposing that the meat they touched with unwashen hands would be defiling to them. The

Pharisees practised this themselves, and with a great deal of strictness imposed it upon others, not under civil penalties, but as matter of conscience, and making it a sin against God if they did not do it. Rabbi Josès determined, "that to eat with unwashen hands is as great a sin as adultery." And Rabbi Akiba being kept a close prisoner, having water sent him both to wash his hands with, and to drink with his meat, the greatest part being accidentally shed, he washed his hands with the remainder, though he left himself none to drink, saying he would rather die than transgress the tradition of the elders. Nay, they would not eat meat with one that did not wash before meat. This mighty zeal in so small a matter would appear very strange, if we did not still see it incident to church-oppressors, not only to be fond of practising their own inventions, but to be furious in pressing their own impositions.

2. What was the transgression of this tradition or injunction by the disciples; it seems, they did not wash their hands when they ate bread, which was the more offensive to the Pharisees, because they were men who in other things were strict and conscientious. The custom was innocent enough, and had a decency in its civil use. We read of the water for purifying at the marriage where Christ was present, (John 2. 6.) though Christ turned it into wine, and so put an end to that use of it. But when it came to be practised and imposed as a religious rite and ceremony, and such a stress laid upon it, the disciples, though weak in knowledge, yet were so well taught as not to comply with it, or observe it; no, not when the Scribes and Pharisees had their eye upon them. They had already learned St. Paul's lesson, *All things are lawful for me*; no doubt, it is lawful to wash before meat; but I will not be brought under the power of any; especially not of those who *said to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over*, 1 Cor. 6. 12.

3. What was the complaint of the Scribes and Pharisees against them. They quarrel with Christ about it, supposing that he allowed them in it, as he did, no doubt, by his own example; "*Why do thy disciples transgress the canons of the church?*" And why dost thou suffer them to do it?" It was well that the complaint was made to Christ; for the disciples themselves, though they knew their duty in this case, were perhaps not so well able to give a reason for what they did as were to be wished.

II. Here is Christ's answer to this cavil, and his justification of the disciples in that which was charged upon them as a transgression. Note, While we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, he will be sure to bear us out in it.

Two ways Christ replies upon them:

1. By way of recrimination, v. 3—6. They were spying motives in the eyes of his disciples, but Christ shows them a beam in their own. But that which he charges upon them, is, not barely a recrimination, for it will be no vindication of ourselves to condemn our reprovers; but it is such a censure of their tradition (and the authority of that was it they built their charge upon) as makes not only a non-compliance lawful, but an opposition a duty. That human authority must never be submitted to, which sets up in competition with divine authority.

(1.) The charge in general is, *You transgress the commandment of God by your tradition*. They called it the *tradition of the elders*, laying stress upon the antiquity of the usage, and the authority of them that imposed it, as the church of Rome does upon fathers and councils; but Christ calls it *their* tradition. Note, Illegal impositions will be laid to the charge of those who support and maintain them, and keep them up, as well as of those who first invented and enjoined them; Mic. 6. 16. *You transgress the commandment of God*. Note, Those who are most

zealous of their own impositions, are commonly most careless of God's commands; which is a good reason why Christ's disciples should stand upon their guard against such impositions, lest though at first they seem only to infringe the liberty of christians, they come at length to confront the authority of Christ. Though the Pharisees, in this command of washing before meat, did not intrench upon any command of God; yet, because in other instances they did, he justifies his disciples' disobedience to this.

(2.) The proof of this charge is in a particular instance, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment.

[1.] Let us see what the command of God is, (v. 4.) what the precept, and what the sanction of the law is.

The precept is, *Honour thy father and thy mother*; this is enjoined by the common Father of mankind, and by paying respect to them whom Providence has made the instruments of our being, we give honour to him who is the Author of it, who has thereby, as to us, put some of his image upon them. The whole of children's duty to their parents is included in this of honouring them, which is the spring and foundation of all the rest. *If I be a Father, where is my honour?* Our Saviour here supposes it to mean the duty of children's maintaining their parents, and ministering to their wants, if there be occasion, and being every way serviceable to their comfort. *Honour widows*, that is, maintain them, 1 Tim. 5. 3.

The sanction of this law in the fifth commandment, is, a promise, *that thy days may be long*; but our Saviour waves that, lest any should thence infer it to be only a thing commendable and profitable, and insists upon the penalty annexed to the breach of this commandment in another scripture, which denotes the duty to be highly and indispensably necessary; *He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death*: this law we have, Exod. 21. 17. The sin of cursing parents is here opposed to the duty of honouring them. Those who speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, who mock at them, or give them taunting and opprobrious language, break this law. If to call a brother *Raca* be so penal, what is it to call a father so? By our Saviour's application of this law, it appears, that denying service or relief to parents is included in cursing them. Though the language be respectful enough, and nothing abusive in it, yet what will that avail, if the deeds be not agreeable? It is but like him that said, *I go, Sir, and went not*, ch. 21. 30.

[2.] Let us see what was the contradiction which the tradition of the elders gave to this command. It was not direct and downright, but implicit; their casuists gave them such rules as furnished them with an easy evasion from the obligation of this command, v. 5, 6. You hear what God saith, *but ye say so* and so. Note, That which men say, even great men, and learned men, and men in authority, must be examined by that which God saith; and if it be found either contrary or inconsistent, it may and must be rejected, Acts 4. 19. Observe,

First, What their tradition was; That a man could not in any case bestow his worldly estate better than to give it to the priests, and devote it to the service of the temple: and that, when any thing was so devoted, it was not only unlawful to alienate it, but all other obligations, though ever so just and sacred, were thereby superseded, and a man was thereby discharged from them. And this proceeded partly from their ceremoniousness, and the superstitions regard they had to the temple, and partly from their covetousness, and love of money: for what was given to the temple they were gainers by. The former was, in pretence, the latter was, in truth, at the bottom of this tradition.

Secondly, How they allowed the application of

this to the case of children. When their parents' necessities called for their assistance, they pleaded, that all they could spare from themselves and their children, they had devoted to the treasury of the temple; *It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me*, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them; suggesting withal, that the spiritual advantage of what was so devoted, would redound to the parents, who must live upon that air. This, they taught, was a good and valid plea, and many undutiful, unnatural children made use of it, and they justified them in it, and said, *He shall be free*; so we supply the sense. Some go further, and supply it thus, "*He doth well, his days shall be long in the land, and he shall be looked upon as having duly observed the fifth commandment.*" The pretence of religion would make his refusal to provide for his parents not only passable but plausible. But the absurdity and impiety of this tradition were very evident; for revealed religion was intended to improve, not to overthrow, natural religion; one of the fundamental laws of which is this of honouring our parents; and had they known what that meant, *I will have justice, and mercy, and not sacrifice*, they had not thus made the most arbitrary rituals destructive of the most necessary morals. This was making the command of God of no effect. Note, Whatever leads to, or countenances, disobedience, does, in effect, make void the command; and they that take upon them to dispense with God's law, do, in Christ's account, repeal and disarm it. To break the law is bad, but to teach men so, as the Scribes and Pharisees did, is much worse, *ch. 5. 19*. To what purpose is the command given, if it be not obeyed? The rule is, as to us, of none effect, if we be not ruled by it. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work*; high time for the great Reformer, the great Refiner, to appear; for they have made void thy law; (*Ps. 119. 126.*) not only sinned against the commandment, but, as far as in them lay, sinned away the commandment. But, thanks be to God, in spite of them and all their traditions, the command stands in full force, power, and virtue.

2. The other part of Christ's answer is by way of reprehension; and that which he here charges them with, is hypocrisy; *Ye hypocrites, v. 7.* Note, It is the prerogative of him who searcheth the heart, and knows what is in man, to pronounce who are hypocrites. The eye of man can perceive open profaneness, but it is only the eye of Christ that can discern hypocrisy, *Luke 16. 15.* And as it is a sin which his eye discovers, so it is a sin which of all others his soul hates.

Now Christ fetches his reproof from *Isa. 29. 13. Well did Isaiah prophesy of you.* Isaiah spoke it of the men of that generation to which he prophesied, yet Christ applies it to these Scribes and Pharisees. Note, The reproofs of sin and sinners, which we find in scripture, were designed to reach the like persons and practices to the end of the world; for they are not of private interpretation, *2 Pet. 1. 20.* The sinners of the latter days are prophesied of, *1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 1. 2 Pet. 3. 3.* Threatenings directed against others, belong to us, if we be guilty of the same sins. Isaiah prophesied not of them only, but of all other hypocrites, against whom that word of his is still levelled, and stands in force. The prophecies of scripture are every day in the fulfilling.

This prophecy exactly describes a hypocritical nation, *Isa. 9. 17.—10. 6.* Here is,

(1.) The description of hypocrites, in two things.

[1.] In their own performances of religious worship, *v. 8.* When they draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, their heart is far from him. Observe,

First, How far a hypocrite goes; he draws nigh to God, and honours him; he is, in profession, a

worshipper of God. The Pharisees went up to the temple, to pray; he does not stand at that distance which these are at, who love without God in the world, but has a name among the people near unto him. They honour him; that is, they take on them to honour God, they join with those that do so. Some honour God has even from the services of hypocrites, as they help to keep up the face and form of godliness in the world, whence God fetches honour to himself, though they intend it not to him. When God's enemies submit themselves but feignedly, when they lie unto him, so the word is, (*Ps. 66. 3.*) it redounds to his honour, and he gets himself a name.

Secondly, Where he rests and takes up; this is done but with his mouth and with his lips. It is piety but from the teeth outwards; he shows much love, and that is all, there is in his heart no true love; they make their voice to be heard, (*Isa. 58. 4.*) mention the name of the Lord, *Isa. 48. 1.* Hypocrites are those that only make a lip-labour of religion and religious worship. In word and tongue, the worst hypocrites may do as well as the best saints, and speak as fair with Jacob's voice.

Thirdly, What that is wherein he comes short; it is in the main matter; *Their heart is far from me*, habitually alienated and estranged, (*Eph. 4. 18.*) actually wandering and dwelling upon something else; no serious thoughts of God, no pious affections toward him, no concern about the soul and eternity, no thoughts agreeable to the service. God is near in their mouth, but far from their reins, *Jer. 12. 2. Ezek. 33. 31.* The heart, with the fool's eyes, is in the ends of the earth. It is a silly dove that is without heart, and so it is a silly duty, *Hos. 7. 11.* A hypocrite says one thing, but thinks another. The great thing that God looks at and requires, is, the heart; (*Prov. 23. 26.*) if that be far from him, it is not a reasonable service, and therefore not an acceptable one, it is the sacrifice of fools, *Ecc. 5. 1.*

[2.] In their prescriptions to others. This is an instance of their hypocrisy, that they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The Jews then, as the Papists since, paid the same respect to oral tradition that they did to the word of God, receiving it *patri pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ—with the same pious affection and reverence.* Conc. Trident. *Sess. 4. Decr. 1.* When men's inventions are tacked to God's institutions, and imposed accordingly; this is hypocrisy, a mere human religion. The commandments of men are properly conversant about the things of men, but God will have his own work done by his own rules, and accepts not that which he did not himself appoint. That only comes to him, that comes from him.

(2.) The doom of hypocrites; it is put in a little compass; *In vain do they worship me.* Their worship does not attain the end for which it was appointed; it will neither please God, nor profit themselves. If it be not in spirit, it is not in truth, and so it is all nothing. That man who only seems to be religious, but is not so, his religion is vain; (*James 1. 26.*) and if our religion be a vain oblation, a vain religion, how great is that vanity! How sad is it to live in an age of prayers and sermons, and sabbaths and sacraments, in vain, to beat the air in all these, it is so, if the heart be not with God in them. Lip labour is lost labour, *Isa. 1. 11.* Hypocrites sow the wind and reap the whirlwind; they trust in vanity and vanity will be their recompense.

Thus Christ justified his disciples in their disobedience to the traditions of the elders; and thus the Scribes and Pharisees got by their cavilling. We read not of any reply they made; if they were not satisfied, yet they were silenced, and could not resist the power where-with Christ spake.

10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13. But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. 15. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17. Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Christ having proved that the disciples, in eating with unwashen hands, were not to be blamed, as transgressing the traditions and injunctions of the elders, comes here to show that they were not to be blamed, as having done any thing that was in itself evil. In the former part of his discourse he overturned the authority of the law, and in this the reason of it. Observe,

1. The solemn introduction to this discourse; (v. 10.) *He called the multitude.* They were withdrawn while Christ discoursed with the Scribes and Pharisees; probably those proud men ordered them to withdraw, as not willing to talk with Christ in their hearing; Christ must favour them at their pleasure with a discourse in private. But Christ had a regard to the multitude; he soon despatched the Scribes and Pharisees, and then turned them off, and invited the mob, the multitude, to be his hearers: thus the poor are evangelized; and the foolish things of the world, and things that are despised, hath Christ chosen. The humble Jesus embraced those whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, and to them he designed it for a mortification. He turns from them as wilful and unteachable, and turns to the multitude, who, though weak, were humble, and willing to be taught. To them he said, *Hear, and understand.* Note, What we hear from the mouth of Christ, we must give all diligence to understand. Not only scholars, but even the multitude, the ordinary people, must apply their minds to understand the words of Christ. *He therefore* calls upon them to understand, because the lesson he was now about to teach them, was contrary to the notions which they had sucked in with their milk from their teachers; and overturned many of the customs and usages which they were wedded to, and laid stress upon. Note, There is need of a great intention of mind and clearness of understanding, to free men from those corrupt principles and practices which they have been bred up in and long ac-

customed to; for in that case the understanding is commonly bribed and biased by prejudice.

II. The truth itself laid down, (v. 11.) in two propositions, which were opposite to the vulgar errors of that time, and were therefore surprising,

1. *Not that which goes into the mouth defiles the man.* It is not the kind or quality of our food, nor the condition of our hands, that affects the soul with any moral pollution or defilement. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,* Rom. 14. 17. That defiles the man, by which guilt is contracted before God, and the man is rendered offensive to him, and disquieted for communion with him; now what we eat, if we do not eat unreasonably and immoderately, does not this; for *to the pure all things are pure,* Tit. 1. 15. The Pharisees carried the ceremonial pollutions, by eating such and such meats, much further than the law intended, and burdened it with additions of their own, which our Saviour witnesses against; intending hereby to pave the way to a repeal of the ceremonial law in that matter. He was now beginning to teach his followers to *call nothing common or unclean*; and if Peter, when he was bid to *kill and eat*, had remembered this word, he would not have said, *Not so, Lord,* Acts 10. 13—15, 28.

2. *But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* We are polluted, not by the meat we eat with unwashen hands, but by the words we speak from an unsanctified heart; so it is that *the mouth causeth the flesh to sin,* Eccl. 5. 6. Christ, in a former discourse, had laid a great stress upon our words; (ch. 12. 36, 37.) and that was intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at him: this here is intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at the disciples, and censured them. It is not the disciples that defile themselves with what they eat, but the Pharisees that defile themselves with what they speak spitefully and censoriously of them. Note, Those who charge guilt upon others for transgressing the commandments of men, many times bring greater guilt upon themselves by transgressing the law of God against rash judging. Those most defile themselves, who are most forward to censure the defilements of others.

III. The offence that was taken at this truth, and the account brought to Christ of that offence; (v. 12.) *"The disciples said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, and didst thou not foresee that they would be so, at this saying, and would think the worse of thee and of thy doctrine for it, and be the more enraged at thee?"*

1. It was not strange that the Pharisees should be offended at this plain truth, for they were men made up of error and enmity, mistake and malice. Sore eyes cannot bear clear light; and nothing is more provoking to proud imposers than the undeceiving of those whom they have first blindfolded, and then enslaved. It should seem that the Pharisees, who were strict observers of the traditions, were more offended than the Scribes, who were the teachers of them; and perhaps they were as much galled with the latter part of Christ's doctrine, which taught a strictness in the government of our tongue, as with the former part, which taught an indifference about washing our hands; great contenders for the formalities of religion, being commonly as great contemners of the substantial of it.

2. The disciples thought it strange that their Master should say that which he knew would give so much offence; he did not use to do so: surely, think they, if he had considered how provoking it would be, he would not have said it. But he knew what he said, and to whom he said it, and what would be the effect of it; and would teach us, that though in indifferent things we must be tender of giving offence, yet we must not, for fear of that, evade any truth or duty. Truth must be owned, and duty

done; and if any be offended, it is his own fault; it is scandal, not given, but taken.

Perhaps the disciples themselves stumbled at the word Christ said, which they thought bold, and scarcely reconcilable with the difference that was put by the law of God between *clean* and *unclean* meats; and therefore objected this to Christ, that they might themselves be better informed. They seem likewise to have a concern upon them for the Pharisees, though they had quarrelled with them; which teaches us to forgive, and seek the good, especially the spiritual good, of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. They would not have the Pharisees go away displeased at any thing Christ had said; and therefore, though they do not desire him to retract it, they hope he will explain, correct, and mollify it. Weak hearers are sometimes more solicitous than they should be not to have wicked hearers offended. But if we please men with the concealment of truth, and the indulging of their errors and corruptions, we are not the servants of Christ.

IV. The doom passed upon the Pharisees and their corrupt traditions; which comes in as a reason why Christ cared not though he offended them, and therefore why the disciples should not care; because they were a generation of men that hated to be reformed, and were marked out for destruction. Two things Christ here foretells concerning them.

1. The rooting out of them and their traditions; (v. 13.) *Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.* Not only the corrupt opinions and superstitious practices of the Pharisees, but their sect, and way, and constitution, were plants not of God's planting. The rules of their profession were no institutions of his, but owed their origin to pride and formality. The people of the Jews were planted a *noble vine*; but now that they are become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, God disowned them, as not of his planting. Note, (1.) In the visible church, it is no strange thing to find plants that our heavenly father has not planted. It is implied that whatever is good in the church, is of God's planting, Isa. 41. 19. But let the husbandman be ever so careful, his ground will cast forth weeds of itself, more or less, and there is an enemy busy sowing tares. What is corrupt, though of God's permitting, is not of his planting, he sows nothing but *good seed in his field*. Let us not therefore be deceived, as if all must needs be right, that we find in the church, and all those persons and things our Father's plants, that we find in our Father's garden. *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits*; see Jer. 19. 5.—23. 31, 32. (2.) Those that are of the spirit of the Pharisees, proud, formal, and imposing, what figure soever they make, and of what denomination soever they be, God will not own them as of his planting. *By their fruit you shall know them*. (3.) Those plants that are not of God's planting, shall not be of his protecting, but shall undoubtedly be rooted up. What is not of God shall not stand, Acts 5. 38. What things are unscriptural, will wither and die of themselves, or be justly exploded by the churches; however, in the great day these tares that offend will be bundled for the fire. What is become of the Pharisees and their traditions? They are long since abandoned; but the gospel of truth is great, and will remain. It cannot be rooted up.

2. The ruin of them, and their followers, who had their persons and principles in admiration, v. 14. Where,

(1.) Christ bids his disciples *let them alone*. "Have no converse with them or concern for them; neither court their favour, nor dread their displeasure; care not though they be offended, they will take their course, and let them take the issue of it.

They are wedded to their own fancies, and will have every thing their own way; let them alone. Seek not to please a generation of men that please not God, (1 Thess. 2. 15.) and will be pleased with nothing less than an absolute dominion over your consciences. They are *joined to idols*, as Ephraim, (Hos. 4. 17.) the idols of their own fancy; *let them alone, let them be filthy still*," Rev. 22. 11. The case of those sinners is sad indeed, whom Christ orders his ministers to let alone.

(2.) He gives them two reasons for it. *Let them alone*; for,

[1.] They are proud and ignorant; two bad qualities that often meet, and render a man incurable in his folly, Prov. 26. 12. *They are blind leaders of the blind*. They are grossly ignorant in the things of God, and strangers to the spiritual nature of the divine law; and yet so proud, that they think they see better and further than any, and therefore undertake to be leaders of others, to show others the way to heaven, when they themselves know not one step of the way; and, accordingly, they prescribe to all, and prescribe these who will not follow them. Though they were blind, if they had owned it, and come to Christ for eyesalve, they might have seen, but they disdained the intimation of such a thing; (John 9. 40.) *Are we blind also?* They were confident that *they themselves were guides of the blind*, (Rom. 2. 19, 20.) were appointed to be so, and fit to be so; that every thing they said, was an oracle and a law; "Therefore *let them alone*, their case is desperate; do not meddle with them; you may soon provoke them, but never convince them." How miserable was the case of the Jewish church now when their leaders were blind, so self-conceitedly foolish, as to be peremptory in their conduct, while the people were so sottishly foolish as to follow them with an implicit faith and obedience, and *willingly walk after the commandment*, Hos. 5. 11. Now the prophecy was fulfilled, Isa. 29. 10, 14. And it is easy to imagine *what will be in the end hereof*, when *the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so*, Jer. 5. 31.

[2.] They are posting to destruction, and will shortly be plunged into it; *Both shall fall into the ditch*. This must needs be the end of it, if both be so blind, and yet both so bold, venturing forward, and yet not aware of danger. Both will be involved in the general desolation coming upon the Jews, and both drowned in eternal destruction and perdition. The blind leaders and the blind followers will perish together. We find (Rev. 22. 15.) that hell is the portion of those that *make a lie*, and of those that *love* it when it is made. *The deceived and the deceiver* are obnoxious to the judgment of God, Job 12. 16. Note, *First*, Those that by their cunning craftiness draw others to sin and error, shall not, with all their craft and cunning, escape ruin themselves. *If both fall together into the ditch*, the blind leaders will fall undermost, and have the worst of it; see Jer. 14. 15, 16. *The prophets shall be consumed first*, and then the *people to whom they prophesy*, Jer. 20. 6.—28. 15, 16. *Secondly*, The sin and ruin of the deceivers will be no security to those that are deceived by them. Though the leaders of this people *cause them to err*, yet they that are *led of them are destroyed*, (Isa. 9. 16.) because they shut their eyes against the light which would have rectified their mistake. Seneca, complaining of most people's being led by common opinion and practice, (*Unusquisque mavult credere quam judicare—Things are taken upon trust, and never examined,*) concludes, *Inde ista tanta coactatio aliorum super alios ruentium—Hence crowds fall upon crowds, in vast confusion*. De Vita Beata. The falling of both together will aggravate the fall of both; for they that have the

mutually increased each other's sin, will mutually exasperate each other's ruin.

V. Instruction given to the disciples concerning the truth Christ had laid down, v. 10. Though Christ rejects the wilfully ignorant who care not to be taught, he can have compassion on the ignorant who are willing to learn, Heb. 5. 2. If the Pharisees, who made void the law, be offended, let them be offended; but this *great peace have they who love the law, that nothing shall offend them*, but, some way or other, the offence shall be taken off, Ps. 119. 165.

Here is, 1. Their desire to be better instructed in this matter; (v. 15.) in this respect, as in many others, Peter was their speaker; the rest, it is probable, putting him on to speak, or intimating their concurrence; *Declare unto us this parable*. What Christ said, was plain, but, because it agreed not with the notions they had imbibed, though they would not contradict it, yet they call it a parable, and cannot understand it. Note, (1.) Weak understandings are apt to turn plain truths into parables, and to seek for a knot in a bulrush. The disciples often did so, as John 16. 17. even the grasshopper is a burden to a weak stomach, and babes in understanding cannot bear and digest strong meat. (2.) Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind will seek for instruction. The Pharisees were offended, but kept it to themselves; hating to be reformed, they hated to be informed; but the disciples, though offended, sought for satisfaction, imputing the offence, not to the doctrine delivered, but to the shallowness of their own capacity.

2. The reproof Christ gave them for their weakness and ignorance; (v. 16.) *Are ye also yet without understanding?* As many as Christ loves and teaches, he thus rebukes. Note, They are very ignorant indeed, who understand not that moral pollutions are abundantly worse and more dangerous than ceremonial ones. Two things aggravated their dulness and darkness.

(1.) That they were the disciples of Christ; "*Are ye also without understanding?* Ye whom I have admitted into so great a degree of familiarity with me, are ye so unskilful in the word of righteousness?" Note, the ignorance and mistakes of those that profess religion, and enjoy the privileges of church-membership, are justly a grief to the Lord Jesus. "No wonder that the Pharisees understand not this doctrine, who know nothing of the Messiah's kingdom; but ye that have heard it, and embraced it yourselves, and preached it to others, are ye also such strangers to the spirit and genius of it?"

(2.) That they had been a great while Christ's scholars: "*Are ye yet so*, after ye have been so long under my teaching?" Had they been but of yesterday in Christ's school, it had been another matter, but to have been for so many months Christ's constant hearers, and yet to be without understanding, was a great reproach to them. Note, Christ expects from us some proportion of knowledge, and grace, and wisdom, according to the time and means we have had. See John 14. 9. Heb. 5. 12. 2 Tim. 3. 7, 8.

3. The explication Christ gave them of this doctrine of pollutions. Though he chid them for their dulness, he did not cast them off, but pitied them, and taught them, as Luke 24. 25—27. He here shows us,

(1.) What little danger we are in of pollution from that which *entereth in at the mouth*, v. 17. An inordinate appetite, intemperance, and excess in eating, come out of the heart, and are defiling; but meat in itself is not so, as the Pharisees supposed. What there is of dregs and defilement in our meat, nature (or rather the God of nature) has provided a way to clear us of it; *it goes in at the belly, and is*

cast out into the draught, and nothing remains to us but pure nourishment. So *farfully and wonderfully are we made* and preserved and our souls held in life. The expulsive faculty is as necessary in the body as any other, for the discharge of that which is superfluous, or noxious; so happily is nature enabled to help itself, and shift for its own good: by this means nothing defiles; if we eat with unwashed hands, and so any thing unclean mix with our food, nature will separate it, and cast it out, and it will be no defilement to us. It may be a piece of cleanliness, but it is no point of conscience, to wash before meat; and we go upon a great mistake if we place religion in it. It is not the practice itself, but the opinion it is built upon, that Christ condemns, as if meat commended us to God; (1 Cor. 8. 8.) whereas christianity stands not in such observances.

(2.) What great danger we are in of pollution from that which *proceeds out of the mouth*, (v. 18.) out of the abundance of the heart: compare ch. 12. 34. There is no defilement in the products of God's bounty; the defilement arises from the products of our own corruption. Now here we have,

[1.] The corrupt foundation of that which proceeds out of the mouth: it comes from the heart; that is the spring and source of all sin, Jer. 8. 7. It is the heart that is so desperately wicked; (Jer. 17. 9.) for there is no sin in word or deed, which was not first in the heart. There is the root of bitterness, which *bears gall and wormwood*. It is the inward part of a sinner, that is very wickedness, Ps. 5. 9. All evil speakings come forth from the heart, and are defiling: from the corrupt heart comes the corrupt communication.

[2.] Some of the corrupt streams which flow from this fountain, specified; though they do not all *come out of the mouth*, yet they all come out of the man, and are the fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there, Ps. 58. 2.

First, Evil thoughts, sins against all the commandments. Therefore David puts vain thoughts in opposition to the whole law, Ps. 119. 113. These are the first-born of the corrupt nature, the beginning of its strength, and do most resemble it. These, as the son and heir, *abide in the house, and lodge within us*. There is a great deal of sin that begins and ends in the heart, and goes no further. Carnal fancies and imaginations are evil thoughts, wickedness in the contrivance, (*διαλογισμοὶ πονηροί*) wicked plots, purposes, and devices of mischief to others, Mic. 2. 1.

Secondly, Murders, sins against the sixth commandment; these come from a malice in the heart against our brother's life, or a contempt of it. Hence *he that hates his brother*, is said to be a murderer; he is so at God's bar, 1 John 3. 15. *War is in the heart*, Ps. 55. 21. James 4. 1.

Thirdly, Adulteries and fornications, sins against the seventh commandment; these come from the wanton, unclean, carnal heart; and the lust that reigns there, is conceived there, and brings forth these sins, James 1. 15. There is adultery in the heart first, and then in the act, ch. 5. 28.

Fourthly, Thefts, sins against the eighth commandment, cheats, wrongs, rapines, and all injurious contracts; the fountain of all these is in the heart, that is it that is *exercised in these covetous practices*, (2 Pet. 2. 14.) that is set upon riches, Ps. 62. 10. *Achan coveted, and then took*, Joshua 7. 20, 21.

Fifthly, False witness, against the ninth commandment; this comes from a complication of falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and malice in the heart. If truth, holiness, and love, which God *requires in the inward parts*, reigned as they ought, there would be no false-witness bearing, Ps. 64. 6. Jer. 9. 8.

Sixthly, Piousness, speaking evil of God, again

the third commandment; speaking evil of our neighbour, against the ninth commandment; these come from a contempt and disesteem of both in the heart; thence the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost proceeds; (ch. 12. 33, 34.) these are the overflowings of the gall within.

Now these are the things which defile a man, v. 20. Note, Sin is defiling to the soul, renders it unlovely and abominable in the eyes of the pure and holy God, unfit for communion with him, and for the enjoyment of him in the new Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter, that defileth, or worketh iniquity. The mind and conscience are defiled by sin, and that makes every thing else so, Tit. 1. 15. This defilement by sin, was signified by the ceremonial pollutions which the Jewish doctors added to, but understood not. See Heb. 9. 13, 14. 1 John 1. 7.

These therefore are the things we must carefully avoid, and all approaches toward them, and not lay stress upon the washing of the hands. Christ doth not yet repeal the law of the distinction of meats, (that was not done till Acts 10.) but the tradition of the elders, which was tacked to that law; and therefore he concludes, *To eat with unwashed hands, (which was the matter now in question,) this defileth not a man.* If he wash, he is not the better before God; if he wash not, he is not the worse.

21. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me! 26. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. 28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

We have here that famous story of Christ's casting the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter; it has something in it singular and very surprising, and which looks favourably upon the poor Gentiles, and is an earnest of that mercy which Christ had in store for them. Here is a gleam of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles, Luke 2. 32. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not; but many of them quarrelled with him, and were offended in him; and observe what follows, v. 21.

1. *Jesus went thence.* Note, Justly is the light taken from those that either play by it, or rebel against it. When Christ and his disciples could not be quiet among them, he left them, and so left an example to his own rule, (ch. 10. 14.) *Shake off the dust of your feet.* Though Christ endure long, he will not always endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. He had said, (v. 14.) *Let them alone,* and he did so. Note, Wilful prejudices against the gospel, and cavils at it, often provoke Christ to

withdraw, and to remove the candlestick out of its place, Acts 13. 45, 51.

II. When he went thence, he departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; not to those cities, (they were excluded from any share in Christ's mighty works, ch. 11. 21, 22.) but into that part of the land of Israel which lay that way: thither he went, as Elias to *Sarepta*, a city of Sidon; (Luke 4. 25.) thither he went to look after this poor woman, whom he had mercy in reserve for. While he went about doing good, he was never out of his way. The dark corners of the country, which lay most remote, shall have their share of his benign influences; and as now the ends of the land, so afterward the ends of the earth, shall see his salvation, Isa. 49. 6. Here it was, that this miracle was wrought, in the story of which we may observe,

1. The address of the woman of Canaan to Christ, v. 22. She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably one of the posterity of those accursed nations that were devoted by that word, *Cursed be Canaan.* Note, The doom of political bodies doth not always reach every individual member of them. God will have his remnant out of all nations, chosen vessels in all coasts, even the most unlikely; she came out of the same coasts. If Christ had not now made a visit to these coasts, though the mercy was worth travelling far for, it is probable that she had never come to him. Note, It is often an excitement to a dormant faith and zeal, to have opportunities of acquaintance with Christ brought to our doors, to have the word nigh us.

Her address was very importunate, she cried to Christ, as one in earnest; cried, as being at some distance from him, not daring to approach too near, being a Canaanite, lest she should give offence. In her address,

(1.) She relates her misery; *My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil*, *ακαταπαύτως*—*She is ill-behitched, or possessed.* There were degrees of that misery, and this was the worst sort. It was a common case at that time, and very calamitous. Note, The vexations of children are the trouble of parents, and nothing should be more so than their being under the power of Satan. Tender parents very sensibly feel the miseries of those that are pieces of themselves; "Though vexed with the devil, yet she is my daughter still." The greatest afflictions of our relations do not dissolve our obligations to them, and therefore ought not to alienate our affections from them. It was the distress and trouble of her family, that now brought her to Christ; she came to him, not for teaching, but for healing; yet, because she came in faith, he did not reject her. Though it is need that drives us to Christ, yet we shall not therefore be driven from him. It was the affliction of her daughter that gave her this occasion of applying to Christ. It is good to make the afflictions of others our own, in sense and sympathy, that we may make them our own, in improvement and advantage.

(2.) She requests for mercy; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.* In calling him *Lord, the Son of David*, she owns him to be the Messiah; that is the great thing which faith should fasten upon, and fetch comfort from. From the Lord we may expect acts of power, he can command deliverances; from the Son of David we may expect all the mercy and grace which were foretold concerning him. Though a Gentile, she owns the promise made to the fathers of the Jews, and the honour of the house of David. The Gentiles must receive christianity, not only as an improvement of natural religion, but as the perfection of the Jewish religion, with an eye to the Old Testament.

Her petition is, *Have mercy on me.* She doth not limit Christ to this or that particular instance of

mercy, but mercy, mercy is the thing she begs: she pleads not merit, but depends upon mercy; *Have mercy upon me*. Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents; favours to ours are favours to us, and are so to be accounted. Note, It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to be earnest in prayer for them, especially for their souls; "I have a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud will, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by him at his will; *Lord, help them.*" This is a case more deplorable than that of a bodily possession. Bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, who alone is able to heal them. Parents should look upon it as a great mercy to themselves, to have Satan's power broken in the souls of their children.

2. The discouragements she met with in this address: in all the story of Christ's ministry we do not meet with the like. He was wont to countenance and encourage all that came to him, and either to *answer before they called, or to hear while they were yet speaking*; but here was one otherwise treated: and what could be the reason of it? (1.) Some think that Christ showed himself backward to gratify this poor woman, because he would not give offence to the Jews, by being as free and as forward in his favour to the Gentiles as to them. He had bid his disciples *not go into the way of the Gentiles*, (ch. 10. 5.) and therefore would not himself seem so inclinable to them as to others, but rather more shy. Or rather, (2.) Christ treated her thus, to try her; he knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, and how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such discouragements; he *therefore* met her with them, *that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7. This was like God's tempting Abraham, (Gen. 22. 1.) like the angel's wrestling with Jacob, only to put him upon wrestling, Gen. 32. 24. Many of the methods of Christ's providence, and especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained with the key of this story, which is for that end left upon record, to teach us that there may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns in his face, and to encourage us, therefore, *though he slay us, yet to trust in him*.

Observe the particular discouragements given her:

[1.] When she cried after him, *he answered her not a word*, v. 23. His ear was wont to be always open and attentive to the cries of poor supplicants, and his lips, which dropped as the honey-comb, always ready to give an answer of peace; but to this poor woman he turned a deaf ear, and she could get neither an alms nor an answer. It was a wonder that she did not fly off in a fret, and say, "Is this he that is so famed for clemency and tenderness? Have so many been heard and answered by him, as they talk, and must I be the first rejected suitor? Why so distant to me, if it be true that he hath stooped to so many?" But Christ knew what he did, and *therefore* did not answer, that she might be the more earnest in prayer. He heard her, and was pleased with her, and *strengthened her with strength in her soul* to prosecute her request, (Ps. 138. 3. Job 23. 6.) though he did not immediately give her the answer she expected. By seeming to draw away the desired mercy from her, he drew her on to be so much the more importunate for it. Note, Every accepted prayer is not immediately answered prayer. Sometimes God seems not to regard his people's prayers, like a man asleep or astonished, (Ps. 44. 23. Jer. 14. 9. Ps. 22. 1. 2.) nay, to be angry at them; (Ps. 80. 4. Lam. 3. 8, 44.) but it is to prove, and so to *improve*, their faith, and to make his after-appearances for them the more glorious to himself, and the more welcome to them; for

the vision, at the end, shall speak, and shall not lie, Hab. 2. 3. See Job 35. 14.

[2.] When the disciples spake a good word for her, he gave a reason why he refused her, which was yet more discouraging.

First, It was some little relief, that the disciples interposed on her behalf; they said, *Send her away, for she crieth after us*. It is desirable to have an interest in the prayers of good people, and we should be desirous of it. Yet the disciples, though wishing she might have what she came for, yet therein consulted rather their own ease than the poor woman's satisfaction; "*Send her away with a cure, for she crieth, and is in good earnest; she crieth after us, and is troublesome to us, and shames us.*" Continued importunity may be uneasy to men, even to good men; but Christ loves to be cried after.

Secondly, Christ's answer to the disciples quite dashed her expectations; "*I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*: you know I am not, she is none of them, and would you have me go beyond my commission?" Importunity seldom conquers the settled reason of a wise man; and those refusals are most silencing, which are so backed. He doth not only not answer her, but he argues against her, and stops her mouth with a reason. It is true, she is a *lost sheep*, and hath as much need of his care as any, but she is not of the *house of Israel*, to whom he was first sent, (Acts 3. 26.) and therefore not immediately interested in it, and entitled to it. Christ was a *Minister of the circumcision*; (Rom. 15. 8.) and though he was intended for a *Light to the Gentiles*, yet the *fulness of time* for that *was not now come, the vail was not yet rent, nor the partition-wall taken down*. Christ's personal ministry was to be the *glory of his people Israel*; "*If I am sent to them, what have I to do with those that are none of them?*" Note, It is a great trial, when we have occasion given us to question whether we be of those to whom Christ was sent. But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction between Jew and Gentile is taken away: we are sure that *he gave his life a ransom for many*, and if for many, why not for me?

Thirdly, When she continued her importunity, he insisted upon the unfitness of the thing, and gave her not only a repulse, but a seeming reproach too; (v. 26.) *It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto dogs*. This seems to cut her off from all hope, and might have driven her to despair, if she had not had a very strong faith indeed. Gospel-grace and miraculous cures, (the appurtenances of it,) were children's bread; they belonged to them to whom pertained the adoption, (Rom. 9. 4.) and lay not upon the same level with that rain from heaven, and those fruitful seasons, which God gave to the nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways; (Acts 14. 16, 17.) no, these were peculiar favours, appropriated to the peculiar people, the garden inclosed. Christ preached to the Samaritans, (John 4. 41.) but we read not of any cures he wrought among them; *that salvation was of the Jews*; it is not meet therefore to alienate these. The Gentiles were looked upon by the Jews with great contempt, were called and counted *dogs*; and, in comparison with the house of Israel, who were so dignified and privileged, Christ here seems to allow it, and therefore thinks it not meet that the Gentiles should share in the favours bestowed on the Jews. But see how the tables are turned; after the bringing of the Gentiles into the church, the Jewish zealous for the law are called *dogs*, Phil. 3. 2.

Now this Christ urgeth against this woman of Canaan; "How can she expect to eat of the children's bread, who is not of the family?" Note, 1. Those whom Christ intends most signally to honour, he first humbles and lays low in a sense of their own

meanness and unworthiness. We must first see ourselves to be as dogs, *less than the least of all God's mercies*, before we are fit to be dignified and privileged with them. 2. Christ delights to exercise great faith with great trials, and sometimes reserves the sharpest for the last, that, *being tried, we may come forth like gold*. This general rule is applicable to other cases for direction, though here used only for trial. Special ordinances and church-privileges are children's bread, and must not be prostituted to the grossly ignorant and profane. Common charity must be extended to all, but spiritual dignities are appropriated to the household of faith; and therefore promiscuous admission to them, without distinction, wastes the children's bread, and is the giving of that which is holy to the dogs, *ch. 7. 6. Procul hinc, procul inde, profanum—Off, ye profane*.

3. Here is the strength of her faith and resolution, in breaking through all these discouragements. Many a one, thus tried, would either have sunk down into silence, or broken out into passion. "Here is cold comfort," might she have said, "for a poor distressed creature; as good for me to have staid at home, as come hither to be taunted at and abused at this rate; not only to have a piteous case slighted, but to be called a dog!" A proud, unhumiliated heart would not have borne it. The reputation of the house of Israel was not now so great in the world, but that this slight put upon the Gentiles was capable of being retorted, had the poor woman been so minded. It might have occasioned a reflection upon Christ, and might have been a blemish upon his reputation, as well as a shock to the good opinion she had entertained of him; for we are apt to judge of persons as we ourselves find them; and think that they are what they are to us. "Is this the son of David?" (might she have said:) "Is this he that has such a reputation for kindness, tenderness, and compassion? I am sure I have no reason to give him that character, for I was never treated so roughly in my life; he might have done as much for me as for others; or, if not, he needed not to have set me with the dogs of his flock. I am not a dog, I am a woman, and an honest woman, and a woman in misery; and I am sure it is not meet to call me dog." No, here is not a word of this. Note, A humble, believing soul, that truly loves Christ, takes every thing in good part, that he saith and doeth, and puts the best construction upon it.

She breaks through all these discouragements,

(1.) With a holy earnestness of desire in prosecuting her petition. This appeared upon the former repulse; (v. 25.) *Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me*. [1.] She continued to pray. What Christ said, silenced the disciples; you hear no more of them, they took the answer but the woman did not. Note, The more sensibly we feel the burden, the more resolutely we should pray for the removal of it. And it is the will of God, that we should continue instant in prayer, should always pray, and not faint. [2.] She improved in prayer. Instead of blaming Christ, or charging him with unkindness, she seems rather to suspect herself, and lay the fault upon herself. She fears lest, in her first address, she had not been humble and reverent enough, and therefore now she came, and worshipped him, and paid him more respect than she had done; or she fears that she had not been earnest enough, and therefore now she cries, *Lord, help me*. Note, When the answers of prayer are deferred, God is thereby teaching us to pray more, and pray better. It is then time to inquire wherein we have come short in our former prayers, that what has been amiss may be amended for the future. Disappointments in the success of prayer, must be excitements to do the duty of prayer. Christ, in his agony, *prayed more earnestly*. [3.] She waives the

question, whether she was of those to whom Christ was sent or no; she will not argue that with him, though perhaps she might have claimed some kindred to the house of Israel; but, "Whether an Israelite or no, I come to the Son of David for mercy, and I will not let him go, except he bless me." Many weak christians perplex themselves with questions and doubts about their election, whether they are of the house of Israel or no; such had better mind their errand to God, and continue instant in prayer for mercy and grace; throw themselves by faith at the feet of Christ, and say, *If I perish, I will perish here*; and then that matter will by degrees clear itself. If we cannot reason down our unbelief, let us pray it down. A fervent, affectionate *Lord, help me*, will help us over many of the discouragements which are sometimes ready to bear us down and overwhelm us. [4.] Her prayer is very short, but comprehensive and fervent; *Lord, help me*. Take this, *First*, As lamenting her case: "If the Messiah be sent only to the house of Israel, the *Lord help me*, what will become of me and mine." Note, It is not in vain for broken hearts to bemoan themselves; God looks upon them then, *Jer. 31. 18*. Or, *Secondly*, As begging grace to assist her in this hour of temptation. She found it hard to keep up her faith when it was thus frowned upon, and therefore prays, "*Lord, help me*; *Lord*, strengthen my faith now; *Lord*, let thy right hand uphold me, while my soul is following hard after thee." *Psa. 63. 8*. Or, *Thirdly*, As enforcing her original request: "*Lord, help me*; *Lord*, give me what I come for." She believed that Christ could and would help her, though she was not of the house of Israel; else she would have dropt her petition. Still she keeps up good thoughts of Christ, and will not quit her hold. *Lord, help me*, is a good prayer, if well put up; and it is pity that it should be turned into a by-word, and that we should take God's name in vain in it.

(2.) With a holy skillfulness of faith, suggesting a very surprising plea. Christ had placed the Jews with the children, *as olive-plants round about God's table*, and had put the Gentiles with the dogs, under the table; and she doth not deny the aptness of the similitude. Note, There is nothing got by contradicting any word of Christ, though it bear ever so hard upon us. But this poor woman, since she cannot object against it, resolves to make the best of it: (v. 27.) *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs*. Now here,

[1.] Her acknowledgment was very humble: *Truth, Lord*. Note, You cannot speak so meanly and slightly of a humble believer, but he is ready to speak as meanly and slightly of himself. Some that seem to dispraise and disparage themselves, will yet take it as an affront if others do so too; but one that is humbled aright, will subscribe to the most abasing challenges, and not call them abasing ones. "*Truth, Lord*; I cannot deny it; I am a dog, and have no right to the children's bread." David, *Thou hast done foolishly, very foolishly: Truth, Lord*. Asaph, *Thou hast been as a beast before God: Truth, Lord*. Agar, *Thou art more brutish than any man: Truth, Lord*. Paul, *Thou hast been the chief of sinners, art less than the least of saints, not meet to be called an apostle: Truth, Lord*.

[2.] Her improvement of this into a plea was very ingenious; *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs*. It was by a singular acumen, and spiritual quickness and sagacity, that she discerned matter of argument in that which looked like a slight. Note, A lively, active faith will make that to be for us, which seems to be against us; will fetch meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. Unbelief is apt to mistake recruits for enemies, and to draw dismal conclusions even from comfortable premises; (*Judges 13. 22, 23.*) but faith can find encouragement even

in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. So good a thing it is to be of *quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, Isa. 11. 3.

Her plea is, *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs*. It is true, the full and regular provision is intended for the children only, but the small casual, neglected crumbs are allowed to the dogs, and are not grudging them; that is, to the dogs under the table, that attend there expecting them. We poor Gentiles can not expect the stated ministry and miracles of the Son of David, that belongs to the Jews; but they begin now to be weary of their meat, and to play with it, they find fault with it, and crumble it away; surely then some of the broken meat may fall to a poor Gentile; "I beg a cure by the by, which is but as a crumb, though of the same precious bread, yet but a small inconsiderable piece, compared with the loaves which they have." Note, When we are ready to surfeit on the children's bread, we should remember how many there are, that would be glad of the crumbs. Our broken meat in spiritual privileges, would be a feast to many a soul; Acts 13. 42. Observe here,

First, Her humility and necessity made her glad of crumbs. Those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve nothing, will be thankful for any thing; and *then* we are prepared for the greatest of God's mercies, when we see ourselves less than the least of them. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, and the very crumbs of the bread of life.

Secondly, Her faith encouraged her to expect these crumbs. Why should it not be at Christ's table as at a great man's, where the dogs are fed as sure as the children? Observe, She calls it their *master's* table; if she were a dog, she was *his* dog, and it cannot be ill with us, if we stand but in the meanest relation to Christ; "Though unworthy to be called children, yet *make me as one of the hired servants*; nay, rather let me be set with the dogs than turned out of the house; for *in my Father's house there is not only bread enough, but to spare*, Luke 15. 17, 19. It is good lying in God's house, though we lie at the threshold there.

4. The happy issue and success of all this. She came off with credit and comfort from this struggle; and, though a Canaanite, approved herself a true daughter of Israel, who, *like a prince, had power with God, and prevailed*. Hitherto Christ hid his face from her, but now *gathers her with everlasting kindness*, v. 27. *Then Jesus said, O woman, great is thy faith*. This was like Joseph's making himself known to his brethren, *I am Joseph*: so here, in effect, *I am Jesus*. Now he begins to speak like himself, and put on his own countenance. *He will not contend for ever*.

(1.) He commended her faith. *O woman, great is thy faith*. Observe, [1.] It is her faith that he commends. There were several other graces that shone bright in her conduct of this affair—wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer; but these were the product of her faith, and therefore Christ fastens upon that as most commendable; because of all graces faith honours Christ most, therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most. [2.] It is the greatness of her faith. Note, *First*, Though the faith of all the saints is alike precious, yet it is not in all alike strong; all believers are not of the same size and stature. *Secondly*, The greatness of faith consists much in a resolute adherence to Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, even in the face of discouragements; to love him, and trust him, as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy. This is *great faith*! *Thirdly*, Though weak faith, if true, shall not be rejected, yet great faith shall be commended, and shall appear greatly well pleasing to Christ;

for in them that thus believe he is most admired. Thus Christ commended the faith of the centurion, and he was a Gentile too: he had a strong faith in the power of Christ, this woman in the good will of Christ; both were acceptable.

(2.) He cured her daughter; "*Be it unto thee even as thou wilt*": I can deny thee nothing, take what thou camest for." Note, Great believers may have what they will for the asking. When our will conforms to the will of Christ's precept, his will concurs with the will of our desire. Those that will deny Christ nothing, shall find that he will deny them nothing at last, though for a time he seems to hide his face from them. "Thou wouldest have thy sins pardoned, thy corruptions mortified, thy nature sanctified; *be it unto thee even as thou wilt*. And what canst thou desire more?" When we come, as this poor woman did, to pray against Satan and his kingdom, we concur with the intercession of Christ, and it shall be accordingly. Though Satan may *sift* Peter, and *buffet* Paul, yet, through Christ's prayer and the sufficiency of his grace, *we shall be more than conquerors*, Luke 22. 31, 32. 2 Cor. 12. 7, 9. Rom. 16. 20.

The event was answerable to the word of Christ. *Her daughter was made whole from that very hour*, from thenceforward was never vexed with the devil any more; the mother's faith prevailed for the daughter's cure. Though the patient was at a distance, that was no hinderance to the efficacy of Christ's word. *He spake, and it was done*.

29. And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. 30. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others*, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: 31. Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. 32. Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him*, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34. And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat* that was left, seven baskets full. 38. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39. And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.

Here is,

1. A general account of Christ's cures, his curing by wholesale. The tokens of Christ's power and goodness are neither scarce nor scanty; for there is in him an overflowing fulness. Now observe,

1. The place where these cures were wrought; it was *near the sea of Galilee*, a part of the country Christ was much conversant with. We read not of any thing he did in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but the casting of the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter, as if he took that journey on purpose, with that in prospect. Let not ministers grudge their pains to do good, though but to few. He that knows the worth of souls, would go a great way to help to save one from death and Satan's power.

But *Jesus departed thence*. Having let fall that crumb under the table, he here returns to make a full feast for the children. We may do that occasionally for one, which we may not make a constant practice of. Christ steps into the coast of Tyre and Sidon, but he *sits down by the sea of Galilee*, (v. 29.) sits down, not on a stately throne, or tribunal of judgment, but on a mountain: so mean and homely were his most solemn appearances in the days of his flesh! He *sat down on a mountain*, that all might see him, and have free access to him; for he is an open Saviour. He sat down there, as one tired with his journey, and willing to have a little rest; or rather, as one waiting to be gracious. He sat, expecting patients, as Abraham at his tent-door, ready to entertain strangers. He settled himself to this good work.

2. The multitudes and maladies that were healed by him; (v. 30.) *Great multitudes came to him*; that the scripture might be fulfilled, *Unto him shall the gathering of the people be*, Gen. 49. 10. If Christ's ministers could cure bodily diseases as Christ did, there would be more flocking to them than there is; we are soon sensible of bodily pain and sickness, but few are concerned about their souls and their spiritual diseases.

Now, (1.) Such was the goodness of Christ, that he admitted all sorts of people; the poor as well as the rich are welcome to Christ, and with him there is room enough for all comers. He never complained of crowds or throngs of seekers, or looked with contempt upon the vulgar, the *herd*, as they are called; for the souls of peasants are as precious with him as the souls of princes.

(2.) Such was the power of Christ, that he healed all sorts of diseases; those that came to him, brought their sick relations and friends along with them, and *cast them down at Jesus' feet*, v. 30. We read not of any thing they said to him, but they laid them down before him as objects of pity, to be looked upon by him. Their calamities spake more for them than the tongue of the most eloquent orator could. *David showed before God his trouble*, that was enough, he then left it with him, Ps. 142. 2. Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is, to lay it at Christ's feet, to spread it before him, and refer it to his cognizance, and then submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those that would have spiritual healing from Christ, must lay themselves at his feet, to be ruled and ordered as he pleaseth.

Here were *lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others*, brought to Christ. See what work sin has made! It has turned the world into an hospital: what various diseases are human bodies subject to! See what work the Saviour makes! He conquers those hosts of enemies to mankind. Here were such diseases as a flame of fancy could contribute neither to the cause of nor to the cure of; as lying not in the humours, but in the members of the body; and yet those were subject to the commands of Christ. He

sent his word, and healed them. Note, All diseases are at the command of Christ, to go and come as he bids them. This is an instance of Christ's power, which may comfort us in all our weaknesses; and of his pity, which may comfort us in all our miseries.

3. The influence that this had upon the people, v. 31.

(1.) They *wondered*, and well they might. Christ's works should be our wonder. *It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous*, Ps. 118. 23. The spiritual cures that Christ works, are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, *the dumb to speak* in prayer, *the lame to walk* in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. *Sing unto the Lord a new song, for thus he has done marvellous things*.

(2.) They *glorified the God of Israel*, whom the Pharisees, when they saw these things, blasphemed. Miracles, which are the matters of our wonder, must be the matter of our praise; and mercies, which are matter of our rejoicing, must be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those that were healed, glorified God; if he heal our diseases, all that is within us must bless his holy name; and if we have been graciously preserved from blindness, and lameness, and dumbness, we have as much reason to bless God as if we had been cured of them: nay, and the standers-by glorified God. Note, God must be acknowledged with praise and thankfulness in the mercies of others as in our own. They glorified him as *the God of Israel*, his church's God, a God in covenant with his people, who hath sent the Messiah promised; and this is he. See Luke 1. 68. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*. This was done by the power of the God of Israel, and no other could do it.

II. Here is a particular account of his feeding *four thousand men with seven loaves, and a few little fishes*, as he had lately fed *five thousand with five loaves*. The guests indeed were now not quite so many as then, and the provision a little more; which does not intimate that Christ's arm was shortened, but that he wrought his miracles as the occasion required, and not for ostentation, and therefore he suited them to the occasion: both then and now he took as many as were to be fed, and made use of all that was at hand to feed them with. When once the utmost powers of nature are exceeded, we must say, *This is the finger of God*; and it is neither here nor there how far they are outdone; so that this is no less a miracle than the former.

Here is, 1. Christ's pity; (v. 32.) *I have compassion on the multitude*. He tells his disciples this, both to try and to excite their compassion. When he was about to work this miracle, he called them to him, and made them acquainted with his purpose, and discoursed with them about it; not because he needed their advice, but because he would give an instance of his condescending love to them. He called them not *servants*, for *the servant knows not what his Lord doeth*, but treated them as friends and counsellors. *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?* Gen. 18. 17. In what he said to them, observe,

(1.) The case of the multitude; *They continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat*. This is an instance of their zeal, and the strength of their affection to Christ and his word, that they not only left their callings, to attend upon him on week-days, but underwent a deal of hardship, to continue with him; they wanted their natural rest, and, for aught that appeared lay like soldiers in the field; they wanted necessary food, and had scarcely enough to keep life and soul together. In those hotter countries they could better bear long fasting than we can in these colder climates; but though it could not but be grievous to the body, and might en-

danger their health, yet *the zeal of God's house thus ate them up*, and they esteemed the words of Christ more than their necessary food. We think three hours too much to attend upon public ordinances; but these people stayed together three days, and yet snuffed not at it, nor said, *Behold, what a weariness is it!* Observe, With what tenderness Christ spake of it; *I have compassion on them*. It had become time to have compassion on him, who took so much pains with them for three days together, and was so indefatigable in teaching and healing; so much virtue had gone out of him, and yet for aught that appears, he was fasting too; but he prevented them with his compassion. Note, Our Lord Jesus keeps an account how long his followers continue their attendance on him, and takes notice of the difficulty they sustain in it; (Rev. 2. 2.) *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience*; and it shall in no wise lose its reward.

Now the exigence the people were reduced to serves to magnify, [1.] The mercy of their supply: he fed them when they were hungry; and then food was doubly welcome. He treated them as he did Israel of old; *he suffered them to hunger, and then fed them*; (Deut. 8. 3.) for that is *sweet to the hungry soul, which the full soul loathes*. [2.] The miracle of their supply: having been so long fasting, their appetites were the more craving. If two hungry meals make the third a glutton, what would three hungry days do? And yet they *did all eat and were filled*. Note, There are mercy and grace enough with Christ, to give the most earnest and enlarged desire an abundant satisfaction; *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. He replenisheth even the hungry soul*.

2. The care of our master concerning them; *I will not send them away fasting, lest they should faint by the way*; which would be a discredit to Christ and his family, and a discouragement both to them and to others. Note, It is the unhappiness of our present state, that when our souls are in some measure elevated and enlarged, our bodies cannot keep pace with them in good duties. The weakness of the flesh is a great grievance to the willingness of the spirit. It will not be so in heaven, where the body shall be made spiritual, where they *rest not, day nor night, from praising God*, and yet faint not; where they *hunger no more, nor thirst any more*, Rev. 7. 16.

Here is, 2. Christ's power. His pity of their wants sets his power on work for their supply. Now observe,

[1.] How his power was distrusted by his disciples; (v. 33.) *Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness?* A proper question, one would think, like that of Moses, (Numb. 11. 22.) *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain to suffice them?* But it was here an improper question, considering not only the general assurance the disciples had of the power of Christ, but the particular experience they lately had of a seasonable and sufficient provision by miracle in a like case; they had been not only the witnesses, but the ministers, of the former miracle; the multiplied bread went through their hands; so that it was an instance of great weakness for them to ask, *Whence shall we have bread?* Could they be at a loss, while they had their Master with them? Note, Forgetting former experiences leaves us under present doubts.

Christ knew how slender the provision was, but he would know it from them; (v. 34.) *How many loaves have ye?* Before he would work, he would have it seen how little he had to work on, that his power might shine the brighter. What they had, they had for themselves, and it was little enough for their own family; but Christ would have them bestow it all upon the multitude, and trust Providence for more. Note, It becomes Christ's disciples to be

generous, their Master was so; what we have, we should be free of, as there is occasion; *given to hospitality*; not like Nabal, (1 Sam. 25. 11.) but like Elisha, 2 Kings 4. 42. Niggardiness to-day, out of thoughtfulness for to-morrow, is a complication of corrupt affections that ought to be mortified. If we be prudently kind and charitable with what we have, we may piously hope that God will send more. *Jehovah-jireh; The Lord will provide*. The disciples asked, *Whence should we have bread?* Christ asked, *How many loaves have ye?* Note, When we cannot have what we would, we must make the best of what we have, and do good with it as far as it will go: we must not think so much of our wants as of our havings. Christ herein went according to the rule he gave to Martha, not to be *troubled about many things, nor cumbered about much serving*. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

[2.] How his power was discovered to the multitude, in the plentiful provision he made for them; the manner of which is much the same as before, ch. 14. 18, &c. Observe here,

First, The provision that was at hand; *seven loaves, and a few little fishes*: the fish not proportionable to the bread, for bread is the staff of life. It is probable that the fish was such as they had themselves taken; for they were fishers, and were now near the sea. Note, It is comfortable to *eat the labour of our hands*, (Ps. 128. 2.) and to enjoy that which is any way the product of our own industry, Prov. 12. 27. And what we have got by God's blessing on our labour we should be free of; for *therefore we must labour, that we may have to give*, Eph. 4. 28.

Secondly, The putting of the people in a posture to receive it; (v. 35.) *He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground*. They saw but very little provision, yet they must sit down, in faith that they should have a meal's meat out of it. They who would have spiritual food from Christ, must sit down at his feet, to hear his word, and expect it to come in an unseen way.

Thirdly, The distributing of the provision among them. He first *gave thanks*—*εὐχαριστήσας*. The word used in the former miracle was *εὐλόγησας*—*he blessed*. It comes all to one; giving thanks to God is a proper way of craving a blessing from God. And when we come to ask and receive further mercy, we ought to give thanks for the mercies we have received. He then *brake the loaves*, (for it was in the breaking that the bread multiplied,) *and gave to his disciples, and they to the multitude*. Though the disciples had distrusted Christ's power, yet he made use of them now as before; he is not provoked, as he might be, by the weaknesses and infirmities of his ministers, to lay them aside; but still he gives to them, and they to his people, of the word of life.

Fourthly, The plenty there was among them; (v. 37.) *They did all eat, and were filled*. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills. While we labour for the world, we labour for that which satisfieth not; (Isa. 55. 2.) but those that duly wait on Christ shall be *abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house*, Ps. 65. 4. Christ thus fed people once and again, to intimate that though he was called Jesus of Nazareth, yet he was of *Bethlehem, the house of bread*; or rather, that he was himself *the Bread of life*.

To show that they had all enough, there was a great deal left—*seven baskets full of broken meat*; not so much as there was before, because they did not gather after so many eaters, but enough to show that with Christ *there is bread enough, and to spare*; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek more.

Fifthly, The account taken of the guests; not that they might pay their share, (here was no reckoning to be discharged, they were fed gratis,) but that they might be witnesses to the power and goodness of Christ, and that this might be some resemblance of that universal providence that *gives food to all flesh*, Ps. 136. 25. Here were four thousand men fed; but what were they to that great family which is provided for by the divine care every day? God is a great Housekeeper, on whom the eyes of all the creatures wait, and he giveth them their food in due season, Ps. 104. 27.—145. 15.

Lastly, The dismissal of the multitude, and Christ's departure to another place; (v. 39.) He sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not expect miracles to be their daily bread. Let them now go home to their callings, and to their own tables. And he himself departed by ship to another place; for, being the *Light of the world*, he must be still in motion, and go about to do good.

CHAP. XVI.

None of Christ's miracles are recorded in this chapter, but four of his discourses. Here is, I. A conference with the Pharisees, who challenged him to show them a sign from heaven, v. 1. 4. II. Another with his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees, v. 5. 12. III. Another with them concerning himself, as the Christ, and concerning his church built upon him, v. 13. 20. IV. Another concerning his sufferings for them, and theirs for him, v. 21. 28. And all these are written for our learning.

1. **T**HE Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be fair weather*; for the sky is red: 3. And in the morning, *It will be foul weather to-day*; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4. A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

We have here Christ's discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, as appears, Acts 23. 7, 8. and yet unanimous in their opposition to Christ; because his doctrine did equally overthrow the errors and heresies of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits and a future state; and the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the great imposers of the traditions of the elders. Christ and Christianity meet with opposition on all hands. Observe,

I. Their demand, and the design of it.

1. The demand was of a sign from heaven; this they desired him to show them; pretending they were very willing to be satisfied and convinced, when really they were far from being so, but sought excuses for an obstinate infidelity. That which they pretended to desire, was,

(1.) Some other sign than what they had yet had. They had great plenty of signs; every miracle Christ wrought was a sign, for *no man could do what he did unless God were with him*. But this will not serve, they must have a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon some sign which would gratify the curiosity of the

proud. It is fit that the proofs of divine revelation should be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. The evidence that is given, is sufficient to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding, but was not intended to please a vain humour. And it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, to think that we should be wrought upon by the means and advantages which we have not, while we slight those which we have. *If we hear not Moses and the prophets*, neither would we be wrought upon *though one rose from the dead*.

(2.) It must be a sign from heaven. They would have such miracles to prove his commission, as were wrought at the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; thunder, and lightning, and the voice of words, were the sign from heaven they required. Whereas the sensible signs and terrible ones were not agreeable to the spiritual and comfortable dispensation of the gospel. Now the word comes more nigh us, (Rom. 10. 8.) and therefore the miracles do so, and do not oblige us to keep such a distance as these did, Heb. 12. 18.

2. The design was, to tempt him; not to be taught by him, but to ensnare him. If he should show them a sign from heaven, they would attribute it to a confederacy with the *prince of the power of the air*; if he should not, as they supposed he would not, they would have that to say for themselves, *why they did not believe on him*. They now tempted Christ as Israel did, 1 Cor. 10. 9. And observe their perverseness; then, when they had signs from heaven, they tempted Christ, saying, *Can he furnish a table in the wilderness?* Now that he had furnished a table in the wilderness, they tempted him, saying, *Can he give us a sign from heaven?*

II. Christ's reply to this demand; lest they should be wise in their own conceit, he answered these fools according to their folly, Prov. 26. 5. In his answer,

1. He condemns their overlooking of the signs they had, v. 2. 3. They were seeking for the signs of the kingdom of God, when it was already among them. *The Lord was in this place, and they knew it not*. Thus their unbelieving ancestors, when miracles were their daily bread, asked, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not?*

To expose this, he observes to them,

(1.) Their skillfulness and sagacity in other things, particularly in natural prognostications of the weather; "You know that a red sky over night is a presage of fair weather, and a red sky in the morning, of foul weather. There are common rules drawn from observation and experience, by which it is easy to foretell very probably what weather it will be. When second causes have begun to work, we may easily guess at their issue, so uniform is nature in its motions, and so consistent with itself. We know not the balancings of the clouds, (Job 37. 16.) but we may spell something from the faces of them. This gives no countenance at all to the wild and ridiculous predictions of the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators, (Isa. 47. 13.) concerning the weather long before, with which weak and foolish people are imposed upon; we are sure, in general, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease. But as to the particulars, till, by the weather-glasses, or otherwise, we perceive the immediate signs and harbingers of the change of weather, it is not for us to know, no, not that concerning the times and seasons. Let it suffice, that it shall be what weather pleases God; and that which pleases God, should not displease us.

(2.) Their sottishness and stupidity in the concerns of their souls; *Can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

[1.] "Do you not see that the Messiah is come?" The sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's

weeks were just expiring, and yet they regarded not. The miracles Christ wrought, and the gathering of the people to him, were plain indications that the *kingdom of heaven was at hand*, that this was *the day of their visitation*. Note, *First*, There are signs of the times, by which wise and upright men are enabled to make moral prognostications, and so far to understand the motions and methods of Providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do, as the men of Is-sachar, as the physician from some certain symptoms finds a crisis formed. *Secondly*, There are many who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their opportunities, are not aware of the wind when it is fair for them, and so let slip the gale. See Jer. 8. 7. Isa. 1. 3. *Thirdly*, It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

[2.] "Do not you foresee your own ruin coming for rejecting him? You will not entertain the gospel of peace, and can you not evidently discern that hereby you pull an inevitable destruction upon your own heads?" Note, It is the undoing of multitudes, that they are not aware what will be the end of their refusing Christ.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign, (v. 4.) as he had done before in the same words, *ch. 12. 39*. Those that persist in the same iniquities, must expect to meet with the same reproofs. Here, as there, (1.) He calls them *an adulterous generation*; because, while they professed themselves of the true church and spouse of God, they treacherously departed from him, and brake their covenants with him. The Pharisees were a *generation pure in their own eyes*, having the way of the adulterous woman, that thinks she has done no wickedness, Prov. 30. 20. (2.) He refuses to gratify their desire. Christ will not be prescribed to; *we ask, and have not, because we ask amiss*. (3.) He refers them to the sign of the prophet Jonas, which should yet be given them; his resurrection from the dead, and his preaching by his apostles to the Gentiles; these were reserved for the last and highest evidences of his divine mission. Note, Though the fancies of proud men shall not be humoured, yet the faith of the humble shall be supported, and the unbelief of them that perish, left for ever inexcusable, and *every mouth shall be stopped*.

This discourse broke off abruptly; *he left them, and departed*. Christ will not tarry long with those that tempt him, but justly withdraws from those that are disposed to quarrel with him. He left them as irreclaimable; *Let them alone*. He left them to themselves, left them in the hand of their own counsels; *so he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts*.

5. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is because we have taken no bread*. 8 *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? 9. Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10. Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many bas-

kets ye took up? 11. How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? 12. Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning bread, in which, as in many other discourses, he speaks to them of spiritual things under a similitude, and they misunderstand him of carnal things. The occasion of it was, their forgetting to victual their ship, and to take along with them provisions for their family on the other side the water; usually they carried bread along with them, because they were sometimes in desert places; and when they were not, yet they would not be burdensome. But now they forgot; we will hope it was because their minds and memories were filled with better things. Note, Christ's disciples are often such as have no great forecast for the world.

1. Here is the caution Christ gave them, to *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*. He had now been discoursing with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and saw them to be men of such a spirit, that it was necessary to caution his disciples to have nothing to do with them. Disciples are in most danger from hypocrites; against these that are openly vicious they stand upon their guard, but against Pharisees, who are great pretenders to devotion, and Sadducees, who pretend to a free and impartial search after truth, they commonly lie unguarded: and therefore the caution is doubled, *Take heed, and beware*.

The corrupt principles and practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees are compared to leaven; they were souring, and swelling, and spreading, like leaven; they fermented wherever they came.

II. Their mistake concerning this caution, v. 7. They thought Christ hereby upbraided them with their improvidence and forgetfulness, that they were so busy attending to his discourse with the Pharisees, that *therefore* they forgot their private concerns. Or, because having no bread of their own with them, they must be beholden to their friends for supply, he would not have them to ask it of the Pharisees and Sadducees, nor to receive of *their* alms, because he would not so far countenance them; or, for fear, lest, under pretence of feeding them, they should do them a mischief. Or, they took it for a caution, not to be familiar with the Pharisees and Sadducees, not to eat with them, (Prov. 23. 6.) whereas the danger was not in their bread, (Christ himself did eat with them, Luke 7. 36.—14. 1.—11. 37.) but in their principles.

III. The reproof Christ gave them for this.

1. He reproves their distrust of his ability and readiness to supply them in this strait; (v. 8.) "*O ye of little faith*, why are ye in such perplexity because ye have taken no bread, that ye can mind nothing else, that ye think your Master is as full of it as you, and apply every thing he saith to that?" He does not chide them for their little forecast, as they expected he would. Note, Parents and masters must not be angry at the forgetfulness of their children and servants, more than is necessary to make them take more heed another time; we are all apt to be forgetful of our duty. This should serve to excuse a fault, *Peradventure it was an oversight*. See how easily Christ forgave his disciples' carelessness, though it was in such a material point as taking bread; and do likewise. But that which he chides them for, is, their little faith.

(1.) He would not have them to depend upon him

for supply, though it were in a wilderness, and not to disquiet themselves with anxious thoughts about it. Note, Though Christ's disciples be brought into wants and straits through their own carelessness and incontinency, yet he encourages them to trust in him for relief. We must not therefore use this as an excuse for our want of charity to those who are really poor, that they should have minded their own affairs better, and then they would not have been in need. It may be so, but they must not therefore be left to starve when they are in need.

(2.) He is displeased at their solicitude in this matter. The weakness and shiftlessness of good people in their worldly affairs, is that for which men are apt to condemn them; but it is not such an offence to Christ as their inordinate care and anxiety about those things. We must endeavour to keep the mean between the extremes of carelessness and carefulness; but of the two, the excess of thoughtfulness about the world worst becomes Christ's disciples. "*O ye of little faith, why are ye disquieted for want of bread?*" Note, To distrust Christ, and to disturb ourselves when we are in straits and difficulties, is an evidence of the weakness of our faith, which, if it were in exercise as it should be, would ease us of the burden of care, by casting it on the Lord, who *careth for us*.

(3.) The aggravation of their distrust was, the experience they had so lately had of the power and goodness of Christ in providing for them, *v. 9, 10*. Though they had no bread with them, they had him with them, who could provide bread for them. If they had not the cistern, they had the Fountain. *Do ye not yet understand, neither remember?* Note, Christ's disciples are often to be blamed for the shallowness of their understandings, and the slipperiness of their memories. "Have ye forgot those repeated instances of merciful and miraculous supplies; five thousand fed with five loaves, and four thousand with seven loaves, and yet they had enough and to spare? Remember *how many baskets ye took up.*" These baskets were intended for memorials, by which to keep the mercy in remembrance, as the pot of manna which was preserved in the ark, *Exod. 16. 32*. The fragments of those meals would be a feast now; and he that could furnish them with such an overplus then, surely could furnish them with what was necessary now. That meat for their bodies was intended to be meat for their faith, (*Ps. 74. 14.*) which therefore they should have lived upon, now that they had forgotten to take bread. Note, We are *therefore* perplexed with present cares and distrusts, because we do not duly remember our former experiences of divine power and goodness.

2. He reproves their misunderstanding of the caution he gave them; (*v. 11.*) *How is it that you do not understand?* Note, Christ's disciples may well be ashamed of the slowness and dullness of their apprehensions in divine things; especially when they have long enjoyed the means of grace; *I spake it not unto you concerning bread*. He took it ill, (1.) That they should think him as thoughtful about bread as they were; whereas his *meat and drink were to do his Father's will*. (2.) That they should be so little acquainted with his way of preaching, as to take that literally which he spake by way of parable; and should thus make themselves like the multitude, who, when Christ spake to them in parables, seeing, saw not, and hearing, heard not, *ch. 13. 13*.

IV. The rectifying of the mistake by this reproof; (*v. 12.*) *Then understood they what he meant*. Note, Christ *therefore* shows us our folly and weakness, that we may stir up ourselves to take things right. He did not tell them expressly what he meant, but repeated what he had said, that they should beware of the leaven; and so obliged them,

by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word. And those truths are most precious, which we have thus digged for, and have found out after some mistakes. Though Christ did not tell them plainly, yet now they were aware that by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he meant their doctrine and way, which were corrupt and vicious, but, as they managed them, very apt to insinuate themselves into the minds of men like leaven, and to *eat like a canker*. They were leading men, and were had in reputation, which made the danger of infection by their errors the greater. In our age, we may reckon atheism and deism to be the leaven of the Sadducees, and popery to be the leaven of the Pharisees, against both which it concerns all christians to stand upon their guard.

13. When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? 14. And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. 17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

We have here a private conference which Christ had with his disciples concerning himself. It was in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, the utmost borders of the land of Canaan northward; there in that remote corner, perhaps, there was less flocking after him than in other places, which gave him leisure for this private conversation with his disciples. Note, When ministers are abridged in their public work, they should endeavour to do the more in their own families.

Christ is here catechising his disciples.

I. He inquires what the opinions of others were concerning him; *Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?*

1. He calls himself the *Son of man*; which may be taken either, (1.) As a title common to him with others. He was called, and justly, the *Son of God*, for so he was; (*Luke 1. 35.*) but he called himself the *Son of man*; for he is really and truly "Man, made of a woman." In courts of honour, it is a rule to distinguish men by their highest titles; but Christ, having now emptied himself, though he was the *Son of God*, will be known by the style and title of the *Son of man*. Ezekiel was often called so to *keep* him humble: Christ called himself so, to show that he *was* humble. Or, (2.) As a title peculiar to him as

Mediator. He is made known, in Daniel's vision, as the *Son of man*, Dan. 7. 13. I am the Messiah, that Son of man that was promised. But,

2. He inquires what people's sentiments were concerning him: "*Whom do men say that I am? The Son of man?*" (So I think it might better be read.) "Do they own me for the Messiah?" He asks, not, "Who do the *Scribes and Pharisees* say that I am?" They were prejudiced against him, and said that he was a deceiver and in league with Satan; but, "Who do *men* say that I am?" He referred to the common people, whom the Pharisees despised. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; for if he knows what men think, much more what they say; nor as one desirous to hear his own praises, but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching, by showing that he himself was so. The common people conversed more familiarly with the disciples than they did with their Master, and therefore from them he might better know what they said. Christ had not plainly said who he was, but left people to infer it from his works, John 10. 24, 25. Now he would know what inferences the people drew from *them*, and from the miracles which his apostles wrought in his name.

3. To this question the disciples gave him an answer; (v. 14.) *Some say, thou art John the Baptist, &c.* There were some that said, he was the *Son of David*, (ch. 12. 23.) and the great Prophet, John 6. 14. The disciples, however, do not mention that opinion, but only such opinions as were wide of the truth, which they had gathered up from their countrymen. Observe,

(1.) They are different opinions; some say one thing, and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that commonly vary one from another. Thus Christ came eventually to send division, Luke 12. 51. Being so noted a person, every one would be ready to pass his verdict upon him, and, "Many men, many minds;" those that were not willing to own him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.

(2.) They are honourable opinions, and bespeak the respect they had for him, according to the best of their judgment. These were not the sentiments of his enemies, but the sober thoughts of those that followed him with love and wonder. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.

(3.) They all suppose him to be *one risen from the dead*; which perhaps arose from a confused notion they had of the resurrection of the Messiah, before his public preaching, as of Jonas. Or their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancients returned to life again.

(4.) They are all false opinions, but built upon mistakes, and wilful mistakes. Christ's doctrines and miracles bespoke him to be an extraordinary Person; but because of the meanness of his appearance, so different from what they expected, they would not own him to be the Messiah, but will grant him to be any thing rather than that.

[1.] *Some say, Thou art John the Baptist.* Herod said so; (ch. 14. 2.) and those about him would be apt to say as he did. This notion might be strengthened by an opinion they had, that those who died as martyrs, should rise again before others; which some think the second of the seven sons refers to, in his answer to Antiochus, 2 Macc. 7. 9. *The King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.*

[2.] *Some, Elias;* taking occasion, no doubt, from the prophecy of Malachi, (ch. 4. 5.) *Behold, I will*

send you Elijah. And the rather, because Elijah (as Christ) did many miracles, and was himself, in his translation, the greatest miracle of all.

[3.] *Others, Jeremias:* they fasten upon him, either because he was the weeping prophet, and Christ was often in tears; or because God had *set him over kingdoms and nations*, (Jer. 1. 10.) which they thought agreed with their notion of the Messiah.

[4.] *Or, one of the prophets.* This shows what an honourable idea they entertained of the prophets; and yet they were the *children of them that persecuted and slew them*, ch. 23. 29. Rather than they would allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary person as his works bespoke him to be, they would say, "It was not he, but *one of the old prophets.*"

II. He inquires what *their* thoughts were concerning him; "*But who say ye that I am?*" Ye tell me what other people say of me; can ye say better?"

1. The disciples had themselves been better taught than others; had, by their intimacy with Christ, greater advantages of getting knowledge than others had. Note, It is justly expected, that those who enjoy greater plenty of the means of knowledge and grace than others, should have a more clear and distinct knowledge of the things of God than others. Those who have more acquaintance with Christ than others, should have truer sentiments concerning him, and be able to give a better account of him than others. 2. The disciples were trained up to teach others, and therefore it was highly requisite that they should understand the truth themselves; "Ye that are to preach the gospel of the kingdom, what are your notions of him that sends you?" Note, Ministers must be examined before they be sent forth, especially what their sentiments are of Christ, and who they say that he is; for how can they be owned as ministers of Christ, that are either ignorant or erroneous concerning Christ? This is a question we should every one of us be frequently putting to ourselves, "*Who do we say, what kind of one do we say, that the Lord Jesus is?*" Is he precious to us? Is he in our eyes the chief of ten thousand? Is he the Beloved of our souls?" It is well or ill with us, according as our thoughts are right or wrong concerning Jesus Christ.

Well, this is the question; now let us observe,

(1.) Peter's answer to this question, v. 16. To the former question concerning the opinion others had of Christ, several of the disciples answered, according as they had heard people talk; but to this Peter answers in the name of all the rest, they all consenting to it, and concurring in it. Peter's temper led him to be forward in speaking upon all such occasions, and sometimes he spake well, sometimes amiss; in all companies there are found some warm, bold men, to whom a precedence of speech falls of course; Peter was such a one; yet we find other of the apostles sometimes speaking as the mouth of the rest; as *John*, (Mark 9. 38.) *Thomas, Philip, and Jude*, John 14. 5, 8, 22. So that this is far from being a proof of such primacy and superiority of Peter above the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome ascribes to him. They will needs advance him to be a judge, when the utmost they can make of him, is, that he was but foreman of the jury, to speak for the rest, and that only *pro hac vice*—for this once; not the perpetual dictator or speaker of the house, only chairman upon this occasion.

Peter's answer is short, but it is full, and true, and to the purpose; *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.* Here is a confession of the Christian faith, addressed to Christ, and so made an act of devotion. Here is a confession of the true God as the living God, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, and of *Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, whom to know is

life eternal. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

[1.] The people called him a *Prophet, that Prophet*; (John 6. 14.) but the disciples own him to be the Christ, the anointed One; the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; the true Messiah promised to the fathers, and depended on by them as *He that shall come.* It was a great thing to believe this concerning one whose outward appearance was so contrary to the general idea the Jews had of the Messiah.

[2.] He called himself the *Son of man*; but they owned him to be the *Son of the living God.* The people's notion of him was, that he was the ghost of a dead man, Elias or Jeremias; but they know and believe him to be the *Son of the living God*, who has life in himself, and has given to his Son to have life in himself, and to be the *Life of the world.* If he be the *Son of the living God*, he is of the same nature with him; and though his divine nature was now veiled with the cloud of flesh, yet there were those who looked through it, and *saw his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* Now can we with an assurance of faith subscribe to this confession? Let us then, with a fervency of affection and adoration, go to Christ, and tell him so; Lord Jesus, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

(2.) Christ's approbation of his answer; (τ. 17—19.) in which Peter is replied to, both as a believer and as an apostle.

[1.] As a believer, τ. 17. Christ shows himself well pleased with Peter's confession, that it was so clear and express, without *ifs* or *ands*, as we say. Note, The proficiency of Christ's disciples in knowledge and grace is very acceptable to him; and Christ shows him whence he received the knowledge of this truth. At the first discovery of this truth in the dawning of the gospel-day, it was a mighty thing to believe it; *all men had not this knowledge*, had not this faith. But,

First, Peter had the happiness of it; *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona.* He reminds him of his rise and original, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction; he was *Bar-jonas*—*The son of a dove*; so some. Let him remember *the rock out of which he was hewn*, that he may see he was not born to this dignity, but preferred to it by the divine favour; it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit, must remember who is their Father, 1 Sam. 10. 12. Having reminded him of this, he makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; *Blessed art thou.* Note, True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they are so, makes them so. "Peter, thou art a happy man, who thus *knowest the joyful sound*," Ps. 89. 15. *Blessed are your eyes, ch. 13. 16.* All happiness attends the right knowledge of Christ.

Secondly, God must have the glory of it; "*For flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee.*" Thou hadst this neither by the invention of thy own wit and reason, nor by the instruction and information of others; this light sprang neither from nature nor from education, but from my Father, who is in heaven." Note, 1. The christian religion is a revealed religion, has its rise in heaven; it is a religion from above, given by inspiration of God, not the learning of philosophers, nor the politics of statesmen. 2. Saving faith is the gift of God, and, wherever it is, is wrought by him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, and upon the score of his mediation, Phil. 1. 29. *Therefore thou art blessed, because my Father has revealed it to thee.* Note, The revealing of Christ to us and in us is a distinguishing token of God's good will, and a firm foundation of

true happiness; and blessed are they that are thus highly favoured.

Perhaps Christ discerned something of pride and vain-glory in Peter's confession; a subtle sin, and which is apt to mingle itself even with our good duties. It is hard for good men to compare themselves with others, and not to have too great a conceit of themselves; to prevent which, we should consider that our preference to others is no achievement of our own, but the free gift of God's grace to us, and not to others; so that we have nothing to boast of, Ps. 115. 1. 1 Cor. 4. 7.

[2.] Christ replies to him as an apostle or minister, τ. 18, 19. Peter, in the name of the church, had confessed Christ, and to him therefore the promise intended for the church is directed. Note, There is nothing lost by being forward to confess Christ; for those who thus honour him, he will honour.

Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, he signed and published this royal, this divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the Bridegroom and the spouse. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised Seed, Gen. 3. 15. But now, that promised Seed being come, it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter; and a thousand pities it is, that this word, which is the great support of the kingdom of Christ, should be wrested and pressed into the service of antichrist. But the devil has employed his subtlety to pervert it, as he did that promise, Ps. 91. 11. which he perverted to his own purpose, ch. 4. 6. and perhaps both that scripture and this he thus perverted because they stood in his way, and therefore he owed them a spite.

Now the purport of this charter is,

First, To establish the being of the church; *I say also unto thee.* It is Christ that makes the grant, he who is the church's Head and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived; he who makes it pursuant to the authority received from the Father, and his undertaking for the salvation of the elect. The grant is put into Peter's hand: "I say it to thee." The Old-Testament promises relating to the church were given immediately to particular persons, eminent for faith and holiness, as to Abraham and David; which yet gave no supremacy to them, much less to any of their successors; so the New-Testament charter is here delivered to Peter as an agent, but to the use and behoof of the church in all ages, according to the purposes therein specified and contained. Now it is here promised,

1. That Christ would build his church upon a rock. This body politic is incorporated by the style and title of *Christ's church.* It is a number of the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. It is not *thy* church, but *mine.* Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers *not to lord it over God's heritage.* The church is Christ's peculiar, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and they that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ as Mediator. It bears his image and superscription.

(1.) The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself; *I will build it.* The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of, Zech. 6. 11, 13. Herein Solomon was a type of Christ, and Cyrus, Isa. 44. 28. The materials and workmanship are his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church,

and so builds it up with living stones, 1 Pet. 2. 5. *Ye are God's building*; and building is a progressive work; the church in this world is but *in fieri*—in the forming, like a house in the building. It is comfort to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it.

(2.) The foundation on which it is built is, *this Rock*; Let the architect do his part ever so well, if the foundation be rotten, the building will not stand; let us therefore see what the foundation is, and it must be meant of Christ, for *other foundation can no man lay*. See Isa. 28. 16.

[1.] The church is built upon a *rock*; a firm, strong, and lasting foundation, which time will not waste, nor will it sink under the weight of the building. Christ would not build his house upon the sand, for he knew that storms would arise. A rock is high, Ps. 61. 2. Christ's church does not stand upon a level with this world; a rock is large, and extends far, so does the church's foundation; and the more large, the more firm; those are not the church's friends, that narrow its foundations.

[2.] It is built upon *this rock*; thou art *Peter*, which signifies a *stone or rock*; Christ gave him that name when he first called him, (John 1. 42.) and here he confirms it; "Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed, and one that there is some hold of. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth," 2 Pet. 1. 12. From the mention of this significant name, occasion is taken for this metaphor of *building upon a rock*.

First, Some by this rock understand Peter himself as an apostle, the chief, though not the prince, of the twelve; senior among them, but not superior over them. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, Eph. 2. 20. The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be *written in the foundations* of the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 14. Now Peter being that apostle by whose hand the first stones of the church were laid, both in Jewish converts, (Acts 2.) and in the Gentile converts, (Acts 10.) he might in some sense be said to be the rock on which it was built. *Cephas* was one that seemed to be a pillar, Gal. 2. 9. But it sounds very harsh, to call a man that only lays the first stone of a building, which is a transient act, the foundation on which it is built, which is an abiding thing. Yet if it were so, this would not serve to support the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome; for Peter had no such headship as he claims, much less could derive it to his successors, least of all to the Bishops of Rome, who, whether they are so in place or no, is a question, but that they are not so in the truth of christianity, is past all question.

Secondly, Others by this *rock* understand Christ; "Thou art Peter, thou hast the name of a stone, but upon *this rock*, pointing to himself, *I build my church*." Perhaps he laid his hand on his breast, as when he said, *Destroy this temple*, (John 2. 19.) when he *spoke of the temple of his body*. Then he took occasion from the temple, where he was, so to speak of himself, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of that; so here he took occasion from Peter, to speak of himself as the Rock, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of Peter. But this must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see 1 Cor. 3. 11. 1 Pet. 2. 6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.

Thirdly, Others by this *rock* understand this confession which Peter made of Christ, and this comes

all to one with understanding it of Christ himself. It was a good confession which Peter witnessed, *Thou art Christ the Son of the living God*; the rest concurred with him in it. "Now," saith Christ, "this is that great truth upon which I will build my church." 1. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, christianity is a cheat, and the church is a mere chimera; *our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins*, 1 Cor. 15. 14, 17. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. 2. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and character of infidelity. This is *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesie*—that article, with the admission or the denial of which the church either *rises or falls*; "the main hinge on which the door of salvation turns;" those who let go this, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a sacred society, incorporated upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great it is, and has prevailed.

2. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church, when it is built; *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it.

(1.) This implies that the church has enemies that fight against it, and endeavour its ruin and overthrow, here represented by the *gates of hell*, that is, the city of hell; (which is directly opposite to this heavenly city, this *city of the living God*;) the devil's interest among the children of men. The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil's kingdom, the dragon's heads and horns, by which he *makes war with the Lamb*; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel-truths, corrupting gospel-ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good christians; drawing or driving, persuading by craft or forcing by cruelty, to that which is inconsistent with the purity of religion: this is the design of the gates of hell, to root out the name of christianity, (Ps. 83. 4.) *to devour the man child*, (Rev. 12. 9.) to raze this city to the ground.

(2.) This assures us that the enemies of the church shall not gain their point. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, in which his truths and ordinances shall be owned and kept up, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness; *They shall not prevail against it*, Ps. 129. 1, 2. This gives no security to any particular church, or church-governors, that they shall never err, never apostatize or be destroyed; but that somewhere or other the christian religion shall have a being, though not always in the same degree of purity and splendour, yet so as that the entail of it shall never be quite cut off. *The woman lives, though in a wilderness*, (Rev. 12. 14.) *cast down, but not destroyed*, (2 Cor. 4. 9.) *as dying, and behold we live*, 2 Cor. 6. 9. Corruptions grieving, persecutions grievous, but neither fatal. The church may be foiled in particular encounters, but in the main battle it shall come off *more than a conqueror*. Particular believers are *kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5.

Secondly, The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, v. 19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter

was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David, which belongs only to the Son of David; no, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. *Claves regni caelorum in B. Petro apostolo cuncti suscepimus sacerdotes*.—All we that are priests, received, in the person of the blessed apostle Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose *De Dignit. Sacerd.* Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts 10. 28. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, impowers the magistrates to hold courts in his name, to try matters of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is so done, regularly, as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; *I will give thee the keys*. He doth not say, *"I have given them,"* or *"I do now;"* but *"I will do it,"* meaning after his resurrection; *when he ascended on high, he gave those gifts*, Ephes. 4. 8. then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, ch. 28. 19, 20. John 20. 21. He doth not say, *The keys shall be given, but, I will give them;* for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, 1 Cor. 5. 4.

Now, 1. The power here delegated, is a spiritual power; it is a power pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel-dispensation; that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; their instructions afterward were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Acts 1. 3.

2. It is the power of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house their portion of meat in due season, (Luke 12. 42.) and deny it as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Tit. 1. 7. Eliakim, who had the key of the house of David, was over the household, Isa. 22. 22.

3. It is a power to bind and loose, that is, (following the metaphor of the keys,) to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom, Ps. 105. 21, 22. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, *interdico tibi aqua et igne*—*I forbid thee the use of fire and water;* when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ has promised to own the due administration of; (he will ratify the sentences of his stewards with his own approbation;) *It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven;* not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all church-censures, right or wrong; but such as are duly passed according to the word, *clave non errante*—*the key turning the right way*, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, 1 Thess. 2. 13. John 13. 20.

Now the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

(1.) The key of doctrine, called the key of knowledge; Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions, to bind and loose: these, in the common speech of the Jews, at that time, signified to prohibit and permit; to teach or declare a thing to be unlawful, was to bind; to be lawful, was to loose. Now the apostles had an extraordinary power of this kind; some things forbidden by the law of Moses were now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first taught himself, and then taught others, to call nothing common or unclean, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, what is good, and what the Lord requires of them; and they who declare the whole counsel of God, use these keys well, Acts 20. 27.

Some make the giving of the keys to allude to the custom of the Jews in creating a doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it; and the binding and loosing, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, Acts 13. 46.—18. 6. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(2.) The key of discipline, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is hereby conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declare what is law, and, upon an impartial inquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is the power of the keys, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof. [1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; *"Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them;* those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their seed members of the church by baptism." Ministers are to let in to the wedding-feast those that are bidden; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion. [2.] They have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelievers the application of gospel-promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, that they have no part or lot in the matter, as Peter did to Simon Magus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God. [3.] They have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of discerning spirits; yet even they went by the rule of outward appearances, (as Acts 8. 21. 1 Cor. 5. 1. 2 Cor. 2. 7. 1 Tim. 1. 20.) which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

Lastly, Here is the charge which Christ gave his disciples, to keep this private for the present; (v. 20.) *They must tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.* What they had professed to him, they

must not yet publish to the world, for several reasons; 1. Because this was the time of preparation for his kingdom; the great thing now preached, was, that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*; and therefore those things were now to be insisted on, which were proper to make way for Christ; as the doctrine of repentance; not this great truth, in and with which *the kingdom of heaven* was to be actually set up. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and it is good advice, *Prepare thy work, and afterward build*, Prov. 24. 27. 2. Christ would have his Messiahship proved by his works, and would rather they should testify of him than that his *disciples* should, because their testimony was but as his own, which he insisted not on. See John 5. 31, 34. He was so secure of the demonstration of his miracles, that he waved other witnesses, John 10. 25, 38. 3. If they had known that *he was Jesus the Christ, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. 2. 8. 4. Christ would not have the apostles preach this, till they had the most convincing evidence ready to allege in confirmation of it. Great truths may suffer damage by being asserted before they can be sufficiently proved. Now the great proof of Jesus being the Christ, was, his resurrection; by that *he was declared to be the Son of God, with power*; and therefore the divine wisdom would not have this truth preached, till that could be alleged for proof of it. 5. It was requisite that the preachers of so great a truth should be furnished with greater measures of the Spirit than the apostles as yet had; therefore the open asserting of it was adjourned till the Spirit should be poured out upon them. But when Christ was glorified and the Spirit poured out, we find Peter proclaiming upon the house-tops what was here spoken in a corner, (Acts 2. 36.) *That God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ*; for as there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak.

21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning his own sufferings; in which observe,

1. Christ's foretelling of his sufferings. Now he began to do it, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of sufferings, as when he said, *Destroy this temple*: when he spake of *the Son of man being lifted up, and of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood*: but now he began to show it, to speak plainly and expressly of it. Hitherto he had not touched upon this, because the disciples were weak, and could not well bear the notice of a thing so very strange, and so very melancholy; but now that they were more ripe in knowledge, and strong in faith, he began to tell them this. Note, Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it.

From that time, when they had made that full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this. When he found them knowing in one truth, he taught them another;

for to him that has, shall be given. Let them first be established in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then go on to perfection, Heb. 6. 1. If they had not been well grounded in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, it would have been a great shaking to their faith. All truths are not to be spoken to all persons at all times, but such as are proper and suitable to their present state. Now observe,

1. What he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances of them, are all surprising.

(1.) The place where he should suffer. He must go to Jerusalem, the head city, the holy city, and suffer there. Though he lived most of his time in Galilee, he must die at Jerusalem; there all the sacrifices were offered, there therefore he must die, *who is the great Sacrifice*.

(2.) The persons by whom he should suffer; *the elders, and chief priests, and scribes*: these made up the great sanhedrim, which sat at Jerusalem, and was had in veneration by the people. Those that should have been most forward in owning and admiring Christ, were the most bitter in persecuting him. It was strange that men of knowledge in the scripture, who professed to expect the Messiah's coming, and pretended to have something sacred in their character, should use him thus barbarously when he did come. It was the Roman power that condemned and crucified Christ, but he lays it at the door of the *chief priests and Scribes*, who were the first movers.

(3.) What he should suffer; *He must suffer many things, and be killed*. His enemies' insatiable malice, and his own invincible patience, appear in the variety and multiplicity of his sufferings, (he suffered many things,) and in the extremity of them; nothing less than his death would satisfy them, he must be killed. The suffering of many things, if not unto them, is more tolerable; for while there is life, there is hope; and death, without such preface, would be less terrible; but *he must first suffer many things, and then be killed*.

(4.) What should be the happy issue of all his sufferings; *he shall be raised again the third day*. As the prophets, so Christ himself, when he testified beforehand his sufferings, testified withal the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he mentions that, to keep up their faith. When he spake of the cross and the shame, he spake in the same breath of *the joy set before him*, in the prospect of which *he endured the cross, and despised the shame*. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, trace in it the way to his glory; and thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, look through it to the recompense of reward. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him*.

2. Why he foretold his sufferings. (1.) To show that they were the product of an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity; *thus it behoved Christ to suffer*. The matter was settled in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge, in pursuance of his own voluntary susception and undertaking for our salvation; his sufferings were no surprise to him, did not come upon him as a snare, but he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love, John 18. 4. (2.) To rectify the mistakes which his disciples had imbibed concerning the eternal pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon nothing but dignity and authority in the world; but here Christ reads them another lesson, tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests and the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be

the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors; this would give them quite another idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that this mistake should be rectified. Those that follow Christ must be dealt plainly with, and warned not to expect great things in this world. (3.) It was to prepare them for the share, at least, of sorrow and fear, which they must have in his sufferings. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly, and, being forewarned, may be fore-armed.

11. The offence which Peter took at this; he said, *Be it far from thee, Lord*: probably he spake the sense of the rest of the disciples, as before, for he was chief speaker. *He took him, and began to rebuke him.* Perhaps Peter was a little elevated with the great things Christ had now said unto him, which made him more bold with Christ than did become him; so hard is it to keep the spirit low and humble in the midst of great advancements!

1. It did not become Peter to contradict his Master, or take upon him to advise him; he might have wished, that, if it were possible, this cup might pass away, without saying so peremptorily, *This shall not be*, when Christ had said, *It must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reprovet God, let him answer it.* Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cross to us, it becomes us silently to acquiesce in, and not to prescribe to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, Rom. 11. 34.

2. It savoured much of fleshly wisdom, for him to appear so warmly against suffering, and to startle thus at the offence of the cross. It is the corrupt part of us, that is thus solicitous to sleep in a whole skin. We are apt to look upon sufferings as they relate to this present life, to which they are uneasy; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, Rom. 8. 18. See how passionately Peter speaks; *"Be it far from thee, Lord.* God forbid, that thou shouldst suffer and be killed; we cannot bear the thoughts of it." *Master, spare thyself*: so it might be read; *ἄραγε σπεί, κύριε*—"Be merciful to thyself, and then no one else can be cruel to thee; pity thyself, and then *this shall not be to thee.*" He would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. He intimates, likewise, the improbability of the thing, humanly speaking; *"This shall not be unto thee.* It is impossible that one who hath so great an interest in the people as thou hast, should be crushed by the elders, who fear the people: this can never be; we that have followed thee, will fight for thee, if occasion be; and there are thousands that will stand by us."

III. Christ's displeasure against Peter for this suggestion of his, v. 23. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that he resented so much as this, though they often offended.

Observe, 1. How he expressed his displeasure: He turned upon Peter, and (we may suppose) with a frown said, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* He did not so much as take time to deliberate upon it, but gave an immediate reply to the temptation, which was such as made it to appear how ill he took it. Just now, he had said, *Blessed art thou, Simon*, and had even laid him in his bosom; but here, *Get thee behind me, Satan*; and there was cause for both. Note, A good man may by a surprise of temptation soon grow very unlike himself. He answered him

as he did Satan himself, ch. 4. 10. Note, (1.) It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. Thus he assaulted Adam by Eve, Job by his wife, and here Christ by his beloved Peter. It concerns us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and depths, by standing always upon our guard against sin, whoever moves us to it. Even the kindnesses of our friends are often abused by Satan, and made use of as temptations to us. (2.) Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that dissuades them from their duty. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken; we should learn to know the devil's voice when he speaks in a saint as well as when he speaks in a serpent. Whoever takes us off from that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language. (3.) We must be free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though it may be under colour of kindness to us. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend.* Such smittings must be accounted kindnesses, Ps. 141. 5. (4.) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

2. What was the ground of this displeasure; why did Christ thus resent a motion that seemed not only harmless, but kind? Two reasons are given:

(1.) *Thou art an offence to me*; *Σκάνδαλον μου εἶ*—*Thou art my hinderance*; (so it may be read:) "thou standest in my way." Christ was hastening on in the work of our salvation, and his heart was so much upon it, that he took it ill to be hindered, or tempted to start back from the hardest and most discouraging part of his undertaking. So strongly was he engaged for our redemption, that they who but indirectly endeavoured to divert him from it, touched him in a very tender and sensible part. Peter was not so sharply reproved for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings as he was for dissuading him from them; though that was the defect, this the excess, of kindness. It argues a very great firmness and resolution of mind in any business, when it is an offence to be dissuaded, and a man will not endure to hear any thing to the contrary; like that of Ruth, *Entreat me not to leave thee.* Note, Our Lord Jesus preferred our salvation before his own ease and safety; for even Christ pleased not himself; (Rom. 15. 3.) he came into the world, not to spare himself, as Peter advised, but to spend himself.

See why he called Peter *Satan*, when he suggested this to him; because, whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil, who is a sworn enemy to it. The same Satan that afterwards entered into Judas, maliciously to destroy him in his undertaking, here prompted Peter plausibly to divert him from it. Thus he changes himself into an angel of light.

Thou art an offence to me. Note, [1.] Those that engage in any great and good work, must expect to meet with hinderance and opposition from friends and foes, from within and from without. [2.] Those that obstruct our progress in any duty, must be looked upon as an offence to us. Then we do the will of God, as Christ did, *whose meat and drink it was to do it*, when it is a trouble to us to be solicited from our duty. Those that hinder us from doing or suffering for God, when we are called to it, whatever they are in other things, in that they are *Satans, adversaries to us.*

(2.) *Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.* Note, [1.] *The things that are of God*, that is, the concerns of his

will and glory, often clash and interfere with *the things that are of men*, that is, with our own wealth, pleasure, and reputation. While we mind christian duty as our way and work, and the divine favour as our end and portion, we *savour the things of God*; but if these be minded, the flesh must be denied, hazards must be run and hardships borne; and here is the trial which of the two we savour. [2.] Those that inordinately fear, and industriously decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God; they relish those things more themselves, and make it appear to others that they do so.

24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 28. Verily I say unto you, There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Christ, having showed his disciples that *he* must suffer, and that he was ready and willing to suffer, here shows them that *they* must suffer too, and must be ready and willing. It is a weighty discourse that we have in these verses:

1. Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it, *v. 24.* He said this to his disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own sincerity. Observe,

1. What it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, *Follow me.* A true disciple of Christ is one that doth follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him, as Peter now undertook to do, forgetting his place. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven; and one that walks in the same way that he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his conduct, and *follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes*, Rev. 14. 4.

2. What are the great things required of those that will be Christ's disciples; *If any man will come, ας βωυ—If any man be willing to come.* It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice. Many are disciples more by chance or the will of others than by any act of their own will; but Christ will have his people volunteers, Ps. 110. 3. It is as if Christ had said, "If any of the people that are not my disciples, be steadfastly minded to come to me, and if you that are, be in like manner minded to adhere to me, it is upon these terms, these and no other; you must *follow me* in sufferings as well as in other things, and therefore when you sit down to count the cost, reckon upon it."

Now what are these terms?

(1.) *Let him deny himself.* Peter had advised Christ to spare himself, and would be ready, in the like case, to take the advice; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from *sharing* themselves, that they must *deny* themselves. Herein they must come after Christ, for his birth, and life, and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, Phil. 2. 7, 8. If self-denial be a hard lesson, and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction; and *the servant is not above his lord*. Note, All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves. It is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and great lesson to be learned in this school, to deny ourselves; it is both the *strait* gate, and the *narrow* way; it is necessary in order to our learning all the other good lessons that are there taught. We must deny ourselves absolutely, we must not admire our own shadow, nor gratify our own humour; we must not lean to our own understanding, nor seek our own things, nor be our own end. We must deny ourselves, comparatively; we must deny ourselves for Christ, and his will and glory, and the service of his interest in the world; we must deny ourselves for our brethren, and for their good; and we must deny ourselves for ourselves, deny the appetites of the body for the benefit of the soul.

(2.) *Let him take up his cross.* The cross is here put for all sufferings, as men or christians; providential afflictions, persecutions for righteousness' sake, every trouble that befalls us, either for doing well or for not doing ill. The troubles of christians are fitly called *crosses*, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to; and it should reconcile us to troubles, and take off the terror of them, that they are what we bear in common with Christ, and such as he hath borne before us. Note, [1.] Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it; as each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burden. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. That is our cross which Infinite Wisdom has appointed for us, and a Sovereign Providence has laid on us, as fitted for us. It is good for us to call the cross we are under, *our own*, and entertain it accordingly. We are apt to think we could bear such a one's cross better than our own; but that is best, which is, and we ought to make the best of it. [2.] Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross: when Simon carried Christ's cross after him, this phrase was illustrated. *First*, It is supposed that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but must accommodate ourselves to those which God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are laid in our way. We must so manage an affliction, that it may not be a stumbling-block or hinderance to us in any service we have to do for God. We must take it up out of our way, by getting over *the offence of the cross*; *None of these things move me*; and we must then go on with it in our way, though it lie heavy. *Secondly*, That which we have to do, is, not only to bear the cross, (that a stock or a stone or a stick may do,) not only to be silent under it, but we must *take up* the cross, must improve it to some good advantage

"We should not say, 'This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it;' but 'This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good.'" When we *rejoice in our afflictions, and glory in them*, then we take up the cross. This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, when it comes to the push, will never have the heart to take up his cross. "He that cannot take up a resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never like to die a martyr;" so Archbishop Tillotson.

(3.) *Let him follow me*, in this particular of taking up the cross. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ, who bears it *before us*, bears it *for us*, and so bears it *from us*. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end, and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. Note, The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform themselves in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. To do well and to suffer ill, is to follow Christ. *If any man will come after me, let him follow me*; that seems to be *idem per idem*—the same thing over again. What is the difference? Surely it is this, "If any man will come after me, in profession, and so have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow me in truth, and so do the work and duty of a disciple." Or thus, *If any man will set out after me*, in good beginnings, let him continue to follow me with all perseverance. That is *following the Lord fully*, as Caleb did. Those that come after Christ, must fulfil after him.

II. Here are arguments to persuade us to submit to these laws, and come up to these terms. Self-denial, and patient suffering, are hard lessons, which will never be learned if we consult with flesh and blood; let us therefore consult with our Lord Jesus, and see what advice he gives us; and here he gives us,

1. Some considerations proper to engage us to these duties of self-denial and suffering for Christ. Consider,

(1.) The weight of that eternity which depends upon our present choice; (v. 25.) *Whosoever will save his life, by denying Christ, shall lose it; and whosoever is contented to lose his life, for owning Christ, shall find it*. Here are *life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, set before us*. Observe,

[1.] The misery that attends the most plausible apostacy. *Whosoever will save his life in this world, if it be by sin, he shall lose it in another*; he that forsakes Christ, to preserve a temporal life and avoid a temporal death, will certainly come short of eternal life, and will be hurt of the second death, and certainly held by it. There cannot be a fairer pretence for apostacy and iniquity than saving the life by it, so cogent is the law of self-preservation; and yet even that is folly, for it will prove in the end self-destruction; the life saved is but for a moment, the death shunned is but as a sleep; but the life lost is everlasting, and the death run upon is the depth and complement of all misery, and an endless separation from all good. Now, let any rational man consider of it, take advice and speak his mind, whether there is any thing got, at long run, by apostacy, though a man save his estate, preferment, or life, by it.

[2.] The advantage that attends the most perilous and expensive constancy; *Whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake in this world, shall find it*

in a better, infinitely to his advantage. Note, *First*, Many a life is lost, for Christ's sake, in doing his work, by labouring fervently for his name; in suffering work, by choosing rather to die than to deny him or his truths and ways. Christ's holy religion is handed down to us, sealed with the blood of thousands, that have not known their own souls, but have despised their lives, (as Job speaks in another case,) though very valuable ones, when they have stood in competition with their duty and the testimony of Jesus, Rev. 20. 4. *Secondly*, Though many have been losers for Christ, even of life itself, yet never any one was, or will be, a loser by him in the end. The loss of other comforts, for Christ, may possibly be made up in this world; (Mark 10. 30.) the loss of life cannot, but it shall be made up in the other world, in an eternal life; the believing prospect of which hath been the great support of suffering saints in all ages. An assurance of the life they should find, in lieu of the life they hazarded, hath enabled them to triumph over death in all its terrors; to go smiling to a scaffold, and stand singing at a stake, and to call the utmost instances of their enemies' rage but a *light affliction*.

[3.] The worth of the soul which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it; (v. 26.) *What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* *ἅπα ὅλην τὴν κόσμον κερδαίνει*; the same word which is translated his life, (v. 25.) for the soul is the life, Gen. 2. 7. This alludes to that common principle, that, whatever a man gets, if he lose his life, it will do him no good, he cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Note, *First*, Every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, which actuates the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and propriety, (for we are not our own, *All souls are mine*, saith God,) but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves. *Secondly*, It is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of; when it dies as far as a soul can die; when it is separated from the favour of God, and sunk under his wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell. *Thirdly*, If the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. *The man loses his own soul*, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving, Hos. 13. 9. The sinner dies because he will die; *his blood is on his own head*. *Fourthly*, One soul is more worth than all the world; our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the *whole world set in the scale against one soul*, and *Tekel* written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and he is a competent Judge; he had reason to know the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he under-rate the world, for he made it. *Fifthly*, The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interests by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. *It is the love of the world, and the eager pursuit of it, that drowns men in destruction and perdition*. *Sixthly*, The loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit

down at last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account, and to compare profit and loss, he will find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes, is irreparably broken.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Note, If once the soul be lost, it is lost for ever. There is no *ἀντάλλαγμα*—*counter-price*, that can be paid, or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If, after that great price which Christ laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world, that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, and do well for ourselves.

2. Here are some considerations proper to encourage us in self-denial and suffering for Christ.

(1.) The assurance we have of Christ's glory, at his second coming to judge the world, *v.* 27. If we look to the end of all these things, the period of the world, and the posture of souls then, we shall thence form a very different idea of the present state of things. If we see things as they *will* appear then, we shall see them as they *should* appear now.

The great encouragement to steadfastness in religion is taken from the second coming of Christ, considering it,

[1.] As his honour; *The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels.* To look upon Christ in his state of humiliation, so abased, so abused, a *reproach of men*, and *despised of the people*, would discourage his followers from taking any pains, or running any hazards for him; but with an eye of faith to see the Captain of our salvation coming in his glory, in all the pomp and power of the upper world, will animate us, and make us think nothing too much to do, or too hard to suffer, for him. *The Son of man shall come.* He here gives himself the title of his humble state, (he is the *Son of man*;) to show that he is not ashamed to own it. His first coming was in the meanness of his children, who being partakers of flesh, he took part of the same; but his second coming will be in the glory of his Father. At his first coming, he was attended with poor disciples; at his second coming, he will be attended with glorious angels; and *if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him*, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

[2.] As our concern; *Then he shall reward every man according to his works.* Observe, *First*, Jesus Christ will come as a Judge, to dispense rewards and punishments, infinitely exceeding the greatest that any earthly potentate has the dispensing of. The terror of men's tribunal (*ch.* 10. 13.) will be taken off by a believing prospect of the glory of Christ's tribunal. *Secondly*, Men will then be rewarded, not according to their gains in this world, but according to their works, according to what they were and did. In that day, the treachery of backsliders will be punished with eternal destruction, and the constancy of faithful souls recompensed with a crown of life. *Thirdly*, The best preparative for that day, is, to *deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ*; for so we shall make the Judge our Friend, and these things will then pass well in the account. *Fourthly*, The rewarding of men according to their works is deferred till that day. Here good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously; we see not apostacy punished with immediate strokes, nor fidelity encouraged with immediate smiles, from heaven; but in that day all will be set to rights. Therefore *judge nothing before the time*, 2 Tim. 4. 6—8.

(2.) The near approach of his kingdom in this world, *v.* 28. It was so near, that there were some

attending him, who should live to see it. As Simon was assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ come in the flesh; so some here are assured that they shall not taste death (death is a sensible thing, its terrors are seen, its bitterness is tasted) till they had seen the Lord's Christ coming in his kingdom. At the end of time, he shall come in his Father's glory; but now, in the fulness of time, he was to come in his own kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom. Some little specimen was given of his glory a few days after this, in his transfiguration; (*ch.* 17. 1.) then he tried his robes. But this points at Christ's coming by the pouring out of his Spirit, the planting of the gospel-church, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the place and nation of the Jews, who were the most bitter enemies to christianity. Here was the *Son of man coming in his kingdom*. Many then present lived to see it, particularly John, who lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and saw christianity planted in the world. Let this encourage the followers of Christ to suffer for him, [1.] That their undertaking shall be succeeded; the apostles were employed in setting up Christ's kingdom; let them know, for their comfort, that, whatever opposition they meet with, yet they shall carry their point, shall see of the *travail of their soul*. Note, It is a great encouragement to suffering saints, to be assured, not only of the safety, but of the advancement, of Christ's kingdom among men; not only *notwithstanding* their sufferings, but *by* their sufferings. A believing prospect of the success of the kingdom of grace, as well as of our share in the kingdom of glory, may carry us cheerfully through our sufferings. [2.] That their cause shall be pleaded; their deaths shall be revenged, and their persecutors reckoned with. [3.] That this shall be done shortly, in the present age. Note, The nearer the church's deliverances are, the more cheerful should we be in our sufferings for Christ. *Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.* It is spoken as a favour to those that should survive the present cloudy time, that they should see better days. Note, It is desirable to share with the church in her joys, Dan. 12. 12. Observe, Christ saith, *Some shall live to see those glorious days, not all*; some shall enter into the promised land, but others shall fall in the wilderness. He does not tell them *who* should live to see this kingdom, lest, if they had known, they should have put off the thoughts of dying, but *some* of them shall; *Behold, the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door; be patient, therefore; brethren.*

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ in his pomp and glory, transfigured, *v.* 1. 13. II. Christ in his power and grace casting the devil out of a child, *v.* 14. 21. And, III. Christ in his poverty and great humiliation, 1. Foretelling his own sufferings, *v.* 22, 23. 2. Paying tribute, *v.* 24. 27. So that here is Christ, the Brightness of his Father's glory, by himself purging our sins, paying our debts, and destroying for us him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus were the several indications of Christ's gracious intentions admirably interwoven.

1. **A**ND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him. 4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou

wild, let us make here three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.' 6. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. 10. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? 11. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. 12. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

We have here the story of Christ's transfiguration; he had said that the *Son of man should shortly come in his kingdom*, with which promise all the three evangelists industriously connect this story; as if Christ's transfiguration were intended for a specimen and an earnest of the kingdom of Christ, and of that light and love of his, which therein appears to his select and sanctified ones. Peter speaks of this as *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus*; (2 Pct. 1. 16.) because it was an emanation of his power, and a previous notice of his coming, which was fitly introduced by such prefaces.

When Christ was here in his humiliation, though his state, in the main, was a state of abasement and afflictions, there were some glimpses of his glory intermixed, that he himself might be the more encouraged in his sufferings, and others the less offended. His birth, his baptism, his temptation, and his death, were the most remarkable instances of his humiliation; and these were each of them attended with some signal points of glory, and the smiles of heaven. But the series of his public ministry being a continued humiliation, here, just in the midst of that, comes in this discovery of his glory. As, now that he is in heaven, he has his condescensions, so, when he was on earth, he had his advancements.

Now concerning Christ's transfiguration, observe,

I. The circumstances of it, which are here noted,

1. The time; *six days* after he had the solemn conference with his disciples, *ch. 16. 21*. St. Luke saith, *It was about eight days after*, six whole days intervening, and this the eighth day, that day seven-night. Nothing is recorded to be said or done by our Lord Jesus for six days before his transfiguration; thus, before some great appearances, *there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour*, Rev. 8. 1. Then when Christ seems to be doing nothing for his church, expect, ere long, something more than ordinary.

2. The place; it was on *the top of a high mountain apart*. Christ chose a mountain, (1.) As a se-

cret place, he went apart; for though a city upon a hill can hardly be hid, two or three persons upon a hill can hardly be found; therefore their private oratories were commonly on mountains. Christ chose a retired place to be transfigured in, because his appearing publicly in his glory was not agreeable to his present state; and thus he would show his humility, and teach us that privacy much befriends our communion with God. Those that would maintain intercourse with heaven, must frequently withdraw from the converse and business of this world; and they will find themselves never less alone than when alone, for the Father is with them. (2.) Though a sublime place, elevated above things below. Note, Those that would have a transforming fellowship with God, must not only retire, but ascend; lift up their hearts, and *seek things above*. The call is, *Come up hither*, Rev. 6. 1.

3. The witnesses of it. He took with him Peter and James and John. (1.) He took three, a competent number to testify what they should see; for *out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established*. Christ makes his appearances certain enough, but not too common; *not to all the people, but to witnesses*, (Acts 10. 41.) that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed. (2.) He took these three because they were the chief of his disciples, the first three of the worthies of the Son of David; probably they excelled in gifts and graces; they were Christ's favourites, singled out to be the witnesses of his retirements. They were present when he raised the damsel to life, Mark 5. 37. They were afterward to be the witnesses of his agony, and this was to prepare them for that. Note, A sight of Christ's glory while we are here in this world, is a good preparative for our sufferings with him, as these are preparatives for the sight of his glory in the other world. Paul, who had abundance of trouble, had abundance of revelations.

II. The manner of it; (*τ. 2.*) *He was transfigured before them*. The substance of his body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered; he was not turned into a spirit, but his body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonour, now appeared in power and glory. *He was transfigured*, μεταμορφώθη—he *was metamorphosed*. The profane poets amused and abused the world with idle extravagant stories of metamorphoses, especially the metamorphoses of their gods, such as were disparaging and diminishing to them, equally false and ridiculous; to these some think Peter has an eye, when, being about to mention this transfiguration of Christ, he saith, *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made it known unto you*, 2 Pct. 1. 16. Christ was both God and man; but, in the days of his flesh, he took on him the *form of a servant*—μορφῇ δούλου, Phil. 2. 7. He drew a veil over the glory of his godhead; but now, in his transfiguration, he put by that veil, appeared *in μορφῇ Θεοῦ*—in the form of God, (Phil. 2. 6.) and gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory, which could not but change his form.

The great truth which we declare, is, that *God is Light*, (1 John 1. 5.) *dwells in light*, (1 Tim. 6. 16.) *covers himself with light*, Ps. 104. 2. And therefore when Christ would appear in the *form of God*, he appeared in *light*, the most glorious of all visible beings, the first-born of the creation, and most nearly resembling the eternal Parent. Christ is the *Light*; while he was in the world, he *shined in darkness*, and therefore the world knew him not; (John 1. 5, 10.) but, at this time, that Light shined out of the darkness.

Now his transfiguration appeared in two things:

1. *His face did shine as the sun*. The face is the principal part of the body, by which we are known;

therefore such a brightness was put on Christ's face, that face which afterward *he hid not from shame and spitting*. It shone as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, so clear, so bright; for he is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed, reflected light, but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate, inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud.

2. *His raiment was white as the light*. All his body was altered, as his face was; so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses was so weak, that it could easily be concealed by a thin veil; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it.

III. The companions of it. He will come, at last, *with ten thousands of his saints*; and, as a specimen of that, there now *appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him*, v. 3. Observe, 1. There were glorified saints attending him, that, when there were *three to bear record on earth*, Peter, James, and John, there might be some to bear record from heaven too. Thus here was a lively resemblance of Christ's kingdom, which is made up of saints in heaven and saints on earth, and to which belong the *spirits of just men made perfect*. We see here, that they who are fallen asleep in Christ, are not perished, but exist in a separate state, and shall be forthcoming when there is occasion. 2. These two were Moses and Elias, men very eminent in their day. They had both fasted forty days and forty nights, as Christ did, and wrought other miracles, and were both remarkable at their going out of the world as well as in their living in the world. Elias was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, and died not. The body of Moses was never found, possibly it was preserved from corruption, and reserved for this appearance. The Jews had great respect for the memory of Moses and Elias, and therefore they came to witness of him, they came to carry tidings concerning him to the upper world. In them the law and the prophets honoured Christ, and bore testimony to him. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples; they saw them, and heard them talk, and, either by their discourse or by information from Christ, they knew them to be Moses and Elias; glorified saints shall know one another in heaven. They talked with Christ. Note, Christ has communion with the blessed, and will be no stranger to any of the members of that glorified corporation. Christ was now to be sealed in his prophetic office, and therefore these two great prophets were fittest to attend him, as transferring all their honour and interest to him; for *in these last days God speaks to us by his Son*, Heb. 1. 1.

IV. The great pleasure and satisfaction that the disciples took in the sight of Christ's glory. Peter, as usual, spoke for the rest; *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. Peter here expresses,

1. The delight they had in this converse; *Lord, it is good to be here*. Though upon a high mountain, which we may suppose rough and unpleasant, bleak and cold, yet *it is good to be here*. He speaks the sense of his fellow-disciples; It is good not only for me, but for us. He did not covet to monopolize this favour, but gladly takes them in. He saith this to Christ. Pious and devout affections love to pour out themselves before the Lord Jesus. The soul that loves Christ and loves to be with him, loves to go and tell him so; *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. This intimates a thankful acknowledgment of his kindness in admitting them to his favour. Note, Communion with Christ is the delight of christians. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus reckon it is good

for them to be with him in the holy mount. It is good to be here where Christ is, and whither he brings us along with him by his appointment; it is good to be here, retired and alone with Christ; to be here, where we may behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus, Ps. 27. 4. It is pleasant to hear Christ compare notes with Moses and the prophets, to see how all the institutions of the law, and all the predictions of the prophets, pointed at Christ, and were fulfilled in him.

2. The desire they had of the continuance of it, *Let us make here three tabernacles*. There was in this, as in many other of Peter's sayings, a mixture of weakness and of good will, more zeal than discretion.

(1.) Here was a zeal for this converse with heavenly things, a laudable complacency in the sight they had of Christ's glory. Note, Those that by faith *behold the beauty of the Lord* in his house, cannot but desire to *dwell there all the days of their life*. It is good having a nail in God's holy place, (Ezra 9. 8.) a constant abode; to be in holy ordinances as a man at home, not as a wayfaring man. Peter thought this mountain was a fine spot of ground to build upon, and he was for making tabernacles there; as Moses in the wilderness made a tabernacle for the Shekinah, or divine glory.

It argued great respect for his Master and the heavenly guests, with some commendable forgetfulness of himself and his fellow-disciples, that he would have tabernacles for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, but none for himself. He would be content to lie in the open air, on the cold ground, in such good company; if his Master have but where to lay his head, no matter whether he himself has or no.

(2.) Yet in this zeal he betrayed a great deal of weakness and ignorance. What need had Moses and Elias of tabernacles? They belonged to that blessed world, *where they hunger no more, nor doth the sun light upon them*. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and hid his disciples expect the like; Peter forgets that, or, to prevent it, will needs be building tabernacles in the mount of glory, cut of the way of trouble. Still he harps upon, *Master, spare thyself*, though he had been so lately checked for it. Note, There is a piteness in good men to expect the crown without the cross. Peter was for laying hold of this as the prize, though he had not as yet fought his fight, nor finished his course, as those other disciples, ch. 20. 21. We are out in our aim, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims, (such we are in our best circumstances in this world,) to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city.

Yet it is some excuse for the incongruity of Peter's proposal, not only that *he knew not what he said*, (Luke 9. 33.) but also that he submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ; *If thou wilt, let us make tabernacles*. Note, Whatever tabernacles we propose to make to ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave.

Now to this which Peter said, there was no reply made; the disappearing of the glory would soon answer it. They that promise themselves great things on this earth, will soon be undeceived by their own experience.

V. The glorious testimony which God the Father gave to our Lord Jesus, in which *he received from him honour and glory*, (2 Pet. 1. 17.) when *there came this voice from the excellent glory*. This was like proclaiming the titles of honour or the royal style of a prince, when, at his coronation, he appears in his robes of state; and be it known, to the comfort of mankind, the royal style of Christ is taken from his mediation. Thus, in vision, he appeared with a rainbow, the seal of the covenant, about his throne; (Rev. 4. 3.) for it is his glory to be our Redeemer

Now concerning this testimony from heaven to Christ, observe,

1. How it came, and in what manner it was introduced.

(1.) There was a cloud. We find often in the Old Testament, that a cloud was a visible token of God's presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud, (Exod. 19. 9.) and so to Moses, Exod. 34. 5. Numb. 11. 25. He took possession of the tabernacle in a cloud, and afterward of the temple; where Christ was in his glory, the temple was, and there God showed himself present. We know not the balancings of the clouds, but we know that much of the intercourse and communication between heaven and earth is maintained by them. By the clouds vapours ascend, and rains descend; therefore God is said to make the clouds his chariots; so he did here when he descended upon this mount.

(2.) It was a bright cloud; under the law it was commonly a thick and dark cloud that God made the token of his presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a thick cloud, (Exod. 19. 16.) and said he would dwell in thick darkness; see 1 Kings 8. 12. But we are now come, not to the mount that was covered with blackness and darkness, (Heb. 12. 18.) but to the mount that is crowned with a bright cloud. Both the Old-Testament and the New Testament-dispensation had tokens of God's presence; but that was a dispensation of darkness, and terror, and bondage; this, of light, love, and liberty.

(3.) It overshadowed them. This cloud was intended to break the force of that great light which otherwise would have overcome the disciples, and have been intolerable; it was like the vail which Moses put upon his face when it shone. God, in manifesting himself to his people, considers their frame. This cloud was to their eyes as parables to their understandings, to convey spiritual things by things sensible, as they were able to bear them.

(4.) There came a voice out of the cloud, and it was the voice of God, who now, as of old, shake in the cloudy pillar, Ps. 99. 7. Here was no thunder, or lightning, or voice of a trumpet, as there was when the law was given by Moses, but only a voice, a still small voice, and that not ushered in with a strong wind, or an earthquake, or fire, as when God spake to Elias, 1 Kings 19. 11, 12. Moses then and Elias were witnesses, that in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son, in another way than he spake formerly to them. This voice came from the excellent glory, (2 Pet. 1. 17.) the glory which excelleth, in comparison of which the former had no glory; though the excellent glory was clouded, yet thence came a voice, for faith comes by hearing.

2. What this testimony from heaven was; *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.* Here we have,

(1.) The great gospel-mystery revealed; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This was the very same that was spoken from heaven at his baptism; (ch. 3. 7.) and it was the best news that ever came from heaven to earth since man sinned. It is to the same purport with that great doctrine, (2 Cor. 5. 19.) *That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.* Moses and Elias were great men, and favourites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spake unadvisedly, and Elias was a man subject to passions; but Christ is a Son, and in him God was always well pleased. Moses and Elias were sometimes instruments of reconciliation between God and Israel; Moses was a great intercessor, and Elias a great reformer; but in Christ God is reconciling the world; his intercession is more prevalent than that of Moses, and his reformation more effectual than that of Elias.

This repetition of the same voice that came from heaven at his baptism was no vain repetition; but,

like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show the thing was established. What God hath thus spoken once, yea, twice, no doubt he will stand to, and he expects we should take notice of it. It was spoken at his baptism, because then he was entering upon his temptation, and his public ministry; and now it was repeated, because he was entering upon his sufferings, which are to be dated from hence; for now, and not before, he began to foretell them, and immediately after his transfiguration it is said, (Luke 9. 51.) *that the time was come, that he should be received up*; this therefore was then repeated, to arm him against the terror, and his disciples against the offence, of the cross. When sufferings begin to abound, consolations are given in more abundantly, 2 Cor. 1. 5.

(2.) The great gospel-duty required, and it is the condition of our benefit by Christ; *Hear ye him.* God is well pleased with none in Christ but those that hear him. It is not enough to give him the hearing, (what will that avail us?) but we must hear him, and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must hearken to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. This voice from heaven has made all the sayings of Christ as authentic as if they had been thus spoken out of a cloud. God does here, as it were, turn us over to Christ for all the revelations of his mind; and it refers to that prediction concerning the Prophet God would raise up like unto Moses; (Deut. 18. 18.) *him shall ye hear.*

Christ now appeared in glory; and the more we see of Christ's glory, the more cause we shall see to hearken to him; but the disciples were gazing on that glory of his which they saw; they are therefore bid not to look at him but to hear him. Their sight of his glory was soon intercepted by the cloud, but their business was to hear him. We walk by faith, which comes by hearing, not by sight, 2 Cor. 5. 7.

Moses and Elias were now with him, the law and the prophets; hitherto it was said, *Hear them*, Luke 16. 29. The disciples were ready to equal them with Christ, when they must have tabernacles for them as well as for him. They had been talking with Christ, and probably the disciples were very desirous to know what they said, and to hear something more from them; No, saith God, *hear him*, and that is enough; him, and not Moses and Elias, who were present, and whose silence gave consent to this voice; they had nothing to say to the contrary; whatever interest they had in the world as prophets, they were willing to see it all transferred to Christ, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Be not troubled that Moses and Elias make so short a stay with you; hear Christ, and you will not want them.

VI. The fright which the disciples were put into by this voice, and the encouragement Christ gave them.

1. *The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid.* The greatness of the light, and the surprise of it might have a natural influence upon them, to dispirit them. But that was not all, ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have ever been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear any thing immediately from God. Note, Even then when fair weather comes out of the secret place, yet with God is terrible majesty, Job 37. 22. See what dreadful work the voice of the Lord makes, Ps. 29. 4. It is well for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

2. Christ graciously raised them up with abundance of tenderness. Note, The glories and ad-

vancements of our Lord Jesus do not at all lessen his regard to, and concern for, his people that are compassed about with infirmity. It is comfortable to think, that now, in his exalted state, he has a compassion for, and condescends to, the meanest true believer. Observe here, (1.) What he did; *he came, and touched them*. His approaches banished their fears; and when they apprehended that they were apprehended of Christ, there needed no more to make them easy. Christ laid his right hand upon John in a like case, and upon Daniel, Rev. 1. 17. Dan. 8. 18.—10. 18. Christ's touches were often healing, and here they were strengthening and comforting. (2.) What he said; *Arise, and be not afraid*. Note, Though a fear of reverence in our converse with Heaven is pleasing to Christ, yet a fear of amazement is not so, but must be striven against. Christ said, *Arise*. Note, It is Christ by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up good men from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it; *Arise, be not afraid*. Note, Causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. Considering what they had seen and heard, they had more reason to rejoice than to fear, and yet, it seems, they needed this caution. Note, Through the infirmity of the flesh, we often frighten ourselves with that wherewith we should encourage ourselves. Observe, After they had had an express command from heaven to hear Christ, the first word they had from him, was, *Be not afraid*, hear that. Note, Christ's errand into the world, was to give comfort to good people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might *serve God without fear*, Luke 1. 74, 75.

VII. The disappearing of the vision; (v. 8.) *They lift themselves, and then lift up their eyes, and saw no man, save Jesus only*. Moses and Elias were gone, the rays of Christ's glory were laid aside, or veiled again. They hoped this had been the day of Christ's entrance into his kingdom, and his public appearance in that external splendour which they dreamed of; but see how they are disappointed. Note, It is not wisdom to raise our expectations high in this world, for the most valuable of our glories and joys here are vanishing, even those of near communion with God are so, not a continual feast, but a running banquet. If sometimes we are favoured with special manifestations of divine grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are withdrawn presently; two heavens are too much for those to expect, that never deserve one. Now *they saw no man, save Jesus only*. Note, Christ will tarry with us when Moses and Elias are gone. *The prophets do: of live for ever*, (Zech. 1. 5.) and we see the period of our ministers' conversation; but *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 7, 8.

VIII. The discourse between Christ and his disciples as they came down from the mountain, v. 9, 13. Observe, 1. *They came down from the mountain*. Note, We must come down from the holy mountains, where we have communion with God, and complacency in that communion, and of which we are saying, *It is good to be here*; even there we have no continuing city. Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, When the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. Note, When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.

2. As they came down, they talked of Christ. Note, When we are returning from holy ordinances, it is good to entertain ourselves and one another with discourse suitable to the work we have been about. That communication which is good to the

use of edifying, is then in a special manner seasonable; as, on the contrary, that which, is corrupt, is worse than that at another time.

Here is, (1.) The charge that Christ gave the disciples to keep the vision very private for the present; (v. 9.) *Tell it to no man till the Son of man is risen*. If they had proclaimed it, the credibility of it would have been shocked by his sufferings, which were now hastening on. But let the publication of it be adjourned till after his resurrection, and then that and his subsequent glory will be a great confirmation of it. Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of himself; would have his works put together, mutually to explain and illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Christ's resurrection was properly the beginning of the gospel-state and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory and by way of preface; and therefore, though this was transacted before, it must not be produced as evidence till then, (and then it appears to have been much insisted on by 2 Pet. 1. 16—18.) when the religion it was designed for the confirmation of was brought to its full consistence and maturity. Christ's time is the best and fittest for the manifesting of himself, and must be attended to by us.

(2.) An objection which the disciples made against something Christ had said; (v. 10.) *“Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?”* If Elias make so short a stay, and is gone so suddenly, and we must say nothing of him; why have we been taught out of the law to expect his public appearance in the world immediately before the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom? Must the coming of Elias be a secret, which every body looks for?” Or thus; “If the resurrection of the Messiah, and with it the beginning of his kingdom, be at hand, what come of that glorious preface and introduction to it, which we expect in the coming of Elias?” The scribes, who were the public expositors of the law, said this according to the scripture; (Mal. 4. 5.) *Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet*. The disciples spake the common language of the Jews, who made that the saying of the scribes, which was the saying of the scripture; whereas of that which ministers speak to us according to the word of God, we should say, “God speaks it to us, not the ministers;” for we must not receive it *as the word of men*, 1 Thess. 2. 13. Observe, When the disciples could not reconcile what Christ said with what they had heard out of the Old Testament, they desired him to explain it to them. Note, When we are puzzled with scripture-difficulties, we must apply ourselves to Christ by prayer for his Spirit to open our understandings, and to lead us into all truth.

(3.) The solving of this objection, *Ask, and it shall be given*; ask instruction, and it shall be given.

[1.] Christ allows the prediction: (v. 11.) *“Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things;”* so far you are in the right.” Christ did not come to alter or invalidate any thing foretold in the Old Testament. Note, Corrupt and mistaken glosses may be sufficiently rejected and exploded, without diminishing or derogating from the authority or dignity of the sacred text. New-Testament prophecies are true and good, and are to be received and improved, though some hot foolish men may have misinterpreted them, and drawn wrong inferences from them. He shall come, and restore all things; not restore them to their former state, (John Baptist went not about to do that,) but he shall accomplish all things, (so it may be read,) all things that were written of him, all the predictions of the coming of Elias. John Baptist came to restore things spiritually, to revive the decays of religion, to *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*; which means the same with

this, *he shall restore all things.* John preached repentance, and that restores all things.

[2.] He asserts the accomplishment. The scribes say true, that *Elias shall come*; but *I say unto you*, what the scribes could not say, that *Elias is come*, v. 12. Note, God's promises are often fulfilled, and men perceive it not, but inquire, *Where is the promise?* when it is already performed. *Elias is come*, and they knew him not; they knew him not to be the Elias promised, the forerunner of the Messiah. The scribes busied themselves in criticising upon the scripture, but understood not by the signs of the times the fulfilling of the scripture. Note, It is easier to explain the word of God than to apply it and make a right use of it. But it is no wonder that the morning star was not observed, when he who is the Sun itself, was in the world, and the world knew him not.

Because they knew him not, *they have done to him whatsoever they listed*; if they had known, they would not have crucified Christ, or beheaded John, 1 Cor. 2. 8. They ridiculed John, persecuted him, and at last put him to death; which was Herod's doing, but is here charged upon the whole generation of unbelieving Jews, and particularly the scribes, who, though they could not prosecute John themselves, were pleased with what Herod did. He adds, *Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them.* Marvel not that Elias should be abused and killed by those who pretended, with a great deal of reverence, to expect him, when the Messiah himself will be in like manner treated. Note, The sufferings of Christ took off the strangeness of all other sufferings; (John 15. 18.) when they had imbrued their hands in the blood of John Baptist, they were ready to do the like to Christ. Note, As men deal with Christ's servants, so they would deal with him himself: and they that are drunk with the blood of the martyrs, still cry, *Give, give*, Acts 12. 1—3.

(4.) The disciples' satisfaction in Christ's reply to their objection; (v. 13.) *They understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.* He did not name John, but gives them such a description of him as would put them in mind of what he had said to them formerly concerning him; *This is Elias.* This is a profitable way of teaching; it engages the learners' own thoughts, and makes them, if not their own teachers, yet their own remembrancers; and thus knowledge becomes easy to him that understands. When we diligently use the means of knowledge, how strangely are mists scattered and mistakes rectified!

11. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a *certain* man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15. Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is *lunatic*, and sore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. 16. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. 18. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. 19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain

of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting

We have here the miraculous cure of a child that was lunatic and vexed with a devil. Observe,

1. A melancholy representation of the case of this child, made to Christ by the afflicted father. This was immediately upon his coming down from the mountain where he was transfigured. Note, Christ's glories do not make him unmindful of us and of our wants and miseries. Christ, when he came down from the mount, where he had conversation with Moses and Elias, did not take state upon him, but was as easy of access, as ready to poor beggars, and as familiar with the multitude, as ever he used to be. This poor man's address was very importunate; he came kneeling to Christ. Note, Sense of misery will bring people to their knees. Those who see their need of Christ, will be earnest, will be in good earnest, in their applications to him; and he delights to be thus wrestled with.

Two things the father of the child complains of. 1. The distress of his child; (v. 15.) *Lord, have mercy on my son.* The affliction of the children cannot but affect the tender parents, for they are pieces of themselves. And the case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. This child's distemper, probably, disabled him to pray for himself. Note, Parents are doubly concerned to pray for their children, not only that are weak and cannot, but much more that are wicked and will not, pray for themselves. Now, (1.) The nature of this child's disease was very sad; *He is lunatic and sore vexed.* A lunatic is properly one whose distemper lies in the brain, and returns with the change of the moon. The devil, by the divine permission, either caused this distemper, or at least concurred with it, to heighten and aggravate it. The child had the falling-sickness, and the hand of Satan was in it; by it he tormented them, and made it much more grievous than ordinarily it is. These whom Satan got possession of, he afflicted by these diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the soul that he aims to do mischief to. The father, in his complaint, saith, *He is lunatic*, taking notice of the effect; but Christ, in the cure, rebuked the devil, and so struck at the cause. Thus he doeth in spiritual cures. (2.) The effects of the disease were very deplorable; *He oft falls into the fire, and into the water.* If the force of the disease made him to fall, the malice of the devil made him to fall into the fire or water; so mischievous is he where he gains possession and power in any soul. He seeks to devour, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

2. The disappointment of his expectation from the disciples; (v. 16.) *I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.* Christ gave his disciples power to cast out devils, (ch. 10. 1, 8.) and therein they were successful; (Luke 10. 17.) yet at this time they failed in the operation, though there were nine of them together, and before a great multitude. Christ permitted this, (1.) To keep them humble, and to show their dependence upon him, that without him they could do nothing. (2.) To glorify himself and his own power. It is for the honour of Christ to come in with help at a dead-lift, when other helpers cannot help. Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hand will not raise the child, he must come himself. Note, There are some special favours which Christ reserves the bestowing of to himself; and sometimes he keeps the cistern empty, that he may bring us to himself the Fountain. But the

failures of instruments shall not hinder the operations of his grace, which will work, if not *by* them, yet *without* them.

II. The rebukes that Christ gave to the people first, and then to the devil.

1. He chid those about him; (v. 17.) *O faithless and perverse generation!* This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people, and perhaps especially to the scribes, who are mentioned in Mark 9. 14. and who, as it should seem, insulted over the disciples, because they had now met with a case that was too hard for them. Christ himself could not do many mighty works among a people in whom unbelief reigned. It was here owing to the faithlessness of this generation, that they could not obtain those blessings from God, which otherwise they might have had; as it was owing to the weakness of the disciples' faith, that they could not do those works for God, which otherwise they might have done. They were faithless and perverse. Note, Those that are faithless, will be perverse; and perverseness is sin in its worst colours. Faith is compliance with God, unbelief is opposition and contradiction to God. Israel of old was perverse, because faithless, (Ps. 95. 9.) froward, for in them is no faith, Deut. 32. 20.

Two things he upbraids them with. (1.) His presence with them so long; "*How long shall I be with you?*" Will you always need my bodily presence, and never come to such maturity as to be fit to be left, the people to the conduct of the disciples, and the disciples to the conduct of the Spirit and of their commission? Must the child be always carried, and will it never learn to go alone?" (2.) His patience with them so long; *How long shall I suffer you?* Note, [1.] The faithlessness and perverseness of those who enjoy the means of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus. Thus did he suffer the manners of Israel of old, Acts 13. 18. [2.] The longer Christ has borne with a perverse and faithless people, the more he is displeased with their perverseness and unbelief; and he is God, and not man, else he would not suffer so long, nor bear so much as he doth.

2. He cured the child, and set him to rights again. He called, *Bring him hither to me.* Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. Note, Though Christ may be angry, he is never unkind, nor doth he, in the greatest of his displeasure, shut up the bowels of his compassion from the miserable; *Bring him to me.* Note, When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, and may be confident in him and in his power and goodness.

See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer.

1. He breaks the power of Satan; (v. 18.) *Jesus rebuked the devil*, as one having authority, who could back with force his word of command. Note, Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word, the sword that comes out of his mouth, Rev. 19. 21. Satan cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ, though his possession has been ever so long. It is comfortable to those who are wrestling with principalities and powers, that Christ hath spoiled them, Coloss. 2. 15. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will be too hard for the roaring lion that seeks to devour.

2. He redresses the grievances of the children of men; *The child was cured from that very hour.* It was an immediate cure, and a perfect one. This is an encouragement to parents to bring their children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ, the ordinary means by which Satan's strong holds are demolished in the

soul. Christ's rebukes, brought home to the heart, will ruin Satan's power.

III. Christ's discourse with his disciples hereupon.

1. They ask the reason why they could not cast out the devil at this time; (v. 19.) *They came to Jesus apart.* Note, Ministers, who are to deal for Christ in public, have need to keep up a private communion with him, that they may in secret, where no eye sees, bewail their weakness and straitness, their follies and infirmities, in their public performances, and inquire into the cause of them. We should make use of the liberty of access we have to Jesus apart, where we may be free and particular with him. Such questions as the disciples put to Christ, we should put to ourselves, in communing with our own hearts upon our beds; Why were we so dull and careless at such a time? Why came we so much short in such a duty? That which is amiss, may, when found out, be amended.

2. Christ gives them two reasons why they failed.

(1.) It was *because of their unbelief*, v. 20. When he spake to the father of the child and to the people, he charged it upon their unbelief; when he spake to his disciples, he charged it upon theirs; for the truth was, there were faults on both sides; but we are more concerned to hear of our own faults than of other people's, and to impute what is amiss to ourselves than to others. When the preaching of the word seems not to be so successful as sometimes it has been, the people are apt to lay all the fault upon the ministers, and the ministers upon the people; whereas, it is more becoming for each to own his own faultiness, and to say, "It is owing to me." Ministers, in reproving, must learn thus to give to each his portion of the word; and to take people off from judging others, by teaching all to judge themselves; *It is because of your unbelief.* Though they had faith, yet that faith was weak and ineffectual. Note, [1.] As far as faith falls short of its due strength, vigour, and activity, it may truly be said, "There is unbelief." Many are chargeable with unbelief, who yet are not to be called *unbelievers*. [2.] It is because of our unbelief, that we bring so little to pass in religion, and so often miscarry, and come short, in that which is good.

Our Lord Jesus takes this occasion to show them the power of faith, that they might not be defective in that, another time, as they were now; *If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed*, ye shall do wonders, v. 20. Some make the comparison to refer to the quality of the mustard seed, which is, when bruised, sharp and penetrating; "If you have an active, growing faith, not dead, flat, or insipid, you will not be baffled thus." But it rather refers to the quantity; "If you had but a grain of true faith, though so little, that it were like that which is the least of all seeds, you would do wonders." Faith in general is a firm assent to, a compliance with, and a confidence in, all divine revelation. The faith here required, is that which had for its object that particular revelation by which Christ gave his disciples power to work miracles in his name, for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached. It was a faith in this revelation that they were defective in; either doubting the validity of their commission, or fearing that it was expired with their first mission, and was not to continue when they were returning to their Master; or that it was some way or other forfeited or withdrawn. Perhaps their Master's absence with the three chief of his disciples, with a charge to the rest not to follow them, might occasion some doubts concerning their power, or rather the power of the Lord with them, to do this; however, there were not at present, such a strong actual dependence upon, and confidence in, the promise of Christ's presence with them, as there should have been. It is good for us to be diffident of ourselves

and of our own strength ; but it is displeasing to Christ, when we distrust any power derived from him or granted by him.

If ye have ever so little of this faith in sincerity, if ye truly rely upon the powers committed to you, *ye shall say to this mountain, Remove.* This is a proverbial expression, denoting that which follows, and no more, *Nothing shall be impossible to you.* They had a full commission, among other things, to cast out devils without exception ; but, this devil being more than ordinarily malicious and inveterate, they distrusted the power they had received, and so failed. To convince them of this, Christ shows them what they might have done. Note, An active faith can remove mountains, not of itself, but in the virtue of a divine power engaged by a divine promise, both which faith fastens upon.

(2.) Because there was something in the kind of the malady, which rendered the cure more than ordinarily difficult ; (v. 21.) “ *This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.*” This possession, which works by a falling sickness, or this kind of devils that are thus furious, is not cast out ordinarily, but by great acts of devotion, and therein ye were defective.” Note, [1.] Though the adversaries we wrestle with, be all principalities and powers, yet some are stronger than others, and their power more hardly broken. [2.] The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to a greater intenseness in the acting of it, and more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it ; so some understand it here ; “ *This kind of faith (which removeth mountains) doth not proceed, is not obtained, from God, nor is it carried up to its full growth, nor drawn out into act and exercise, but by earnest prayer.*” [3.] Fasting and prayer are proper means for the bringing down of Satan’s power against us, and the fetching in of divine power to our assistance. Fasting is of use to put an edge upon prayer ; it is an evidence and instance of humiliation, which is necessary in prayer, and is a means of mortifying some corrupt habits, and of disposing the body to serve the soul in prayer. When the devil’s interest in the soul is confirmed by the temper and constitution of the body, fasting must be joined with prayer, to keep under the body.

22. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men ; 23. And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Christ here foretells his own sufferings ; he began to do it before ; (ch. 16. 21.) and, finding that it was to his disciples a hard saying, he saw it necessary to repeat it. There are some things which *God speaketh once, yea, twice, and yet man perceiveth it not.* Observe here,

1. What he foretold concerning himself—that he should be betrayed and killed. He perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, and yet undertook the work of our redemption, which greatly commends his love ; nay, his clear foresight of what was a kind of ante-passion, had not his love to man made all easy to him.

(1.) He tells them that he should be *betrayed into the hands of men.* He shall be delivered up ; (so it might be read, and understood of his Father’s delivering him up by his determined counsel and foreknowledge, Acts 2. 23. Rom. 8. 32.) but as we render it, it refers to Judas’s betraying him into the hands of the priests, and their betraying him into the hands of the Romans. He was *betrayed into the hands of men* ; men, to whom he was allied by na-

ture, and from whom therefore he might expect pity and tenderness ; men, whom he had undertaken to save, and from whom therefore he might expect honour and gratitude ; yet these are his persecutors and murderers.

(2.) That *they should kill him* ; nothing less than that would satisfy their rage ; it was his blood, his precious blood, that they thirsted after. *This is the heir, come, let us kill him.* Nothing less would satisfy God’s justice, and answer his undertaking ; if he be a Sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed ; without blood no remission.

(3.) That *he shall be raised again the third day.* Still, when he spake of his death, he gave a hint of his resurrection, *the joy set before him*, in the prospect of which *he endured the cross, and despised the shame.* This was an encouragement, not only to him, but to his disciples ; for if he rise the third day, his absence from them will not be long, and his return to them will be glorious.

2. How the disciples received this ; *They were exceeding sorry.* Herein appeared their love to their Master’s person, but with all their ignorance and mistake concerning his undertaking. Peter indeed durst not say any thing against it, as he had done before, (ch. 16. 22.) having then been severely chidden for it ; but he, and the rest of them, greatly lamented it, as it would be their own loss, their Master’s grief, and the sin and ruin of them that did it.

24. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute ? 25. He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon ? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute ? of their own children, or of strangers ? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. 27. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money : that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

We have here an account of Christ’s paying tribute.

1. Observe how it was demanded, v. 24. Christ was now at Capernaum, his head-quarters, where he mostly resided ; he did not keep from thence, to decline being called upon for his dues, but the rather came thither, to be ready to pay them.

1. The tribute demanded was not any civil payment to the Roman powers, that was strictly exacted by the publicans, but the church-duties, the half shekel, about fifteen pence, which was required from every person for the service of the temple, and the defraying of the expenses of the worship there ; it is called a *ransom for the soul*, Exod. 30. 12, &c. This was not so strictly exacted now as sometimes it had been, especially not in Galilee.

2. The demand was very modest ; the collectors stood in such awe of Christ, because of his mighty works, that they durst not speak to him about it, but applied themselves to Peter, whose house was in Capernaum, and probably in his house Christ lodged, he therefore was fittest to be spoken to as the housekeeper, and they presumed he knew his Master’s mind. Their question is, *Doth not your master pay tribute ?* Some think that they sought

an occasion against him, designing, if he refused, to represent him as disaffected to the temple-service, and his followers as lawless people, that would pay *neither toll, tribute, nor custom*, Ezra 4. 13. It should rather seem, they asked this with respect, intimating, that if he had any privilege to exempt him from this payment, they would not insist upon it.

Peter presently passed his word for his Master; "Yes, certainly; my Master pays tribute; it is his principle and practice; you need not fear moving it to him." (1.) *He was made under the law*; (Gal. 4. 4.) therefore under this law he was paid for at forty days old, (Luke 2. 22.) and now he paid for himself, as one who, in his estate of humiliation, had taken upon him the form of a servant, Phil. 2. 7, 8. (2.) *He was made sin for us, and was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh*, Rom. 8. 3. Now this tax paid to the temple, is called an *atonement for the soul*, Exod. 30. 15. Christ, that in every thing he might appear in the likeness of sinners, paid it, though he had no sin to atone for. (3.) *Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness*, ch. 4. 15. He did this, to set us an example, [1.] *Of rendering to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due*, Rom. 13. 7. The kingdom of Christ not being of this world, the favourites and officers of it are so far from having a power granted them, as such, to tax other people's purses, that theirs are made liable to the powers that are. [2.] *Of contributing to the support of the public worship of God in the places where we are*. If we reap spiritual things, it is fit that we should return carnal things. The temple was now made a den of thieves, and the temple-worship a pretence for the opposition which the chief priests gave to Christ and his doctrine; and yet Christ paid this tribute. Note, Church-duties, legally imposed, are to be paid, notwithstanding church-corruptions. We must take care not to use *our liberty as a cloak of covetousness or maliciousness*, 1 Pet. 2. 16. If Christ pay tribute, who can pretend an exemption?

II. How it was disputed, (v. 25.) not with the collectors themselves, lest they should be irritated, but with Peter, that he might be satisfied in the reason why Christ paid tribute, and might not mistake about it. He brought the collectors into the house; but Christ anticipated him, to give him a proof of his omniscience, and that no thought can be withholden from him. The disciples of Christ are never attacked without his knowledge.

Now, 1. He appeals to the way of the kings of the earth, which is, to take tribute of strangers, of the subjects of their kingdom, or foreigners that deal with them, but not of their own children that are of their families; there is such a community of goods between parents and children, and a joint interest in what they have, that it would be absurd for the parents to levy taxes upon the children, or demand any thing from them; it is like one hand taxing the other.

2. He applies this to himself; *Then are the children free*. Christ is the Son of God, and heir of all things; the temple is his temple, (Mal. 3. 1.) his Father's house, (John 2. 16.) in it he is faithful as a Son in his own house; (Heb. 3. 6.) and therefore not obliged to pay this tax for the service of the temple. Thus Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misimproved to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like a disowning of it himself. These immunities of the children are to be extended no further than our Lord Jesus himself. God's children are freed by grace and adoption, from the slavery of sin and Satan, but not from their subjection to civil magistrates in civil things; here the law of Christ is express; *Let every soul* (sanctified souls not excepted) *be subject to the higher powers. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*.

III. How it was paid, notwithstanding, (v. 27.)

1. For what reason Christ waved his privilege, and paid this tribute, though he was entitled to an exemption—*Lest we should offend them*. Few knew, as Peter did, that he was the Son of God; and it would have been a diminution to the honour of that great truth, which was yet a secret, to advance it now, to serve such a purpose as this. Therefore Christ drops that argument, and considers, that if he should refuse this payment, it would increase people's prejudice against him and his doctrine, and alienate their affections from him, and therefore he resolves to pay it. Note, Christian prudence and humility teach us, in many cases, to recede from our right, rather than give offence by insisting upon it. We must never decline our duty for fear of giving offence; (Christ's preaching and miracles offended them, yet he went on with them, ch. 15. 12, 13.) better offend men than God; but we must sometimes deny ourselves in that which is our secular interest, rather than give offence; as Paul, 1 Cor. 8. 13. Rom. 14. 13.

2. What course he took for the payment of this tax; he furnished himself with money for it out of the mouth of a fish, (v. 27.) wherein appears,

(1.) The poverty of Christ; he had not fifteen pence at command to pay his tax with, though he cured so many that were diseased; it seems, he did all gratis; *for our sakes he became poor*, 2 Cor. 8. 9. In his ordinary expenses, he lived upon alms, (Luke 8. 3.) and in extraordinary ones, he lived upon miracles. He did not order Judas to pay this out of the bag which he carried; that was for subsistence, and he would not order that for his particular use, which was intended for the benefit of the community.

(2.) The power of Christ, in fetching money out of a fish's mouth for this purpose. Whether his omnipotence put it there, or his omniscience knew that it was there, it comes all to one; it was an evidence of his divinity, and that he is Lord of hosts. Those creatures that are most remote from man, are at the command of Christ, even the fishes of the sea are under his feet; (Ps. 8. 5.) and to evidence his dominion in this lower world, and to accommodate himself to his present state of humiliation, he chose to take it out of a fish's mouth, when he could have taken it out of an angel's hand. Now observe,

[1.] Peter must catch the fish by angling. Even in miracles he would use means to encourage industry and endeavour. Peter has something to do, and it is in the way of his old calling too; to teach us diligence in the employment we are called to, and called in. Do we expect that Christ should give to us? Let us be ready to work for him.

[2.] The fish came up, with money in the mouth of it; which represents to us the reward of obedience in obedience. What work we do at Christ's command, brings its own pay along with it: *In keeping God's commands, as well as after keeping them, there is great reward*, Ps. 19. 11. Peter was made a fisher of men, and those that he caught thus, came up; where the heart is opened to entertain Christ's word, the hand is open to encourage his ministers.

[3.] The piece of money was just enough to pay the tax for Christ and Peter. Thou shalt find a stater, the value of a Jewish shekel, which would pay the poll-tax for two, for it was half a shekel, Exod. 30. 13. Christ could as easily have commanded a bag of money as a piece of money; but he would teach us not to covet superfluities, but, having enough for our present occasions, therewith to be content, and not to distrust God, though we live but from hand to mouth. Christ made the fish his cash-keeper; and why may not we make God's providence our storehouse and treasury? If we have a competency for to-day, *let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself*. Christ paid for himself and

Peter, because it is probable that here *he* only was assessed, and of him it was at this time demanded; perhaps the rest had paid already, or were to pay elsewhere. The papists made a great mystery of Christ's paying for Peter, as if this made him the head and representative of the whole church; whereas the payment of tribute for him, was rather a sign of subjection than of superiority. His pretended successors pay no tribute, but exact it. Peter fished for his money, and therefore part of it went for his use. Those that are *workers together with Christ* in winning souls, shall be sharers with him in his glory, and shall shine with him. *Give it for thee and me.* What Christ paid for himself was looked upon as a debt; what he paid for Peter, was a courtesy to him. Note, It is a desirable thing, if God so please, to have wherewithal of this world's goods, not only to be just, but to be kind; not only to be charitable to the poor, but obliging to our friends. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good?

Lastly, Observe, The evangelist records here the orders Christ gave to Peter, the warrant; the effect is not particularly mentioned, but taken for granted, and justly; for with Christ, saying and doing are the same thing.

CHAP. XVIII.

The gospels are, in short, a record of what Jesus began both to do and to teach. In the foregoing chapter, we had an account of his doings, in this of his teachings; probably, not all at the same time, in a continued discourse, but at several times, upon divers occasions, here put together, as near akin. We have here, I. Instructions concerning humility, v. 1. . 6. II. Concerning offences in general, (v. 7.) particularly offences given, 1. By us to ourselves, v. 8, 9. 2. By us to others, v. 10. . 14. 3. By others to us; which are of two sorts, (1.) Scandalous sins, which are to be reprov'd, v. 15. . 20. (2.) Personal wrongs, which are to be forgiven, v. 21. . 35. See how practical Christ's preaching was; he could have revealed mysteries, but he pressed plain duties, especially those that are most displeasing to flesh and blood.

1. **A**T the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

As there never was a greater pattern of humility, so there never was a greater preacher of it, than Christ; he took all occasions to command it, to commend it, to his disciples and followers.

I. The occasion of this discourse concerning humility was, an unbecoming contest among the disciples for precedence; they *came to him, saying*, among themselves, (for they were ashamed to ask him, Mark 9. 34.) *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* They mean not, *who* by character, (then the question had been good, that they might know what graces and duties to excel in,) but *who* by name. They had heard much, and preached much,

of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, his church in this world; but as yet they were so far from having any clear notion of it, that they dreamt of a temporal kingdom, and the external pomp and power of it. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, that he should rise again, from whence they expected his kingdom would commence; and now they thought it was time to put in for their places in it; it is good, in such cases, to speak early. Upon other discourses of Christ to that purport, debates of this kind arose; (*ch.* 20. 19, 20. *Luke* 22. 22, 24.) he spake many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet they fasten upon that, and overlook the other; and, instead of asking how they might have strength and grace to suffer with him, they ask him, "Who shall be highest in reigning with him?" Note, Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. They look so much at the crown, that they forget the yoke and the cross. So the disciples here did, when they asked, *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

1. They suppose that all who have a place in that kingdom, are great, for it is a kingdom of priests. Note, Those are truly great, who are truly good; and they will appear so at last, when Christ shall own them as his, though ever so mean and poor in the world.

2. They suppose that there are degrees in this greatness. All the saints are honourable, but not all alike so; *one star differs from another star in glory.* All David's officers were not worthies, nor all his worthies of the first three.

3. They suppose it must be some of them, that must be prime ministers of state. To whom should King Jesus delight to do honour, but to them who had left all for him, and were now his companions in patience and tribulation?

4. They strive who it should be, each having some pretence or other to it. Peter was always the chief speaker, and already had the keys given him; he expects to be lord chancellor, or lord chamberlain of the household, and so to be the greatest. Judas had the bag, and therefore he expects to be lord treasurer, which, though now he come last, he hopes will then denominate him the greatest. Simon and Jude are nearly related to Christ, and they hope to take place of all the great officers of state, as princes of the blood. John is the beloved disciple, the favourite of the Prince, and therefore hopes to be the greatest. Andrew was first called, and why should not he be first preferred? Note, We are very apt to amuse and humour ourselves with foolish fancies of things that will never be.

II. The discourse itself, which is a just rebuke to the question, *Who shall be greatest?* We have abundant reason to think, that if Christ ever intended that Peter and his successors at Rome should be heads of the church, and his chief vicars on earth, having so fair an occasion given him, he would now have let his disciples know it; but so far is he from this, that his answer disallows and condemns the thing itself. Christ will not lodge such an authority or supremacy any where in his church; whoever pretend to it, are usurers; instead of settling any of the disciples in this dignity, he warns them all not to put in for it.

Christ here teacheth them to be humble.

1. By a sign; (*v.* 2.) *He called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them.* Christ often taught by signs or sensible representations, (comparisons to the eye,) as the prophets of old. Note, humility is a lesson so hardly learned, that we have need by all ways and means to be taught it. When we look upon a little child, we should be put in mind of the use Christ made of this child. Sensible things must

be improved to spiritual purposes. *He set him in the midst of them*; not that they might play with him, but that they might learn by him. Grown men, and great men, should not disdain the company of little children, or think it below them to take notice of them. They may either speak to them, and give instruction to them; or look upon them, and receive instruction from them. Christ himself, when a Child, was in the midst of the doctors, Luke 2. 46.

2. By a sermon upon this sign; in which he shows them and us,

(1.) The necessity of humility, v. 3. His preface is solemn, and commands both attention and assent; *Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, say it, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Here observe,

[1.] What it is that he requires and insists upon.

First, "You must be converted, you must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper, must have other thoughts, both of yourselves, and of the kingdom of heaven, before you be fit for a place in it. The pride, ambition, and affectation of honour and dominion, which appear in you, must be repented of, mortified, and reformed, and you must come to yourselves." Note, Beside the first conversion of a soul from a state of nature to a state of grace, there are after-conversions from particular paths of backsliding, which are equally necessary to salvation. Every step out of the way by sin, must be a step into it again by repentance. When Peter repented of his denying his Master, he was converted. *Secondly*, You must become as little children. Note, Converting grace makes us like little children, not foolish as children, (1 Cor. 14. 20.) nor fickle, (Eph. 4. 14.) nor playful; (ch. 11. 16.) but, as children, we must desire the sincere milk of the word; (1 Pet. 2. 2.) as children, we must be careful for nothing, but leave it to our heavenly Father to care for us; (ch. 6. 31.) we must, as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice, (1 Cor. 14. 20.) governable, and under command; (Gal. 4. 2.) and (which is here chiefly intended) we must be humble as little children, who do not take state upon them, nor stand upon the punctilios of honour; the child of a gentleman will play with the child of a beggar, (Rom. 12. 16.) the child in rags, if it have the breast, is well enough pleased with, and envies not, the gaiety of the child in silk; little children have no great aims at great places, or projects to raise themselves in the world; they exercise not themselves in things too high for them; and we should in like manner behave, and quiet ourselves, Ps. 131. 1, 2. As children are little in body and low in stature, so we must be little and low in spirit, and in our thoughts of ourselves. This is a temper which leads to other good dispositions; the age of childhood is the learning age.

[2.] What stress he lays upon this; Without this you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Note, Disciples of Christ have need to be kept in awe by threatenings, that they may fear lest they seem to come short, Heb. 4. 1. The disciples, when they put that question, (v. 1.) thought themselves sure of the kingdom of heaven; but Christ awakens them to be jealous of themselves. They were ambitious of being greatest in the kingdom of heaven; Christ tells them, that, except they came to a better temper, they should never come thither. Note, Many that set up for great ones in the church, prove not only little, but nothing, and are found to have no part or lot in the matter. Our Lord designs here to show the great danger of pride and ambition; whatever profession men make, if they allow themselves in this sin, they will be rejected both from God's tabernacle and from his holy hill. Pride threw the angels that sinned, out of heaven, and will keep us out, if we be not converted from it. They that are

lifted up with pride, fall into the condemnation of the devil; to prevent this, we must become as little children, and, in order to that, must be born again, must put on the new man, must be like the holy child Jesus; so he is called even after his ascension, Acts 4. 27.

(2.) He shows the honour and advancement that attend humility, (v. 4.) thus furnishing a direct but surprising answer to their question; He that humbles himself as a little child, though he may fear that hereby he will render himself contemptible, as men of timid minds, who thereby throw themselves out of the way of preferment, yet the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Note, The humblest christians are the best christians, and most like to Christ, and highest in his favour; are best disposed for the communications of divine grace, and fittest to serve God in this world, and enjoy him in another. They are great, for God overlooks heaven and earth, to look on such; and certainly those are to be most respected and honoured in the church, that are most humble and self-denying; for though they least seek it, they best deserve it.

(3.) The special care Christ takes for those that are humble; he espouses their cause, protects them, interests himself in their concerns, and will see that they are not wronged, without being righted.

Those that thus humble themselves, will be afraid,

[1.] That nobody will receive them; but, (v. 5.) *Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.* Whatever kindnesses are done to such, Christ takes as done to himself. Whoso entertains a meek and humble christian, keeps him in countenance, will not let him lose by his modesty, takes him into his love and friendship, and society and care, and studies to do him a kindness; and doth this in Christ's name, for his sake, because he bears the image of Christ, serves Christ, and because Christ has received him; this shall be accepted, and recompensed as an acceptable piece of respect to Christ. Observe, though it be but one such little child that is received in Christ's name, it shall be accepted. Note, The tender regard Christ has to his church, extends itself to every particular member, even the meanest; not only to the whole family, but to every child of the family; the less they are in themselves, to whom we show kindness, the more there is of good will in it to Christ; the less it is for their sakes, the more it is for his; and he takes it accordingly. If Christ were personally among us, we think we should never do enough to welcome him; the poor, the poor in spirit, we have always with us, and they are his receivers. See ch. 25. 35—40.

[2.] They will be afraid that every body will abuse them; the basest men delight to trample upon the humble; *Vexat censura columbas—censure pounces on doves.* This objection he obviates, (v. 6.) where he warns all people, as they will answer it at their utmost peril, not to offer any injury to one of Christ's little ones. This word makes a wall of fire about them; he that touches them, touches the apple of God's eye.

Observe, *First*, The crime supposed; offending one of these little ones that believe in Christ. Their believing in Christ, though they be little ones, unites them to him, so that, as they partake of the benefit of his sufferings, he also partakes in the wrong of theirs, and interests him in their cause. Even the little ones that believe, have the same privileges with the great ones, for they have all obtained like precious faith. There are those that offend these little ones, by drawing them to sin, (1 Cor. 8. 10, 11.) grieving and vexing their righteous souls, discouraging them, taking occasion from their mildness to make a prey of them in their persons, fami-

lies, goods, or good name. Thus the best men have often met with the worst treatment in this world.

Secondly, The punishment of this crime; intimated in that word, *Better for him that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*. The sin is so heinous, and the ruin proportionably so great, that he had better undergo the sorest punishments inflicted on the worst of malefactors, which can only kill the body. Note, 1. Hell is worse than the depth of the sea; for it is a bottomless pit, and it is a burning lake. The depth of the sea is only killing, but hell is tormenting. We meet with one that had comfort in the depth of the sea, it was Jonah; (*ch.* 2. 2, 4, 9.) but never any had the least grain or glimpse of comfort in hell, nor will have to eternity. 2. The irresistible, irrevocable doom of the great Judge, will sink sooner and surer, and bind faster, than a mill-stone *hanged about the neck*. It fixes a great gulf, which can never be broken through, *Luke* 16. 26. Offending Christ's little ones, though by omission, is assigned as the reason of that dreadful sentence, *Go ye cursed*, which will at last be the doom of proud persecutors.

7. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! 8. Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. 9. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. 11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 12. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray? 13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Our Saviour here speaks of offences, or scandals,

I. In general, *v.* 7. Having mentioned the offending of little ones, he takes occasion to speak more generally of offences. That is an offence, 1. Which occasions guilt, which by enticement or affrightment tends to draw men from that which is good to that which is evil. 2. Which occasions grief, which *makes the heart of the righteous sad*. Now, concerning offences, Christ here tells them,

(1.) That they were certain things; *It must needs be that offences come*. When we are sure there is danger, we should be the better armed. Not that Christ's word necessitates any man to offend, but it is a prediction upon a view of the causes; considering the subtlety and malice of Satan, the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, and the foolishness that

is found there, it is morally impossible but that there should be offences; and God has determined to permit them for wise and holy ends, that both *they which are perfect, and they which are not, may be made manifest*. See *1 Cor.* 11. 19. *Dan.* 11. 35. Being told, before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and many bad examples, let us stand upon our guard, *ch.* 24. 24. *Acts* 20. 29, 30.

(2.) That they would be woful things, and the consequence of them fatal. Here is a double woe annexed to offences:

[1.] A woe to the careless and unguarded, to whom the offence is given; *Woe to the world because of offences*. The obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness in all places, are the bane and plague of mankind, and the ruin of thousands. This present world is an evil world, it is so full of offences, of sins, and snares, and sorrows; a dangerous road we travel, full of stumbling-blocks, precipices, and false guides. Woe to the world. As for those whom God hath chosen and called out of the world, and delivered from it, they are preserved by the power of God from the prejudice of these offences, are helped over all these stones of stumbling. *They that love God's law, have great peace, and nothing shall offend them*, *Psa.* 119. 165.

[2.] A woe to the wicked, who wilfully give the offence; *But woe to that man by whom the offence comes*. Though it must needs be, that the offence will come, that will be no excuse for the offenders. Note, Though God makes the sins of sinners to serve his purposes, that will not secure them from his wrath: and the guilt will be laid at the door of those who give the offence, though they also fall under a woe, who take it. Note, They who any way hinder the salvation of others will find their own condemnation the more intolerable, like *Jeroboam, who sinned and made Israel to sin*. This woe is the moral of that judicial law, (*Exod.* 21. 33, 34.—22. 6.) that he who opened the pit, and kindled the fire, was accountable for all the damage that ensued. The antichristian generation, by whom came the great offence, will fall under this woe, for their delusion of sinners, (*2 Thess.* 2. 11, 12.) and their persecutions of saints, (*Rev.* 17. 1, 2, 6.) for the righteous God will reckon with those who ruin the eternal interests of precious souls, and the temporal interests of precious saints; for *precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of souls and the blood of saints*; and men will be reckoned with, not only for their doings, but for the fruit of their doings, the mischief done by them.

II. In particular, Christ here speaks of offences given,

1. By us to ourselves, which is expressed by our hand or foot offending us; in such a case, it must be *cut off*, *v.* 8, 9. This Christ had said before, (*ch.* 5. 29, 30.) where it especially refers to seventh-commandment sins; here it is taken more generally. Note, Those hard sayings of Christ, which are displeasing to flesh and blood, need to be repeated to us again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(1.) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an *eye*, or a *hand*, or a *foot*, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note, [1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away of our own lust: nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty. [2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it. *First*, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified,

though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. *The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified*, Gal. 5. 24. *The body of sin must be destroyed*; corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. *Secondly*, The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Abraham quitted his native country, for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quitted Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience.

(2.) Upon what inducement this is required; *It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into hell*. The argument is taken from the future state, from heaven and hell; thence are fetched the most cogent dissuaves from sin. The argument is the same with that of the apostle; (Rom. 8. 13.) [1.] *If we live after the flesh, we must die*; having two eyes, no breaches made upon the body of sin, inbred corruption, like Adonijah, never displeased, we shall be cast into hell-fire. [2.] *If we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live*; that is meant by our entering into life maimed, that is, the body of sin maimed; and it is but maimed at the best, while we are in this world. If the right hand of the old man be cut off, and its right eye plucked out, its chief policies blasted and powers broken, it is well; but there is still an eye and a hand remaining, with which it will struggle. They that are Christ's, have nailed the flesh to the cross, but it is not yet dead; its life is prolonged, but its *dominion taken away*, (Dan. 7. 12.) and the deadly wound given it, that shall not be healed.

1. Concerning offences given by us to others, especially Christ's little ones, which we are here charged to take heed of, pursuant to what he had said, v. 6. Observe,

(1.) The caution itself; *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones*. This is spoken to the disciples. As Christ will be displeased with the enemies of his church, if they wrong any of the members of it, even the least, so he will be displeased with the great ones of the church, if they despise the little ones of it. "You that are striving who shall be greatest, take heed lest in this contest you despise the little ones." We may understand it literally of little children; of them Christ was speaking, v. 2, 4. The infant seed of the faithful belong to the family of Christ, and are not to be despised. Or, figuratively; true but weak believers are these little ones, who in their outward condition, or the frame of their spirits, are like little children, the lambs of Christ's flock.

[1.] We must not despise them, not think meanly of them, as lambs despised, Job 12. 5. We must not make a jest of their infirmities, nor look upon them with contempt, nor conduct ourselves scornfully or disdainfully toward them, as if we care not what became of them; we must not say, "Though they be offended, and grieved, and stumbled, what is that to us?" Nor should make a slight matter of doing that which will entangle and perplex them. This despising of the little ones, is what we are largely cautioned against, Rom. 14. 3, 10, 15, 20, 21. We must not impose upon the consciences of others, nor bring them into subjection to our humours, as they do who say to men's souls, *Bow down that we may go over*. There is a respect owing to the conscience of every man who appears to be conscientious.

[2.] We must take heed that we do not despise

them; we must be afraid of the sin, and be very cautious what we say and do, lest we should through inadvertency give offence to Christ's little ones, lest we put contempt upon them, without being aware of it. There were those that hated them, and cast them out, and yet said, *Let the Lord be glorified*. And we must be afraid of the punishment; "Take heed of despising them, for it is at your peril if you do."

(2.) The reasons to enforce the caution. We must not look upon these little ones as contemptible, because really they are considerable. Let not earth despise those whom heaven respects; not let those be looked upon by us with disdain, whom God has put honour upon, and looks upon with respect, as his favourites. To prove that the little ones which believe in Christ are worthy to be respected, consider,

[1.] The ministration of the good angels about them; *In heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father*. This Christ saith to us, and we may take it upon his word, who came from heaven to let us know what is done there by the world of angels. Two things he lets us know concerning them,

First, That they are the little ones' angels. God's angels are theirs; for all his is ours, if we be Christ's, 1 Cor. 3. 22. They are theirs; for they have a charge concerning them to minister for their good, (Heb. 1. 14.) to pitch their tents about them, and bear them up in their arms. Some have imagined that every particular saint has a guardian angel; but why should we suppose that, when we are sure that every particular saint, when there is occasion, has a guard of angels? This is particularly applied here to the little ones, because they are most despised and most exposed. They have but little that they can call their own, but they can look by faith on the heavenly hosts, and call them theirs. While the great ones of the world have honourable men for their retinue and guards, the little ones of the church are attended with glorious angels; which bespeaks not only their dignity, but the danger those run themselves upon, who despise and abuse them. It is bad being enemies to those who are so guarded; and it is good having God for our God, for then we have his angels for our angels.

Secondly, That they always behold the face of the Father in heaven. This bespeaks, 1. The angels' continual felicity and honour. The happiness of heaven consists in the vision of God, seeing him face to face as he is, beholding his beauty; this the angels have without interruption; when they are ministering to us on earth, yet even then by contemplation they behold the face of God, for they are *full of eyes within*. Gabriel, when speaking to Zecharias, yet stands in the presence of God, Rev. 4. 8. Luke 1. 19. The expression intimates, as some think, the special dignity and honour of the little ones' angels; the prime ministers of state are said to *see the king's face*, (Esth. 1. 14.) as if the strongest angels had the charge of the weakest saints. 2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints. *As the eyes of the servant are to the hand of his master*, ready to go or come upon the least beck, so the eyes of the angels are upon the face of God, waiting for the intimations of his will, which those winged messengers fly swiftly to fulfil; *they go and return like a flash of lightning*, Ezek. 1. 14. If we would behold the face of God in glory hereafter, as the angels do, (Luke 20. 36.) we must behold the face of God now, in readiness to our duty, as they do, Acts 9. 6.

[2.] The gracious design of Christ concerning them; (v. 11.) *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost*. This is a reason, *First*, Why

the little ones' angels have such a charge concerning them, and attend upon them; it is in pursuance of Christ's design to save them. Note, The ministration of angels is founded in the mediation of Christ; through him angels are reconciled to us; and, when they celebrated God's good will toward men, to it they annexed their own. *Secondly*, Why they are not to be despised; because Christ came to save them, to save them that are lost, the little ones that are lost in their own eyes, (Isa. 56. 3.) that are at a loss within themselves. Or rather, the children of men. Note, 1. Our souls by nature are lost souls; as a traveller is lost, that is out of his way, as a convicted prisoner is lost. God lost the service of fallen man, lost the honour he should have had from him. 2. Christ's errand into the world was, to save that which was lost, to reduce us to our allegiance, restore us to our work, reinstate us in our privileges, and so to put us into the right way that leads to our great end; to save those that are spiritually lost from being eternally so. 3. This is a good reason why the least and weakest believer should not be despised or offended. If Christ put such a value upon them, let us not undervalue them. If he denied himself so much for their salvation, surely we should deny ourselves for their edification and consolation. See this argument urged, Rom. 14. 15. 1 Cor. 8. 11, 12. Nay, if Christ came into the world to save souls, and his heart is so much upon that work, he will reckon severely with those that obstruct and hinder it, by obstructing the progress of those that are setting their faces heavenward, and so thwart his great design.

[3.] The tender regard which our heavenly Father has to these little ones, and his concern for their welfare. This is illustrated by a comparison, v. 12—14. Observe the gradation of the argument; the angels of God are their servants, the Son of God is their Saviour, and, to complete their honour, God himself is their Friend. *Nine shall pluck them out of my Father's hand*, John 10. 28.

Here is, *First*, The comparison, v. 12, 13. The owner that had lost one sheep out of a hundred, does not slight it, but diligently inquires after it, is greatly pleased when he has found it, and has in that a sensible and affecting joy, more than in the ninety and nine that wandered not. The fear he was in of losing that one, and the surprise of finding it, add to the joy. Now this is applicable, 1. To the state of fallen man in general; he is strayed like a lost sheep, the angels that stood, were as the ninety-nine that never went astray; wandering man is sought upon the mountains, which Christ, in great fatigue, traversed in pursuit of him, and he is found; which is matter of joy. Greater joy there is in heaven for returning sinners than for reuniting angels. 2. To particular believers, who are offended and put out of their way by the stumbling-blocks that are laid in their way, or the wiles of those who seduce them out of the way. Now though but one of a hundred should hereby be driven off, as sheep easily are, yet that one shall be looked after with a great deal of care, the return of it welcomed with a great deal of pleasure; and therefore the wrong done to it, no doubt, will be reckoned for with a great deal of displeasure. If there be joy in heaven for the finding of one of these little ones, there is wrath in heaven for the offending of them. Note, God is graciously concerned, not only for his flock in general, but for every lamb, or sheep, that belongs to it. Though they are many, yet out of those many he can easily miss one, for he is a *great* Shepherd, but not so easily lose it, for he is a *good* Shepherd, and takes a more particular cognizance of his flock than ever any did; for he *calls his own sheep by name*, John 10. 3. See a full exposition of this parable, Ezek. 34. 2, 10, 16, 19.

Secondly, The application of this comparison; (v. 14.) *It is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish*. More is implied than is expressed. It is not his will, that any should perish, but, 1. It is his will, that these little ones should be saved; it is the will of his design and delight, he has designed it, and set his heart upon it, and he will effect it; it is the will of his precept, that all should do what they can to further it, and nothing to hinder it. 2. This care extends itself to every particular member of the flock, even the meanest. We think if but *one or two* be offended and ensnared, it is no great matter, we need not mind it; but God's thoughts of love and tenderness are above ours. 3. It is intimated that those who do any thing by which any of these little ones are brought into danger of perishing, contradict the will of God, and highly provoke him; and though they cannot prevail in it, yet they will be reckoned with for it by him, who, in his saints, as in other things, is jealous of his honour, and will not bear to have it trampled on. See Isa. 3. 15. *What mean ye that ye beat my people?* Ps. 76. 8, 9.

Observe, Christ called God, (v. 19.) *my Father which is in heaven*; he calls him, (v. 14.) *your Father which is in heaven*; intimating that he is not ashamed to call his poor disciples *brethren*; for have not he and they one Father? *I ascend to my Father and your Father*; (John 20. 17.) therefore ours because his. This intimates likewise the ground of the safety of his little ones; that God is their Father, and is therefore inclined to succour them. A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones, Gen. 33. 13. He is their Father in heaven; a place of prospect, and therefore he sees all the indignities offered them; and a place of power, therefore he is able to avenge them. This comforts offended little ones, that their Witness is in heaven, (Job 16. 19.) their Judge is there, Ps. 68. 5.

15. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Christ, having cautioned his disciples not to give offence, comes next to direct them what they must do in case of offences given them; which may be understood either of personal injuries, and then these directions are intended for the preserving the peace of the church; or of public scandals, and then they are intended for the preserving of the purity and beauty of the church. Let us consider it both ways.

I. Let us apply it to the quarrels that happen, upon any account, among christians. If thy brother trespass against thee, by grieving thy soul, (1 Cor. 8. 12.) by affronting thee, or putting contempt or abuse upon thee, if he blemish thy good name by false reports or tale-bearing, if he encroach on thy rights, or be any way injurious to thee in thy estate; if he be guilty of any of those trespasses that are specified, Lev. 6. 2, 3. If he transgress the laws of justice, charity, or relative duties; these are trespasses against us, and often happen among Christ's disciples, and sometimes, for want of prudence, are of very mischievous consequence. Now observe what is the rule prescribed in this case.

1. *Go, and tell him his fault between him and thee alone.* Let this be compared with, and explained by, Lev. 19. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart*; that is, "If thou hast conceived a displeasure at thy brother for any injury he hath done thee, do not suffer thy resentments to ripen into a secret malice, (like a wound, which is most dangerous when it bleeds inwardly,) but give vent to them in a mild and grave admonition, let them so spend themselves, and they will expire the sooner; do not go and rail against him behind his back, but *thou shalt in any wise reprove him.* If he has indeed done thee a considerable wrong, endeavour to make him sensible of it, but let the rebuke be private, between thee and him alone; if thou wouldst convince him, do not expose him, for that will but exasperate him, and make the reproof look like a revenge." This agrees with Prov. 25. 8, 9. "*Go not forth hastily to strive, but debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself*, argue it calmly and amicably; and if he shall hear thee, well and good, *thou hast gained thy brother*, there is an end of the controversy, and it is a happy end; let no more be said of it, but let the falling out of friends be the renewing of friendship."

2. "*If he will not hear thee*, if he will not own himself in a fault, nor come to an agreement, yet do not despair, but try what he will say to it, if thou take *one or two more*, not only to be witnesses of what passes, but to reason the case further with him; he will be the more likely to hearken to them because they are disinterested; and if reason will rule him, the word of reason in the mouth of two or three witnesses will be better spoken to him." (*Plus vident oculi, quam oculus*—*Many eyes see more than one*.) "and more regarded by him, and perhaps it will influence him to acknowledge his error, and to say, *I repent.*"

3. "*If he shall neglect to hear them*, and will not refer the matter to their arbitration, then *tell it to the church*, to the ministers, elders, or other officers, or the most considerable persons in the congregation you belong to, make them the referees to accommodate the matter, and do not presently appeal to the magistrate, or fetch a writ for him." This is fully explained by the apostle, (1 Cor. 6.) when he reproves those that went to law before the unjust, and not before the saints, (v. 1.) he would have the saints to judge those small matters, (v. 2.) that pertain to this life, v. 3. If you ask, "*Who is the church that must be told?*" The apostle directs there, (v. 5.) *Is there not a wise man among you?* Those of the church that are presumed to be most capable of determining such matters; and he speaks ironically, when he says, (v. 4.) "*Set them to judge, who are least esteemed in the church*"; those, if there be no better, those, rather than suffer an irreconcilable breach between two church-members." This rule was then in a special manner requisite, when the civil government was in the hands of such as were not only aliens, but enemies.

4. "*If he will not hear the church*, will not stand to their award, but persists in the wrong he has done

thee, and proceeds to do thee further wrong, *let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican*; take the benefit of the law against him, but let that always be the last remedy; appeal not to the courts of justice till thou hast first tried all other means to compromise the matter in variance. Or thou mayst, if thou wilt, break off thy friendship and familiarity with him; though thou must by no means study revenge, yet thou mayst choose whether thou wilt have any dealings with him, at least, in such a way as may give him an opportunity of doing the like again. Thou wouldst have healed him, wouldst have preserved his friendship, but he would not, and so has forfeited it." If a man cheat and abuse me once, it is his fault; if twice, it is my own.

II. Let us apply it to scandalous sins, which are an offence to the little ones, of bad example to those that are weak and pliable, and of great grief to those that are weak and timorous. Christ, having taught us to indulge the weakness of our brethren, here cautions us not to indulge their wickedness under pretence of that. Christ, designing to erect a church for himself in the world, here took care for the preservation, 1. Of its purity, that it might have an expulsive faculty, a power to cleanse and clear itself, like a fountain of living waters, which is necessary as long as the net of the gospel brings up both good fish and bad. 2. Of its peace and order, that every member may know his place and duty, and the purity of it may be preserved in a regular way and not tumultuously. Now let us see,

(1.) What is the case supposed; *If thy brother trespass against thee.* [1.] "The offender is a brother, one that is in christian communion, that is baptized, that hears the word, and prays with thee, with whom thou joimest in the worship of God, stately or occasionally." Note, Church-discipline is for church-members. *Them that are without God judges,* 1 Cor. 5. 12, 13. When any trespass is done against us, it is good to remember that the trespasser is a brother, which furnishes us with a qualifying consideration. [2.] "The offence is a trespass against thee; if thy brother sin against thee, (so the word is,) if he do any thing which is offensive to thee as a christian." Note, A gross sin against God is a trespass against his people, who have a true concern for his honour. Christ and believers have twisted interests; what is done against them, Christ takes as done against himself; and what is done against him, they cannot but take as done against themselves. *The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me*, Ps. 69. 9.

(2.) What is to be done in this case. We have here,

[1.] The rules prescribed, v. 15—17. Proceed in this method:

First, "Go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone. Do not stay till he comes to thee, but go to him, as the physician visits the patient, and the shepherd goes after the lost sheep." Note, We should think no pains too much to take for the recovering of a sinner to repentance. "*Tell him his fault*, remind him of what he has done, and of the evil of it, *show him his abominations.*" Note, People are loath to see their faults, and have need to be told of them. Though the fact is plain, and the fault too, yet they must be put together with application. Great sins often amuse conscience, and for the present stupify and silence it; and there is need of help to awaken it. David's own heart smote him, when he had cut off Saul's skirt, and when he had numbered the people; but (which is very strange) we do not find that it smote him in the matter of Uriah, till Nathan told him. *Thou art the man.*

"*Tell him his fault*, *ἔλεγε τὸν ἁμαρτίαν*—argue the case with him;" (so the word signifies;) "and do it with reason and argument, not with passion." Where

the fault is plain and great, the person proper for us to deal with, and we have an opportunity for it, and there is no apparent danger of doing more hurt than good, we must with meekness and faithfulness tell people of what is amiss in them. Christian reproof is an ordinance of Christ for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and must be managed as an ordinance. "Let the reproof be private, between thee and him alone; that it may appear you seek not his reproof, but his repentance." Note, It is a good rule, which should ordinarily be observed among christians, not to speak of our brethren's faults to others, till we have first spoken of them to themselves; this would make less reproaching and more reproving; that is, less sin committed, and more duty done. It will be likely to work upon an offender, when he sees his reprover concerned not only for his salvation, in telling him his fault, but for his reputation, in telling him of it privately.

"If he shall hear thee," that is, "hired thee, if he be wrought upon by the reproof, it is well, *thou hast gained thy brother*; thou hast helped to save him from sin and ruin, and it will be thy credit and comfort," James 5. 19, 20. Note, The converting of a soul is the winning of that soul; (Prov. 11. 30.) and we should covet it, and labour after it, as gain to us; and if the loss of a soul be a great loss, the gain of a soul is sure no small gain.

Secondly, If that doth not prevail, *then take with thee one or two more*, v. 15. Note, We must not we weary of well-doing, though we see not presently the good success of it. "If he will not hear thee, yet do not give him up as in a desperate case; say not, It will be to no purpose to deal with him any further; but go on in the use of other means; even those that harden their necks, must be often reproved, and those that oppose themselves, instructed in meekness." In work of this kind we must *travail in birth again*; (Gal. 4. 19.) and it is after many pains and throes that the child is born.

"Take with thee one or two more; 1. To assist thee; they may speak some pertinent, convincing word which thou didst not think of, and may manage the matter with more prudence than thou didst." Note, Christians should see their need of help in doing good, and pray in the aid one of another; as in other things, so in giving reproofs, that the duty may be done, and may be done well. 2. "To affect him; he will be the more likely to be humbled for his fault, when he sees it witnessed against by two or three." Deut. 19. 15. Note, Those should think it high time to repent and reform, who see their misconduct become a general offence and scandal. Though in such a world as this it is rare to find one good whom *all men speak well of*, yet it is more rare to find one good whom *all men speak ill of*. 3. "To be witnesses of his conduct, in case the matter should afterward be brought before the church." None should come under the censure of the church as obstinate and contumacious till it be very well proved that they are so.

Thirdly, *If he neglect to hear them*, and will not be humbled, *then tell it to the church*, v. 17. There are some stubborn spirits to whom the likeliest means of conviction prove ineffectual; yet such must not be given over as incurable, but let the matter be made more public, and further help called in. Note, 1. Private admonitions must always go before public censures; if gentler methods will do the work, those that are more rough and severe must not be used, Tit. 3. 10. Those that will be reasoned out of their sins, need not be shamed out of them. Let God's work be done effectually, but with as little noise as may be; his kingdom comes with power, but not with observation. But, 2. Where private admonition does not prevail, there public censure must take place. The church must receive the complaints of

the offended, and rebuke the sins of the offenders, and judge between them, after an impartial inquiry made into the merits of the cause.

Tell it to the church. It is a thousand pities that this appointment of Christ, which was designed to end differences, and remove offences, should itself be so much a matter of debate, and occasion differences and offences, through the corruption of men's hearts. What church must be told—is the great question; The civil magistrate, say some; The Jewish sanhedrim then in being, say others; but by what follows, (v. 18.) it is plain that he means a christian church, which, though not yet formed, was now in the embryo. "*Tell it to the church*, that particular church, in the communion of which the offender lives; make the matter known to those of that congregation, who are by consent appointed to receive informations of that kind. Tell it to the guides and governors of the church, the minister or ministers, the elders or deacons, or (if such the constitution of the society be) tell it to the representatives or heads of the congregation, or to all the members of it; let them examine the matter, and if they find the complaint frivolous and groundless, let them rebuke the complainant; if they find it just, let them rebuke the offender, and call him to repentance, and this will be likely to put an edge and an efficacy upon the reproof, because given," 1. "With greater solemnity," and, 2. "With greater authority." It is an awful thing to receive a reproof from a church, from a minister, a reprover by office; and therefore it is the more regarded by such as pay any deference to an institution of Christ and his ambassadors.

Fourthly, "*If he neglect to hear the church*, if he slight the admonition, and will neither be ashamed of his faults, nor amend them, *let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican*; let him be cast out of the communion of the church, secluded from special ordinances, degraded from the dignity of a church-member, let him be put under disgrace, and let the members of the society be warned to withdraw from him, that he may be ashamed of his sin, and they may not be infected by it, or made chargeable with it." Those who put contempt on the orders and rules of a society, and bring reproach upon it, forfeit the honours and privileges of it, and are justly laid aside till they repent and submit, and reconcile themselves to it again. Christ has appointed this method for the vindicating of the church's honour, the preserving of its purity, and the conviction and reformation of these that are scandalous. But observe, he doth not say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but, "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be *taken away from among them*, (1 Cor. 5. 2.) must be *delivered to Satan*; for if he be cast out of Christ's kingdom, he is looked upon as belonging to Satan's kingdom; they must not keep company with him, v. 11, 13. But when by this he is humbled and reclaimed, he must be welcomed into communion again, and all shall be well.

[2.] Here is a warrant signed for the ratification of all the church's proceedings according to these rules, v. 18. What was said before to Peter, is here said to all the disciples, and in them to all the faithful office-bearers in the church, to the world's end. While ministers preach the word of Christ faithfully, and in their government of the church strictly adhere to his laws, (*clave non errante—the key not turning the wrong way,*) they may be assured that he will own them, and stand by them,

and will ratify what they say and do, so that it shall be taken as said and done by himself. He will own them,

First, In their sentence of suspension; *Whosoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.* If the censures of the church duly follow the institution of Christ, his judgments will follow the censures of the church, his spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all other, such as the rejected Jews fell under, (Rom. 11. 8.) *a spirit of slumber*; for Christ will not suffer his own ordinances to be trampled upon, but will say *amen* to the righteous sentences which the church passes on obstinate offenders. How light soever proud scornors may make of the censures of the church, let them know that they are confirmed in the court of heaven; and it is in vain for them to appeal to that court, for judgment is there already given against them. They that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous now, shall not stand in it in the great day, Ps. 1. 5. Christ will not own those, as his, nor receive them to himself, whom the church has duly delivered to Satan; but if through error or envy the censures of the church be unjust, Christ will graciously find those who are so cast out, John 9. 34, 35.

Secondly, In their sentence of absolution; *Whosoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* Note, 1. No church-censures bind so fast, but that, upon the sinner's repentance and reformation, they may and must be loosed again. Sufficient is the punishment which has attained its end, and the offender must then be forgiven and comforted, 2 Cor. 2. 6. There is no unpassable gulf fixed but that between hell and heaven. 2. Those who, upon their repentance, are received by the church into communion again, may take the comfort of their absolution in heaven, if their hearts be upright with God. As suspension is for the terror of the obstinate, so absolution is for the encouragement of the penitent. St. Paul speaks in the person of Christ, when he saith, *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also*, 2 Cor. 2. 10.

Now it is a great honour which Christ here puts upon the church, that he will condescend not only to take cognizance of their sentences, but to confirm them; and in the following verses we have two things laid down as the ground of this.

(1.) God's readiness to answer the church's prayers; (v. 19.) *If two of you shall agree harmoniously, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them.* Apply this,

[1.] In general, to all the requests of the faithful praying seed of Jacob; they shall not seek God's face in vain. Many promises we have in scripture of a gracious answer to the prayers of faith, but this gives a particular encouragement to joint prayer; "the requests which two of you agree in, much more which many agree in." No law of heaven limits the number of petitioners. Note, Christ has been pleased to put an honour upon, and to allow a special efficacy in, the joint prayers of the faithful, and the common supplications they make to God. If they join in the same prayer, if they meet by appointment to come together to the throne of grace on some special errand, or, though at a distance, agree in some particular matter of prayer, they shall speed well. Beside the general regard God has to the prayers of the saints, he is particularly pleased with their union and communion in those prayers. See 2 Chron. 5. 13. Acts 4. 31.

[2.] In particular, to those requests that are put up to God about binding and loosing; to which this promise seems more especially to refer. Observe, *First*, That the power of church-discipline is not here lodged in the hand of a single person, but two, at least, are supposed to be concerned in it. When the incestuous Corinthian was to be cast out, the

church was gathered together, (1 Cor. 5. 4.) and it was a punishment inflicted of many, 2 Cor. 2. 6. In an affair of such importance, *two are better than one, and in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.* *Secondly*, It is good to see those who have the management of church-discipline, agreeing in it. Heats and animosities among those whose work it is to remove offences, will be the greatest offence of all. *Thirdly*, Prayer must evermore go along with church-discipline. Pass no sentence, which you cannot in faith ask God to confirm. The binding and loosing spoken of, (ch. 16. 19.) was done by preaching, this by praying. Thus the whole power of gospel-ministers is resolved into the word and prayer, to which they must wholly give themselves. He doth not say, "If you shall agree to sentence and decree a thing, it shall be done;" (as if ministers were judges and lords;) but, "If you agree to ask it of God, from him you shall obtain it." Prayer must go along with all our endeavours for the conversion of sinners; see James 5. 16. *Fourthly*, The unanimous petitions of the church of God, for the ratification of their just censures, shall be heard in heaven, and obtain an answer; "*It shall be done*, it shall be bound and loosed in heaven; God will set his fiat to the appeals and applications you make to him." If Christ (who here speaks as one having authority) say, "*It shall be done*," we may be assured that it is done, though we see not the effect in the way that we look for it. God doth especially own and accept us, when we are praying for those that have offended him and us. *The Lord turned the captivity of Job*, not when he prayed for himself, but when he prayed for his friends who had trespassed against him.

(2.) The presence of Christ in the assemblies of christians, v. 20. Every believer has the presence of Christ with him; but the promise here refers to the meetings where two or three are gathered in his name, not only for discipline, but for religious worship, or any act of christian communion. Assemblies of christians for holy purposes are hereby appointed, directed, and encouraged.

[1.] They are hereby appointed; the church of Christ in the world exists most visibly in religious assemblies; it is the will of Christ that these should be set up, and kept up for the honour of God, the edification of men, and the preserving of a face of religion upon the world. When God intends special answers to prayer, he calls for a solemn assembly, Joel 2. 15, 16. If there be no liberty and opportunity for large and numerous assemblies, yet then it is the will of God that two or three should gather together, to show their good will to the great congregation. Note, When we cannot do what we would in religion, we must do as we can, and God will accept us.

[2.] They are hereby directed to gather together in Christ's name. In the exercise of church-discipline, they must *come together in the name of Christ*, 1 Cor. 5. 4. That name gives to what they do an authority on earth, and an acceptableness in heaven. In meeting for worship, we must have an eye to Christ; must come together, by virtue of his warrant and appointment, in token of our relation to him, professing faith in him, and in communion with all that in every place call upon him. When we come together, to worship God in a dependence upon the Spirit and grace of Christ as Mediator for assistance, and upon his merit and righteousness as Mediator for acceptance, having an actual regard to him as our Way to the Father, and our Advocate with the Father, then we are met together in his name.

[3.] They are hereby encouraged with an assurance of the presence of Christ; *There am I in the midst of them*. By his common presence he is in

all places, as God; but this is a promise of his special presence. Where his saints are, his sanctuary is, and there he will dwell; it is his rest, (Ps. 132. 14.) it is his walk; (Rev. 2. 1.) he is in the midst of them, to quicken and strengthen them, to refresh and comfort them, as the sun in the midst of the universe. He is in the midst of them, that is, in their hearts; it is a spiritual presence, the presence of Christ's Spirit with their spirits, that is here intended. *There am I*, not only *I will be there*, but *I am there*; as if he came first, is ready before them, they shall find him there; he repeated this promise at parting, (ch. 28. 20.) *Lo, I am with you always*. Note, The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians is promised, and may in faith be prayed for and depended on; *There am I*. This is equivalent to the Shechinah, or special presence of God in the tabernacle and temple of old, Exod. 40. 24. 2 Chron. 5. 14.

Though but two or three are met together, Christ is among them; this is an encouragement to the meeting of a few, when it is either, *First*, Of choice. Beside the secret worship performed by particular persons, and the public services of the whole congregation, there may be occasion sometimes for two or three to come together, either for mutual assistance in conference or joint assistance in prayer, not in contempt of public worship, but in concurrence with it; there Christ will be present. Or, *Secondly*, By constraint; when there are not more than two or three to come together, or, if there be, they dare not, *for fear of the Jews*, yet Christ will be *in the midst of them*; for it is not the multitude, but the faith and sincere devotion, of the worshippers, that invites the presence of Christ; and though there be but two or three, the smallest number that can be, yet, if Christ make one among them, who is the principal one, their meeting is as honourable and comfortable as if they were two or three thousand.

21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? 22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. 23. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: 25. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the

debt. 31. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? 34. And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

This part of the discourse, concerning offences, is certainly to be understood of personal wrongs, which it is in our power to forgive. Now observe,

I. Peter's question concerning this matter; (v. 21.) *Lord, how oft shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him?* Will it suffice to do it seven times?

1. He takes it for granted that he must forgive; Christ had before taught his disciples this lesson, (ch. 6. 14, 15.) and Peter has not forgotten it. He knows that he must not only not bear a grudge against his brother, or meditate revenge, but be as good a friend as ever, and forget the injury.

2. He thinks it a great matter, to forgive till seven times; he means not *seven times a-day*, as Christ said, (Luke 17. 4.) but seven times in his life; supposing, that if a man had any way abused him seven times, though he were ever so desirous to be reconciled, he might then abandon his society, and have no more to do with him. Perhaps Peter had an eye to Prov. 24. 16. *A just man falleth seven times*; or to the mention of *three transgressions*, and *four*, which God would no more pass by, Amos 2. 1. Note, There is a proneness in our corrupt nature to stint ourselves in that which is good, and to be afraid of doing too much in religion, particularly of forgiving too much, though we have so much forgiven us.

II. Christ's direct answer to Peter's question; *I say not unto thee, Until seven times*, (he never intended to set up any such bounds,) but, *Until seventy times seven*; a certain number for an indefinite one, but a great one. Note, It does not look well for us to keep count of the offences done against us by our brethren. There is something of ill-nature in scoring up the injuries we forgive, as if we would allow ourselves to be revenged when the measure is full. God keeps an account, (Deut. 32. 34.) because he is the Judge, and vengeance is his; but we must not, lest we be found stepping into his throne. It is necessary to the preservation of peace, both within and without, to pass by injuries, without reckoning how often; to forgive, and forget. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps. 78. 38, 40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries, and should accustom ourselves to it till it becomes habitual.

III. A further discourse of our Saviour's, by way of parable, to show the necessity of forgiving the injuries that are done to us. Parables are of use, not only for the explaining of christian doctrines, but for the pressing of christian duties; for they make and leave an impression. The parable is a comment upon the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*. Those, and those only, may expect to be forgiven of God, who forgive their brethren. The parable represents the kingdom of hea-

ven, that is, the church, and the administration of the gospel-dispensation in it. The church is God's family, it is his court; there he dwells, there he rules. God is our Master, his servants we are, at least, in profession and obligation. In general, the parable intimates how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are.

There are three things in the parable.

1. The master's wonderful clemency to his servant who was indebted to him; he forgave him ten thousand talents, out of pure compassion to him; v. 23—27. Where observe,

(1.) Every sin we commit, is a debt to God; not like a debt to an equal, contracted by buying or borrowing, but to a superior; like a debt to a prince when a recognizance is forfeited, or a penalty incurred by a breach of the law or a breach of the peace; like the debt of a servant to his master, by withholding his service, wasting his lord's goods, breaking his indentures, and incurring the penalty. We are all debtors; we owe satisfaction, and are liable to the process of the law.

(2.) There is an account kept of these debts, and we must shortly be reckoned with for them. This king *would take account of his servants*. God now reckons with us by our own consciences; conscience is an auditor for God in the soul, to call us to account, and to account with us. One of the first questions that an awakened christian asks, is, *How much owest thou unto my Lord?* And unless it be bribed, it will tell the truth, and not write fifty for a hundred. There is another day of reckoning coming, when these accounts will be called over, and either passed or disallowed, and nothing but the blood of Christ will balance the account.

(3.) The debt of sin is a very great debt; and some are more in debt, by reason of sin, than others. When he *began to reckon*, one of the first defaulters appeared to owe *ten thousand talents*. There is no evading the inquiries of divine justice, your sin will be sure to find you out. The debt was ten thousand talents, a vast sum, amounting by computation to one million, eight hundred, seventy-five thousand pounds sterling; a king's ransom or a kingdom's subsidy, more likely, than a servant's debt; see what our sins are; [1.] For the heinousness of their nature; they are talents, the greatest denomination that ever was used in the account of money or weight. Every sin is the load of a talent, *a talent of lead, this is wickedness*, Zech. 5. 7, 8. The trusts committed to us, as stewards of the grace of God, are each of them a talent, (ch. 25. 15.) a talent of gold, and for every one of them buried, much more for every one of them wasted, we are a talent in debt, and this raises the account. [2.] For the vastness of their number; they are ten thousand, a myriad, more than *the hairs on our head*, Ps. 40. 12. Who can understand the number of his errors, or tell how oft he offends? Ps. 19. 12.

(4.) The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it; *He had not to pay*. Sinners are insolvent debtors; the scripture, *which concludeth all under sin*, is a statute of bankruptcy against us all. Silver and gold would not pay our debt, Ps. 49. 6, 7. Sacrifice and offering would not do it; our good works are but God's work in us, and cannot make satisfaction; we are without strength, and cannot help ourselves.

(5.) If God should deal with us in strict justice, we should be condemned as insolvent debtors, and God might exact the debt by glorifying himself in our utter ruin. Justice demands satisfaction, *Curat lex—Let the sentence of the law be executed*. The servant had contracted this debt by his wastefulness and wilfulness, and therefore might justly be left to lie by it. *This lord commanded him to be sold,*

as a bond-slave into the galleys, sold to grind in the prison-house; *his wife and children to be sold, and all that he had, and payment to be made*. See here what every sin deserves; this is *the wages of sin*.

[1.] To be sold. Those that *sell themselves to work wickedness*, must be sold, to make satisfaction. Captives to sin are captives of wrath. He that is sold for a bond-slave, is deprived of all his comforts, and has nothing left him but his life, that he may be sensible of his miseries; which is the case of damned sinners. [2.] Thus he would have *payment to be made*, that is, something done towards it; though it is impossible that the sale of one so worthless should amount to the payment of so great a debt. By the damnation of sinners divine justice will be to eternity in the satisfying, but never satisfied.

(6.) Convinced sinners cannot but humble themselves before God, and pray for mercy. *The servant, under this charge, and this doom, fell down at the feet of his royal master, and worshipped him*; or, as some copies read it, *he besought him*; his address was very submissive and very importunate; *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all*, v. 26. The servant knew before that he was so much in debt, and yet was under no concern about it, till he was called to an account. Sinners are commonly careless about the pardon of their sins, till they come under the arrests of some awakening word, some startling providence, or approaching death, and then, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* Mic. 6. 6. How easily, how quickly, can God bring the proudest sinner to his feet: Ahab to his sackcloth, Manasseh to his prayers, Pharaoh to his confessions, Judas to his restitution, Simon Magus to his supplication, Belshazzar and Felix to their tremblings. The stoutest heart will fail, when God sets the sins in order before it. This servant doth not deny the debt, nor seek evasions, nor go about to abscond.

But, [1.] He begs time; *Have patience with me*. Patience and forbearance are a great favour, but it is folly to think that these alone will save us; reprieves are not pardons. Many are borne with, who are not thereby *brought to repentance*, (Rom. 2. 4.) and then their being borne with does them no kindness.

[2.] He promises payment; *Have patience a while, and I will pay thee all*. Note, It is the folly of many who are under convictions of sin, to imagine that they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him; as those who, like a compounding bankrupt, would discharge the debt, by giving their *first-born for their transgression*, (Mic. 6. 7.) who *go about to establish their own righteousness*, Rom. 10. 3. He that *had nothing to pay*, (v. 25.) fancied he could pay *all*. See how close pride sticks, even to awakened sinners; they are convinced, but not humbled.

(7.) The God of infinite mercy is very ready, out of pure compassion, to forgive the sins of those that humble themselves before him; (v. 27.) *The lord of that servant*, when he might justly have ruined him, mercifully released him; and since he could not be satisfied by the payment of the debt, he would be glorified by the pardon of it. The servant's prayer was, *Have patience with me*; the master's grant is, a discharge in full. Note, [1.] The pardon of sin is owing to the mercy of God, to his tender mercy; (Luke 1. 77, 78.) *He was moved with compassion*. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself; he has mercy *because he will have mercy*. God looked with pity on mankind in general, because miserable, and sent his Son to be a Surety for them; he looks with pity on particular penitents, because sensible of their misery, (their hearts broken and contrite,) and accepts them in the Beloved. [2.] There is forgiveness with God for the greatest sins, if they be repented of. Though

the debt was vastly great, he *forgave it all*, v. 32. Though our sins be very numerous and very heinous, yet, upon gospel-terms, they may be pardoned. [2.] The forgiving of the debt is the loosing of the debtor; *He loosed him*. The obligation is cancelled, the judgment vacated; we never walk at liberty till our sins are forgiven. But observe, Though he discharged him from the penalty as a debtor, he did not discharge him from his duty as a servant. The pardon of sin doth not slacken, but strengthen, our obligations to obedience; and we must reckon it a favour that God is pleased to continue such wasteful servants as we have been, in such a gainful service as his is, and should therefore *deliver us, that we might serve him*, Luke 1. 74. *I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bonds*.

2. The servant's unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him, v. 28—30. This represents the sin of those who, though they are not unjust in demanding that which is not their own, yet are rigorous and unmerciful in demanding that which is their own, to the utmost of right, which sometimes proves a real wrong. *Stammum jus summa injuria*. Push a claim to an extremity, and it becomes a wrong. To exact satisfaction for debts of injury, which tend neither to reparation nor to the public good, but purely for revenge, though the law may allow it, in *terrorem*—in order to strike terror, and for the hardness of men's hearts, yet savours not of a christian spirit. To sue for money-debts, when the debtor cannot possibly pay them, and so let him perish in prison, argues a greater love of money, and a less love of our neighbour, than we ought to have, Neh. 5. 7.

See here, (1.) How small the debt was, how very small, compared with the *ten thousand talents* which his lord forgave him; *He owed him a hundred pence*, about three pounds and half-a-crown of our money. Note, Offences done to men are nothing to those which are committed against God. Dishonours done to a man like ourselves, are but as *pence, notes, gnats*; but dishonours done to God, are as *talents, beams, camels*. Not that therefore we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but therefore we should make light of our neighbour's wronging us, and not aggravate it, or study revenge. David was unconcerned at the indignities done to him; *I, as a drab man, heard not*; but hid much to heart the sins committed against God; for them, *streams of tears ran down his eyes*.

(2.) How severe the demand was; *He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat*. Proud and angry men think, if the matter of their demand be just, that will bear them out, though the manner of it be ever so cruel and unmerciful; but it will not hold. What needed all this violence? The debt might have been demanded without taking the debtor by the throat; without sending for a writ, or setting the bailiff upon him. How lordly is this man's carriage, and yet how base and servile is his spirit! If he had been himself going to prison for his debt to his lord, his occasions would have been so pressing, that he might have had some pretence for going to this extremity in requiring his own; but frequently pride and malice prevail more to make men severe than the most urgent necessity would do.

(3.) How submissive the debtor was; *His fellow-servant*, though his equal, yet knowing how much he lay at his mercy, *fell down at his feet*, and humbled himself to him for this trifling debt, as much as he did to his lord for that great debt; *for the borrower is servant to the lender*, Prov. 22. 7. Note, Those who cannot pay their debts, ought to be very respectful to their creditors, and not only give them good words, but do them all the good offices they possibly can: they must not be angry at those who claim their own, nor speak ill of them for it, no, not

though they do it in a rigorous manner, but in that case leave it to God to plead their cause. The poor man's request is, *Have patience with me*; he honestly confesses the debt, and puts not his creditor to the charge of proving it, only begs time. Note, Forbearance, though it be no acquaintance, is sometimes a piece of needful and laudable charity. As we must not be hard, so we must not be hasty, in our demands, but think how long God bears with us.

(4.) How implacable and furious the creditor was; (v. 30.) *He would not have patience with him*, would not hearken to his fair promise, but without mercy cast him into prison. How insolently did he trample upon one as good as himself, that submitted to him! How cruelly did he use one that had done him no harm, and though it would be no advantage to himself! In this, as in a glass, unmerciful creditors may see their own faces, who take pleasure in nothing more than to swallow up and destroy, (2 Sam. 20. 19.) and glory in having their poor debtor's bones.

(5.) How much concerned the rest of the servants were; *They were very sorry*, (v. 31.) sorry for the creditor's cruelty, and for the debtor's calamity. Note, The sins and sufferings of our fellow-servants should be matter of grief and trouble to us. It is sad that any of our brethren should either make themselves beasts of prey, by cruelty and barbarity; or be made beasts of slavery, by the inhuman usage of those who have power over them. To see a fellow-servant, either raging like a bear or trampled on like a worm, cannot but occasion great regret to all that have any jealousy for the honour either of their nature or of their religion. See with what eye Solomon looked both upon the *tears of the oppressed*, and the *power of the oppressors*, Eccl. 4. 1.

(6.) How notice of it was brought to the master. *They came and told their lord*. They durst not reprove their fellow-servant for it, he was so unreasonable and outrageous; (*Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than such a fool in his folly*;) but they went to their lord, and besought him to appear for the oppressed against the oppressor. Note, That which gives us occasion for sorrow, should give us occasion for prayer. Let our complaints both of the wickedness of the wicked and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him.

3. The master's just resentment of the cruelty his servant was guilty of. If the servant took it so ill, much more would the master, whose compassions are infinitely above ours. Now observe here,

(1.) How he reproved his servant's cruelty; (v. 32, 33.) *O thou wicked servant*. Note, Unmercifulness is wickedness, it is great wickedness. [1.] He upbraids him with the mercy he had found with his master; *I forgave thee all that debt*. Those that will use God's favours, shall never be upbraided with them, but those that abuse them, may expect it, ch. 11. 20. Consider, it was *all that debt*, that great debt. Note, The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy: we should think *how much has been forgiven us*, Luke 7. 47. [2.] He thence shows him the obligation he was under to be merciful to his fellow-servant; *Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?* Note, It is justly expected, that such as have received mercy, should show mercy. *Dat ille veniam facile, cui venia est opus*—He who needs forgiveness, easily bestows it. Seneca. Agamemnon. He shows him, First, That he should have been more compassionate to the distress of his fellow-servant, because he had himself experienced the same distress. What we have had the feeling of ourselves, we can the better have the fellow-feeling of with our brethren. The Israelites know the heart of a stranger, for they were strangers; and this servant should have better known the heart of

an arrested debtor, than to have been thus hard upon such a one. *Secondly*, That he should have been more conformable to the example of his master's tenderness, having himself experienced it, so much to his advantage. Note, The comfortable sense of pardoning mercy tends much to the disposing of our hearts to forgive our brethren. It was in the close of the day of atonement, that the jubilee-trumpet sounded a release of debts; (Lev. 25. 9.) for we must have compassion on our brethren, as God has on us.

(2.) How he revoked his pardon, and cancelled the acquittance, so that the judgment against him revived; (v. 34.) *He delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.* Though the wickedness was very great, his lord laid upon him no other punishment than the payment of his own debt. Note, Those that will not come up to the terms of the gospel, need be no more miserable than to be left open to the law, and to let that have its course against them. See how the punishment answers the sin; he that would not forgive, shall not be forgiven; *He delivered him to the tormentors*; the utmost he could do to his fellow-servant, was but to cast him into prison, but he was himself delivered to the tormentors. Note, The power of God's wrath to ruin us, goes far beyond the utmost extent of any creature's strength and wrath. The reproaches and terrors of his own conscience would be his tormentors, for that is a worm that dies not; devils, the executioners of God's wrath, that are sinners' tempters now, will be their tormentors for ever. He was sent to bridewell till he should pay all. Note, Our debts to God are never compounded; either all is forgiven or all is exacted; glorified saints in heaven are pardoned all, through Christ's complete satisfaction; damned sinners in hell are paying all, that is, are punished for all. The offence done to God by sin, is in point of honour, which cannot be compounded for without such a diminution as the case will by no means admit, and therefore, some way or other, by the sinner or by his surety, it must be satisfied.

Lastly, Here is the application of the whole parable; (v. 35.) *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you.* The title Christ here gives to God, was made use of, (v. 19.) in a comfortable promise; *It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven*; here it is made use of in a terrible threatening. If God's government be fatherly, it follows thence, that it is righteous, but it does not therefore follow, that it is not rigorous, or that under his government we must not be kept in awe by the fear of the divine wrath. When we pray to God as *our Father in heaven*, we are taught to ask for the forgiveness of sins, as we forgive our debtors. Observe here,

1. The duty of forgiving; we must *from our hearts* forgive. Note, We do not forgive our offending brother aright, nor acceptably, if we do not forgive from the heart; for that is it that God looks at. No malice must be harboured there, or ill will to any person, one or another; no projects of revenge must be hatched there or desires of it, as there are in many who outwardly appear peaceable and reconciled. Yet this is not enough; we must from the heart desire and endeavour the welfare even of those that have offended us.

2. The danger of not forgiving; *So shall your heavenly Father do.* (1.) This is not intended to teach us that God reverses his pardons to any, but that he denies them to those that are unqualified for them, according to the tenor of the gospel; though having seemed to be humbled, like Ahah, they thought themselves, and others thought them, in a pardoned state, and they made bold with the comfort of it. Intimations enough we have in scripture, of the forfeiture of pardons, for caution to the presumptuous; and yet we have security enough of the continuance

of them, for comfort to those that are sincere, but timorous; that the one may fear, and the other may hope. Those that do not *forgive their brother's trespasses*, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is *taken away*, is only what *they seemed to have*, Luke 8. 18. (2.) This is intended to teach us, that *they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy*, Jam. 2. 13. It is indispensably necessary to pardon and peace, that we not only *do justly*, but *love mercy*. It is an essential part of that religion which is *pure and undefiled before God and the Father*, of that wisdom *from above*, which is *gentle, and easy to be entreated*. Look how they will answer it another day, who, though they bear the christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer.

CHAP. XIX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ changing his quarters, leaving Galilee, and coming into the coasts of Judea, v. 1. 2. II. His dispute with the Pharisees about divorce, and his discourse with his disciples upon occasion of it, v. 3. 12. III. The kind entertainment he gave to some little children which were brought to him, v. 13. 15. IV. An account of what passed between Christ and a hopeful young gentleman that applied himself to him, v. 16. 22. V. His discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, concerning the difficulty of the salvation of those that have much in the world, and the certain recompense of those that leave all for Christ, v. 23. 30.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan: 2. And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

We have here an account of Christ's removal. Observe,

1. He left Galilee. There he had been brought up and had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote despicable part of the country; it was only upon occasion of the feasts, that he *came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there*; and, we may suppose, that, having no constant residence there when he did come, his preaching and miracles were the more observable and acceptable. But it was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, a north-countryman, the least polite and refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought, in Galilee; but now, having *finished these sayings*, he *departed from Galilee*, and it was his final farewell; for (unless his *passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee*, Luke 17. 11. was after this, which yet was but a visit *in transitu*—as he *passed through the country*) he never came to Galilee again till after his resurrection, which makes this transition very remarkable. Christ did not take his leave of Galilee till he had done his work there, and then he departed thence. Note, As Christ's faithful ministers are not taken out of the world, so they are not removed from any place, till they have finished their testimony in that place, Rev. 11. 7. This is very comfortable to those that follow not their own humours, but God's providence, in their removals, that their sayings shall be finished before they depart. And who would desire to continue any where longer than he has work to do for God there?

2. *He came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jor-*

dan, that they might have their day of visitation as well as Galilee, for they also belonged to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*. But still Christ kept to those parts of Canaan that lay towards other nations; Galilee is called *Galilee of the Gentiles*; and the Syrians dwelt beyond Jordan. Thus Christ intimated, that, while he kept within the confines of the Jewish nation, he had his eye upon the Gentiles, and his gospel was aiming and coming toward them.

3. *Great multitudes followed him.* Where Shiloh is, there will the gathering of the people be. The redeemed of the Lord are such as follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, Rev. 14. 4. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. It was a piece of respect to Christ, and yet it was a continual trouble, to be thus crowded after, wherever he went; but he sought not his own ease, nor, considering how mean and contemptible this mob was, (as some would call them,) his own honour much, in the eye of the world; he went about doing good; for so it follows, *he healed them there*. This shows what they followed him for, to have their sick healed; and they found him as able and ready to help here, as he had been in Galilee; for, wherever this *Sun of righteousness* arose, it was with healing under his wings. He healed them there, because he would not have them follow him to Jerusalem, lest it should give offence. *He shall not strive, nor cry.*

3. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; 5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? 6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8. He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. 9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it.

We have here the law of Christ in the case of divorce, occasioned, as some other declarations of

his will, by a dispute with the Pharisees. So patiently did he endure the contradiction of sinners, that he turned it into instructions to his own disciples! Oh serve here,

1. The case proposed by the Pharisees; (v. 13.) *Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?* This they asked, tempting him, not desiring to be taught by him. Some time ago, he had, in Galilee, declared his mind in this matter, against that which was the common practice; (ch. 5. 31, 32.) and if he would, in like manner, declare himself now against divorce, they would make use of it for the prejudicing and incensing of the people of this country against him, who would look with a jealous eye upon one that attempted to cut them short in a liberty they were fond of. They hoped he would lose himself in the affections of the people as much by this as by any of his precepts. Or, the temptation might be designed thus; If he should say that divorces were not lawful, they would reflect upon him as an enemy to the law of Moses, which allowed them; if he should say that they were, they would represent his doctrine as not having that perfection in it which was expected in the doctrine of the Messiah; since, though divorces were tolerated, they were looked upon by the stricter sort of people as not of good report. Some think, that, though the law of Moses did permit divorce, yet, in assigning the just causes for it, there was a controversy between the Pharisees among themselves, and they desired to know what Christ said to it. Matrimonial cases have been numerous, and sometimes intricate and perplexed; made so, not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often in these cases people resolve, before they ask, what they will do.

Their question is, *Whether a man may put away his wife for every cause?* That it might be done for some cause, even for that of fornication, was granted; but may it be done, as now it commonly was done, by the looser sort of people, for every cause; for any cause that a man shall think fit to assign, though ever so frivolous; upon every dislike or displeasure? The toleration, in this case, permitted it, in case she found no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her, Deut. 24. 1. This they interpreted so largely as to make any disgust, though causeless, the ground of a divorce.

II. Christ's answer to this question; though it was proposed to tempt him, yet, being a case of conscience, and a weighty one, he gave a full answer to it, not a direct one, but an effectual one; laying down such principles as undeniably prove that such arbitrary divorces as were then in use, which made the matrimonial bond so very precarious, were by no means lawful. Christ himself would not give the rule without a reason, nor lay down his judgment without scripture-proof to support it. Now his argument is this; "If husband and wife are by the will and appointment of God joined together in the strictest and closest union, then they are not to be lightly, and upon every occasion, separated; if the knot be sacred, it cannot be easily untied." Now, to prove that there is such a union between man and wife, he urges three things.

1. The creation of Adam and Eve, concerning which he appeals to their own knowledge of the scriptures: *Have ye not read?* It is some advantage in arguing, to deal with those that own, and have read, the scriptures; *Ye have read* (but have not considered) *that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female*, Gen. 1. 27.—5. 2. Note, It will be of great use to us, often to think of our creation, how and by whom, what and for what, we were created. *He made them male and female, one female for one male*; so that Adam could not divorce his wife, and take another, for there was no other to take. It likewise intimated an inseparable

union between them; Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself, and contradict the manifest indications of her creation. Christ hints briefly at this, but in appealing to what they had read, he refers them to the original record, where it is observable, that, though the rest of the living creatures were made male and female, yet it is not said so concerning any of them, but only concerning mankind; because between man and woman the conjunction is rational, and intended for nobler purposes than merely the pleasing of sense and the preserving of a seed; and it is therefore more close and firm than that between male and female among the brutes, who were not capable of being such help-meets for one another as Adam and Eve were. Hence the manner of expression is somewhat singular, (Gen. 1. 27.) *In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them; him and them* are used promiscuously; being one by creation before they were two, when they became one again by marriage-covenant, that oneness could not but be closer and indissoluble.

2. The fundamental law of marriage, which is, *that a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife*, v. 5. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parents and children; now, if the filial relation may not easily be violated, much less may the marriage-union be broken. May a child desert his parents, or may a parent abandon his children, for any cause, for every cause? No, by no means. Much less may a husband put away his wife, betwixt whom, though not by nature, yet by divine appointment, the relation is nearer, and the bond of union stronger, than between parents and children; for that is in a great measure superseded by marriage, when a man must leave his parents, to cleave to his wife. See here the power of a divine institution, that the result of it is a union stronger than that which results from the highest obligations of nature.

3. The nature of the marriage-contract; it is a union of persons; *They twain shall be one flesh*, so that (v. 6.) *they are no more twain, but one flesh*. A man's children are pieces of himself, but his wife is himself. As the conjugal union is closer than that between parents and children, so it is in a manner equivalent to that between one member and another in the natural body. As this is a reason why husbands should love their wives, so it is a reason why they should not put away their wives; *for no man ever yet hated his own flesh*, or cut it off, *but nourishes and cherishes it*, and does all he can to preserve it. They two shall be one, therefore there must be but one wife, for God made but one Eve for one Adam, Mal. 2. 15.

From hence he infers, *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*. Note, (1.) Husband and wife are of God's joining together; *συνεζεύχεν—he hath yoked them together*, so the word is, and it is very significant. God himself instituted the relation between husband and wife in the state of innocence. Marriage and the sabbath are the most ancient of divine ordinances. Though marriage be not peculiar to the church, but common to the world, yet being stamped with a divine institution, and here ratified by our Lord Jesus, it ought to be managed after a godly sort, and sanctified by the word of God and prayer. A conscientious regard to God in this ordinance, would have a good influence upon the duty, and consequently upon the comfort, of the relation. (2.) Husband and wife being joined together by the ordinance of God, are not to be put asunder by any ordinance of man. Let not man put them asunder; not the husband himself, or any one for him; not the magistrate, God never gave him authority to do it. The God of Israel hath said, *that he hateth putting away*, Mal. 2. 16. It is a general

rule, that man must not go about to *put asunder what God hath joined together*.

III. An objection started by the Pharisees against this; an objection not destitute of colour and plausibility; (v. 7.) *Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement*, in case a man did put away his wife? He urged scripture reason against divorce, they allege scripture authority for it. Note, The seeming contradictions that are in the word of God, are great stumbling-blocks to men of corrupt minds. It is true, *Moses was faithful to him that appointed him*, and commanded nothing but *what he received from the Lord*; but as to the thing itself, what they call a *command* was only an *allowance*, (Deut. 24. 1.) and designed rather to restrain the exorbitances of it than to give countenance to the thing itself. The Jewish doctors themselves observe such limitations in that law, that it could not be done without great deliberation. A particular reason must be assigned, the bill of divorce must be written, and, as a judicial act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself, and (which would oblige men, if they had any consideration in them, to consider) they were expressly forbidden ever to come together again.

IV. Christ's answer to this objection, in which,

1. He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a *command*, Christ calls it but a *permission*, a *toleration*. Carnal hearts will take an ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law, which God gave, as the Governor of that people; and it was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage-union being the result, not of a natural, but of a positive, law, the wisdom of God dispensed with divorces in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness.

But Christ tells them there was a reason for this toleration, not at all for their credit; *it was because of the hardness of your hearts*, that you were permitted to *put away your wives*. Moses complained of the people of Israel in his time, that *their hearts were hardened*, (Deut. 9. 6.—31. 27.) hardened against God; this is here meant of their being hardened against their relations; they were generally violent and outrageous, which way soever they took, both in their appetites and in their passions; and therefore if they had not been allowed to put away their wives, when they had conceived a dislike of them, they would have used them cruelly, would have beaten and abused them, and perhaps have murdered them. Note, There is not a greater piece of hard-heartedness in the world, than for a man to be harsh and severe with his own wife. The Jews, it seems, were infamous for this, and therefore were allowed to put them away; better divorce them than do worse, than that *the altar of the Lord should be covered with tears*, Mal. 2. 13. A little compliance, to humour a madman, or a man in a phrenzy, may prevent a greater mischief. Positive laws may be dispensed with for the preservation of the law of nature, for *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice*; but then those are hard-hearted wretches, who have made it necessary; and none can wish to have the liberty of divorce, without virtually owning the hardness of their hearts. Observe, He saith, It is for the hardness of *your* hearts, not only theirs who lived then, but all their seed. Note, God not only sees, but foresees, the hardness of men's hearts; he suited both the ordinances and providences of the Old Testament to the temper of that people, both in terror. Further observe, The law of Moses considered the hardness of men's hearts, but the gospel of Christ cures it; and his grace *takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh*. By the law was the knowledge of sin, but by the gospel was the conquest of it.

2. He reduces them to the original institution; *But from the beginning it was not so.* Note, Corruptions that are crept into any ordinance of God, must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. If the copy be vicious, it must be examined and corrected by the original. Thus, when St. Paul would redress the grievances in the church of Corinth about the Lord's supper, he appealed to the appointment, (1 Cor. 11. 23.) So and so *I received from the Lord.* Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore inquire for the good old way, (Jer. 6. 16,) and must reform, not by latter patterns, but by ancient rules.

3. He settles the point by an express law; *I say unto you;* (v. 9.) and it agrees with what he said before; (ch. 5. 32.) there it was said in preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,

(1.) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, *They two shall be one flesh.* If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, Deut. 22. 22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word *porneia*—fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce.

(2.) He disallows it in all other cases; *Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery.* This is a direct answer to their query, that it is lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel-times are *times of reformation*, Heb. 9. 10. The law of Christ tends to re-instate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend christianity is to our secular interests.

The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men's hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart may justly be expected among them, that they will not be hard-hearted, like Jews, *for God has called us to peace.* There will be no occasion for divorces, if we *forbear one another, and forgive one another, in love*, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to put us away, Isa. 50. 1. No need of divorces, if *husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life*; and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses.

V. Here is a suggestion of the disciples against this law of Christ; (v. 10.) *If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry.* It seems, the disciples themselves were loath to give up the liberty of divorce, thinking it a good expedient for preserving comfort in the married state; and therefore, like sullen children, if they may not have what they would have, they will throw away what they have. If they may not be allowed to put away their wives when they please, they will have no wives at all; though, from the beginning, when no divorce was allowed, God said, *It is not good for man to be alone, and blessed them*, pronounced them blessed, who were thus strictly joined together; yet, unless they may have a liberty of divorce, they think it is good for a man not to marry. Note, 1. Corrupt na-

ture is impatient of restraint, and would fain break Christ's bonds in sunder, and have a liberty for its own lusts. 2. It is a foolish, peevish thing for men to abandon the comforts of this life, because of the crosses that are commonly woven in with them. As if we must needs go out of the world, because we have not every thing to our mind in the world; or must enter into no useful calling or condition, because it is made our duty to abide in it. No, whatever our condition is, we must bring our minds to it, be thankful for its comforts, submissive to its crosses, and, as God has done, *set the one over against the other*, and make the best of that which is, Eccl. 7. 14. If the yoke of marriage may not be thrown off at pleasure, it does not follow that *therefore* we must not come under it; but *therefore*, when we do come under it, we must resolve to comport with it, by love, and meekness, and patience, which will make divorce the most unnecessary, undesirable thing that can be.

VI. Christ's answer to this suggestion, (v. 11, 12.) in which,

1. He allows it good for some not to marry; *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.* Christ allowed what the disciples said, *It is good not to marry*; not as an objection against the prohibition of divorce, as they intended it, but as giving them a rule, (perhaps no less displeasing to them,) that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single; (1 Cor. 7. 1.) for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more *for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord*, (1 Cor. 7. 32, 34.) being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, is to be preferred before any other fellowship.

2. He disallows it, as utterly mischievous, to forbid marriage, because *all men cannot receive this saying*; indeed few can, and therefore the crosses of the married state must be borne, rather than that men should run themselves into temptation, to avoid them; *better marry than burn.*

Christ here speaks of a two-fold unaptness to marriage:

(1.) That which is a calamity by the providence of God; such as those labour under, who are born eunuchs, or made so by men, who, being incapable of answering one great end of marriage, ought not to marry. But to that calamity let them oppose the opportunity that there is in the single state, of serving God better, to balance it.

(2.) That which is a virtue by the grace of God; such is theirs who *have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.* This is meant of an unaptness for marriage, not in body, (which some, through mistake of this scripture, have foolishly and wickedly brought upon themselves,) but in mind. Those have thus made themselves eunuchs, who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God's grace, wholly to abstain from them; and by fasting, and other instances of mortification, have subdued all desires toward them. These are they that *can receive this saying*; and yet these are not to bind themselves by a vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.

Now, [1.] This affection to the single state must be given of God; for none can receive it, *save them to whom it is given.* Note, Continence is a special gift of God to some, and not to others; and when a man, in the single state, finds, by experience, that he has this gift, he may determine with himself, and

(as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 7. 37.) stand steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, that he will keep himself so. But men, in this case, must take heed lest they boast of a false gift, Prov. 25. 14.

[2.] The single state must be chosen for the kingdom of heaven's sake; in those who resolve never to marry, only that they may save charges, or may gratify a morose, selfish humour, or have a greater liberty to serve other lusts and pleasures, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is an ill-natured vice; but when it is for religion's sake, not as in itself a meritorious act, (which the papists make it,) but only as a means to keep our minds more entire for, and more intent upon, the services of religion, and having no families to provide for, we may do the more in works of charity, then it is approved and accepted of God. Note, That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and stuck to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to the preparing of us for, and the preserving of us to, the kingdom of heaven.

13. Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15. And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

We have here the welcome which Christ gave to some little children that were brought to him. Observe,

1. The faith of those that brought them. How many they were, that were brought, we are not told; but they were so little as to be taken up in arms, a year old, it may be, or two at most. The account here given of it, is, that *there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray*, v. 13. Probably they were their parents, guardians, or nurses, that brought them; and herein, 1. They testified their respect to Christ, and the value they had for his favour and blessing. Note, Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should further glorify him by bringing all they have, or have influence upon, to him likewise. Thus give him the honour of his unsearchable riches of grace, his over-flowing, never-failing fulness. We cannot better honour Christ than by making use of him. 2. They did a kindness to their children, not doubting but they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus, whom they looked upon at least as an extraordinary Person, as a Prophet, if not as a Priest and King; and the blessings of such were valued and desired. Others brought their children to Christ, to be healed when they were sick; but these children were under no present malady, only they desired a blessing for them. Note, It is a good thing when we come to Christ ourselves, and bring our children to him, before we are driven to him (as we say) by woe-need; not only to visit him when we are in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in a sense of our general dependence on him, and of the benefit we expect by him, this is pleasing to him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used, especially in paternal blessing; Jacob used it when he blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph, Gen. 48. 14. It intimates something of love and familiarity mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Whom Christ prays for in heaven, he *puts his hand upon* by his Spirit. Note, (1.) Little children may be brought to Christ as need-

ing, and being capable of receiving, blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession. (2.) Therefore they should be brought to him. We can not do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be wrought upon, and prayed for, by him. We can but beg a blessing for them, it is Christ only that can command the blessing.

II. The fault of the disciples in rebuking them. They discontenanced the address as vain and frivolous, and reproved them that made it as impertinent and troublesome. Either they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular ailed them; or they thought he had toil enough with his other work, and would not have diverted him from it; or, they thought if such an address as this were encouraged, all the country would bring their children to him, and they should never see an end of it. Note, It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing, well-meaning souls in their inquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If he do not break the bruised reed, *we* should not. Those that seek unto Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men, who think they know the mind of Christ better than they do.

III. The favour of our Lord Jesus. See how he carried it here.

1. He rebuked the disciples; (v. 14.) *Suffer little children, and forbid them not*; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Note, (1.) The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in *disposition and affection*, (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to him,) but of such in *age*, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church-membership, as among the Jews of old. *The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed*. (2.) That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this, [1.] In respect to the little children themselves, whom he has upon all occasions expressed a concern for; and who, having participated of the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would come of the apostle's parallel, 1 Cor. 15. 22. Rom. 5. 14, 15, &c. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out. [2.] With an eye to the faith of the parents that brought them, and presented them as living sacrifices. Parents are trustees of their children's wills, are empowered by nature to transact for their benefit; and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed, and will own these dedicated things in the day he makes up his jewels. [3.] Therefore he takes it ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received; who cast them out from the inheritance of the Lord, and say, *Ye have no part in the Lord*; (see Josh. 22. 27.) and who forbid water, that they should be baptized, who, if that promise be fulfilled, (Isa. 44. 3.) *have received the Holy Ghost as well as we*, for aught we know.

2. *He received the little children*, and did as he was desired; *he laid his hands on them*, that is, *he blessed them*. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended of him, (Phil. 3. 12.) not so much by knowing God as by being known of him; (Gal. 4. 9.) and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

Methodists think it has something observable in it, that, when he had done this, he departed thence, v. 5. As if he reckoned he had done enough there, when he had thus asserted the rights of the lambs of his flock, and made this provision for a succession of subjects in his kingdom.

16. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17. And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. 18. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness; 19. Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? 21. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. 22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Here is an account of what passed between Christ and a hopeful young gentleman that addressed himself to him upon a serious errand; he is said to be a *young man*; (v. 22.) and I called him a *gentleman*, not only because he had great possessions, but because he was a ruler, (Luke 18. 18.) a magistrate, a justice of peace in his country; it is probable that he had abilities beyond his years, else his youth would have debared him from the magistracy.

Now concerning this young gentleman, we are told how fair he bid for heaven, and came short.

I. How fair he bid for heaven, and how kindly and tenderly Christ treated him, in favour to good beginnings. Here is,

1. The gentleman's serious address to Jesus Christ; (v. 16.) *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Not a better question could be asked, nor more gracefully.

(1.) He gives Christ an honourable title, *Good Master*—*Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθὲ*. It signifies not a ruling, but a teaching, Master. His calling him, *Master*, bespeaks his submissiveness, and willingness to be taught; and *good Master*, his affection and peculiar respect to the Teacher, like that of Nicodemus, *Thou art a Teacher come from God*. We read not of any that addressed themselves to Christ more respectfully than that master in Israel and this ruler. It is a good thing when men's quality and dignity increase their civility and courtesy. It was gentleman-like to give this title of respect to Christ, notwithstanding the present meanness of his appearance. It was not usual among the Jews to accost their teachers with the title of *good*; and therefore this bespeaks the uncommon respect he had for Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is a good master, the best of teachers; none teaches like him; he is distinguished for his goodness, for he can have compassion on the ignorant; he is meek and lowly in heart.

(2.) He comes to him upon an errand of importance, (none could be more so,) and he came not to tempt him, but sincerely desiring to be taught by him. His question is, *What good thing shall I*

do, that I may have eternal life? By this it appears, [1.] That he had a firm belief of eternal life; he was no Sadducee. He was convinced that there is a happiness prepared for those in the other world, who are prepared for it in this world. [2.] That he was concerned to make it sure to himself that he should live eternally, and was desirous of that life more than of any of the delights of this life. It was a rare thing for one of his age and quality to appear so much in care about another world. The rich are apt to think it below them to make such an inquiry as this; and young people think it time enough yet; but here was a young man, and a rich man, solicitous about his soul and eternity. [3.] That he was sensible something must be done, some good thing, for the attainment of this happiness. It is by *patient continuance in well-doing*, that we seek for immortality, Rom. 2. 7. We must be doing, and doing that which is good. The blood of Christ is the only purchase of eternal life, (he merited it for us,) but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to it, Heb. 5. 9. [4.] That he was, or at least thought himself, willing to do what was to be done for the obtaining of this eternal life. Those that know what it is to have eternal life, and what it is to come short of it, will be glad to accept of it upon any terms. Such a holy violence does the kingdom of heaven suffer. Note, While there are many that say, *Who will show us any good?* our great inquiry should be, *What shall we do, that we may have eternal life?* What shall we do, to be for ever happy, happy in another world? For this world has not that in it, that will make us happy.

2. The encouragement that Jesus Christ gave to this address. It is not his manner to send any away without an answer, that come to him on such an errand, for nothing pleases him more, v. 17. In his answer,

(1.) He tenderly assists his faith; for, doubtless, he did not mean it for a reproof, when he said, *Why callest thou me good?* But he would seem to find that faith in what he said, when he called him *good Master*, which the gentleman perhaps was not conscious to himself of; he intended no more than to own and honour him as a good man, but Christ would lead him to own and honour him as a good God; for *there is none good but one, that is God*. Note, As Christ is graciously ready to make the best that he can of what is said or done amiss; so he is ready to make the most that can be of what is well said and well done. His constructions are often better than our intentions; as in that, *"I was hungry, and you gave me meat"*, though you little thought it was to me. Christ will have this young man either know him to be God, or not call him *good*; to teach us to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time given to us. Do any call us *good*? Let us tell them all goodness is from God, and therefore not to us, but to him give glory. All crowns must lie before his throne. Note, God only is good, and there is none essentially, originally, and unchangeably good, but God only. His goodness is of and from himself, and all the goodness in the creature is from him; he is the Fountain of Goodness, and whatever the streams are, *all the springs are in him*, Jam. 1. 17. He is the great Pattern and Sample of goodness, by him all goodness is to be measured; that is good, which is like him, and agreeable to his mind. We in our language call him *God*, because he is good. In this, as in other things, our Lord Jesus was *the Brightness of his glory*, (and his goodness is his glory,) and the *express Image of his person*, and therefore fitly called *good Master*.

(2.) He plainly directs his practice, in answer to his question. He started that thought of his being good, and therefore God, but did not stay upon it, lest he should seem to divert from, and so to drop the main question, as many do in needless disputes and

strifes of words. Now Christ's answer is, in short, this, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

[1.] The end proposed is, entering into life. The young man, in his question, spake of eternal life. Christ, in his answer, speaks of *life*; to teach us, that eternal life is the only true life. The words concerning that are the words of *this life*, Acts 5. 20. The present life scarcely deserves the name of life, for *in the midst of life we are in death*. Or, into life, that spiritual life which is the beginning and earnest of eternal life. He desired to know how he might have eternal life; Christ tells him how he might enter into it: we have it by the merit of Christ, a mystery which was not as yet fully revealed, and therefore Christ waves that; but the way of entering into it, is, by obedience, and Christ directs us in that. By the former we make our title; by this, as by our evidence, we prove it; it is *by adding to faith virtue*, that an entrance (the word here used) is ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom, 2 Pet. 1. 5, 11. Christ, who is our Life, is the way to the Father, and to the vision and fruition of him; he is the only Way; but duty, and the obedience of faith, are the way to Christ. There is an entrance into life hereafter, at death, at the great day, a complete entrance, and those only shall then enter into life that do their duty; it is the diligent, faithful servant that shall then enter into the joy of his Lord, and that joy will be his eternal life. There is an entrance into life now; *we who have believed, do enter into rest*, Heb. 4. 3. We have peace, and comfort, and joy, in the believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, and to this also sincere obedience is indispensably necessary.

[2.] The way prescribed is, keeping the commandments. Note, Keeping the commandments of God, according as they are revealed and made known to us, is the only way to life and salvation; and sincerity herein is accepted through Christ as our gospel-perfection, provision being made of pardon, upon repentance, wherein we come short. Through Christ we are delivered from the condemning power of the law, but the commanding power of it is lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and under that, in that hand, we still are *under the law to Christ*, (1 Cor. 9. 12.) under it as a rule, though not as a covenant. *Keeping the commandments* includes *faith in Jesus Christ*, for that is the great commandment, (1 John 5. 23.) and it was one of the laws of Moses, that, when the great Prophet should be raised up, they should hear him. Observe, In order to our happiness here and forever, it is not enough for us to *know* the commandments of God, but we must *keep* them, keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule, keep them as our treasure, and with care, as the apple of our eye.

[3.] At his particular instance and request, he mentions some particular commandments which he must keep; (v. 18, 19.) *The young man saith unto him, Which?* Note, Those that would do the commandments of God, must seek them diligently, and enquire after them, what they are. Ezra set himself to seek the law, and to do it, Ezra 7. 10. "There were many commandments in the law of Moses; good Master, let me know which those are, the keeping of which is necessary to salvation."

In answer to this, Christ specifies several, especially the commandments of the second table. *First*, That which concerns our own and our neighbour's life; *Thou shalt do no murder*. *Secondly*, Our own and our neighbour's chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. *Thirdly*, Our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; *Thou shalt not steal*. *Fourthly*, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour's good name; *Thou shalt not bear false witness*,

neither *for thyself* nor *against thy neighbour*; for so it is here left at large. *Fifthly*, That which concerns the duties of particular relations; *Honour thy father and mother*. *Sixthly*, That comprehensive law of love, which is the spring and summary of all these duties, whence they all flow, on which they are all founded, and in which they are all fulfilled; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, (Gal. 5. 14. Rom. 13. 9.) that royal law, Jam. 2. 8. Some think this comes in here, not as the sum of the second table, but as the particular import of the tenth commandment; *Thou shalt not covet*, which, in Mark, is, *Defraud not*; intimating that it is not lawful for me to design advantage or gain to myself by the diminution or loss of another; for that is to covet, and to love myself better than my neighbour, whom I ought to love as myself, and to treat as I would myself be treated.

Our Saviour here specifies second-table duties only; not as if the first were of less account, but, 1. Because they that now sat in Moses's seat, either wholly neglected, or greatly corrupted, these precepts in their preaching. While they pressed the tithing of *mint, anise, and cummin, judgment, and mercy, and faith*, the summary of second-table duties, were overlooked, ch. 23. 23. Their preaching ran out all in rituals, and nothing in morals; and therefore Christ pressed that most, which they least insisted on. As one truth, so one duty, must not jostle out another, but each must know its place, and be kept in it; but equity requires that that be helped up, which is most in danger of being thrust out. That is the present truth which we are called to bear our testimony to, not only which is opposed, but which is neglected. 2. Because he would teach him, and us all, that moral honesty is a necessary branch of true christianity, and to be minded accordingly. Though a mere moral man comes short of being a complete christian, yet an immoral man is certainly no true christian; for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. Nay, though first-table duties have in them more of the essence of religion, yet second-table duties have in them more of the evidence of it. Our light *burns* in love to God, but it *shines* in love to our neighbour.

II. See here how he came short, though he bid thus fair, and wherein he failed; he failed by two things.

1. By pride, and a vain conceit of his own merit and strength; this is the ruin of thousands, who keep themselves miserable by fancying themselves happy. When Christ told him what commandments he must keep, he answered very scornfully, *All these things have I kept from my youth up*, v. 20.

Now, (1.) According as he understood the law, as prohibiting only the outward acts of sin, I am apt to think that he said true, and Christ knew it, for he did not contradict him; nay, it is said in Mark, *He loved him*; so far was very good and pleasing to Christ. St. Paul reckons it a privilege, not contemptible in itself, though it was dress in comparison with Christ, that he was, *as touching the righteousness that is in the law, blameless*, Phil. 3. 6. His observance of these commands was universal; *All these have I kept*; it was early and constant; *from my youth up*. Note, A man may be free from gross sin, and yet come short of grace and glory. His hands may be clean from external pollutions, and yet he may perish eternally in his heart-wickedness. What shall we think then of those who do not attain to this; whose fraud and injustice, drunkenness and uncleanness, witness against them, that all these they have broken from their youth up, though they have named the name of Christ? Well, it is sad to come short of those that come short of heaven.

It was commendable also, that he desired to know

further what his duty was; *What lack I yet?* He was convinced that he wanted something to fill up his works before God, and was therefore desirous to know it, because, if he was not mistaken in himself, he was willing to do it. Having not yet attained, he thus seemed to press forward. And he applied himself to Christ, whose doctrine was supposed to improve and perfect the Mosaic institution. He desired to know what were the peculiar precepts of his religion, that he might have all that was in them to polish and accomplish him. Who could bid fairer?

But (2.) Even in this that he said, he discovered his ignorance and folly. [1.] Taking the law in its spiritual sense, as Christ expounded it, no doubt, in many things he had offended against all these commands. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual meaning of the law, instead of saying, *All these have I kept; what lack I yet?* he would have said, with shame and sorrow, "All these have I broken, what shall I do to get my sins pardoned?" [2.] Take it how you will, what he said savoured of pride and vain-glory, and had in it too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith, (Rom. 3. 27.) and which excludes from justification, Luke 18. 11, 14. He valued himself too much, as the Pharisees did, upon the plausibleness of his profession before men, and was proud of that, which spoiled the acceptableness of it. That word, *What lack I yet?* perhaps was not so much a desire of further instruction, as a demand of the praise of his present fancied perfection, and a challenge to Christ himself to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient.

2. He came short by an inordinate love of the world, and his enjoyments in it. This was the fatal rock on which he split. Observe,

(1.) How he was tried in this matter; (v. 21.) *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast.* Christ waved the matter of his boasted obedience to the law, and let that drop, because this would be a more effectual way of discovering him than a dispute of the extent of the law. "Come," saith Christ, "if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt approve thyself sincere in thine obedience," (for sincerity is our gospel-perfection,) "if thou wilt come up to that which Christ has added to the law of Moses, if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt *enter into life*, and so be perfectly happy;" for that which Christ here prescribes, is not a thing of supererogation, or a perfection we may be saved without; but in the main scope and intendment of it, it is our necessary and indispensable duty. What Christ said to him, he thus far said to us all, that, if we will approve ourselves christians indeed, and would be found at last the heirs of eternal life, we must do these two things.

[1.] We must practically prefer the heavenly treasures before all the wealth and riches in this world. That glory must have the pre-eminence in our judgment and esteem before this glory. No thanks to us to prefer heaven before hell; the worst man in the world would be glad that Jerusalem for a refuge when he can stay no longer here, and to have it in reserve; but to make it our choice, and to prefer it before this earth—that is to be a christian indeed. Now, as an evidence of this, *First*, We must dispose of what we have in this world, for the honour of God, and in his service; "*Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor.*" If the occasions of charity be very pressing, sell thy possessions, that thou mayst have to give them that need; as the first christians did, with an eye to this precept, Acts 4. 34. Sell what thou canst spare for pious uses, all thy superfluities; if thou canst not otherwise do good with it, sell it. Sit loose to it, be willing to part with it for the honour of God, and the relief of the poor." A gracious contempt of the world, and compassion of the

poor and afflicted ones in it, are in all a necessary condition of salvation; and in those that have wherewithal, giving of alms is as necessary an evidence of that contempt of the world, and compassion to our brethren; by this the trial will be at the great day, ch. 25. 35. Though many that call themselves christians, do not act as if they believed it, it is certain that, when we embrace Christ, we must let go the world, for we cannot serve God and mammon. Christ knew that covetousness was the sin that did most easily beset this young man; that though what he had he had got honestly, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this he discovered his insincerity. This command was like the call to Abraham, *Get thee out of thy country, to a land that I will show thee.* As God tries believers by their strongest graces, so hypocrites by their strongest corruptions. *Secondly*, We must depend upon what we hope for in the other world, as an abundant recompense for all we have left, or lost, or laid out, for God in this world; *Thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* We must, in the way of chargeable duty, trust God for a happiness out of sight, which will make us rich amends for all our expenses in God's service. The precept sounded hard and harsh; "Sell that thou hast, and give it away;" and the objection against it would soon arise, that "Charity begins at home;" therefore Christ immediately annexes this assurance of a treasure in heaven. Note, Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke not only tolerable, but pleasant, and sweet, and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of this young man's faith, as the precept was of his charity; and contempt of the world.

[2.] We must devote ourselves entirely to the conduct and government of our Lord Jesus; *Come, and follow me.* It seems here to be meant of a close and constant attendance upon his person, such as the selling of what he had in the world was as necessary to as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of us it is required that we follow Christ, that we duly attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals, and by upright and universal obedience to observe his statutes, and keep his laws; and all this from a principle of love to him, and dependence on him, and with a holy contempt of every thing else in comparison of him, and much more in competition with him. This is to *follow Christ fully*. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Well, on these terms, and on no lower, is salvation to be had; and they are very easy and reasonable terms, and will appear so to those who are brought to be glad of it upon any terms.

(2.) See how he was discovered. This touched him in a tender part; (v. 22.) *When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

[1.] He was a rich man, and loved his riches, and therefore went away. He did not like eternal life upon these terms. Note, *First*, Those who have much in the world, are in the greatest temptation to love it, and to set their hearts upon it. Such is the bewitching nature of worldly wealth, that those who want it least, desire it most; when riches increase, then is the danger of setting the heart upon them, Ps. 62. 10. If he had had but two mites in all the world, and had been commanded to give them to the poor, or but one handful of meal in the sabbath, and a little oil in the cruse, and had been bidden to make a cake of that for a poor prophet, the trial, one would think, had been much greater, and yet those trials have been overcome; (Luke 21. 4, and 1 Kings 17. 14.) which shows that the love of the world draws stronger than the most pressing neces-

sities. *Secondly*, The reigning love of this world keeps many from Christ, who seem to have some good desires toward him. A great estate, as to those who are got above it, is a great furtherance; so to those who are entangled in the love of it, it is a great hinderance, in the way to heaven.

Yet something of honesty there was in it, that when he did not like the terms, he went away, and would not pretend to that which he could not find in his heart to come up to the strictness of; better so, than do as Demas did, who, *having known the way of righteousness*, afterward turned aside, out of love to this present world, to the greater scandal of profession; since he could not be a complete christian he would not be a hypocrite.

[2.] Yet he was a thinking man, and well inclined, and therefore *went away sorrowful*. He had a leaning toward Christ, and was loath to part with him. Note, Many a one is ruined by the sin he commits with reluctance; leaves Christ sorrowfully, and yet is never truly sorry for leaving him, for, if he were, he would return to him. Thus this man's wealth was *revelation of spirit* to him, then when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone too?

23. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24. And again I say unto you, 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. 25. When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? 26. But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. 27. Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore? 28. And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. 30. But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon occasion of the rich man's breaking with Christ.

I. Christ took occasion from thence to show the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, v. 23. 26.

1. That it is a very hard thing for a rich man to get to heaven, such a rich man as this here. Note, From the harms and fells of others it is good for us to infer that which will be of caution to us.

Now, (1.) This is vehemently asserted by our Saviour, v. 23, 24. He said this to his disciples, who were poor, and had but little in the world, to reconcile them to their condition with this, that the less they had of worldly wealth, the less hinderance they had in the way to heaven. Note, It should be

a satisfaction to them who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition: if they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if withal they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. This saying is ratified, v. 23. *Verily I say unto you*. He that has reason to know what the way to heaven is, for he has laid it open, he tells us that this is one of the greatest difficulties in that way. It is repeated, v. 24. *Again I say unto you*. Thus he speaks once, yea, twice, that which man is loath to perceive, and more loath to believe.

[1.] He saith that it is a hard thing for a rich man to be a good christian, and to be saved; to enter into the kingdom of heaven, either here or hereafter. The way to heaven is to all a narrow way; and the gate that leads into it a strait gate; but it is particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, which they can hardly do; and more sins do easily beset them, which they can hardly avoid. Rich people have great temptations to resist, and such as are very insinuating; it is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world; very hard, when we are filled with these hid treasures, not to take up with them for a portion. Rich people have a great account to make up for their estates, their interest, their time, and their opportunities of doing and getting good, above others. It must be a great measure of divine grace that will enable a man to break through these difficulties.

[2.] He saith that the conversion and salvation of a rich man is so extremely difficult, that it is *easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*, v. 24. This is a proverbial expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the art and power of man; nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. The difficulty of the salvation of apostates, (Heb. 6. 4.) and of old sinners, (Jer. 13. 23.) is thus represented as an impossibility. The salvation of any is so very difficult, (even the *righteous scarcely are saved*;) that where there is a peculiar difficulty, it is fitly set forth thus. It is very rare for a man to be rich, and not to set his heart upon his riches; and it is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches to get to heaven; for if *any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John 2. 15. James 4. 4. *First*, The way to heaven is very fitly compared to a *needle's eye*, which it is hard to hit, and hard to get through. *Secondly*, A rich man is fitly compared to a *camel*, a beast of burden, for he has riches, as a camel has his load; he carries it, but it is another's, he has it from others, spends it for others, and must shortly leave it to others; it is a burden, for *men load themselves with thick clay*, Hab. 2. 26. A camel is a large creature, but unwieldy.

(2.) This truth is very much wondered at, and scarcely credited by the disciples; (v. 25.) *They were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?* Many surprising truths Christ told them, which they were astonished at, and knew not what to make of: this was one, but their weakness was the cause of their wonder. It was not in contradiction to Christ, but for awakening to themselves, that they said, *Who then can be saved?* Note, Considering the many difficulties that are in the way of salvation, it is really strange that any are saved. When we think how good God is, it may seem a wonder that so *few* are his; but when we think how bad man is, it is more a wonder that so *many* are, and Christ will be eternally admired in them. *Who can then be saved?* Since so many are rich, and have great possessions, and so many more would be rich, and are well affected to great possessions; who can be saved? If riches are a hinderance to rich people.

are not pride and luxury incident to those that are not rich, and as dangerous to them; and who then can get to heaven? This is a good reason why rich people should strive against the stream.

2. That though it be hard, yet it is not impossible, for the rich to be saved; (*v.* 26.) *Jesus beheld them, turned and looked wistfully upon his disciples, to shame them out of their fond conceit of the advantages rich people had in spiritual things.* He beheld them as men that had got over this difficulty, and were in a fair way for heaven, and the more so because poor in this world; and he said unto them, *With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.* This is a great truth in general, that God is able to do that which quite exceeds all created power; that nothing is too hard for God, *Gen.* 18. 14. *Numb.* 11. 23. When men are at a loss, God is not, for his power is infinite and irresistible; but this truth is here applied, (1.) To the salvation of any. *Who can be saved?* say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. *With men this is impossible;* the wisdom of man would soon be nonplussed in contriving, and the power of man baffled in effecting, the salvation of a soul. No creature can work the change that is necessary to the salvation of a soul, either in itself or in any one else. With men it is impossible that so strong a stream should be turned, so hard a heart softened, so stubborn a will bowed. It is a creation, it is a resurrection, and with men this is impossible; it can never be done by philosophy, medicine, or politics; but *with God all things are possible.* Note, The beginning, progress, and perfection of the work of salvation, depend entirely upon the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Faith is wrought by that power, (*Eph.* 1. 19.) and is kept by it, *1 Pet.* 1. 5. Job's experience of God's convincing, humbling grace, made him acknowledge more than any thing else, *I know thou canst do every thing,* *Job* 42. 2. (2.) To the salvation of rich people especially; it is impossible with men that such should be saved, but with God even this is possible; not that rich people should be saved in their worldliness, but that they should be saved *from* it. Note, The sanctification and salvation of such as are surrounded with the temptations of this world are not to be despaired of; it is possible; it may be brought about by the all-sufficiency of the divine grace; and when such are brought to heaven, they will be there everlasting monuments of the power of God. I am willing to think that in this word of Christ there is an intimation of mercy Christ had yet in store for this young gentleman, who was now gone away sorrowful; it was not impossible to God yet to recover him, and bring him to a better mind.

II. Peter took occasion from hence to inquire what they should get by it, who had come up to these terms, upon which this young man broke with Christ, and had left all to follow him, *v.* 27, &c. We have here the disciples' expectations from Christ, and his promises to them.

1. We have their expectations from Christ; Peter, in the name of the rest, signifies that they depended upon him for something considerable in lieu of what they had left for him; *Behold, we have forsaken all, and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* Christ had promised the young man, that, if he would sell all, and come and follow him, he should *have treasure in heaven*: now Peter desires to know.

(1.) Whether they had sufficiently come up to those terms: they had not sold all, (for they had many of them wives and families to provide for,) but they had *forsaken all*; they had not given it to the poor, but they had renounced it as far as it might be any way a hinderance to them in serving Christ. Note, When we hear what are the characters of

those that shall be saved, it concerns us to inquire whether we, through grace, answer these characters. Now Peter hopes that, as to the main scope and intentment of the condition, they had come up to it, for God had wrought in them a holy contempt of the world and the things that are seen, in comparison with Christ and the things that are not seen; and how this must be evidenced, no certain rule can be given, but according as we are called.

Lord, saith Peter, *we have forsaken all.* Alas! it was but a poor *all* that they had forsaken; one of them had indeed quitted a place in the custom-house, but Peter and the most of them had only left a few boats and nets, and the appurtenances of a poor fishing-trade; and yet observe how Peter there speaks of it, as if it had been some mighty thing; *Behold, we have forsaken all.* Note, We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses for Christ, and to think we have made him much our Debtor. However, Christ does not upbraid them with this; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their *all*, like the widow's two mites, and was as dear to them as if it had been more, and therefore Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; for he accepts according to what a man hath.

(2.) Whether therefore they might expect that treasure which the young man shall have if he will sell all. "Lord," saith Peter, "shall we have it, who have left all?" All people are for what they can get; and Christ's followers are allowed to consult their own true interest, and to ask, *What shall we have?* Christ looked at the joy set before him, and Moses at the recompense of reward. For this end it is set before us, that by a patient continuance in well-doing we might seek for it. Christ encourages us to ask what we shall gain by leaving all to follow him; that we may see he doth not call us to our prejudice, but unspeakably to our advantage. As it is the language of an obedient faith to ask, "What shall we do?" with an eye to the precepts; so it is of a hoping, trusting faith, to ask, "What shall we have?" with an eye to the promises. But observe, the disciples had long since left all to engage themselves in the service of Christ, and yet never till now asked, *What shall we have?* Though there was no visible prospect of advantage by it, they were so well assured of his goodness, that they knew they should not lose by him at last, and therefore referred themselves to him, in what way he would make up their losses to them; minded their work, and asked not what should be their wages. Note, It honours Christ, to trust him and serve him, and not to indent with him. Now that this young man was gone from Christ to his possessions, it was time for them to think which they should take to, what they should trust to. When we see what others keep by their hypocrisy and apostasy, it is proper for us to consider what we hope, through grace, to gain, not *for*, but *by*, our sincerity and constancy, and then we shall see more reason to pity them than to envy them.

2. We have here Christ's promises to them, and to all others that tread in the steps of their faith and obedience. What there was either of vain-glory or of vain hopes in that which Peter said, Christ overlooks, and is not extreme to mark it, but takes this occasion to give the bond of a promise,

(1.) To his immediate followers, *v.* 28. They had signaled their respect to him, as the first that followed him, and to them he promises not only treasure, but honour, in heaven; and here they have a grant or patent for it from him who is the Fountain of honour in that kingdom; *Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration shall sit down upon twelve thrones.* Observe,

[1.] The preamble to the patent, or the *con-*

duration of the grant, which, as usual, is a recital of their services; "You have followed me in the regeneration, and therefore this will I do for you." The time of Christ's appearing in this world was a time of regeneration, of reformation, (Heb. 9. 10.) when old things began to pass away, and all things to look new. The disciples had followed Christ when the church was yet in the embryo state, when the gospel-temple was but in the framing, when they had more of the work and service of apostles than of the dignity and power that belonged to their office. Now they followed Christ with constant fatigue, when few did; and therefore on them he will put particular marks of honour. Note, Christ hath special favour for those who begin early with him, who trust him further than they can see him, as they did, who *followed him in the regeneration*. Observe, Peter spake of their forsaking *all*, to follow him; Christ only speaks of their *following* him, which was the main matter.

[2.] The date of their honour, which fixes the time when it should commence; not immediately from the day of the date of *these presents*, no, they must continue a while in obscurity, as they were. But *when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory*; and to this some refer that, *in the regeneration*; "You who now have followed me, shall, in the regeneration, be thus dignified." Christ's second coming will be a regeneration, when there shall be *new heavens, and a new earth, and the restitution of all things*. All that partake of the regeneration in grace, (John 3. 3.) shall partake of the regeneration in glory; for as grace is the first resurrection, (Rev. 20. 6.) so glory is the second regeneration.

Now their honour being adjourned till the Son of man's sitting in the throne of his glory, intimates, *First*, That they must stay for their advancement till then. Note, As long as our Master's glory is delayed, it is fit that ours should be so too, and that we should wait for it with an earnest expectation, as of a *hope not seen*, Rom. 8. 19. We must live, and work, and suffer, in faith, and hope, and patience, which therefore must be tried by these delays. *Secondly*, That they must share with Christ in his advancement; their honour must be a communion with him in his honour. They, having suffered with a suffering Jesus, must reign with a reigning Jesus, for both here and hereafter Christ will be *all in all*; we must be *where he is*, (John 12. 26.) must *appear with him*; (Col. 3. 4.) and this will be an abundant recompense not only for our loss, but for the delay; and when our Lord comes, we shall receive not only *our own*, but *our own with usury*. The longest voyages make the richest returns.

[3.] The honour itself hereby granted; *Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. It is hard to determine the particular sense of this promise, and whether it was not to have many accomplishments, which I see no harm in admitting. *First*, When Christ is ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sits on the throne of his glory, there the apostles shall receive power by the Holy Ghost; (Acts 1. 8.) shall be so much advanced above themselves as they are now, that they shall think themselves upon thrones, in promoting the gospel; they shall deliver it with authority, as a judge from the bench; they shall then have their commission enlarged, and shall publish the laws of Christ, by which the church, God's spiritual Israel, (Gal. 6. 16.) shall be governed, and *Israel according to the flesh*, that continues in infidelity, with all others that do likewise, shall be condemned. The honour and power given them may be explained by Jer. 1. 10. *See, I have set thee over the nations*; and Ezek. 20. 4. *Wilt thou judge them?* and Dan. 7. 13. *The saints shall take the kingdom*;

and Rev. 12. 11. where the doctrine of Christ is called a *crown of twelve stars*. *Secondly*, When Christ appears for the destruction of Jerusalem, (ch. 24. 31.) then shall he send the apostles to judge the Jewish nation, because in that destruction their predictions, according to the word of Christ, would be accomplished. *Thirdly*, Some think it has reference to the conversion of the Jews, which is yet to come, at the latter end of the world, after the fall of antichrist; so Dr. Whitby; and that "it respects the apostles' government of the *twelve tribes of Israel*, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that Spirit which resided in them, and of that purity and knowledge which they delivered to the world, and chiefly by admission of their gospel to be the standard of their faith, and the direction of their lives." *Fourthly*, It is certainly to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the *saints* in general shall judge the world, and the twelve apostles especially, as assessors with Christ, in the judgment of the great day, when all the world shall receive their final doom, and they shall ratify and applaud the sentence. But the *tribes of Israel* are named, partly because the number of the apostles was designedly the same with the number of the tribes; partly because the apostles were Jews, befriended them most, but were most spitefully persecuted by them; and it intimates that the saints will judge their acquaintance and kindred according to the flesh, and will, in the great day, judge those they had a kindness for; will judge their persecutors, who in this world judged them.

But the general intendment of this promise is, to show the glory and dignity reserved for the saints in heaven, which will be an abundant recompense for the disgrace they suffered here in Christ's cause. There are higher degrees of glory for those that have done and suffered most. The apostles in this world were hurried and tossed, there they shall sit down at rest and ease; here *bonds, and afflictions, and deaths did abide them*, but there they shall sit on *thrones of glory*; here they were dragged to the bar, there they shall be advanced to the bench, here the twelve tribes of Israel trampled upon them, there they shall tremble before them. And will not this be recompense enough to make up all their losses and expenses for Christ? Luke 22. 29.

[4.] The ratification of this grant; it is firm, it is inviolably, immutably sure; for Christ hath said, *Verily I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness*, who am empowered to make this grant, I have said it, and it cannot be disannulled."

(2.) Here is a promise to all others that should in like manner leave all to follow Christ. It was not peculiar to the apostles, to be thus preferred, but *this honour have all his saints*. Christ will take care they shall none of them lose by him; (v. 29.) *Every one that has forsaken any thing for Christ, shall receive*.

[1.] Losses for Christ are here supposed. Christ had told them that his disciples must deny themselves in all that is done to them in this world; now here he specifies particulars; for it is good to count upon the worst. If they have not forsaken all, as the apostles did, yet they have forsaken a great deal, houses suppose, and have turned themselves out, to wander in deserts; or dear relations, that would not go with them, to follow Christ; these are particularly mentioned, as hardest for a tender, gracious spirit to part with; *brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children*; and *lands* are added in the close, the profits of which were the support of the family.

Now, *First*, The loss of these things is supposed to be for Christ's name's sake; else he doth not oblige himself to make it up. Many forsake brethren, and wife, and children, in humour and passion, as

the bird that wanders from her nest; that is a sinful desertion. But if we forsake them for Christ's sake, because we cannot keep them, and keep a good conscience, we must either quit them, or quit our interest in Christ; if we do not quit our concern for them, or our duty to them, but our comfort in them, and will do it rather than deny Christ, and this with an eye to him and to his will and glory, this is that which shall be thus recompensed. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes both the martyr and the confessor.

Secondly, It is supposed to be a great loss; and yet Christ undertakes to make it up, for he is able to do it, be it ever so great. See the barbarity of the persecutors, that they stripped innocent people of all they had, for no other crime than their adherence to Christ! See the patience of the persecuted; and the strength of their love to Christ, which was such as all these waters could not quench!

[2.] A recompense of these losses is here secured. Thousands have dealt with Christ, and have trusted him far; but never any one lost by him, never any one but was an unspeakable gainer by him, when the account came to be balanced. Christ here gives his word for it, that he will not only indemnify his suffering servants, and save them harmless, but will abundantly reward them. Let them make a schedule of their losses for Christ, and they shall be sure to receive,

First, A hundred-fold in this life: sometimes in kind, in the things themselves which they have parted with. God will raise up for his suffering servants more friends, that will be so to them for Christ's sake, than they have left that were so for their own sakes. The apostles, wherever they came, met with those that were kind to them, and entertained them, and opened their hearts and doors to them. However, they *shall receive a hundred-fold in kindness*, in those things that are abundantly better and more valuable. Their graces shall increase, their comforts abound, they shall have tokens of God's love, more free communion with him, more full communications from him, clearer foresights, and sweeter foretastes, *of the glory to be revealed*; and then they may truly say, they have received a hundred times more comfort in God and Christ than they could have had in wife or children.

Secondly, Eternal life at last. The former is reward enough, if there were no more; cent. per cent. is great profit; what then is a hundred to one? But this comes in over and above, as it were, into the bargain. The *life* here promised includes in it all the comforts of life in the highest degree, and all *eternal*. Now if we could but mix faith with the promise, and trust Christ for the performance of it, surely we should think nothing too much to do, nothing too hard to suffer, nothing too dear to part with, for him.

Our Saviour, in the last verse, obviates a mistake of some, as if pre-eminence in glory went by precedence in time, rather than the measure and degree of grace. No; *many that are first, shall be last, and the last, first*, v. 30. God will cross hands; will *reveal that to babes*, which he *hid from the wise and prudent*; will reject unbelieving Jews, and receive believing Gentiles. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly inheritances commonly are, by seniority of age, and priority of birth, but according to God's pleasure. This is the text of another sermon, which we shall meet with in the next chapter.

CHAP. XX.

We have four things in this chapter: I. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard, v. 1. . 16. II. A prediction of Christ's approaching sufferings, v. 16. . 19. III. The petition of two of the disciples, by their mother, reproved, v. 20. . 28. IV. The petition of the two blind men granted, and their eyes opened, v. 29. . 31.

1. **F**OR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place. 4. And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. 5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7. They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive. 8. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9. And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11. And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the good man of the house. 12. Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14. Take *that* thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. 15. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? 16. So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

This parable of the labourers in the vineyard is intended,

I. To represent to us *the kingdom of heaven*, (v. 1.) that is, the way and the method of the gospel-dispensation. The laws of that kingdom are not wrapt up in parables, but plainly set down, as in the sermon upon the mount; but the mysteries of that kingdom are delivered in parables, in sacraments, as here and *ch.* 13. The duties of christianity are more necessary to be known than the notions of it; and yet the notions of it are more necessary to be illustrated than the duties of it; which is that which parables are designed for.

II. In particular, to represent to us that concerning the kingdom of heaven, which he had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, that *many that are first shall be last, and the last, first*; with which this parable is connected; that truth, having in it a seeming contradiction, needed farther explication.

Nothing was more a mystery in the gospel-dispensation than the rejection of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles; so the apostle speaks of it; (Eph. 3. 3—6.) that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs: nor was any thing more provoking to the Jews than the intimation of it. Now this seems to be the principal scope of this parable, to show that the Jews should be first called into the vineyard, and many of them should come at the call; but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be *fellow-citizens with the saints*, which the Jews, even those of them that believed, would be very much disgusted at, but without reason.

But the parable may be applied more generally, and shows us, 1. That God is Debtor to no man; a great truth, which the contents in our Bible give as the scope of this parable. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at greater attainments in knowledge, grace, and usefulness, than others whose entrance was more early, and who promised fairer. Though Cushi gets the start of Ahimaaz, yet Ahimaaz, choosing *the way of the plain*, outruns Cushi. John is swifter of foot, and comes *first to the sepulchre*; but Peter has more courage, and goes *first into it*. Thus *many that are last, shall be first*. Some make it a caution to the disciples, who had boasted of their timely and zealous embracing of Christ; they had left all to follow him; but let them look to it, that they keep up their zeal; let them press forward and persevere; else their good beginnings will avail them little; they that seemed to be *first*, would be *last*. Sometimes those that are converted later in their lives, outstrip those that are converted earlier. Paul was *as one born out of due time, yet came not behind the chiefest of the apostles*, and outdid those that were in Christ before him. Something of affinity there is between this parable and that of the prodigal son, where he that returned from his wandering, was as dear to his father as he was, that never went astray; *first and last alike*. 3. That the *recompense of reward* will be given to the saints, not according to the time of their conversion, but according to the preparations for it by grace in this world; not according to the seniority, (as Gen. 43. 33.) but *according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. Christ had promised the apostles, who followed him in the *regeneration*, at the beginning of the gospel-dispensation, great glory; (ch. 19. 28.) but he now tells them that those who are in like manner faithful to him, even in the latter end of the world, shall have the same reward, shall *sit with Christ on his throne*, as well as the apostles, Rev. 2. 26.—3. 21. Sufferers for Christ in the latter days shall have the same reward with the martyrs and confessors of the primitive times, though they are more celebrated; and faithful ministers now, the same with the first fathers.

We have two things in the parable; the *agreement* with the labourers, and the *account* with them.

(1.) Here is the agreement made with the labourers; (v. 1—7.) and here it will be asked, as usual,

[1.] Who hires them? *A man that is a householder*. God is the great Householder, *whose we are, and whom we serve*; as a householder, he has work that he will have to be done, and servants that he will have to be doing; he has a great family in heaven and earth, which is named from Jesus Christ, (Eph. 3. 16.) which he is Owner and Ruler of. God hires labourers, not because he needs them or their services, (for, *if we be righteous, what do we unto him?*) but as some charitable, generous householders keep poor men to work, in kindness to them, to save them from idleness and poverty, and pay them for working for themselves.

[2.] Whence they are hired? Out of the *market-place*, where, till they are hired into God's service, they *stand idle*, (v. 3.) *all the day idle*, v. 6. Note, *First*, The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was (as all the creatures were) created to work, and is either a *servant to iniquity*, or a *servant to righteousness*, Rom. 6. 19. The devil, by his temptations, is *hiring labourers into his field, to feed swine*; God, by his gospel, is *hiring labourers into his vineyard, to dress it, and keep it, paradise-work*. We are put to our choice; for hired we must be; (Josh. 24. 15.) *Choose ye this day whom you will serve*. *Secondly*, Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called a *state of idleness*; sinners are doing nothing, nothing to the purpose, nothing of the great work they were sent into the world about, nothing that will pass well in the account. *Thirdly*, The gospel-call is given to those that *stand idle in the market-place*. The market-place is a *place of concourse*, and there *wisdom cries*: (Prov. 1. 20, 21.) it is a place of sport, there the *children are playing*; (ch. 11. 16.) and the gospel calls us from vanity to seriousness; it is a place of business, of noise and hurry; and from that we are called to retire. "Come, come from this market-place."

[3.] What are they hired to do? To labour in his vineyard. Note, *First*, The church is God's vineyard; it is of his planting, watering, and fencing; and the fruits of it must be to his honour and praise. *Secondly*, We are all called upon to be labourers in this vineyard. The work of religion is vineyard-work, pruning, dressing, digging, watering, fencing, weeding. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God's, and to be kept and dressed for him. In this work we must not be slothful, not loiterers, but *labourers*, working, and *working out our own salvation*. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell; but he that will go to heaven, must be busy.

[4.] What shall be their wages? He promises, *First, A penny*, v. 2. The Roman penny was, in our money, of the value of sevenpence halfpenny, a day's wages for a day's work, and the wages sufficient for the day's maintenance. This doth not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of *works, or of debt*, (no, it is of *grace, free grace*, Rom. 4. 4.) or that there is any proportion between our services and heaven's glories; no, when we have done all, *we are unprofitable servants*; but it is to signify that there is a reward set before us, and a sufficient one. *Secondly, Whatsoever is right*, v. 4, 7. Note, God will be sure not to be behindhand with any for the service they do him: never any lost by working for God. The crown set before us is a *crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give*.

[5.] For what term are they hired? For a *day*. It is but a day's work, that is here done. The time of life is the day, in which *we must work the works of him that sent us into the world*. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for a day; man is said to *accomplish, as a hireling, his day*, Job 14. 6. This should quicken us to expedition and diligence in our work, that we have but a little time to work in, and the *night* is hastening on, *when no man can work*; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work, that it is but for a day; the approaching *shadow, which the servant earnestly desireth*, will bring with it both rest, and the *reward of our work*, Job 7. 2. Hold out, faith and patience, yet a little while.

[6.] Notice is taken of the seven hours of the

day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles were sent forth at the *first and third hour* of the gospel-day; they had a first and a second mission, while Christ was on earth, and their business was to call in the Jews; after Christ's ascension, about the *sixth and ninth hour*, they went out again on the same errand, *preaching the gospel to the Jews only, to them in Judea first*, and afterward to them of the dispersion; but, at length, as it were *about the eleventh hour*, they called the Gentiles to the same work and privilege with the Jews, and told them that in Christ Jesus there should be *no difference made between Jew and Greek*.

But this may be, and commonly is, applied to the several ages of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promiscuous, to come work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is *then* effectual when we come at the call.

First, Some are effectually called, and begin to work in the vineyard when they are very young; are sent in early in the morning, whose tender years are seasoned with grace, and the remembrance of their Creator. John the Baptist was *sanctified from the womb*, and therefore *great*; (Luke 1. 15.) *Timothy from a child*; (2 Tim. 3. 15.) *Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth*. Those that have such a journey to go, had need set out betimes, the sooner the better.

Secondly, Others are savingly wrought upon in middle age; *Go work in the vineyard, at the third, sixth, or ninth hour*. The power of divine grace is magnified in the conversion of some, when they are in the midst of their pleasures and worldly pursuits, as Paul. God has work for all ages; no time amiss to turn to God; none can say, "It is all in good time;" for, whatever hour of the day it is with us, the time past of our life may suffice that we have served sin; *Go ye also into the vineyard*. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for *yet there is room*.

Thirdly, Others are hired into the vineyard in old age, at the *eleventh hour*, when the *day of life is far spent*, and there is but *one hour* of the twelve remaining. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but, "while there is life, there is hope." 1. There is hope for old sinners; for if, in sincerity, they turn to God, they shall doubtless be accepted: true repentance is never too late. And, 2. There is hope of old sinners, that they may be brought to true repentance; nothing is too hard for almighty grace to do, it can *change the Ethiopian's skin, and the leopard's spots*; can set those to work, who have contracted a habit of idleness. *Nicodemus may be born again when he is old, and the old man be put off, which is corrupt*.

Yet let none upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were *sent into the vineyard*, it is true, at the *eleventh hour*; but nobody had hired them, or offered to hire them, before. The Gentiles came in at the *eleventh hour*, but it was because the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel-offers made them at the *third, or sixth hour*, and have resisted and refused them, will not have that to say for themselves at the *eleventh hour*, that these had; *No man has hired us*; nor can they be sure that any man will hire them at the ninth or *eleventh hour*; and therefore not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that *now is the accepted time*; if we will hear his voice, it must be to-day.

(2.) Here is the account with the labourers. Observe,

[1.] When the account was taken; *when the evening was come*, then, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. Note, Evening-time is the reckoning time; the particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the

judgment. Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die; it is deferred till then, that they may wait with patience for it, but no longer; for God will observe his own rule, *The hire of the labourers shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning*. See Deut. 24. 15. When Paul, that faithful labourer, departs, he is with Christ presently. The payment shall not be wholly deferred till the *morning of the resurrection*; but then, in the evening of the world, will be the general account, when *every one shall receive according to the things done in the body*. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, then the state of retribution commences; then call the labourers, and give them their hire. Ministers call them into the vineyard, to do their work; death calls them out of the vineyard to receive their penny; and those to whom the call into the vineyard is effectual, the call out of it will be joyful. Observe, They did not come for their pay till they were called; we must with patience wait God's time for our rest and recompense; go by our master's clock. *The last trumpet, at the great day, shall call the labourers*, 1 Thess. 4. 16. *Then shalt thou call*, saith the good and faithful servant, *and I will answer*. In calling the labourers, they must begin from the last, and so to the first. Let not those that come in at the *eleventh hour*, be put behind the rest, but lest they should be discouraged, call them first. *At the great day, though the dead in Christ shall rise first, yet they which are alive and remain, on whom the ends of the world (the eleventh hour of its day) comes, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds*; no preference shall be given to seniority, but every man shall stand in his own lot at the end of the days.

[2.] What the account was; and in that observe,

First, The general pay; (v. 9, 10.) *They received every man a penny*. Note, All that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life, (Rom. 2. 7.) not as wages for the value of their work, but as the gift of God. Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. They that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of the *highways and the hedges, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, at the same feast, ch. 8. 11. In heaven, every vessel will be full, brim-full, though every vessel is not alike large and capacious. In the distributions of future joys, as it was in the gathering of the manna, he that shall gather much, will have nothing over, and he that shall gather little will have no lack, Exod. 16. 18. Those whom Christ fed miraculously, though of different sizes, *men, women, and children, did all eat, and were filled*.

The giving of a whole day's wages to those that had not done the tenth part of a day's work, is designed to show that God distributes his rewards by *grace and sovereignty*, and not of *debt*. The best of the labourers, and those that begin soonest, having so many empty spaces in their time, and their works not being filled up before God, may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because *we are under grace, and not under the law*, even such defective services, done in sincerity, shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded. Compare Luke 17. 7, 8, with Luke 12. 37.

Secondly, The particular pleading with those that were offended with this distribution in gavel-kind.* The circumstances of this serve to adorn the parable; but the general scope is plain, that *the last shall be first*. We have here,

1. The offence taken; (v. 11, 12.) *They murmur*

* A legal custom, according to which all the sons inherit equally.—Ed.

ed at the good man of the house; not that there is, or can be, any discontent or murmuring in heaven, for that is both guilt and grief, and in heaven there is neither; but there may be, and often are, discontent and murmuring concerning heaven and heavenly things, while they are in prospect and promise in this world. This signifies the jealousy which the Jews were provoked to by the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. As the elder brother, in the parable of the prodigal, repined at the reception of his younger brother, and complained of his father's generosity to him; so these labourers quarrelled with their master, and found fault, not because they had not enough, so much as because others were made *equal* with them. They boast, as the prodigal's elder brother did, of their good services; *We have borne the burden and heat of the day*; that was the most they could make of it. Sinners are said to *labour in the very fire*, (Hab. 2. 13.) whereas God's servants, at the worst, do but labour in the sun; not in the heat of the iron-furnace, but only in the heat of the day. Now *these last have worked but one hour*, and that too in the cool of the day; and yet *thou hast made them equal with us*. The Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews have, who have so long been labouring in the vineyard of the Old-Testament church, under the yoke of the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom. Note, There is a great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and others too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. Very apt we all are to undervalue the deserts of others, and to overvalue our own. Perhaps, Christ here gives an intimation to Peter, not to boast too much, as he seemed to do, of his having *left all to follow Christ*; as if, because he and the rest of them had borne the burden and heat of the day thus, they must have a heaven by themselves. It is hard for those that do or suffer more than ordinary for God, not to be elevated too much with the thought of it, and to expect to merit by it. Blessed Paul guarded against this, when, though the *chief of the apostles*, he owned himself to be *nothing*, to be *less than the least of all saints*.

2. The offence removed. Three things the master of the house urges, in answer to this ill-natured surmise.

(1.) That the complainant had no reason at all to say, he had any wrong done to him, v. 13, 14. Here he asserts his own justice; *Friend, I do thee no wrong*. He calls him *friend*, for in reasoning with others we should use soft words and hard arguments; if our inferiors are peevish and provoking, yet we should not thereby be put into a passion, but speak calmly to them. [1.] It is incontestably true, that God can do no wrong. This is the prerogative of the King of kings. *Is there unrighteousness with God?* The apostle startles at the thought of it; *God forbid!* Rom. 3. 5, 6. His word should silence all our murmurings, that, whatever God doth to us, or withholds from us, he doth us no wrong. [2.] If God gives that grace to others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us, and bounty to another, while it is no injustice to us, we ought not to find fault with. Because it is free grace, that is given to those that have it, boasting is for ever excluded; and because it is free grace that is withheld from those that have it not, murmuring is for ever excluded. *Thus shall every mouth be stopped, and all flesh be silent before God*.

To convince the murmurer that he did no wrong, he refers him to the bargain, "*Didst not thou agree with me for a penny?*" And if thou hast what thou didst agree for, thou hast no reason to cry out of wrong; thou shalt have what we agreed for."

Though God is a Debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a Debtor by his own promise, for the benefit of which, through Christ, believers agree with him, and he will stand to his part of the agreement. Note, It is good for us often to consider what it was that we agreed with God for. *First*, Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; they choose *their portion in this life*; (Ps. 17. 14.) in these things they are willing to *have their reward*, (ch. 6. 2, 5.) *their consolation*, (Luke 6. 24.) *their good things*; (Luke 16. 25.) and with these they shall be put off, shall be cut off from spiritual and eternal blessings; and herein God doeth them no wrong; they have what they chose, 'the penny they agreed for; *so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it*; it is conclusive against them. *Secondly*, Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take God's word for it? Thou didst; and wilt thou go and agree with the world? Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it? And wilt thou seek for a happiness in the creature, or think from thence to make up the deficiencies of thy happiness in God?

He therefore, 1. Ties him to his bargain; (v. 14.) *Take that thine is, and go thy way*. If we understand it of that which is ours by debt or absolute propriety, it would be a dreadful word; we are all undone, if we be put off with that only which we can call our *own*. The highest creature must go away into nothing, if he must go away with that only which is his own: but if we understand it of that which is ours by *gift*, the free gift of God, it teaches us to be content with such things as we have. Instead of repining that we have no more, let us take what we have, and be thankful. If God be better in any respect to others than to us, yet we have no reason to complain while he is so much better to us than we deserve, in giving us our penny, though we are unprofitable servants. 2. He tells him that these he envied should fare as well as he did; "*I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; I am resolved I will*." Note, The unchangeableness of God's purposes in dispensing his gifts, should silence our murmurings. If he will do it, it is not for us to gainsay. *for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Neither giveth he an account of any of his matters*; nor is it fit he should.

(2.) He had no reason to quarrel with the master; for what he gave, was absolutely his own, v. 15. As before he asserted his justice, so here his sovereignty; *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?* Note, [1.] God is the Owner of all good; his propriety in it is absolute, sovereign, and unlimited. [2.] He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. What we have, is not our *own*, and therefore it is not lawful for us to do what we will with it; but what God has, is his own; and this will justify him, *First*, In all the disposals of his providence; when God takes from us that which was dear to us, and which we could ill spare, we must silence our discontents with this; *May he not do what he will with his own? Abstulit, sed et dedit—He hath taken away; but he originally gave*. It is not for such depending creatures as we are to quarrel with our Sovereign. *Secondly*, In all the dispensations of his grace, God gives or withholds the means of grace, and the Spirit of grace, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and what seems to us to be done arbitrarily, will appear at length to have been done wisely, and for holy ends. But this is enough to silence all murmurers and objectors, that God is sovereign Lord of all, and *may do what he will with his own*. We are in his hand, as clay in the hands of a potter; and

it is not for us to prescribe to him, or strive with him.

(3.) He had no reason to envy his fellow-servant, or to grudge at him; or to be angry that he came into the vineyard no sooner; for he was not sooner called; he had no reason to be angry that the master had given him wages for the whole day, when he had idled away the greatest part of it; for, *Is thine eye evil, because I am good?* See here,

[1.] The nature of envy; "It is an evil eye." The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin. *Saul saw that David prospered, and he eyed him*, 1 Sam. 18. 9, 15. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; and it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour, in it; *it is an evil, an only evil*.

[2.] The aggravation of it; "It is because I am good." Envy is unlikeness to God, who is good, and doeth good, and delighteth in doing good; nay, it is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he doeth, and is pleased with. It is a direct violation of both the two great commandments at once; both that of love to God, in whose will we should acquiesce, and love to our neighbour, in whose welfare we should rejoice. Thus man's badness takes occasion from God's goodness to be more exceeding sinful.

Lastly, Here is the application of the parable, (v. 16.) in that observation which occasioned it; (*ch.* 19. 30.) *So the first shall be last, and the last first*. There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel-kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them,

1. That they might possibly be outstripped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world, which as yet stood *idle in the marketplace*, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be the children of the desolate than those of the married wife, Isa. 54. 1. Who knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fit and flourishing than ever, to show that the Lord is upright? Though primitive christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what labourers may be sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day, in the Philadelphian period, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for many are called, but few chosen. This is applied to the Jews; (*ch.* 22. 14.) it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, are effectually called, in the fitness of time, (Rom. 8. 30.) so that, in making our effectual calling sure, we make sure our election; (2 Pet. 1. 10.) but it is not so as to the outward call; many are called, and yet refuse, (Prov. 1. 24.) nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him, (Hos. 11. 2, 7.) by which it appears that they were not chosen, for the election will obtain, Rom. 11. 7. Note, There are but few chosen Christians, in comparison with the many that are only called Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we

be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished christians, and so should seem to come short, Heb. 4. 1.

17. And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 13. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. 19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is the third time that Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings; he was now going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself, the Great Passover; both must be done at Jerusalem, *there the passover must be kept*, (Deut. 12. 5.) and there a prophet must perish, because there the great Sanhedrim sat, who were judges in that case, Luke 13. 33.

Observe,

I. The privacy of this prediction; *He took the twelve disciples apart in the way*. This was one of those things which were told to them in darkness, but which they were afterward to speak in the light, *ch.* 10. 27. His secret was with them, as his friends, and this particularly. It was a hard saying, and, if any could bear it, they could. They would be more immediately exposed to peril with him, and therefore it was requisite that they should know of it, that, being fore-warned, they might be fore-armed. It was not fit to be spoken publicly as yet, 1. Because many, that were cool toward him, would hereby have been driven to turn their backs upon him; the scandal of the cross would have frightened them from following him any longer. 2. Because many, that were hot for him, would hereby be driven to take up arms in his defence, and it might have occasioned an uproar among the people, (*ch.* 26. 5.) which would have been laid to his charge, if he had told them of it publicly before; and, besides that such methods are utterly disagreeable to the genius of his kingdom, which is not of this world, he never countenanced any thing which had a tendency to prevent his sufferings. This discourse was not in the synagogue, or in the house, but in the way, as they travelled along; which teaches us, in our walks or travels with our friends, to keep up such discourse as is good, and to the use of edifying. See Deut. 16. 7.

II. The prediction itself, v. 18, 19. Observe,

1. It is but a repetition of what he had once and again said before, *ch.* 16. 21.—17. 22, 23. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering work; it filled him, not with fear, then he would have studied to avoid it, and could have done it, but with desire and expectation; he spake thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. Note, It is good for us to be often thinking and speaking of our death, and of the sufferings which, it is likely, we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; and thus, by making them more familiar, they would become less formidable. This is one way of dying daily, and of taking up our cross daily, to be daily speaking of the cross, and of dying; which would come neither the sooner nor the surer, but much the better, for our thoughts and discourses of them.

2. He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than any time before. He had said, (*ch.* 16. 21.) that he should suffer many things, and be

killed; and (*ch. 17. 22.*) that he should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill him; but here he adds, that he shall be condemned and delivered to the Gentiles, that they shall mock him, and scourge him, and crucify him. These are frightful things, and the certain foresight of them was enough to damp an ordinary resolution, yet (as was foretold concerning him, Isa. 42. 4.) *he did not fail, nor was discouraged*; but the more clearly he foresaw his sufferings, the more cheerfully he went forth to meet them. He foretells by whom he should suffer, by *the chief priests and the Scribes*; so he had said before, but here he adds, *They shall deliver him to the Gentiles*, that he might be the better understood; for the chief priests and Scribes had no power to put him to death, nor was crucifying a manner of death in use among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles, because he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had a hand in his death, because he was to reconcile both by his cross, Eph. 2. 16.

3. Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings; *The third day he shall rise again*. He still brings this in, (1.) To encourage himself in his sufferings, and to carry him cheerfully through them. *He endured the cross for the joy set before him*; he foresaw he should rise again, and rise quickly, the third day. He shall be straightway glorified, John, 13. 32. The reward is not only sure, but very near. (2.) To encourage his disciples, and comfort them, who would be overwhelmed and greatly terrified by his sufferings. (3.) To direct us, under all the sufferings of this present time, to keep up a believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, to look at the things that are not seen, that are eternal, which would enable us to call the present afflictions light, and but for a moment.

20. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. 21. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. 22. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. 23. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. 24. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. 25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but

to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here is, first, the request of the two disciples to Christ, and the rectifying of the mistake upon which that was grounded, *v. 20, 23.* The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of the first three of Christ's disciples; Peter and they were his favourites; John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; yet none were so often reproved as they; whom Christ loves best he reproves most, Rev. 3. 19.

1. Here is the ambitious address they made to Christ—that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, *v. 20, 21.* It was a great degree of faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but a great degree of ignorance, that they still expected a temporal kingdom with worldly pomp and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. In this they expected to be grandees. They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them, in this imaginary kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above every body else. It is probable, that the last word in Christ's foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request, that *the third day he should rise again*. They concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom, and therefore were resolved to put in betimes for the best place; nor would they lose it for want of speaking early. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused, and were puffed up with. Some cannot bear comforts, but they turn them to a wrong purpose; as sweetmeats in a full stomach produce bile. Now observe,

1. There was policy in the management in this address, that they put their mother on to present it, that it might be looked upon as her request, and not theirs. Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than a *show of humility*, (Col. 2. 18.) and others must be put on to court that honour for them, which they are ashamed to court for themselves. The mother of James and John was Salome, as appears by comparing *ch. 27. 61.* with Mark 15. 40. Some think she was daughter of Cleophas or Alphaeus, and sister or cousin german to Mary the mother of our Lord. She was one of those women that attended Christ, and ministered to him; and they thought she had such an interest in him, that he could deny her nothing, and therefore they make her their advocate. Thus, when Adonijah had an unreasonable request to make to Solomon, he put Bathsheba on to speak for him. It was their mother's weakness thus to become the tool of their ambition, which she should have given a check to. Those that are wise and good, would not be seen in an ill-favoured thing. In gracious requests, we should learn this wisdom, to desire the prayers of those that have an interest at the throne of grace; we should beg of our praying friends to pray for us, and reckon it a real kindness.

It was likewise policy to ask first for a general grant, that he would do a *certain* thing for them, not in faith, but in presumption, upon that general promise; *Ask, and it shall be given you*; in which is implied this qualification of our request, that it be according to the revealed will of God, otherwise we ask and have not, if we ask to consume it upon our lusts, Jam. 4. 3.

2. There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition, to strive to excel others in grace and holiness. but it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others

in pomp and grandeur. *Seekest thou great things for thyself*, when thou hast just now heard of thy Master's being mocked, and searaged, and crucified? For shame! *Seek them not*, Jer. 45. 5.

H. Christ's answer to this address, (v. 22, 23.) directed not to the mother, but to the sons that set her on. Though others be our mouth in prayer, the answer will be given to us according as we stand affected. Christ's answer is very mild; they were overtaken in the fault of ambition, but Christ restored them with the spirit of meekness. Observe,

1. How he repressed the ignorance and error of their petition; *Ye know not what ye ask*. (1.) They were much in the dark concerning the kingdom they and their eye upon; they dreamed of a temporal kingdom, whereas Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand, and on his left; they talked of it as blind men do of colours. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fancies; when we come to see face to face, we shall know what we enjoy; but now, alas, we know not what we ask; we can but ask for the good as it lies in the promise, Tit. 1. 2. What it will be in the performance, eye has not seen, nor ear heard. (2.) They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together. The disciples thought, when they had left what little *all* they had for Christ, and had gone about the country a while preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and suffering were over, and it was now time to ask, *What shall we have?* As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined their warfare was accomplished when it was scarcely begun, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note, [1.] We are all apt, when we are but *girding on the harness*, to boast as though we had put it off. [2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it.

2. How he repressed the vanity and ambition of their request. They were pleasing themselves with the fancy of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in great state; now, to check this, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, and leaves them in the dark about their glory.

(1.) He leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, which they were not so mindful of as they ought to have been. They looked so earnestly upon the crown, the prize, that they were ready to plunge headlong and unprepared into the foul way that led to it; and therefore he thinks it necessary to put them in mind of the hardships that were before them, that they might be no surprise or terror to them.

Observe, [1.] How fairly he puts the matter to them, concerning these difficulties; (v. 22.) "You would stand candidates for the first post of honour in the kingdom; but are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" You talk of what great things you must have when you have done your work; but are you able to hold out to the end of it? Put the matter seriously to yourselves." These same two disciples once knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they were disturbed with anger; (Luke 9. 55.) and now they were not aware what was amiss in their spirits, when they were lifted up

with ambition. Christ sees that pride in us, which we discern not in ourselves.

Note, First, That to suffer for Christ, is to drink of a cup, and to be baptized with a baptism. In this description of sufferings, 1. It is true, that affliction doth abound. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, that is drunk of, wormwood and gall, those waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people; (Ps. 73. 10.) a cup of trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of the wicked men, Ps. 11. 6. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them, the waters compass them about even to the soul; (Jonah 2. 5.) others have but a sprinkling of them; both are baptisms, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. But, 2. Even in this, *consolation doth more abound*. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it: it is a cup in the hand of a Father; (John 18. 11.) and it is full of mixture, Ps. 75. 8. It is but a baptism; if dipped, that is the worst of it, not drowned; perplexed, but not in despair. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Ezek. 20. 37. Isa. 48. 10. Baptism is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" and so is suffering for Christ, for *unto us it is given*, Phil. 1. 29.

Secondly, It is to drink of the same cup that Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with. Christ is beforehand with us in suffering, and in that, as in other things, left us an example. 1. It bespeaks the condescension of a suffering Christ, that he would drink of such a cup, (John 18. 11.) nay, and such a brook, (Ps. 110. 7.) and drink so deep, and yet so cheerfully; that he would be baptized with such a baptism, and was so forward to it, Luke 12. 50. It was much that he would be baptized with water as a common sinner, much more with blood as an uncommon malefactor. But in all this he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin for us. 2. It bespeaks the consolation of suffering Christians, that they do but pledge Christ in the bitter cup, are partakers of his sufferings, and fill up that which is behind of them; we must therefore arm ourselves with the same mind, and go to him without the camp.

Thirdly, It is good for us to be often putting it to ourselves, whether we are able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism. We must expect suffering, and look upon it as a hard thing to suffer well, and as becomes us. Are we able to suffer cheerfully, and in the worst of times still to hold fast our integrity? What can we afford to part with for Christ? How far will we give him credit? Could I find in my heart to drink of a bitter cup, and to be baptized with a bloody baptism, rather than let go my hold of Christ? The truth is, Religion, if it be worth anything, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ, rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

[2.] See how boldly they engage for themselves, they said, *We are able*, in hopes of sitting on his right hand, and on his left; but at the same time they fondly hoped that they should never be tried. As before they knew not what they asked, so now they knew not what they answered. *We are able*: they would have done well to put in, "*Lord, by thy strength, and in thy grace, we are able*, otherwise we are not." But the same that was Peter's temptation, to be confident of his own sufficiency, and presume upon his own strength, was here the temptation of James and John; and it is a sin we are all

prone to. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism, and therefore they were thus bold in promising for themselves. But those are commonly most confident, that are least acquainted with the cross.

[3.] See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold; (v. 23.) *Ye shall drink of my cup.* Sufferings foreseen will be the more easily borne, especially if looked upon under a right notion, as drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should pledge him, in suffering for him. Christ will have us know the worst, that we may make the best of our way to heaven; *Ye shall drink*: that is, ye shall suffer. James drank the bloody cup, first of all the apostles, Acts 12. 2. John, though at last he died in his bed, if we may credit the ecclesiastical historians, yet often drank of this bitter cup, as when he was banished into the isle of Patmos, (Rev. 1. 9.) and when (as they say) at Ephesus he was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved. He was, as the rest of the apostles, in deaths often. He took the cup, offered himself to the baptism, and it was accepted.

(2.) He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they should have a *place in his kingdom*. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompence for the greatest sufferings on earth. But as to the preferments there, it was not fit there should be any intimation given for whom they were intended; for the infirmity of their present state could not bear such a discovery with any evenness; "*To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, and therefore it is not for you to ask it or to know it; but it shall be given to them of whom it is prepared of my Father.*" Note, [1.] It is very probable that there are degrees of glory in heaven; for our Saviour seems to allow that there are some that shall sit on his right hand and on his left, in the highest places. [2.] As the future glory itself, so the degrees of it, are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God; as the common salvation, so the more peculiar honours, are appointed, the whole affair is long since settled, and there is a certain measure of the stature, both in grace and glory, Eph. 4. 13. [3.] Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his own purchase, goes exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose. *It is not mine to give, save to them* (so it may be read) *for whom it is prepared.* Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but then it is *to as many as were given him*, John 17. 2. *It is not mine to give*, that is, to *promise* now; that matter is already settled and concerted, and the Father and Son understand one another perfectly well in this matter. "It is not mine to give to those that seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it."

III. Here are the reproof and instruction which Christ gave to the other ten disciples for their displeasure at the request of James and John. He had much to bear with in them all, they were so weak in knowledge and grace, yet he bore their manners.

1. The fret that the ten disciples were in; (v. 24.) *They were moved with indignation against the two brethren*; not because they were desirous to be preferred, which was their sin, and for which Christ was displeased with them, but because they were desirous to be preferred *before* them, which was a reflection upon them. Many seem to have indignation at sin; but it is not because it is sin, but because it touches them. They will inform against a man that swears; but it is only if he swear at them, and affront them, not because he dishonours God. These disciples were angry at their brethren's ambition, though they themselves, nay *because* they

themselves, were as ambitious. Note, It is common for people to be angry at those sins in others, which they allow of and indulge in themselves. Those that are proud and covetous themselves do not care to see others so. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, nor is the cause of more indignation and contention, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it.

2. The check that Christ gave them, which was very gentle, rather by way of instruction what they should be, than by way of reprehension for what they were. He had reproofed this very sin before, (ch. 18. 3.) and told them they must be humble as little children; yet they relapsed into it, and yet he reproofed them for it thus mildly.

He called them unto him, which intimates great tenderness and familiarity. He did not, in anger, bid them get out of his presence, but called them, in love, to come into his presence; for *therefore* he is fit to teach, and we are invited to learn of him, because *he is meek and lowly in heart*. What he had to say concerned both the two disciples and the ten, and therefore he will have them all together. And he tells them, that, whereas they were asking which of them should have dominion in a temporal kingdom, there was really no such dominion reserved for any of them. For,

(1.) They must not be *like the princes of the Gentiles*. Christ's disciples must not be like Gentiles, no not like princes of the Gentiles. Principality doth no more become ministers than Gentilism doth Christians.

Observe, [1.] What is the way of the princes of the Gentiles; (v. 25.) *to exercise dominion and authority over their subjects*, and (if they can but win the upper hand with a strong hand) over one another too. That which bears them up in it, is, that they are great, and great men think they may do any thing. Dominion and authority are the great things which the princes of the Gentiles pursue, and pride themselves in; they would bear sway, would carry all before them, have every body truckle to them, and every sheaf bow to their's. They would have it cried before them, *Bow the knee*; like Nebuchadnezzar, who slew, and kept alive, at pleasure.

[2.] What is the will of Christ concerning his apostles and ministers, in this matter.

First, It shall not be so among you. The constitution of the spiritual kingdom is quite different from this. You are to teach the subjects of this kingdom, to instruct and beseech them, to counsel and comfort them, to take pains with them, and suffer with them, not to exercise dominion or authority over them; you are not to *lord it over God's heritage*, (1 Pet. 5. 3.) but to labour in it. This forbids not only tyranny, and abuse of power, but the claim or use of any such secular authority as the princes of the Gentiles lawfully exercise. So hard is it for vain men, even good men, to have such authority, and not to be puffed up with it, and do more hurt than good with it, that our Lord Jesus saw fit wholly to banish it out of his church. Paul himself disowns dominion over the faith of any, 2 Cor. 1. 24. The pomp and grandeur of the princes of the Gentiles ill become Christ's disciples. Now, if there were no such power and honour intended to be in the church, it was nonsense for them to be striving who should have it. *They knew not what they asked.*

Secondly, How then shall it be among the disciples of Christ? Something of greatness among them Christ himself had intimated, and here he explains it; "*He that will be great among you, that will be chief*, that would really be so, and would be found to be so at last, *let him be your minister, your ser-*

part," v. 26, 27. Here observe, 1. That it is the duty of Christ's disciples to serve one another, for mutual edification. This includes both humility and usefulness. The followers of Christ must be ready to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the good one of another, must *submit one to another*, (1 Pet. 5. 5. Eph. 5. 21.) and *edify one another*, (Rom. 14. 19.) *please one another* for good, Rom. 15. 2. The great apostle made himself every one's servant; see 1 Cor. 9. 19. 2. It is the dignity of Christ's disciples faithfully to discharge this duty. The way to be great and chief is to be humble and serviceable. Those are to be best accounted of, and most respected, in the church, and will be so by all that understand things aright; not those that are dignified with high and mighty names, like the names of the great ones of the earth, that appear in pomp, and assume to themselves a power proportionable, but those that are most humble and self-denying, and lay out themselves most to do good, though to the diminishing of themselves. These honour God most, and those he will honour. As he must become a fool, that would be wise, so he must become a servant, that would be chief. St. Paul was a great example of this; he *laboured more abundantly than they all*, made himself (as some would call it) a drudge to his work; and is not he chief? Do we not by consent call him the *great* apostle, though he called himself *less than the least*? And perhaps our Lord Jesus had an eye to him, when he said, There were *last*, that should be *first*; for Paul was *one born out of due time*; (1 Cor. 15. 8.) not only the youngest child of the family of the apostles, but a posthumous one, yet he became greatest. And perhaps he it was for whom the first post of honour in Christ's kingdom was reserved and prepared of his Father, not for James who sought it; and therefore, just before Paul began to be famous as an apostle, Providence ordered it so that James was cut off. (Acts 12. 1.) that in the college of the twelve Paul might be substituted in his room.

(2.) They must be like the Master himself; and it is very fit that they should, that, while they were in the world, they should be as he was when he was in the world; for to both the present state is a state of humiliation, the crown and glory were reserved for both in the future state. Let them consider that the *Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, v. 28. Our Lord Jesus here sets himself before his disciples as a pattern of those two things before recommended, humility, and usefulness.

[1.] Never was there such an example of humility and condescension as there was in the life of Christ, who came not to be *ministered unto, but to minister*. When the Son of God came into the world, his Ambassador to the children of men, one would think he should have been ministered to, should have appeared in an equipage agreeable to his person and character; but he did not so; he made no figure, had no pompous train of state-servants to attend him, nor was he clad in robes of honour, for he took upon him the *form of a servant*. He was indeed ministered to as a poor man, which was a part of his humiliation; there were those that *ministered to him of their substance*; (Luke 8. 2, 3.) but he was never ministered to as a great man; he never took state upon him, was not waited on at table; he once washed his disciples' feet, but we never read that they washed his feet. He came to minister help to all that were in distress; he made himself a servant to the sick and diseased; was as ready to their requests as ever any servant was at the beck of his master, and took as much pains to serve them; he attended continually to this very thing, and denied himself both food and rest to attend to it.

[2.] Never was there such an example of beneficence and usefulness as there was in the death of Christ, who *gave his life a ransom for many*. He lived as a servant, and went about doing good; but he died as a sacrifice, and in that he did the greatest good of all. He came into the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; it was first in his intention. The aspiring princes of the Gentiles make the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and perhaps a sacrifice to their own humour. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he is not prodigal of it; (Ps. 72. 14.) but, on the contrary, he gives his honour, and life too, a ransom for his subjects. Note, *First*, Jesus Christ laid down his life for a ransom. Our lives were forfeited into the hands of divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued our's; *he was made Sin and a Curse for us*, and died, not only *for our good, but in our stead*, Acts 20. 28. 1 Peter 1. 18, 19. *Secondly*, It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, "Why not for me?" It was for many, that by him many may be made righteous. These many were his seed, for which his soul travailed; (Isa. 53. 10, 11.) for many, so they will be when they come all together, though now they appear but a little flock.

Now this is a good reason why we should not strive for precedence, because the cross is our banner, and our Master's death is our life. It is a good reason why we should study to do good, and, in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, not hesitate to *lay down our lives for the brethren*, 1 John 3. 16. Ministers should be more forward than others to serve and suffer for the good of souls, as blessed Paul was, Acts 20. 24. Phil. 2. 17. The nearer we are all concerned in, and the more we are advantaged by, the humility and humiliation of Christ, the more ready and careful we should be to imitate it.

29. And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 31. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? 33. They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

We have here an account of the cure of two poor blind beggars; in which we may observe,

1. Their address to Christ, v. 29, 30. And in this, 1. The circumstances of it are observable. It was as Christ and his disciples departed from Jericho; of that devoted place, which was rebuilt under a curse, Christ took his leave with this blessing, for he received gifts even for the rebellious. It was in the presence of a *great multitude that followed him*; Christ had a numerous, though not a pompous, attendance, and did good to them, though he did not take state to himself. This multitude that followed Christ was a mixed multitude. Some followed him

for loaves, and some for love, some for curiosity, and some in expectation of his temporal reign, which the disciples themselves dreamed of, very few with desire to be taught their duty; yet, for the sake of those few, he confirmed his doctrine by miracles wrought in the presence of great multitudes; who, if they were not convinced by them, would be the more inexcusable. Two blind men concurred in their request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ, *ch. 18. 19.* These joint-sufferers were joint-suitors; being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication. Note, It is good for those that are labouring under the same calamity, or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all the petitioners. These blind men were *sitting by the way-side*, as blind beggars used to do. Note, Those that would receive mercy from Christ, must place themselves there where his out-goings are; where he manifests himself to those that seek him. It is good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in his road.

They heard that Jesus passed by. Though they were blind, they were not deaf. Seeing and hearing are the learning senses. It is a great calamity to want either; but the defect of one may be, and often is, made up in the acuteness of the other; and therefore it has been observed by some, as an instance of the goodness of Providence, that none were ever known to be born both blind and deaf; but that, one way or other, all are in a capacity of receiving knowledge. These blind men had heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but they desired that their eyes might see him. *When they heard that Jesus passed by*, they asked no further questions, who were with him, or whether he was in haste, but immediately *cried out*. Note, it is good to improve the present opportunity, to make the best of the price now in the hand, because, if once let slip, it may never return; these blind men did so, and did wisely; for we do not find that Christ ever came to Jericho again. *Now is the accepted time.*

2. The address itself is more observable; *Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David*, repeated again, *v. 31.* Four things are recommended to us for an example in this address; for, though the eye of the body was dark, the eye of the mind was enlightened concerning truth, duty, and interest.

(1.) Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest; men in want are earnest, of course. Cold desires do but beg denials. Those that would prevail in prayer, must stir up themselves to take hold on God in the duty. When they were discountenanced in it, they cried the more. The stream of fervency, if it be stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This is wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; for the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

(2.) Of humility in prayer; in that word, *Have mercy on us*, not specifying the favour, or prescribing what, much less pleading merit, but casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy, in what way he pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy, mercy. This is that which our hearts must be upon, when we come to the *throne of grace*, that we may find mercy, Heb. 4. 16. Ps. 130. 7.

(3.) Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to Christ, which was in the nature of a plea; *O Lord, thou Son of David*; they confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*, and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Christ *Lord*, 1 Cor. 12. 3.

Thus they take their encouragement in prayer from his power, as, in calling him the son of David, they take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah, of whom so many kind and tender things had been foretold, particularly his compassion to the poor and needy, Ps. 72. 12, 13. It is of excellent use, in prayer, to eye Christ in the grace and glory of his Messiahship; to remember that he is the Son of David, whose office it is to help, and save, and to plead it with him.

(4.) Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding discouragement. *The multitude rebuked them*, as noisy, clamorous, and impertinent, and bid them *hold their peace*, and not disturb the Master, who perhaps at first himself seemed not to regard them. In following Christ with our prayers, we must expect to meet with hinderances and manifold discouragements from within and from without, something or other that bids us hold our peace. Such rebukes are permitted, that faith and fervency, patience and perseverance, may be tried. These poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that followed Christ. Note, The sincere and serious beggars at Christ's door commonly meet with the worst rebukes from those that follow him but in pretence and hypocrisy. But they would not be beaten off so; when they were in pursuit of such a mercy, it was no time to compliment, or to practise a timid delicacy; no, *they cried the more*. Note, *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; to *pray with all perseverance*; (Luke 18. 1.) to continue in prayer with resolution, and not to yield to opposition.

11. The answer of Christ to this address of their's. The multitude rebuked them; but Christ encouraged them. It were sad for us, if the Master were not more kind and tender than the multitude; but he loves to countenance those with special favour that are under frowns, and rebukes, and contempts from men. He will not suffer his humble supplicants to be run down, and put out of countenance.

1. *He stood still, and called them*, *v. 32.* He was now going up to Jerusalem, and was straitened till his work there was accomplished; and yet he stood still to cure these blind men. Note, When we are ever so much in haste about any business, yet we should be willing to stand still, to do good. *He called them*, not because he could not cure them at a distance, but because he would do it in the most obliging and instructing way, and would countenance weak but willing patients and petitioners. Christ not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us; holds out the golden sceptre to us, and bids us come touch the top of it.

2. He inquired further into their case; *What wilt thou that I shall do unto you?* This implies (1.) A very fair offer; "Here I am; let me know what you would have, and you shall have it." What would we more? He is able to do for us, and as willing as he is able; *Ask, and it shall be given you*. (2.) A condition annexed to this offer, which is a very easy and reasonable one—that they should tell him what they would have him to do for them. One would think this a strange question, any one might tell what they would have. Christ knew well enough; but he would know it from them, whether they begged only for an alms, as from a common person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. Note, It is the will of God that we should in every thing make our requests known to him by prayer and supplication; not to inform or move him, but to qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in the boat, who with his hook takes hold of the shore, does not thereby pull the shore to the boat, but the boat to the shore. So in prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.

They soon made known their request to him, such

a one as they never made to any one else; *Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* The wants and burthens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate; *Ubi dolor, ibi digitus—The finger promptly points to the seat of pain.* Oh that we were but as apprehensive of our spiritual maladies, and could as feelingly complain of them, especially our spiritual blindness! *Lord, that the eyes of our mind may be opened!* Many are spiritually blind, and yet say they see, John 9. 41. Were we but sensible of our darkness, we should soon apply ourselves to him, who alone has the eye-salve, with this request, *Lord, that our eyes may be opened.*

3. He cured them; when he encouraged them to seek him, he did not say, *Seek, in vain.* What he did was an instance,

(1.) Of his pity; *He had compassion on them.* Misery is the object of mercy. They that are poor and blind are *wretched and miserable*, (Rev. 3. 17.) and the objects of compassion. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness, Luke 1. 78, 79. We cannot help those that are under such calamities, as Christ did; but we may and must pity them, as Christ did, and draw out our soul to them.

(2.) Of his power; *He that formed the eye, can he not heal it?* Yes, he can, he did, he did it easily, he touched their eyes; he did it effectually, *Immediately their eyes received sight.* Thus he not only proved that he was sent of God, but shewed on what errand he was sent—to give sight to those that are spiritually blind, *to turn them from darkness to light.*

Lastly, These blind men, when they had received sight, *followed him.* Note, None follow Christ blindfold. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. They followed Christ, as his disciples, to learn of him, and as his witnesses, eye-witnesses, to bear their testimony to him and to his power and goodness. The best evidence of spiritual illumination, is a constant inseparable adherence to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Leader.

CHAP. XXI.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the two main hinges upon which the door of salvation turns. He came unto the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; so he had lately said, ch. 20. 28. And therefore the history of his sufferings, even unto death, and his rising again, is more particularly recorded by all the evangelists than any other part of his story; and to that this evangelist now hastens apace. For at this chapter begins that which is called the passion-week. He had said to his disciples more than once, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and there the Son of man must be betrayed. A great deal of good work he did by the way, and now at length he is come up to Jerusalem; and here we have, I. The public entry which he made into Jerusalem, upon the first day of the passion-week, v. 1. . 11. II. The authority he exercised there, in cleansing the temple, and driving out of it the buyers and sellers, v. 12. . 16. III. The emblem he gave of the state of the Jewish church, in cursing the barren fig-tree, and his discourse with his disciples thereupon, v. 17. . 22. IV. His justifying his own authority, by appealing to the baptism of John, v. 23. . 27. V. His shaming the infidelity and obstinacy of the chief priests and elders, with the repentance of the publicans, illustrated by the parable of the two sons, v. 29. . 32. VI. His reading the doom of the Jewish church for its unfruitfulness, in the parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, v. 33. . 46.

1. **A**ND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, 2. Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them

unto me. 3. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. 4. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5. Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. 6. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, 7. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. 8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. 10. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? 11. And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

All the four evangelists take notice of this passage of Christ's *riding in triumph into Jerusalem*, five days before his death. The passover was on the fourteenth day of the month, and this was the tenth, on which day the law appointed that the paschal lamb should be taken up, (Exod. 12. 3.) and set apart for that service; on that day therefore Christ our Passover, who was to be sacrificed for us, was publicly shewed. So that this was the prelude to his passion. He had lodged at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, for some time; at a supper there, the night before, Mary had *anointed his feet*, John 12. 2. But, as is usual with ambassadors, he deferred his public entry till some time after his arrival. Our Lord Jesus travelled much, and his custom was to travel on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem, some scores of miles, which was both humbling and toilsome; many a dirty weary step he had when he *went about doing good.* How ill does it become Christians to be inordinately solicitous about their own ease and state, when their Master had so little of either! Yet once in his life he rode in triumph; and it was now when he went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure and preferment he courted; and then he thought himself begin to look great.

Now here we have,

I. The provision that was made for this solemnity; and it was very poor and ordinary, and such as bespoke his *kingdom to be not of this world.* Here were no heralds at arms provided, no trumpet sounded before him, no chariots of state, no liveries; such things as these were not agreeable to his present state of humiliation, but will be far outdone at his second coming, to which his magnificent appearance is reserved, when the last trumpet shall sound, the glorious angels shall be his heralds and attendants, and the clouds his chariots. But in this public appearance,

1. The preparation was sudden and off-hand. For his glory in the other world, and our's with him, preparation was made before the foundation of the world, for that was the glory his heart was upon; his glory in this world he was dead to, and therefore, though he had it in prospect, did not forecast for it, but took what came next. They were come

to Bethphage, which was the suburbs of Jerusalem, and was accounted (say the Jewish doctors) in all things as Jerusalem, a long scattering street that lay toward the mount of Olives; when he entered upon that, *he sent two of his disciples*, some think Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, for he had none ready for him.

2. 1 was very mean. He sent only for an ass and her colt, v. 2. Asses were much used in that country for travel; horses were kept only by great men, and for war. Christ could have summoned a cherub to carry him; (Ps. 18. 10.) but though *by his name Jah*, which speaks him God, *he rides upon the heavens*, yet now by his name Jesus, *Immanuel, God with us*, in his state of humiliation, *he rides upon an ass*. Yet some think that he had herein an eye to the custom in Israel for the judges to ride upon white asses, (Judg. 5. 10.) and their sons on ass-colts, Judg. 12. 14. And Christ would thus enter, not as a Conqueror, but as the Judge of Israel, *who for judgment came into this world*.

3. It was not his own, but borrowed. Though he had not a house of his own, yet, one would think, like some wayfaring men that live upon their friends, he might have had an ass of his own, to carry him about; but for our sakes he became in all respects poor, 2 Cor. 8. 9. It is commonly said, "They that live on borrowing, live on sorrowing;" in this, therefore, as in other things, Christ *was a man of sorrows*—that he had nothing of this world's goods but what was given him or lent him.

The disciples who were sent to borrow this ass, are directed to say, *The Lord has need of him*. Those that are in need, must not be ashamed to own their need, nor say, as the unjust steward, *To beg I am ashamed*, Luke 16. 3. On the other hand, none ought to impose upon the kindness of their friends, by going to beg or borrow, when they have not need. In the borrowing of this ass,

(1.) We have an instance of Christ's knowledge. Though the thing was altogether contingent, yet Christ could tell his disciples where they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her. His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed. *Doth God take care for oxen?* (1 Cor. 9. 9.) No doubt he doth, and would not have Balaam's ass abused. He knows all the creatures, so as to make them serve his own purpose.

(2.) We have an instance of his power over the spirits of men. The hearts of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are *in the hand of the Lord*. Christ asserts his right to use the ass, in bidding them bring it to him; the fulness of the earth is the Lord Christ's; but he foresees some hindrance which the disciples might meet with in this service; they must not take them *clam. et secreto*—*privily*, but in the sight of the owner, much less *vi et armis*—*with force and arms*, but with the consent of the owner, which he undertakes they shall have: *If any man say aught to you, ye shall say, The Lord has need of him*. Note, What Christ sets us to do, he will bear us out in the doing of, and furnish us with answers to the objections we may be assaulted with, and make them prevalent; as here, *Straightway he will send them*. Christ, in commanding the ass into his service, shewed that he is Lord of hosts; and, in inclining the owner to send him without further security, shewed that he is the *God of the spirits of all flesh*, and can bow men's hearts.

(3.) We have an example of justice and honesty, in not using the ass, though for so small a piece of service as riding the length of a street or two, without the owner's consent. As some read the latter clause, it gives us a further rule of justice; "*You shall say, The Lord has need of them, and he*" that is, *the Lord*) "*will presently send them back, and*

take care that they be safely delivered to the owner, as soon as he has done with them." Note, What we borrow we must restore in due time, and in good order; for *the wicked borrow, and pay not again*. Care must be taken of borrowed goods, that they be not damaged. *Alas, Master, for it was borrowed!*

II. The prediction that was fulfilled in this, v. 4, 5. Our Lord Jesus, in all he did and suffered, had very much his eye upon this, *That the scriptures might be fulfilled*. As the prophets looked forward to him, (to him they all bare witness,) so he looked back upon them, that all things which were written of the Messiah might be punctually accomplished in him. This particularly which was written of him, Zech. 9. 9. where it ushers in a large prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah, *Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh, must be accomplished*. Now observe here,

1. How the coming of Christ is foretold; *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, the church, the holy mountain, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee*. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the church's King, one of our brethren like unto us, according to the law of the kingdom, Deut. 17. 15. He is appointed King over the church, Ps. 2. 6. He is accepted King by the church; the daughter of Zion swears allegiance to him, Hos. 1. 11. (2.) Christ, the King of his church, came to his church, even in this lower world; he comes to thee, to rule thee, to rule in thee, to rule for thee; he is *Head over all things to the church*. *He came to Zion*, (Rom. 11. 26.) that out of Zion the law might go forth; for the church and its interests were all in all with the Redeemer. (3.) Notice was given to the church, beforehand, of the coming of her King; *Tell the daughter of Zion*, Note, Christ will have his coming looked for, and waited for, and his subjects big with expectation of it; *Tell the daughter of Zion*, that they may *go forth, and behold king Solomon*, Cant. 3. 11. Notices of Christ's coming are usually ushered in with a *Behold!* A note commanding both attention and admiration; *Behold, thy King cometh*; behold, and wonder at him, behold, and welcome him. Here is a royal progress truly admirable. Pilate, like Caiaphas, said he knew not what, in that great word, (John 19. 14.) *Behold your King*.

2. How his coming is described. When a king comes, something great and magnificent is expected, especially when he comes to take possession of his kingdom. The King, the Lord of hosts, was seen upon a throne, high, and lifted up; (Isa. 6. 1.) but there is nothing of that here; *Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass*. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty.

(1.) His temper is very mild. He comes not in wrath to take vengeance, but in mercy to work salvation. He is meek to suffer the greatest injuries and indignities for Zion's cause, meek to bear with the follies and unkindness of Zion's own children. He is easy of access, easy to be entreated. He is meek not only as a Teacher, but as a Ruler; he rules by love. His government is mild and gentle, and his laws not written in the blood of his subjects, but in his own. His yoke is easy.

(2.) As an evidence of this, his appearance is very mean, sitting upon an ass, a creature made not for state, but service, not for battles, but for burthens; slow in its motions, but sure, and safe, and constant. The foretelling of this so long before, and the care taken that it should be exactly fulfilled, intimate it to have a peculiar significance, for the encouragement of poor souls to apply themselves to Christ. Zion's King comes riding, not on a prancing horse, which the timorous petitioner dares not come near, or a running horse, which the slow-foot

ed petitioner cannot keep pace with, but on a quiet ass, that the poorest of his subjects may not be discouraged in their access to him. Mention is made in the prophecy of a *colt*, the *foal of an ass*; and therefore Christ sent for the colt with the ass, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

III. The procession itself, which was answerable to the preparation, both being destitute of worldly pomp, and yet both accompanied with a spiritual power.

Observe, 1. His equipage; *The disciples did as Jesus commanded them*; (v. 6.) they went to fetch the ass and the colt, not doubting but to find them, and to find the owner willing to lend them. Note, Christ's commands must not be disputed, but obeyed; and those that sincerely obey them shall not be jalked or baffled in it; *They brought the ass, and the colt*. The meanness and contemptibleness of the beast Christ rode on might have been made up with the richness of the trappings; but those were, like all the rest, such as came next to hand; they had not so much as a saddle for the ass, but the disciples threw some of their clothes upon it, and that must serve for want of better accommodations. Note, We ought not to be nice or curious, or to affect exactness, in outward conveniencies. A holy indifference and neglect well becomes us in these things: it will evidence that our heart is not upon them, and that we have learned the apostle's rule, (Rom. 12. 16. margin,) *to be content with mean things*. Any thing will serve travellers; and there is a beauty in some sort of carelessness, a noble negligence; yet the disciples furnished him with the best they had, and did not object the spoiling of their clothes when *the Lord hath need of them*. Note, We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ, for the clothing of his poor destitute and afflicted members. *I was naked, and you clothed me*, ch. 25. 36. Christ script himself for us.

2. His retinue; there was nothing in this stately or magnificent. Zion's King comes to Zion, and the daughter of Zion was told of his coming long before; yet he is not attended by the gentlemen of the country, nor met by the magistrates of the city in their formalities, as one might have expected; he should have had the keys of the city presented to him, and should have been conducted with all possible convenience to the *thrones of judgment*, the *thrones of the house of David*; but here is nothing of all this; yet he has his attendants, *a very great multitude*; they were only the common people, the mob, (the *rabble* we should have been apt to call them,) that graced the solemnity of Christ's triumph, and none but such. The chief priests and the elders afterward herded themselves with the multitude that abused him upon the cross; but we find none of them here joining with the multitude that did him honour. Ye see here your calling, brethren, *not many mighty, or noble*, attend on Christ, but *the foolish things of this world, and base things, which are despised*, 1 Cor. 1. 26, 28. Note, Christ is honoured by the multitude, more than by the magnificence, of his followers; for he values men by their souls, not by their preferments, names, or titles of honour.

Now, concerning this great multitude, we are here told,

(1.) What they did; according to the best of their capacity, they studied to do honour to Christ. [1.] *They spread their garments in the way*, that he might ride upon them. When Jehu was proclaimed king, the captains put their garments under him, in token of their subjection to him. Note, Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet; the clothes, in token of their heart; for when Christ comes, though not

when any one else comes, it must be said to the soul, *Row down, that he may go over*. Some think that these garments were spread, not upon the ground, but on the hedges or walls, to adorn the roads; as, to beautify a cavalcade, the balconies are hung with tapestry. This was but a poor piece of state, yet Christ accepted their good-will; and we are hereby taught to contrive how to make Christ welcome, Christ and his grace, Christ and his gospel, into our hearts and houses. How shall we express our respects to Christ? What honour and what dignity shall be done unto him? [2.] *Others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way*, as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles, in token of liberty, victory, and joy; for the mystery of that feast is particularly spoken of as belonging to gospel-times, Zech. 14. 16.

(2.) What they said; *They that went before, and they that followed*, were in the same time; both those that gave notice of his coming, and those that attended him with their applauses, *cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David*, v. 9. When they carried branches about at the feast of tabernacles, they were wont to cry *Hosanna*, and from thence to call their bundles of branches their *Hosannas*. *Hosanna* signifies, *Save now, we beseech thee*; referring to Ps. 118. 25, 26, where the Messiah is prophesied of as the *Head-stone of the corner*, though the builders refused him; and all his loyal subjects are brought in triumphing with him, and attending him with hearty good wishes to the prosperity of all his enterprises. *Hosanna to the Son of David* is, "This we do in honour of the Son of David."

The hosannas with which Christ was attended, bespeak two things,

[1.] Their welcoming his kingdom. *Hosanna* bespeaks the same with, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. It was foretold concerning this Son of David, that *all nations shall call him blessed*; (Ps. 72. 17.) these here began, and all true believers in all ages concur in it, and call him blessed; it is the genuine language of faith. Note *First*, Jesus Christ comes in the name of the Lord; he is sanctified, and sent into the world, as Mediator; *him hath God the Father sealed*. Secondly, The coming of Christ, in the name of the Lord, is *worthy of all acceptance*; and we all ought to say *Blessed is he that cometh*; to praise him, and be pleased in him. Let his coming in the name of the Lord be mentioned with strong affections, to our comfort, and joyful acclamations, to his glory. Well may we say, *Blessed is he*; for it is in him that we are blessed. Well may we follow him with our blessings, who meets us with his.

[2.] Their wishing well to his kingdom; intimated in their *Hosanna*; earnestly desiring that prosperity and success may attend it, and that it might be a victorious kingdom; "*Send now prosperity to that kingdom*." If they understood it of a temporal kingdom, and had their hearts carried out thus toward that, it was their mistake, which a little time would rectify; however, their good-will was accepted. Note, It is our duty earnestly to desire and pray for the prosperity and success of Christ's kingdom in the world. Thus *prayer must be made for him continually*, (Ps. 72. 15.) that all happiness may attend his interest in the world, and that, though he may ride on an ass, yet in his majesty he may ride prosperously, because of that meekness, Ps. 45. 4. This we mean, when we pray, *Thy kingdom come*. They add, *Hosanna in the highest*; Let prosperity in the highest degree attend him, let him have a name above every name, a throne above every throne; or, Let us praise him in the best manner with exalted affections; or, Let our prayers for his church ascend to heaven, to the

highest heavens, and fetch in peace and salvation from thence. See Ps. 20. 6. *The Lord saveth his Anointed, and will hear from his high, his holy heaven.*

3. We have here his entertainment in Jerusalem; (v. 10.) *When he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved*; every one took notice of him, some were moved with wonder at the novelty of the thing, others with laughter at the meanness of it; some perhaps were moved with joy, *who waited for the Consolation of Israel*: others, of the pharisaical class, were moved with envy and indignation. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom!

Upon this commotion, we are further told,

(1.) What the citizens said; *Who is this?* [1.] They were, it seems, ignorant concerning Christ. Though he was the *Glory of his people Israel*, yet *Israel knew him not*; though he had distinguished himself by the many miracles he wrought among them, yet *the daughters of Jerusalem* knew him not *from another beloved*, Cant. 5. 9. The Holy One unknown in the holy city! In places where the clearest light shines, and the greatest profession of religion is made, there is more ignorance than we are aware of. [2.] Yet they were inquisitive concerning him. Who is this that is thus cried up, and comes with so much observation? *Who is this King of glory*, that demands admission into our hearts? Ps. 24. 8. Isa. 63. 1.

(2.) How the multitude answered them; *This is Jesus*, v. 11. The multitude were better acquainted with Christ than the great ones. *Vox populi—The voice of the people*, is sometimes *vox Dei—the voice of God*. Now, in the account they give of him, [1.] They were right in calling him the *Prophet*, that great Prophet. Hitherto he had been known as a Prophet, teaching and working miracles; now they attend him as a King; Christ's priestly office was, of all the three, last discovered. [2.] Yet they missed it, in saying he was of *Nazareth*; and it helped to confirm some in their prejudices against him. Note, Some, that are willing to honour Christ, and bear their testimony to him, yet labour under mistakes concerning him, which would be rectified, if they would take pains to inform themselves.

12. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13. And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. 14. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, 16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? 17. And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

When Christ came into Jerusalem, he did not go up to the court or the palace, though he came in as

a King, but *into the temple*; for his kingdom is *spiritual*, and *not of this world*; it is in holy things that he rules, in the temple of God that he exercises authority. Now, what did he do there?

1. Thence he drove the buyers and sellers. Abuses must first be purged out, and the plants not of God's planting be plucked up, before that which is right can be established. The great Redeemer appears as a great Reformer, that turns away ungodliness, Rom. 11. 26. Here we are told,

1. What he did; (v. 12.) *He cast out all them that sold and bought*; he had done this once before, (John 2. 14, 15.) but there was occasion to do it again. Note, Buyers and sellers, driven out of the temple, will return and nestle there again, if there be not a continual care and oversight to prevent it, and if the blow be not followed, and often repeated.

(1.) The abuse was, buying and selling, and changing money, in the temple. Note, Lawful things, ill timed and ill placed, may become sinful things. That which was decent enough in another place, and not only lawful, but laudable, on another day, *defiles the sanctuary, and profanes the sabbath*. This buying and selling, and changing money, though secular employments, yet had the pretence of being in *ordinate ad spiritualia—for spiritual purposes*. They sold beasts for sacrifice, for the convenience of those that could more easily bring their money with them than their beast; and they changed money for those that wanted the half shekel, which was their yearly poll, or redemption-money; or, upon the bills of return; so that this might pass for the outward business of the house of God; and yet Christ will not allow of it. Note, Great corruptions and abuses come into the church by the practices of those whose *gain is godliness*, that is, who make worldly gain the end of their godliness, and counterfeit godliness their way to worldly gain; (1 Tim. 6. 5.) *from such turn away*.

(2.) The purging out of this abuse. Christ cast them out that sold. He did it before *with a scourge of small cords*; (John 2. 13.) now he did it with a look, with a frown, with a word of command. Some reckon this none of the least of Christ's miracles, that he should himself thus clear the temple, and not be opposed in it by them who by this craft got their living, and were backed in it by the priests and elders. It is an instance of his power over the spirits of men, and the hold he has of them by their own consciences. This was the only act of regal authority and coercive power that Christ did in the days of his flesh; he began with it, John 2. and here ended with it. Tradition says, that his face shone, and beams of light darted from his blessed eyes, which astonished these market-people, and compelled them to yield to his command; if so, the scripture was fulfilled, Prov. 8. 20. *The King that sitteth on the throne of judgement, scattereth away all evil with his eyes. He overthrew the tables of the money-changers*; he did not take the money to himself, but scattered it, threw it to the ground, the fittest place for it. The Jews, in Esther's time, *on the spoil laid not their hand*, Esther 9. 10.

(3.) What he said, to justify himself, and to convict them; (v. 13.) *It is written*. Note, In the reformation of the church, the eve must be upon the scripture, and that must be adhered to as the rule, the pattern in the mount; and we must go no further than we can justify ourselves with, *It is written*. Reformation is then right, when corrupted ordinances are reduced to their primitive institution.

(1.) He shews, from a scripture prophecy, what the temple should be, and was designed to be; *My house shall be called the house of prayer*; which is quoted from Isa. 56. 7. Note, All the ceremonial institutions were intended to be subservient to moral

duties; the house of sacrifices was to be a house of prayer, for that was the substance and soul of all those services; the temple was in a special manner sanctified to be a house of prayer, for it was not only the place of that worship, but the medium of it, so that the prayers made in or toward that house had a particular promise of acceptance, (2 Chron. 6. 21.) as it was a type of Christ: therefore Daniel looked that way in prayer; and in this sense, no house or place is now, or can be, a house of prayer; for Christ is our Temple; yet in some sense the appointed places of our religious assemblies may be so called, as *places where prayer is wont to be made*, Acts 16. 13.

(2.) It shews, from a scripture reproof, how they had abused the temple, and perverted the intention of it; *Ye have made it a den of thieves*. This is quoted from Jer. 7. 11. *Is this house become a den of robbers in your eyes?* When disssembled piety is made the cloak and cover of iniquity, it may be said that the *house of prayer* is become a *den of thieves*, in which they lurk, and shelter themselves. Markets are two often dens of thieves, so many are the corrupt and cheating practices in buying and selling; but markets in the temple are certainly so, for they rob God of his honour, the worst of thieves, Mal. 3. 8. The priests lived, and lived plentifully, upon the altar; but, not content with that, they found other ways and means to squeeze money out of the people; and therefore Christ here calls them *thieves*, for they exacted that which did not belong to them.

11. There, in the temple, he healed the blind and the lame, v. 14. When he had driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he invited the blind and lame into it; for he fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away. Christ, in the temple, by his word there preached, and in answer to the prayers there made, heals those that are spiritually blind and lame. It is good coming to the temple, when Christ is there, who, as he shews himself jealous for the honour of his temple, in expelling those who profane it, so he shews himself gracious to those who humbly seek him. *The blind and the lame* were debarred David's palace, (2 Sam. 5. 8.) but were admitted into God's house; for the state and honour of his temple lie not in those things wherein the magnificence of princes' palaces is supposed to consist; from them blind and lame must keep their distance, but from God's temple only the wicked and profane. The temple was profaned and abused when it was made a market-place, but it was graced and honoured when it was made an hospital; to be doing good in God's house, is more honourable, and better becomes it, than to be getting money there. Christ's healing was a real answer to that question, *Who is this?* His works testified of him more than the *hosannas*; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling of the promise, that *the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former*.

There also he silenced the offence which the chief priests and scribes took at the acclamations with which he was attended, v. 15, 16. They that should have been most forward to give him honour were his worst enemies.

1. They were inwardly vexed at the wonderful things that he did; they could not deny them to be true miracles, and therefore were cut to the heart with indignation at them, as Acts 4. 16.—5. 33. The works that Christ did recommended themselves to every man's conscience. If they had any sense, they could not but own the miracle of them; and, if any good nature, could not but be in love with the mercy of them; yet, because they were resolved to oppose him, for these they envied him, and bore him a grudge.

(2.) They openly quarrelled at the children's *hosannas*; they thought that hereby an honour was given him, which did not belong to him, and that it looked like ostentation. Proud men cannot bear that honour should be done to any but to themselves, and are uneasy at nothing more than at the just praises of deserving men. Thus Saul envied David the women's songs; and "Who can stand before envy?" When Christ is most honoured, his enemies are most displeased.

Just now we had Christ preferring the blind and the lame before the buyers and sellers; now here we have him (v. 16.) taking part with the children against priests and scribes.

Observe, (1.) The children were in the temple, perhaps playing there; no wonder, when the rulers make it a *market-place*, that the children make it a place of pastime; but we are willing to hope that many of them were worshipping there. Note, It is good to bring children betimes to the house of prayer, for *of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Let children be taught to keep up the form of godliness, it will help to lead them to the power of it. Christ has a tenderness for the lambs of his flock.

(2.) They were there, *crying, Hosanna to the Son of David*. This they learned from those that were grown up. Little children say and do as they hear others say, and see others do; so easily do they imitate; and therefore great care must be taken to set them good examples, and no bad ones. *Maxima debetur puero reverentia—Our intercourse with the young should be conducted with the most scrupulous care*. Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and swear, or to pray and praise. The Jews did betimes teach their children to carry branches at the feast of tabernacles, and to cry *Hosanna*; but God taught them here to apply it to Christ. Note, *Hosanna to the Son of David* well becomes the mouths of little children, who should learn young the language of Canaan.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus not only allowed it, but was very well pleased with it, and quoted a scripture which was fulfilled in it, (Ps. 8. 2.) or, at least, may be accommodated to it; *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise*; which, some think, refers to the children's joining in the acclamations of the people, and the women's songs with which David was honoured when he returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, and therefore is very fitly applied here to the *hosannas* with which the Son of David was saluted, now that he was entering upon his conflict with Satan, that Goliath. Note, [1.] Christ is so far from being ashamed of the services of little children, that he takes particular notice of them, (and children love to be taken notice of,) and is well pleased with them. If God may be honoured by babes and sucklings, who are made to hope at the best, much more by children who are grown up to maturity and some capacity. [2.] Praise is perfected out of the mouth of such, it has a peculiar tendency to the honour and glory of God for little children to join in his praises; the praise would be accounted defective and imperfect, if they had not their share in it; which is an encouragement for children to be good betimes, and to parents to teach them to be so; the labour neither of the one nor of the other shall be in vain. In this psalm it is, *Thou hast ordained strength*. Note, *God perfecteth praise, by ordaining strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings*. When great things are brought about by weak and unlikely instruments, God is thereby much honoured, for his strength is perfected in weakness, and the infirmities of the babes and sucklings serve for a foil to the divine power. That which follows in the psalm, *That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger*, was very applicable to the priests and scribes, but

Christ did not apply it to them, but left it to them to apply it.

Lastly, Christ, having thus silenced them, forsook them, *v. 17.* *He left them*, in prudence, lest they should now have seized him before his hour was come; in justice, because they had forfeited the favour of his presence. By repining at Christ's praises we drive him from us. *He left them* as incorrigible, and he *went out of the city to Bethany*, which was a more quiet retired place; not so much that he might sleep undisturbed as that he might pray undisturbed. *Bethany was but two little miles from Jerusalem*; thither he now went on foot, to shew that, when he rode, it was only to fulfil the scripture. He was not lifted up with the hosannas of the people; but, as having forgot them, soon returned to his mean and toilsome way of travelling.

18. Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Observe,

I. Christ returned in the morning to Jerusalem, *v. 18.* Some think that he went out of the city over night, because none of his friends there durst entertain him, for fear of the great men; yet, having work to do there, he returned. Note, We must never be driven off from our duty, either by the malice of our foes, or the unkindness of our friends. Though he knew that in the city bonds and afflictions did abide him, yet none of these things moved him. Paul followed him when he went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem. Acts 20. 22.

II. As he went he hungered. He was a Man, and submitted to the infirmities of nature; he was an active Man, and was so intent upon his work, that he neglected his food, and came out fasting; for the zeal of God's house did even eat him up, and his meat and drink was to do his Father's will. He was a poor Man, and had no present supply; he was a Man that pleased not himself, for he would willingly have taken up with green raw figs for his breakfast, when it was fit that he should have had something warm.

Christ therefore hungered, that he might have occasion to work this miracle, in cursing, and so withering, the barren fig tree, and there might give us an instance of his justice and his power, and both instructive.

1. See his justice, *v. 19.* He went to it, expecting fruit, because it had leaves; but, finding none, he sentenced it to a perpetual barrenness. The miracle had its significance, as well as other his miracles. All Christ's miracles hitherto were wrought for the good of men, and proved the power of his grace and blessing; (the sending of the devils into

the herd of swine was but a permission;) all he did was for the benefit and comfort of his friends, none for the terror or punishment of his enemies; but now, at last, to shew that *all judgment is committed to him*, and that he is able not only to save, but to destroy, he would give a specimen of the power to his wrath and curse; yet this not on any man, woman, or child, because *the great day of his wrath is not yet come*, but on an inanimate tree, that is set forth for an example: *Come, learn a parable of the fig tree, ch. 24. 32.* The scope of it is the same with the parable of the fig tree, Luke 13. 6.

(1.) This cursing of the barren fig tree, represents the state of hypocrites in general; and so it teaches us, [1.] That the fruit of fig trees may justly be expected from those that have the leaves. Christ looks for the power of religion from those that make profession of it; the favour of it from those that have the show of it; grapes from the vineyard that is planted in a fruitful hill: he hungers after it, his soul desires the first ripe fruits. [2.] Christ's just expectations from flourishing professors are often frustrated and disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only, and he discovers it. Many have a name to live, and are not alive indeed; dote on the form of godliness, and yet deny the power of it. [3.] The sin of barrenness is justly punished with the curse and plague of barrenness; *Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.* As one of the chiefest blessings, and which was the first, is, *Be fruitful*; so one of the saddest curses is, *Be no more fruitful*. Thus the sin of hypocrites is made their punishment; they would not do good, and therefore they shall do none; he that is fruitless, let him be fruitless still, and lose his honour and comfort. [4.] A false and hypocritical profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse; the fig tree, that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. Hypocrites may look plausible for a time, but, having no principle, no root in themselves, their profession will soon come to nothing; the gifts wither, common graces decay, the credit of the profession declines and sinks, and the falseness and folly of the pretender is manifested to all men.

(2.) It represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular; they were a fig tree planted in Christ's way, as a church. Now observe, [1.] The disappointment they gave to our Lord Jesus. He came among them, expecting to find some fruit, something that would be pleasing to him; he hungered after it; not that he desired a gift, he needed it not, but fruit that might abound to a good account; but his expectations were frustrated, he found nothing but leaves; they called Abraham their father, but did not do the works of Abraham; they professed themselves expectant of the promised Messiah, but, when he came, they did not receive and entertain him. [2.] The doom he passed upon them, that never any fruit should grow upon them, or be gathered from them, as a church or as a people, from henceforward for ever. Never any good came from them, (except the particular persons among them that believed,) after they rejected Christ; they became worse and worse; blindness and hardness happened to them, and grew upon them, till they were unchurched, unpeopled, and undene, and their place and nation rooted up; their beauty was defaced, their privileges and ornaments, their temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices, and festivals, and all the glories of their church and state, fell like leaves in autumn. How seen did their fig tree wither away, after they said, *His blood be on us, and on our children?* And the Lord was righteous in it.

2. See the power of Christ; the former is wrapped up in the figure, but this more fully discoursed

of; Christ intending thereby to direct his disciples in the use of their powers.

(1.) The disciples admired the effect of Christ's curse; (*v.* 20.) *They marvelled*; no power could do it but his, *who shake and it was done*. They marvelled at the suddenness of the thing; *How soon is the fig tree withered away!* There was no visible cause of the fig tree's withering, but it was a secret blast, a worm at the root; it was not only the leaves of it that withered, but the body of the tree; it withered away in an instant, and became like a dry stick. Gospel curses are, upon this account, the most dreadful—that they work insensibly and silently, by a fire not blown, but effectually.

(2.) Christ empowered them by faith to do the like; (*v.* 21, 22.) as he said, (*John* 14. 12.) *Greater works than these shall ye do*.

Observe, [1.] The description of this wonder-working faith; *If ye have faith, and doubt not*. Note, Doubting of the power and promise of God is the great thing that spoils the efficacy and success of faith. "If you have faith, and dispute not," (so some read it,) "dispute not with yourselves, dispute not with the promise of God; if you stagger not at the promise;" (*Rom.* 4. 20.) for, as far as we do, so our faith is deficient; as certain as the promise is, so confident our faith should be.

[2.] The power and prevalence of it expressed figuratively; *If ye shall say to this mountain, (meaning the mount of Olives,) Be thou removed, it shall be done*. There might be a particular reason for his saying so of this mountain, for there was a prophecy, that the *mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, should cleave in the midst, and then remove*, *Zech.* 14. 4. Whatever was the intent of that word, the same must be the expectation of faith, how impossible soever it might appear to sense. But this is a proverbial expression; intimating that we are to believe that nothing is impossible with God, and therefore that what he has promised shall certainly be performed, though to us it seem impossible. It was among the Jews a usual commendation of their learned Rabbins, that they were removers of mountains, that is, could solve the greatest difficulties; now this may be done by faith acted on the word of God, which will bring great and strange things to pass.

[3.] The way and means of exercising this faith, and of doing it which is to be done by it; *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*. Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer; and prayer is not right, if it do not spring from faith. This is the condition of our receiving; we must *ask in prayer, believing*. The requests of prayer shall not be denied; the expectations of faith shall not be frustrated. We have many promises to this purport from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, and all to encourage faith, the principal grace, and prayer, the principal duty, of a Christian. It is but ask and have, believe and receive; and what would we more? Observe how comprehensive the promise is—all things whatsoever ye shall ask; this is like all and every the premises in a conveyance. *All things*, is general; *whatsoever*, brings it to particulars; though generals include particulars, yet such is the folly of our unbelief, that, though we think we assent to promises in the general, yet we fly off, when it comes to particulars, and therefore, *that we might have strong consolation*, it is thus copiously expressed, *All things whatsoever*.

23. And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teach-

ing, and said, By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority? 21. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven: he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Our Lord Jesus (like St. Paul after him) preached his gospel *with much contention*; his first appearance was in a dispute with the doctors in the temple, when he was twelve years old; and here, just before he died, we have him engaged in controversy. In this sense, he was like Jeremiah, *a man of contention; not striving, but striven with*. The great contenders with him, were, the chief priests and the elders, the judges of two distinct courts: the chief priests presided in the ecclesiastical court, in all matters of the Lord, as they are called; the elders of the people were judges of the civil courts, in temporal matters. See an idea of both, *2 Chron.* 19. 5, 8, 11. These joined to attack Christ, thinking they should find or make him obnoxious either to the one or to the other. See how woefully degenerate that generation was, when the governors both in church and state, who should have been the great promoters of the Messiah's kingdom, were the great opposers of it! Here we have them disturbing him when he was preaching, *v.* 23. They would neither receive his instructions themselves, nor let others receive them. Observe,

I. As soon as he came into Jerusalem, he went to the temple, though he had been affronted there the day before, was there in the midst of enemies, and in the mouth of danger; yet thither he went, for there he had a fairer opportunity of doing good to souls than any where else in Jerusalem. Though he came hungry to the city, and was disappointed of a breakfast at the barren fig tree, yet, for aught that appears, he went straight to the temple, as one that esteemed the words of God's mouth, the preaching of them, *more than his necessary food*.

II. In the temple he was teaching; he had called it a *house of prayer*, (*v.* 13.) and here we have him preaching there. Note, In the solemn assemblies of Christians, praying and preaching must go together, and neither must encroach upon, or jostle out, the other. To make up communion with God, we must not only speak to him in prayer, but hear what he has to say to us by his word; ministers must give themselves both to the word and to prayer, *Acts* 6. 4. Now that Christ taught in the temple, that scripture was fulfilled, (*Isa.* 2. 3.) *Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways*. The priests of old often taught there the good knowledge of the Lord; but they never had such a teacher as this.

III. When Christ was teaching the people, the priests and elders came upon him, and challenged him to produce his orders; the hand of Satan was in this, to hinder him in his work. Note, It cannot but be a trouble to a faithful minister, to be taken

off, or diverted from, plain and practical preaching, by an unavoidable necessity of engaging in controversies; yet good was brought out of this evil, for hereby occasion was given to Christ to dispel the objections that were advanced against him, to the greater satisfaction of his followers; and, while his adversaries thought by their power to have silenced him, he by his wisdom silenced them.

Now, in this dispute with them, we may observe,

1. How he was assaulted by their insolent demand; *By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?* Had they duly considered his miracles, and the power by which he wrought them, they needed not to have asked this question; but they must have something to say for the shelter of an obstinate infidelity. "Thou ridest in triumph into Jerusalem, receivest the hosannas of the people, controuldest in the temple, drivest out such as had licence to be there, from the rulers of the temple, and paid them rent; thou art here preaching a new doctrine; whence hadst thou a commission to do all this? Was it from Cæsar, or from the high priest, or from God? Produce thy warrant, thy credentials. Dost not thou take too much upon thee?" Note, It is good for all that take upon them to act with authority, to put this question to themselves, "Who gave us that authority?" For unless a man be clear in his own conscience concerning that, he cannot act with any comfort or hope of success. They who run before their warrant, run without their blessing, Jer. 23. 21, 22.

Christ had often said it, and proved it beyond contradiction, and Nicodemus a master in Israel, had owned it, that he was a *Teacher sent of God*; (John 3. 2.) yet, at this time of day, when that point had been so fully cleared and settled, they come to him with this question. (1.) In the ostentation of their own power, as chief priests and elders, which, they thought, authorised them to call him to an account in this manner. How haughtily do they ask, *Who gave thee this authority?* Intimating that he could have no authority, because he had none from them, 1 Kings 22. 24. Jer. 20. 1. Note, It is common for the greatest abusers of their power, to be the most rigorous asserters of it, and to take a pride and pleasure in any thing that looks like the exercise of it. (2.) It was to insnare and entangle him. Should he refuse to answer this question, they would enter judgment against him upon *Nihil dicet*—*He says nothing*; would condemn him as standing mute; and would insinuate to the people, that his silence was a tacit confessing of himself to be a Usurper; should he plead an authority from God, they would, as formerly, demand a sign from heaven, or make his defence his offence, and accuse him of blasphemy for it.

2. How he answered this demand with another, which would help them to answer it themselves; (v. 24, 25.) *I also will ask you one thing.* He declined giving them a direct answer, lest they should take advantage against him; but answers them with a question. Those that are *as sheep in the midst of wolves*, have need to be *wise as serpents: the heart of the wise studieth to answer.* We must give a reason of the hope that is in us, not only with meekness, but with fear, (1 Pet. 3. 15.) with prudent caution, lest truth be damaged, or ourselves endangered.

Now this question is concerning John's baptism, here put for his whole ministry, preaching as well as baptizing; "Was this *from heaven, or of men?* One of the two it must be; either what he did was of his own head, or he was sent of God to do it." Gamaliel's argument turned upon this hinge; (Acts 5. 38, 39.) Either *this counsel is of men, or of God.* Though that which is manifestly bad cannot be of God, yet that which is seemingly good may be of men, nay, of Satan, when *he transforms himself into an angel of light.* This question was not at all shuf-

fling, to evade their's; but, (1.) If they answered this question, it would answer their's: should they say, against their consciences, that John's baptism was of men, yet it would be easy to answer, *John did no miracles*, (John 10. 41.) Christ did many; but, should they say, as they could not but own, that John's baptism was from heaven, (which was supposed in the questions sent him, John 1. 21. *Art thou Elias, or that prophet?*) then their demand was answered, for he bare testimony to Christ. Note, Truths appear in the clearest light when they are taken in their due order; the resolving of the *previous* question will be a key to the *main* question.

(2.) If they refused to answer it, that would be a good reason why he should not offer proofs of his authority to men that were obstinately prejudiced against the strongest conviction; it was but to cast pearls before swine. Thus *he taketh the wise in their own craftiness*; (1 Cor. 3. 19.) and those that would not be convinced of the plainest truths shall be convicted of the vilest malice, against John first, then against Christ, and in both against God.

3. How they were hereby baffled and run aground; they knew the truth, but would not own it, and so were taken in the snare they laid for our Lord Jesus. Observe,

(1.) *How they reasoned with themselves*, not concerning the merits of the cause, what proofs there were of the divine original of John's baptism; no, their care was, how to make their part good against Christ. Two things they considered and consulted, in this reasoning with themselves—their credit, and their safety; the same things which *they* principally aim at, who *seek their own things*.

[1.] They consider their own credit, which they would endanger, if they should own John's baptism to be of God; for then Christ would ask them, before all the people, *Why did ye not believe him?* And to acknowledge that a doctrine is from God, and yet not to receive and entertain it, is the greatest absurdity and iniquity that a man can be charged with. Many, that will not be kept by the fear of sin from neglecting and opposing that which they know to be true and good, are kept by the fear of shame from owning that to be true and good which they neglect and oppose. Thus they *reject the counsel of God against themselves*, in not submitting to John's baptism, and were left without excuse.

[2.] They consider their own safety, that they would expose themselves to the resentments of the people, if they should say that John's baptism was of men; *We fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet.* It seems, then, *First*, That the people had truer sentiments of John than the chief priests and the elders had, or, at least, were more free and faithful in declaring their sentiments. This people, of whom they said in their pride that they *knew not the law, and were cursed*, (John 7. 49.) it seems knew the gospel, and were blessed. *Secondly*, That the chief priests and elders stood in awe of the common people, which is an evidence that things were in disorder among them, and that mutual jealousies were at a great height; that the government was become obnoxious to the hatred and scorn of the people, and the scripture was fulfilled, *I have made you contemptible and base*, Mal. 2. 8, 9. If they had kept their integrity, and done their duty, they had kept up their authority, and needed not to fear the people. We find sometimes that the people feared them, and it served them for a reason why they did not confess Christ, John 9. 22.—12. 42. Note, Those could but fear the people, who studied only how to make the people fear them. *Thirdly*, That it is usually the temper even of common people, to be zealous for the honour of that which they account sacred and divine. If they account *John as a prophet*, they will not endure that it should be said,

His baptism was of men; hence the hottest contests have been about holy things. *Fourthly*, That the chief priests and elders were kept from an open denial of the truth, even against the conviction of their own minds, not by the fear of God, but purely by the fear of the people; *as the fear of man may bring good people into a snare*, (Prov. 29. 25.) so sometimes it may keep bad people from being *over-much wicked, lest they should die before their time*, Eccl. 7. 17. Many bad people would be a deal worse than they are, if they durst.

(2.) How they replied to our Saviour, and so dropt the question. They fairly confessed, *We cannot tell*; that is, "We will not;" *in disguise—We never knew*. The more shame for them, while they pretended to be leaders of the people, and by their office were obliged to take cognizance of such things; when they would not confess their knowledge, they were constrained to confess their ignorance. And observe by the way, when they said, *We cannot tell*, they told a lie, for they knew that John's baptism was of God. Note, There are many who are more afraid of the *shame* of lying than of the *sin*, and therefore scruple not to speak that which they know to be false concerning their own thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, or their remembering or forgetting of things, because in those things they know nobody can disprove them.

Thus Christ avoided the snare they laid for him, and justified himself in refusing to gratify them; *Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things*. If they be so wicked and base as either not to believe, or not to confess, that the baptism of John was from heaven, (though it obliged to repentance, that great duty, and sealed the kingdom of God at hand, that great promise,) they were not fit to be discoursed with concerning Christ's authority; for men of such a disposition could not be convinced of the truth, nay, they could not but be provoked by it, and therefore *he that is thus ignorant, let him be ignorant still*. Note, Those that imprison the truths they know, in unrighteousness, (either by not professing them, or by not practising according to them,) are justly denied the further truths they inquire after, Rom. 1. 18, 19. Take away the talent from him that buried it; those that *will not see, shall not see*.

28. But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. 29. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 30. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. 31. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

As Christ instructed his disciples by parables, which made the instructions the more easy, so sometimes he convinced his adversaries by parables, which bring reproofs more close, and make men, or ever they are aware, to reprove themselves. Thus Nathan convinced David by a parable. (2 Sam. 12. 1.) and the woman of Tekoa surprised him

in like manner, 2 Sam. 14. 2. Reproving parables are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge them out of their own mouths. This Christ designs here, as appears by the first words, (v. 28.) *But what think you?*

In these verses, we have the parable of the *two sons* sent to work in the vineyard, the scope of which is to show that they who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were ashamed even by the publicans and harlots, who knew it, and owned it. Here is,

1. The parable itself, which represents two sorts of persons; some that prove better than they promise, represented by the first of those sons; others that promise better than they prove, represented by the second.

1. They had both one and the same father, which signifies that God is a common Father to all mankind. There are favours which all alike receive from him, and obligations which all alike lie under to him; *Have we not all one Father?* Yes, and yet there is a vast difference between men's characters.

2. They had both the same command given them; *Son, go work to-day in my vineyard*. Parents should not breed up their children in idleness; nothing is more pleasing, and yet nothing more pernicious, to youth than that, Lam. 3. 27. God sets his children to work, though they are all heirs. This command is given to every one of us. Note, (1.) The work of religion, which we are called to engage in, is vineyard-work, creditable, profitable, and pleasant. By the sin of Adam we were turned out to work upon the common, and to eat the herb of the field; but by the grace of our Lord Jesus we are called to work again in the vineyard. (2.) The gospel-call to work in the vineyard, requires present obedience; *Son, go work to-day*, while it is called to-day, because *the night comes when no man can work*. We were not sent into the world to be idle, nor had we day-light given us to play by; and therefore, if ever we mean to do any thing for God and our souls, Why not now? Why not to-day? (3.) The exhortation to *go work to-day in the vineyard*, speaketh unto us *as unto children*; (Heb. 12. 5.) *Son, go work*. It is the command of a Father, which carries with it both authority and affection, a Father that pities his children, and considers their frame, and will not over-task them, (Ps. 103. 13, 14.) a Father that is very tender of *his Son that serves him*, Mal. 3. 17. If we work in our Father's vineyard, we work for ourselves.

3. Their conduct was very different.

(1.) One of the sons did better than he said, proved better than he promised. His answer was bad, but his actions were good.

[1.] Here is the untoward answer that he gave to his father; he said, flat and plain, *I will not*. See to what a degree of impudence the corrupt nature of man rises, to say, *I will not*, to the command of a Father; such a command of such a Father; they are impudent children and stiff-hearted. Those that will not bend, surely they cannot blush: if they had any degree of modesty left them, they could not say, *We will not*, Jer. 2. 25. Excuses are bad, but downright denials are worse; yet such peremptory refusals do the calls of the gospel often meet with. *First*, Some love their ease, and will not work; they would live in the world, as leviathan in the waters, to play therein; (Ps. 104. 26.) they do not love working. *Secondly*, Their hearts are so much upon their own fields, that they are not for working in God's vineyard. They love the business of the world better than the business of their religion. Thus some by the delights of sense, and others by the employments of the world, are kept from doing that great work which they were sent into the world about, and so *stand all the day idle*.

[2.] Here is the happy change of his mind, an

of his way, upon second thoughts; *Afterward he repented, and went.* Note, There are many who in their beginning are wicked and wilful, and very unpromising, who afterward repent and mend, and come to something. Some, that God hath chosen, are suffered for a great while to run to a great excess of riot; *Such were some of you*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. These are set forth for *patterns of long suffering*, 1 Tim. 1. 16. *Afterward he repented.* Repentance is *μετάνοια*—an *after-wit*; and *μεταμέλεια*—an *after-care*. Better late than never. Observe, When he repented, he went; that was the *fruit meet for repentance*. The only evidence of our repentance for our former resistance, is, immediately to comply, and set to work; and then what is past shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. See what a kind Father God is; he resents not the affront of our refusals, as justly he might. He that told his father to his face, that he *would not* do as he bid him, deserved to be turned out of doors, and disinherited; but our God *waits to be gracious*, and, notwithstanding our former follies, if we repent and mend, will favourably accept of us: blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

(2.) The other son said better than he did, promised better than he proved; his answer was good, but his actions bad. To him the father *said likewise*, v. 30. The gospel-call, though very different, is, in effect, the same to all, and is carried on with an even tenour. We have all the same commands, engagements, encouragements, though to some they are a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Observe,

[1.] How fairly this other son promised; *He said, I go, sir.* He gives his father a title of respect, *sir*. Note, It becomes children to speak respectfully to their parents. It is one branch of that honour which the fifth commandment requires. He professes a ready obedience, *I go*; not, “I will go by and by,” but, “Ready, sir, you may depend upon it, I go just now.” This answer we should give from the heart heartily to all the calls and commands of the word of God. See Jer 3. 22. Ps. 27. 8.

[2.] How he failed in the performance; *He went not.* Note, There are many that give good words, and make fair promises, in religion, and those from some good motions for the present, that rest there, and go no further, and so come to nothing. Saying and doing are two things; and many there are that say, and do not; it is particularly charged upon the Pharisees, *ch. 23. 3.* Many with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes another way. They had a good mind to be religious, but they met with something to be done, that was too hard, or something to be parted with, that was too dear, and so their purposes are to no purpose. Buds and blossoms are not fruit.

II. A general appeal upon the parable; *Whither of them did the will of his father?* v. 31. They both had their faults, one was rude, and the other was false; such variety of exercises parents sometimes have in the different humours of their children, and they have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to know what is the best way of managing them. But the question is, Which was the better of the two, and the less faulty? And it was soon resolved; the first, because his actions were better than his words, and his latter end than his beginning. This they had learned from the common sense of mankind, who would much rather deal with one that will be better than his word, than with one that will be false to his word. And, in the intention of it, they had learned from the account God gives of the rule of his judgment, (Ezek. 18. 21, 22.) that if *the sinner turn from his wickedness*, he shall be pardoned; and if *the righteous man turn from his righteous-*

ness, he shall be rejected. The tenour of the whole scriptures gives us to understand that those are accepted as doing their Father's will, who, when they have missed it, are sorry for it, and do better.

III. A particular application of it to the matter in hand, v. 31, 32. The primary scope of the parable, is, to show how the publicans and harlots, who never talked of the Messiah and his kingdom, yet entertained the doctrine, and submitted to the discipline, of John the Baptist, his forerunner, when the priests and elders, who were big with expectations of the Messiah, and seemed very ready to go into his measures, slighted John the Baptist, and run counter to the designs of his mission. But it has a further reach; the Gentiles were *sometimes disobedient*, had been long so, children of disobedience, like the elder son; (Tit. 3. 3, 4.) yet, when the gospel was preached to them, they became obedient to the faith; whereas the Jews, who said, *I go, sir*, promised fair, (Exod. 24. 7. Josh. 24. 24.) yet went not; they did but flatter God with their mouth, Ps 78. 36.

In Christ's application of this parable, observe,

1. How he proves that John's baptism was *from heaven, and not of men*. “If you cannot tell,” saith Christ, “you might tell.”

(1.) By the scope of his ministry; *John came unto you in the way of righteousness*. Would you know whether John had his commission from Heaven, remember the rule of trial, *By their fruits ye shall know them*; the fruits of their doctrines, the fruits of their doings. Observe but their way, and you may trace out both their rise and their tendency. Now it was evident that John came *in the way of righteousness*. In his ministry, he taught people to repent, and to work the works of righteousness. In his conversation, he was a great example of strictness, and seriousness, and contempt of the world, denying himself, and doing good to every body else. Christ *therefore* submitted to the baptism of John, because it *became him to fulfil all righteousness*. Now, if John thus came in the way of righteousness, could they be ignorant that his baptism was from heaven, or make any doubt of it?

(2.) By the success of his ministry: *The publicans and the harlots believed him*; he did abundance of good among the worst sort of people. St. Paul proves his apostleship by the seals of his ministry, 1 Cor. 9. 2. If God had not sent John the Baptist, he would not have crowned his labours with such wonderful success, nor have made him so instrumental as he was for the conversion of souls. If publicans and harlots believe his report, surely the arm of the Lord is with him. The people's profiting is the minister's best testimonial.

2. How he reproves them for their contempt of John's baptism, which yet, for fear of the people, they were not willing to own. To shame them for it, he sets before them the faith, repentance, and obedience, of the publicans and harlots, which aggravated their unbelief and impenitence. As he shows, *ch. 11. 21.* that the less likely would have repented, so here, that the less likely did repent.

(1.) The publicans and harlots were like the first son in the parable, from whom little of religion was expected. They promised little good, and those that knew them promised themselves little good from them. Their disposition was generally rude, and their conversation profligate and debauched; and yet many of them were wrought upon by the ministry of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elias. See Luke 7. 29. These fitly represented the Gentile world; for, as Dr. Whitby observes, the Jews generally ranked the publicans with the heathen; nay, and the heathen were represented by the Jews as harlots, and born of harlots, John 8. 41.

(2.) The Scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests

and elders, and indeed the Jewish nation in general, were like the other son that gave good words; they made a specious profession of religion, and yet, when the kingdom of the Messiah was brought among them by the baptism of John, they slighted it, they turned their back upon it, nay they *lifted up the heel against it*. A hypocrite is more hardly convinced and converted than a gross sinner; the form of godliness, if that be rested in, becomes one of Satan's strong-holds, by which he opposes the power of godliness. It was an aggravation of their unbelief, [1.] That John was such an excellent person, that he came, and came to them, *in the way of righteousness*. The better the means are, the greater will the account be, if not improved. [2.] That, when they saw the publicans and harlots go before them into the kingdom of heaven, they did not afterward repent and believe; were not thereby provoked to a holy emulation, Rom. 11. 14. Shall publicans and harlots go away with grace and glory; and shall not we put in for a share? Shall our inferiors be more holy and more happy than we? They had not the wit and grace that Esau had, who was moved to take other measures than he had done, by the example of his younger brother, Gen. 28. 6. These proud priests, that set up for leaders, scorned to follow, though it were into the kingdom of heaven, especially to follow publicans; through the pride of their countenance, they would not seek after God, after Christ, Ps. 10. 4.

33. Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be

broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 45. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; they and their leaders are the husbandmen here; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, not to be high-minded, but fear.

1. We have here the privileges of the Jewish church, represented by the letting out of a vineyard to the husbandmen; they were as tenants holding by, from, and under, God the great Householder. Observe,

1. How God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite to an advantageous management and improvement of it. (1.) He planted this vineyard. The church is the *planting of the Lord*, Isa. 61. 3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the *vineyard which his right hand has planted*, (Ps. 80. 15.) planted with the *chiefest vine*, (Isa. 5. 2.) a *noble vine*, Jer. 2. 21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; but vines must be planted. The being of a church is owing to God's distinguishing favour, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others. (2.) He hedged it round about. Note, God's church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a *hedge round about*, like that about Job on every side, (Job 1. 10.) a wall of fire, Zech. 2. 5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain. (3.) He *digged a wine-press, and built a tower*. The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient?

2. How he intrusted these visible church privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them as husbandmen, not because he had need of them, as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honoured by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great; when they were taken to be to God *for a people, and for a name, and for a praise*; (Jer. 13. 11.) when he *revealed his word unto Jacob*; (Ps. 147. 19.) when the *covenant of life and peace* was made with Levi; (Mal. 2. 4, 5.) then this vineyard was let out. See an abstract of the lease, Cant. 8. 11, 12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a *thousand pieces of silver*, (compare Isa. 7. 13.) the main profit was to be his; but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he *went into a far country*. When God had in a visible appearance settled the

Jewish church at mount Sinai, he did in a manner withdraw; they had no more such open vision, but were left to the written word. Or, they imagined that he was gone into a far country, as Israel, when they made the calf, fancied that Moses was gone. They put far from them the evil day.

II. God's expectation of rent from those husbandmen, *vi. 34.* It was a reasonable expectation: for *who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof?* Note, From those that enjoy church privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. 1. His expectations were not hasty; he did not demand a fore-rent, though he had been at such expense upon it; but staid till the time of the fruit drew near, as it did now that John preached the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. 2. They were not high; he did not require them to come at their peril, upon penalty of forfeiting their lease if they ran behindhand; but he sent his servants to them, to mind them of their duty, and of the rent day, and to help them in gathering in the fruit, and making return of it. These servants were the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent, and sometimes directly, to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. 3. They were not hard; it was only to receive the fruits. He did not demand more than they could make of it, but some fruit of that which he himself planted, and observance of the laws and statutes he gave them. What could have been done more reasonable? Israel was an empty vine, nay it was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and brought forth wild grapes.

III. The husbandmen's baseness in abusing the messengers that were sent to them.

1. When he sent them his servants, they abused them, though they represented the master himself, and spake in his name. Note, The calls and reproofs of the word, if they do not engage, will but exasperate. See here what hath all along been the lot of God's faithful messengers, more or less; (1.) To suffer; so persecuted they the prophets, who were hated with a cruel hatred. They not only despised and reproached them, but treated them as the worst of malefactors—they beat them, and killed them, and stoned them. They beat Jeremiah, killed Isaiah, stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the temple. If they that live godly in Christ Jesus themselves, shall suffer persecution, much more they that press others to it. This was God's old quarrel with the Jews, misusing his prophets, 2 Chron. 36. 16. (2.) It has been their lot to suffer from their master's own tenants; they were the husbandmen that treated them thus, the chief priests and elders that sat in Moses's chair, that professed religion and relation to God; these were the most bitter enemies of the Lord's prophets, that cast them out, and killed them, and said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. 66. 5. See Jer. 20. 1, 2.—26. 11.

Now see, [1.] How God persevered in his goodness to them. He sent other servants more than the first; though the first sped not, but were abused. He sent them John the Baptist, and him they had beheaded; and yet he sent them his disciples, to prepare his way. Oh the riches of the patience and forbearance of God, in keeping up in his church a despised, persecuted ministry! [2.] How they persisted in their wickedness. They did unto them likewise. One sin makes way for another of the same kind. They that are drunk with the blood of the saints, add drunkenness to thirst, and still cry, Give, give.

2. At length, he sent them his Son; we have seen God's goodness in sending, and their badness in abusing, the servants; but in the latter instance both these exceed themselves.

(1.) Never did grace appear more gracious than in sending the Son. This was done last of all. Note, All the prophets were harbingers and forerunners to Christ. He was sent last; for if nothing else would work upon them, surely this would; it was therefore reserved for the *ratio ultima*—the last expedient. Surely they will reverence my Son, and therefore I will send him. Note, It might reasonably be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be revered; and reverence to Christ would be a powerful and effectual principle of fruitfulness and obedience, to the glory of God; if they will but reverence the Son, the point is gained. Surely they will reverence my Son, for he comes with more authority than the servants could; judgment is committed to him, that all men should honour him. There is greater danger in refusing him than in despising Moses's law.

(2.) Never did sin appear more sinful than in the abusing of him, which was now to be done in two or three days. Observe,

[1.] How it was plotted; (*vi. 38.*) *When they saw the Son:* when he came, whom the people owned and followed as the Messiah, who would either have the rent paid, or distrained for it; this touched their copyhold, and they were resolved to make one bold push for it, and to preserve their wealth and grandeur by taking him out of the way, who was the only hinderance of it, and rival with them. *This is the heir; come, let us kill him.* Pilate and Herod, the princes of this world, knew not; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8. But the chief priests and elders knew that this was the heir, at least, some of them; and therefore *Come, let us kill him.* Many are killed for what they have. The chief thing they envied him, and for which they hated and feared him, was, his interest in the people, and their hosannas, which, if he was taken off, they hoped to engross securely to themselves. They pretended that he must die, to save the people from the Romans; (John 11. 50.) but really he must die, to save their hypocrisy and tyranny from that reformation which the expected Kingdom of the Messiah would certainly bring along with it. He drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and therefore *let us kill him*; and then, as if the premises must of course go to the occupant, *let us seize on his inheritance.* They thought, if they could but get rid of this Jesus, they should carry all before them in the church without control, might impose what traditions, and force the people to what submissions, they pleased. Thus they take counsel against the Lord and his anointed; but he that sits in heaven, laughs to see them out-shot in their own bow; for, while they thought to kill him, and so to seize on his inheritance, he went by his cross to his crown, and they were broken in pieces with a rod of iron, and their inheritance seized, Ps. 2. 2, 3, 6, 9.

[2.] How this plot was executed, *vi. 39.* While they were so set upon killing him, in pursuance of their design to secure their own pomp and power, and while he was so set upon dying, in pursuance of his design to subdue Satan, and save his chosen, no wonder if they soon caught him and slew him, when his hour was come. Though the Roman power condemned him, yet it is still charged upon the chief priests and elders; for they were not only the prosecutors, but the principal agents, and had the greater sin. *Ye have taken*, Acts 2. 23. Nay, looking upon him to be as unworthy to live, as they were unwilling he should, they cast him out of the vineyard, out of the holy church, which they supposed themselves to have the key of, and out of the holy city, for he was crucified without the gate. Heb. 13. 12. As if He had been the Shame and Reproach, who was the greatest glory, of his people Israel. Thus they who persecuted the servants, persecuted

the Son; as men treat God's ministers, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them.

IV. Here is their doom read out of their own mouths, v. 40, 41. He puts it to them, *When the Lord of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those husbandmen?* He puts it to themselves, for their stronger conviction, that, *knowing the judgment of God against them which do such things, they might be the more inexcusable.* Note, God's proceedings are so unexceptionable, that there needs but an appeal to sinners themselves concerning the equity of them. God will be justified when he speaks. They could readily answer, *He will miserably destroy these wicked men.* Note, Many can easily prognosticate the dismal consequences of other people's sins, that see not what will be the end of their own.

1. Our Saviour, in his question, supposes that *the Lord of the vineyard will come*, and reckon with them. God is the Lord of the vineyard; the property is his, and he will make them know it, who now *lord it over his heritage*, as if it were all their own. The Lord of the vineyard will come. Persecutors say in their hearts, *He delays his coming, he doth not see, he will not require*; but they shall find, though he bear long with them, he will not bear always. It is comfort to abused saints and ministers, that *the Lord is at hand, the Judge stands before the door*. When he comes, what will he do to carnal professors? What will he do to cruel persecutors? They must be called to account, they have their day now; but he sees that *his day is coming*.

2. They, in their answer, suppose that it will be a terrible reckoning; the crime appearing so very black, you may be sure.

(1.) That he will miserably destroy those wicked men; it is destruction that is their doom. *καὶ οὗτοι οὐ μὴ ὑποσώζονται*—*Malis male perdet*. Let men never expect to do ill, and fare well. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in that miserable destruction which was brought upon them by the Romans, and was completed about forty years after this; an unparalleled ruin attended with all the most dismal aggravating circumstances. It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness; hell is everlasting destruction, and it will be the most miserable destruction to them of all others, that have enjoyed the greatest share of church privileges, and have not improved them. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites and persecutors.

(2.) That he will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Note, God will have a church in the world, notwithstanding the unworthiness and opposition of many that abuse the privileges of it. The unbelief and forwardness of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. If one will not, another will. The Jews' leavings were the Gentiles' feast. Persecutors may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the church. The Jews imagined that, no doubt, *they were the people*, and wisdom and holiness must die with them; and if they were cut off, what would God do for a church in the world? But when God makes use of any to bear up his name, it is not because he needs them, nor is he at all beholden to them. If we were made a desolation and an astonishment, God could build a flourishing church upon our ruins; for he is never at a loss what to do for his great name, whatever becomes of us, and of our place and nation.

V. The further illustration and application of this by Christ himself, telling them, in effect, that they had rightly judged.

1. He illustrates it by referring to a scripture fulfilled in this; (v. 42.) *Did ye never read in the scripture?* Yes, no doubt, they had often read and sung it, but had not considered it. We lose the benefit of what we read, for want of meditation. The scrip-

ture he quotes, is, Ps. 118. 22, 23. the same context out of which the children fetched their hosannas. The same word yields matter of praise and comfort to Christ's friends and followers, which speaks conviction and terror to his enemies. Such a two-edged sword is the word of God. That scripture, *the Stone which the builders refused is become the Head-stone of the corner*, illustrates the preceding parable, especially that part of it which refers to Christ.

(1.) The builders rejecting the stone is the same with the husbandmen's abusing of the son that was sent to them. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, had the oversight of the Jewish church, which was God's building; and they would not allow Christ a place in their building, would not admit his doctrine or laws into their constitution; they threw him aside as a despised broken Vessel, a Stone that would serve only for a stepping-stone, to be trampled upon.

(2.) The advancing of this stone to be the head of the corner, is the same with *letting out the vineyard to other husbandmen*. He who was rejected by the Jews, was embraced by the Gentiles; and to that church where there is no difference of circumcision or uncircumcision, *Christ is all and in all*. His authority over the gospel-church, and influence upon it, his ruling it as the Head, and uniting it as the Corner-stone, are the great tokens of his exaltation. Thus, in spite of the malice of the priests and elders, he divided a portion with the great, and received his kingdom, though they would not have him to reign over them.

(3.) The hand of God was in all this; *This is the Lord's doing*. Even the rejecting of him by the Jewish builders, was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; he permitted and overruled it; much more was his advancement to the Head of the corner; his right hand and his holy arm brought it about; it was God himself that *highly exalted him*, and gave him a name above every name; and it is marvellous in our eyes. The wickedness of the Jews that rejected him, is marvellous; that men should be so prejudiced against their own interest; See Isa. 29. 9, 10, 14. The honour done him by the Gentile world, notwithstanding the abuses done him by his own people, is marvellous; that he whom men despised and abhorred, should be adored by kings! Isa. 49. 7. But it is the Lord's doing.

2. He applies it to them, and application is the life of preaching.

(1.) He applies the sentence which they had passed, (v. 41.) and turns it upon themselves; not the former part of it, concerning the miserable destruction of the husbandmen, (he could not bear to speak of that,) but the latter part, of *letting out the vineyard to others*; because, though it looked black upon the Jews, it spake good to the Gentiles. Know then,

[1.] That the Jews shall be unchurch'd; *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you*. This turning out of the husbandmen speaks the same doom with that of dismantling the vineyard, and laying it common, Isa. 5. 5. To the Jews had long pertained *the adoption and the glory*; (Rom. 9. 4.) to them were committed *the oracles of God*, (Rom. 3. 2.) and the sacred trust of revealed religion, and bearing up of God's name in the world; (Ps. 76. 1, 2.) but now it shall be so no longer. They were not only unfruitful in the use of their privileges, but, under pretence of them, opposed the gospel of Christ, and so forfeited them, and it was not long ere the forfeiture was taken. Note, It is a righteous thing with God, to remove church privileges from those that not only sin against them, but sin with them, Rev. 2. 4, 5. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, not only by the temporal judgments that befel them, but by the spiritual judgments they lay under, their blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and

indignation at the gospel, Rom. 11. 8—10. 1 Thess. 2. 15.

[2.] That the Gentiles shall be taken in. God needs not ask us leave, whether he shall have a church in the world; though his vine be plucked up in one place, he will find another to plant it in. He will give it *fruit*—to the Gentile world, that will bring forth the fruit of it. They who had been not a people, and had not obtained mercy, became favourites of Heaven. This is the mystery which blessed Paul was so much affected with, (Rom. 11. 30, 33.) and which the Jews were so much affronted by, Acts 22. 21, 22. At the first planting of Israel in Canaan, the fall of the Gentiles was the riches of Israel; (Ps. 135. 10, 11.) so, at their extirpation, the fall of Israel was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 12. It shall go to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Note, Christ knows beforehand who will bring forth gospel-fruits in the use of gospel-means; because our fruitfulness is all the work of his own hands, and known unto God are all his works. They shall bring forth the fruits better than the Jews had done; God has had more glory from the New-Testament church than from that of the Old-Testament; for, when he changes, it shall not be to his loss.

(2.) He applies the scripture which he had quoted, (v. 42.) to their terror, v. 44. This Stone, which the builders refused, is set for the full of many in Israel; and we have here the doom of two sorts of people, for whose fall it proves that Christ is set.

[1.] Some, through ignorance, stumble at Christ in his estate of humiliation; when this Stone lies on the earth, where the builders threw it, they, through their blindness and carelessness, fall on it, fall over it, and they shall be broken. The offence they take at Christ will not hurt him, any more than he that stumbles hurts the stone he stumbles at; but it will hurt themselves; they will fall, and be broken, and snared, Isa. 8. 14.—1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin.

[2.] Others, through malice, oppose Christ, and bid defiance to him in his estate of exaltation, when this Stone is advanced to the head of the corner; and on them it shall fall, for they pull it on their own heads, as the Jews did by that challenge, *His blood be upon us and upon our children, and it will grind them to powder*. The former seems to bespeak the sin and ruin of all unbelievers; this is the greater sin, and sorer ruin, of persecutors, that kick against the pricks, and persist in it. Christ's kingdom will be a burthensome stone to all those that attempt to overthrow it, or heave it out of its place; see Zech. 12. 3. This Stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, will break in pieces all opposing power, Dan. 2. 34, 35. Some make this an allusion to the manner of stoning to death among the Jews. The malefactors were first thrown down violently from a high scaffold upon a great stone, which would much bruise them; but then they threw another great stone upon them, which would crush them to pieces: one way or other, Christ will utterly destroy all those that fight against him. If they be so stout-hearted, that they are not destroyed by falling on this stone, yet it shall fall on them, and so destroy them. He will strike through kings, he will fill the places with dead bodies, Ps. 110. 5, 6. None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered.

Lastly, The entertainment which this discourse of Christ met with among the chief priests and elders, that heard his parables.

1. They perceived that he spake of them, (v. 45.) and that, in what they said, (v. 41.) they had but read their own doom. Note, A guilty conscience needs no accuser, and sometimes will save a minister the labour of saying, *Thou art the man*. *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur*—Change but the name, the tale is told of thee. So quick and power-

ful is the word of God, and such a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it is easy for bad men (if conscience be not quite seared) to perceive that it speaks of them.

2. They sought to lay hands on him. Note, When those who hear the reproofs of the word, perceive that it speaks of them, if it do not do them a great deal of good, it will certainly do them a great deal of hurt. If they be not pricked to the heart with conviction and contrition, as they were, Acts 2. 37. they will be cut to the heart with rage and indignation, as they were, Acts 5. 33.

3. They durst not do it, for fear of the multitude, who took him for a prophet, though not for the Messiah; this served to keep the Pharisees in awe. The fear of the people restrained them from speaking ill of John, (v. 26.) and here from doing ill to Christ. Note, God has many ways of restraining the remainders of wrath, as he has of making that which breaks out to redound to his praise, Ps. 76. 10.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter is a continuation of Christ's discourses in the temple, two or three days before he died. His discourses then are largely recorded, as being of special weight and consequence. In this chapter, we have, 1. Instruction given, by the parable of the marriage supper, concerning the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, (v. 1. . 10.) and, by the doom of the guest that had not the wedding garment, the danger of hypocrisy in the profession of Christianity, v. 11. . 14. 2. Disputes with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes, who opposed Christ, 1. Concerning paying tribute to Caesar, v. 15. . 22. 2. Concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, v. 23. . 33. 3. Concerning the great commandment of the law, v. 34. . 40. 4. Concerning the relation of the Messiah to David, v. 41. . 46.

1. **A**ND Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?

And he was speechless. 13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

We have here the parable of the guests invited to the wedding feast. In this it is said, (v. 1.) *Jesus answered*, not to what his opposers said, (for they were put to silence,) but to what they thought, when they were wishing for an opportunity to lay hands on him, ch. 21. 46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He answered, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for, this parable represents the gospel-offer, and the entertainment it meets with, as the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers that persecuted the prophets; it shews also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers.

1. Gospel-preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made at the marriage of his son; such is the kingdom of heaven, such the provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, a great King, King of kings. Now,

1. Here is a marriage made for his son. Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel day is the day of his espousals, Cant. 3. 11. Behold by faith the church of the first born, that are written in heaven, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. 21. 9. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here.

2. Here is a dinner prepared for this marriage, v. 4. All the privileges of church membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favour of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, deroting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory.

(1.) It is a feast. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast, (Isa. 25. 6.) a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law; (1 Cor. 5. 8.) *Let us keep the feast.* A feast is a good day; (Esth. 8. 7.) so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. *Oxen and fatlings are killed* for this feast; no meetics, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is a day of slaughter, or sacrifice, Jam. 5. 5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's good will toward men. It was made for laughter, (Eccl. 10. 19.) it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fullness; the design of the gospel was to fill every hungry soul with good things. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth. We are sent for to the banquet of wine, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request.

(2.) It is a wedding feast. Wedding feasts are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast; (John 2. 7.) and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when the marriage of the Lamb shall come, and

the bride has made herself ready, a victorious triumphant feast, Rev. 19. 7, 17, 18.

(3.) It is a royal wedding feast; it is the feast of a king, (1 Sam. 25. 36.) at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Ahasuerus, show the riches of his glorious kingdom, Esth. 1. 4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself, for he gives himself to be to them *El-shaddai* — a God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul.

11. Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. Those that make a feast, will have guests to grace the feast with. God's guests are the children of men. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified! The guests that were first invited were the Jews; wherever the gospel is preached, this invitation is given; ministers are the servants that are sent to invite, Prov. 9. 4, 5.

Now, 1. The guests are called, bidden to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The servants that bring the invitation do not set down their names in a paper; there is no occasion for that, since none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. Those that are bidden to the dinner, are bidden to the wedding; for all that partake of gospel privileges, are to give a due and respectful attendance on the Lord Jesus, as the faithful friend and humble servant of the Bridegroom. They are bidden to the wedding, that they may go forth to meet the Bridegroom; for it is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son.

2. The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious proposals made, but gracious persuasives. We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead, 2 Cor. 5. 11, 26. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, in consideration of their want, but sends to them, in consideration of their weakness and forgetfulness. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king sent forth other servants, v. 4. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the entertainment was almost ready, (the kingdom of God was at hand,) the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent, after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, it was quite ready; and to persuade them to accept the offer. One would think it had been enough to give men an intimation that they had leave to come, and should be welcome; that, during the solemnity of the wedding, the king kept open house; but, because the natural man discerns not, and therefore desires not, the things of the Spirit of God, we are pressed to accept the call by the most powerful inducements, drawn with the cords of man, and all the bonds of love. If the repetition of the call will move us, Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that hears say, Come; let him that is athirst, come, Rev. 22. 17. If the reason of the call will work upon us, Behold, the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; the Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready, peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as wells of living water for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; angels are ready to attend us, creatures are ready to be in league with us, providences are ready to work for our good, and heaven, at last, is ready to receive us; it is a kingdom prepared, ready to be revealed in the last time. Is all this ready; and shall we be unready? Is all this preparation made for us; and is there any room to doubt of our welcome, if we come in a right man-

ner? Come, therefore, *Oh come to the marriage; we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain*, 2 Cor. 6. 1.

III. The cold treatment which the gospel of Christ often meets with among the children of men, represented by the cold treatment that this message met with, and the hot treatment that the messengers met with, in both which the king himself and the royal bridegroom are affronted. This reflects primarily upon the Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves; but it looks further, to the contempt that would, by many in all ages, be put upon, and the opposition that would be given to, the gospel of Christ.

1. The message was basely slighted; (*v. 3.*) *They would not come.* Note, The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him, is, not because they *cannot*, but because *they will not*; (John 5. 40.) *Ye will not come unto me.* This will aggravate the misery of sinners, that they might have had happiness for the coming for, but it was their own act and deed to refuse it. *I would, and ye would not.* But this was not all; (*v. 5.*) *they made light of it*; they thought it not worth coming for; thought the messengers made more ado than needs; let them magnify the preparations ever so much, they could feast as well at home. Note, Making light of Christ, and of the great salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. *ἀμελίζετε—They were careless.* Note, Multitudes perish eternally through mere carelessness, who have not any direct aversion, but a prevailing indifference, to the matters of their souls, and an unconcernedness about them.

And the reason why *they made light of the marriage feast*, was, because they had other things that they minded more, and had more mind to; *they went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.* Note, The business and profit of worldly employments prove to many a great hinderance in closing with Christ: none turn their back on the feast, but with some plausible excuse or other, Luke 14. 18. The country people have their farms to look after, about which there is always something or other to do; the town's people must tend their shops, and be constant upon the exchange; they must *buy, and sell, and get gain.* It is true that both farmers and merchants must be diligent in their business, but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. *Licitis perimus omnes—These lawful things undo us*, when they are unlawfully managed; when we are so *careful and troubled about many things*, as to neglect the *one thing needful.* Observe, Both the city and the country have their temptations, the merchandise in the one, and the farms in the other; so that, whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

2. The messengers were basely abused; *The remnant*, or the rest of them, that is, those who did not go to the *farms or merchandise*, were neither husbandmen nor tradesmen, but ecclesiastics, *the Scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests*; these were the persecutors, these *took the servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them.* This, in the parable, is unaccountable, never any could be so rude and barbarous as this, to servants that came to invite them to a feast; but, in the application of the parable, it was matter of fact; they, whose *feet* should have been *beautiful*, because they brought the *glad tidings of the solemn feasts*, (Nahum 1. 15.) were treated as the *offscouring of all things*, 1 Cor. 4. 13. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, either directly or indirectly, agents in most of the persecutions of the first preachers of the gospel;

witness the history of the *Acts*, that is, the sufferings, of the apostles.

IV. The utter ruin that was coming upon the Jewish church and nation, is here represented by the revenge which the king, in wrath, took on these insolent recusants; (*v. 7.*) *He was wroth.* The Jews, who had been the people of God's love and blessing, by rejecting the gospel, became the generation of his wrath and curse. *Wrath came upon them to the uttermost*, 1 Thess. 2. 16. Now, observe here,

1. What was the crying sin that brought the ruin; it was their being *murderers.* He does not say he destroyed those *despisers of his call*, but those *murderers of his servants*; as if God were more jealous for the lives of his ministers than for the honour of his gospel; he that *toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.* Note, Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills the measure of guilt more than any thing. *Filling Jerusalem with innocent blood*, was that sin of Manasseh which *the Lord would not pardon*, 2 Kings 24. 4.

2. What was the ruin itself, that was coming; *He sent forth his armies.* The Roman armies were his armies, of his raising, of his sending against the people of his wrath; and he gave them a charge to *tread them under foot*, Isa. 10. 6. God is the Lord of men's hosts, and makes what use he pleases of them, to serve his own purposes, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Mic. 4. 11, 12. *His armies destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.* This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. No age ever saw a greater desolation than that, nor more of the direful effects of fire and sword. Though Jerusalem had been a *holy city, the city that God had chosen to put his name there, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*; yet that city being now become a *harlot, righteousness being no longer lodged in it, but murderers, the worst of murderers*, (as the prophet speaks, Isa. 1. 21.) judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; and it is set forth for an example to all that should oppose Christ and his gospel. It was the Lord's doing, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

V. The replenishing of the church again, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is here represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests *out of the highways*, *v. 8, 10.*

Here is, 1. The complaint of the master of the feast concerning those that were first bidden; (*v. 8.*) *The wedding is ready, the covenant of grace ready to be sealed, a church ready to be founded; but they which were bidden, that is, the Jews to whom pertained the covenant and the promises, by which they were of old invited to the feast of fat things, they were not worthy, they were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to.* Note, It is not owing to God that sinners perish, but to themselves. Thus, when Israel of old was within sight of Canaan, the land of promise was ready, the milk and honey ready, but their unbelief and murmuring, and contempt of that pleasant land, shut them out, and their carcasses were left to perish in the wilderness; and these things happened to them for *examples.* See 1 Cor. 10. 11. Heb. 3. 16.—4. 1.

2. The commission he gave to the servants, to invite other guests. The inhabitants of the city (*v. 7.*) had refused; *Go to the high-ways then; into the way of the Gentiles*, which at first they were to decline, *ch. 10. 5.* Thus, by the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 11, 12. Eph. 3. 8. Note, Christ will have a *kingdom in the world*, though many reject the grace, and resist the power, of that kingdom. *Though Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious.* The offer of Christ

and salvation to the Gentiles, was, (1.) Unlooked for and unexpected; such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men upon the road, to be met with an invitation to a wedding feast. The Jews had notice of the gospel long before, and expected the Messiah and his kingdom; but to the Gentiles it was all new, what they had never heard of before, (Acts 17. 19, 20.) and, consequently, what they could not conceive of as belonging to them. See Isa. 65. 1, 2. (2.) It was universal and undistinguishing; *Go, and bid as many as you find.* The highways are public places, and there *Wisdom cries*, Prov. 1. 20. "Ask them that go by the way, ask any body, (Job 21. 29.) high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, Jew and Gentile; tell them all, that they shall be welcome to gospel-privileges upon gospel-terms; whoever will, let him come, without exception."

3. The success of this second invitation; if some will not come, others will; (v. 10.) *They gathered together all, as many as they found.* The servants obeyed their orders. Jonah was sent into the highways, but was so tender of the honour of his country, that he avoided the errand; but Christ's apostles, though Jews, preferred the service of Christ before their respect to their nation; and St. Paul, though sorrowing for the Jews, yet magnifies his office as the apostle of the Gentiles. *They gathered together all.* The design of the gospel is, (1.) To gather souls together; not the nation of the Jews only, but all the children of God who were scattered abroad, (John 11. 52.) *the other sheep that were not of that fold*, John 10. 16. They were gathered into one body, one family, one corporation. (2.) To gather them together to the wedding feast, to pay their respect to Christ, and to partake of the privileges of the new covenant. Where the dove is, there will the poor be gathered together.

Now, the guests that were gathered, were [1.] A multitude, *all, as many as they found*; so many, that the guest chamber was filled. The sealed ones of the Jews were numbered, but those of other nations were without number, *a very great multitude*, Rev. 7. 9. See Isa. 60. 4, 8. [2.] A mixed multitude, *both bad and good*; some that, before their conversion, were sober and well inclined, as the devout Greeks, (Acts 17. 4.) and Cornelius; others, that had run to an excess of riot, as the Corinthians; (1 Cor. 6. 11.) *Such were some of you*; or some that, after their conversion, proved bad, that turned not to the Lord with all their heart, but feignedly; others, that were upright and sincere, and proved of the right class. Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, inclose both good fish and bad; but the Lord knows them that are his.

VI. The case of hypocrites, who are in the church, but not of it, who have a name to live, but are not alive indeed, is represented by the guest that had not on a wedding garment; one of the bad that were gathered in. Those come short of salvation by Christ, not only who refuse to take upon them the profession of religion, but who are not sound at heart in that profession. Concerning this hypocrite observe,

1. His discovery; how he was found out, v. 11.

(1.) *The king came in to see the guests*, to bid those welcome who came prepared, and to turn those out who came otherwise. Note, The God of heaven takes particular notice of those who profess religion, and have a place and a name in the visible church. Our Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks, and therefore knows their works. See Rev. 2. 1, 2. Cant. 7. 12. Let this be a warning to us against hypocrisy, that disguises will shortly be stripped off, and every man will appear in his own colours; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it.

Observe, This hypocrite was never discovered to be without a wedding garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. Note, It is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, either one way or other; but He cannot. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King; then he will separate between the precious and the vile, (ch. 25. 32.) *the secrets of all hearts will then be made manifest*, and we shall infallibly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which now it is not easy to do. It concerns all the guests, to be prepared for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God.

(2.) As soon as he came in, he presently espied the hypocrite; *He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment*; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from the arrests of divine justice; he had not on a wedding garment; he was not dressed as became a nuptial solemnity; he had not his best clothes on. Note, Many come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. If the gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart and a course of life agreeable to the gospel, and our profession of it, *worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called*, (Eph. 4. 1.) *as becomes the gospel of Christ*, Phil. 1. 27. *The righteousness of saints*, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ made *Righteousness to them*, is the clean linen, Rev. 19. 6. This man was not naked, or in rags; some raiment he had, but not a wedding garment. Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is All in all, have the wedding garment.

2. His trial; (v. 12.) and there we may observe,

(1.) How he was arraigned; (v. 12.) *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?* A startling question to one that was priding himself in the place he securely possessed at the feast. *Friend!* That was a cutting word; a seeming friend, a pretended friend, a friend in profession, under manifold ties and obligations to be a friend. Note, There are many in the church who are false friends to Jesus Christ, who say that they love him, while their hearts are not with him. *How camest thou in hither?* He does not chide the servants for letting him in; (the wedding garment is an inward thing, ministers must go according to that which falls within their cognizance;) but he checks his presumption in crowding in, when he knew that his heart was not upright; "How durst thou claim a share in gospel-benefits, when thou hadst no regard to gospel-rules? *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?*" Ps. 50. 16, 17. Such are spots in the feast, dishonour the Bridegroom, affront the company, and disgrace themselves; and, therefore, *How camest thou in hither?* Note, The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to an account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel-ordinances, and usurpation of gospel-privileges. *Who has required this at your hand?* Isa. 1. 12. *Despised sabbaths and abused sacraments must be reckoned for, and judgment taken out upon an action of waste against all those who received the grace of God in vain.* "How camest thou to the Lord's table, at such a time, unhumiliated and unsanctified? What brought thee to sit before God's prophets, as his people do, when thy heart went after thy covetousness? *How camest thou in?* Not by the door, but some other way, as a thief and a robber. It was a tortuous entry, a possession without colour of a title." Note, It is good for those that have a place in the church, often to put it to themselves, "How

came I in hither? Have I a wedding garment?" If we would thus judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

(2.) How he was convicted; *he was speechless: ἡμίμαθ—he was muzzled*; (so the word is used, 1 Cor. 9. 9.) the man stood mute, upon his arraignment, being convicted and condemned by his own conscience. They who live within the church, and die without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day, they will be without excuse; should they plead, *We have eaten and drunken in thy presence*, as they do, Luke 13. 26. that is, to plead guilty; for, the crime they are charged with, is, thrusting themselves into the presence of Christ, and to his table, before they were called. They who never heard a word of this wedding feast will have more to say for themselves; their sin will be more excusable, and their condemnation more tolerable, than theirs who came to the feast without the wedding garment, and so sin against the clearest light and dearest love.

3. His sentence; (v. 13.) *Bind him hand and foot, &c.*

(1.) He is ordered to be pinioned, as condemned malefactors are, to be manacled and shackled. Those that will not work and walk as they should, may expect to be bound hand and foot. There is a binding in this world by the servants, the ministers, whose suspending of persons that walk disorderly, to the scandal of religion, is called binding of them, *ch. 18. 18.* "Bind them up from partaking of special ordinances, and the peculiar privileges of their church-membership; bind them over to the righteous judgment of God." *In the day of judgment*, hypocrites will be bound; *the angels shall bind up these tares in bundles for the fire, ch. 13. 41.* Damned sinners are bound hand and foot by an irreversible sentence; this signifies the same with the fixing of the great gulf; they can neither resist nor outrun their punishment.

(2.) He is ordered to be carried off from the wedding feast; *Take him away.* When the wickedness of hypocrites appears, they are to be taken away from the communion of the faithful, to be cut off as withered branches. This bespeaks the punishment of loss in the other world; they shall be taken away from the King, from the kingdom, from the wedding feast; *Depart from me, ye cursed.* It will aggravate their misery, that (like the unbelieving lord, 2 Kings 7. 2.) *they shall see a light plentiful with their eyes, but shall not taste of it.* Note, Those that walk unworthy of their Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously laid claim to, and complimented themselves with a groundless expectation of.

(3.) He is ordered into a doleful dungeon; *Cast him into outer darkness.* Our Saviour here insensibly slides out of this parable into that which intimates—the damnation of hypocrites in the other world. Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness out of heaven, the land of light; or it is extreme darkness, darkness to the last degree, without the least ray or spark of light, or hope of it, like that of Egypt; *darkness which might be felt; the blackness of darkness, as darkness itself, Job 10. 22.* Note, Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness; and hell will be hell indeed to such, a condemnation more intolerable; *there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.* This our Saviour often uses as part of the description of hell-torments, which are hereby represented, not so much by the misery itself, as by the resentment sinners will have of it; there shall be *weeping*, an expression of great sorrow and anguish; not a gush of tears, which gives present ease, but constant weeping, which is constant torment; and the *gnashing of teeth*, is an expression of the greatest rage and

indignation; they will be *like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord, Isa. 51. 20.—8. 21, 22.* Let us therefore hear and fear.

Lastly, The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying which we had before, (*ch. 20. 16.*) *Many are called, but few are chosen, v. 14.* Of the many that are called to the wedding feast, if you set aside all those as unchosen, that made light of it, and avowedly prefer other things before it; if then you set aside all that make a profession of religion, but the temper of whose spirits, and the tenor of whose conversation, is a constant contradiction to it; if you set aside all the profane, and all the hypocritical, you will find that they are few, very few, that are chosen; many called to the wedding feast, but few chosen to the wedding garment, that is, to *salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit.* This is *the strait gate, and narrow way, which few find.*

15. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. 17. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? 18. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19. Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21. They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. 22. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

It was not the least grievous of the sufferings of Christ, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and had snares laid for him by those that sought how to take him off with some pretence. In these verses, we have him attacked by the Pharisees and Herodians, with a question about paying tribute to Cæsar. Observe,

1. What the design was, which they proposed to themselves, *They took counsel to entangle him in his talk.* Hitherto, his encounters had been mostly with the chief priests and the elders, men in authority, who trusted more to their power than to their policy, and examined him concerning his commission; (*ch. 21, 23.*) but now he is set upon from another quarter; the Pharisees will try whether they can deal with him by their learning in the law, and in casuistical divinity, and they have a *tentamen novum—a new trial* for him. Note, It is vain for the best and wisest of men to think that, by their ingenuity, or interest, or industry, or even by their innocence and integrity, they can escape the hatred and ill-will of bad men, or screen themselves from the strife of tongues. See how unwearied the enemies of Christ and his kingdom are in their opposition!

1. *They took counsel.* It was foretold concerning him, that the rulers would take counsel against him; (Ps. 2. 2.) and so persecuted they the prophets. Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. See Jer. 18. 18.—20. 10. Note, The more there is

of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is. There is a particular *woe* to them that *devise iniquity*, Mic. 2. 1. The more there is of the wicked wit in the contrivance of a sin, the more there is of the wicked will in the commission of it.

2. That which they aimed at, was, to *entangle him in his talk*. They saw him free and bold in speaking his mind, and hoped by that, if they could bring him to some nice and tender point, to get an advantage against him. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word, a word misplaced, or mistaken, or misunderstood; a word, though innocently designed, yet perverted by strained innuendoes: thus they lay a snare for him that *reproveth in the gate*, (Isa. 29. 21.) and represent the greatest teachers as the greatest troublemakers of Israel: thus *the wicked plotteth against the just*, Ps. 37. 12, 13.

There are two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be revenged on him, and be rid of him; either by law, or by force. By law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; for *it was not lawful for them to put any man to death*; (John 18. 31.) and the Roman powers were not apt to concern themselves about *questions of words, and names, and their laws*, Acts 18. 14. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people, who were always the hands, whoever were the heads, in such acts of violence, which they called the beating of the rebels; but the people took Christ for a Prophet, and therefore his enemies could not raise the mob against him. Now, (as the old serpent was from the beginning *more subtle than any beast of the field*,) the design was, to bring him into such a dilemma, that he must make himself liable to the displeasure, either of the Jewish multitude, or of the Roman magistrates; let him take which side of the question he will, he shall run himself into a precipice; and so they will gain their point, and make his own tongue to fall upon him.

II. The question which they put to him, pursuant to this design, v. 16, 17. Having devised this iniquity in secret, in a close cabal, behind the curtain, when they went abroad, without loss of time, they practised it. Observe,

1. The persons they employed; they did not go themselves, lest the design should be suspected, and Christ should stand the more upon his guard; but they sent their disciples, who would look less like tempters, and more like learners. Note, Wicked men will never want wicked instruments to be employed in carrying on their wicked counsels. Pharisees have their disciples at their beck, who will go on any errand for them, and say as they say; and they have this in their eye, when they are so industrious to make proselytes.

With them they sent the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for a cheerful and entire subjection to the Roman emperor, and to Herod his deputy; and who made it their business to reconcile people to that government, and pressed all to pay their tribute. Some think that they were the collectors of the land tax, as the publicans were of the customs, and that they went with the Pharisees to Christ, with this blind upon their plot, that, while the Herodians demanded the tax, and the Pharisees denied it, they were both willing to refer it to Christ, as a proper Judge to decide the quarrel. Herod being obliged, by the charter of the sovereignty, to take care of the tribute, these Herodians, by assisting him in that, helped to endear him to his great friends at home. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews, and did what they could to make them impatient of the Roman yoke. Now, if he should countenance the paying of tribute, the Pharisees would incense the peo-

ple against him; if he should discountenance or disallow it, the Herodians would incense the government against him. Note, It is common for those that oppose one another, to continue in an opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Samson's foxes looked several ways, but met in one firebrand. See Ps. 83. 3, 5, 7, 8. If they are unanimous in opposing, should not we be so in maintaining, the interests of the gospel?

2. The preface, with which they were plausibly to introduce the question: it was highly complimentary to our Saviour; (v. 16.) *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth*. Note, It is a common thing for the most spiteful projects to be covered with the most specious pretences. Had they come to Christ with the most serious inquiry, and the most sincere intention, they could not have expressed themselves better. Here is *hatred covered with deceit, and a wicked heart with burning lips*; (Prov. 26. 23.) as Judas, who kissed, and betrayed, as Joab, who kissed, and killed.

Now, (1.) What they said of Christ, was right, and, whether they knew it or no, blessed be God, we know it.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; *Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth*. For himself, *he is true, the Amen, the faithful Witness*; he is the Truth itself. As for his doctrine, the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness; that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth; he shewed people *the right way, the way in which they should go*. He was a skilful Teacher, and knew the way of God: and a faithful Teacher, that would be sure to let us know it. See Prov. 8. 6—9. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not to suppress, pervert, or stretch, any truth, for favour or affection, hatred or good-will, either out of a desire to please, or a fear to offend, any man.

[2.] That he was a bold Reprover. In preaching, he *cared not for any*; he valued no man's frowns or smiles, he did not court, he did not dread, either the great or the many, for he *regarded not the person of man*. In his evangelical judgment, he did not know faces; that *Lion of the tribe of Judah turned not away for any*, (Prov. 30. 30.) turned not a step from the truth, nor from his work, for fear of the most formidable. He *reproved with equity*, (Isa. 11. 4.) and never with partiality.

(2.) Though what they said was true for the matter of it, yet there was nothing but flattery and treachery in the intention of it. They called him *Master*, when they were contriving to treat him as the worst of malefactors; they pretended respect for him, when they intended mischief against him; and they affronted his wisdom as Man, much more his omniscience as God, of which he had so often given undeniable proofs, when they imagine that they could impose upon him with these pretences, and that he could not see through them. It is the grossest atheism, that is, the greatest folly in the world, to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, Rev. 2. 23. Those that mock God, do but deceive themselves, Gal. 6. 7.

3. The proposal of the case; *What thinkest thou?* As if they had said, "Many men are of many minds in this matter; it is a case which relates to practice, and occurs daily; let us have thy thoughts freely in the matter, *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?*" This implies a further question: Has Cæsar a right to demand it? The nation of the Jews was lately, about a hundred years before this, conquered by the Roman sword, and so, as other nations, made subject to the Roman yoke, and became a province of the empire; accordingly, toll, tribute, and cus-

tom, were demanded from them, and sometimes poll-money. By this it appeared that *the sceptre was departed from Judah*; (Gen. 49. 10.) and therefore, if they had understood the signs of the times, they must have concluded that *Shiloh was come*, and either that this was he, or they must find out another more likely to be so.

Now, the question was, Whether it was lawful to pay these taxes voluntarily, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation, and rather suffer themselves to be distrained upon? The ground of the doubt was, that they *were Abraham's seed*, and should not by consent be *in bondage to any man*, John 8. 33. God had given them a law, that they should not *set a stranger over them*; Did not that imply that they were not to yield any willing subjection to any prince, state, or potentate, that was not of their own nation and religion? This was an old mistake, arising from that *pride*, and that *haughty spirit*, which bring *destruction and a fall*. Jeremiah, in his time, though he spake in God's name, could not possibly beat them off it, nor persuade them to submit to the king of Babylon; and their obstinacy in that matter was then their ruin: (Jer. 27. 13.) and now again they stumbled at the same stone; and it was the very thing which, in a few years after, brought final destruction upon them by the Romans. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of God's word, contended with his providence, when they should have kissed the rod, and accepted the punishment of their iniquity.

However, by this question they hoped to entangle Christ, and, which way soever he solved it, to expose him to the fury either of the jealous Jews, or of the jealous Romans; they were ready to triumph, as Pharaoh did over Israel, that *the wilderness had shut him in*, and his doctrine would be concluded either injurious to the rights of the church, or hurtful to kings and provinces.

III. The breaking of this snare by the wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

1. He discovered it; (v. 18.) *He perceived their wickedness*; for, *surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird*, Prov. 1. 17. A temptation perceived is half conquered, for our greatest danger lies from snakes under the green grass; and he said, *Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* Note, Whatever vizard the hypocrites put on, our Lord Jesus sees through it; he perceives all the wickedness that is in the hearts of pretenders, and can easily convict them of it, and set it in order before them. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. He that searches the heart, can call hypocrites by their own name, as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam, (1 Kings 14. 6.) *Why feignest thou thyself to be another? Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?* Note, Hypocrites tempt Jesus Christ; they try his knowledge, whether he can discover them through their disguises; they try his holiness and truth, whether he will allow of them in his church; but if they that of old *tempted Christ*, when he was but darkly revealed, *were destroyed of serpents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy*, who tempt him now in the midst of gospel-light and love! Those that presume to tempt Christ will certainly find him too hard for them, and that he is of more piercing eyes than not to see, and more pure eyes than not to hate, the disguised wickedness of hypocrites, that dig deep to hide their counsel from him.

2. He evaded it; his convicting them of hypocrisy might have served for an answer: such captious malicious questions deserve a reproof, not a reply; but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and introduced it by an argument sufficient to support it, so as to lay down a rule for his church in

this matter, and yet to avoid giving offence, and to break the snare.

(1.) He forced them, ere they were aware, to confess Cæsar's authority over them, v. 19, 20. In dealing with those that are captious, it is good to give our reasons, and, if possible, reasons of confessed cogency, before we give our resolutions. Thus the evidence of truth may silence gainsayers by surprise, while they only stood upon their guard against the truth itself, not against the reason of it; *Show me the tribute money*. He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem he had not so much as one piece of money about him, for, for our sakes, he emptied himself and became poor; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to overvalue it; silver and gold he had none; why then should we covet to load ourselves with the thick clay? The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time: that, therefore, is called *the tribute money*; he does not name what piece, but *the tribute money*, to shew that he did not mind things of that nature, nor concern himself about them; his heart was upon better things, the kingdom of God, and the riches and righteousness thereof, and our's should be so too. They presently brought him a *penney*, a Roman penny in silver, in value about seven pence halfpenny of our money, the most common piece then in use: it was stamped with the emperor's image and superscription, which was the warrant of the public faith for the value of the pieces so stamped; a method agreed on by most nations, for the more easy circulation of money with satisfaction. The coining of money has always been looked upon as a branch of the prerogative, a flower of the crown, a royalty belonging to the sovereign powers; and the admitting of that as the good and lawful money of a country, is an implicit submission to those powers, and an owning of them in money matters. How happy is our constitution, and how happy we, who live in a nation where, though the image and superscription be the sovereign's, the property is the subjects, under the protection of the laws, and that what we have we can call our own!

Christ asked them, *Whose image is this?* They owned it to be Cæsar's, and thereby convicted those of falsehood, who said, *We were never in bondage to any*; and confirmed what afterwards they said, *We have no king but Cæsar*. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud, that "he is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country." Some think that the superscription upon this coin, was, a memorandum of the conquest of Judea by the Romans, *anno post captam Judæam—the year after that event*; and that they admitted that too.

(2.) From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar; (v. 21.) *Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*; not, "Give it him," (as they expressed it, v. 17.) but "Render it; Return," or, "Restore it; if Cæsar fill the purses, let Cæsar command them. It is too late now to dispute paying tribute to Cæsar, for you are become a province of the empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. *Render to all their due*; and, particularly, *tribute to whom tribute is due*." Now, by this answer,

[1.] No offence was given. It was much to the honour of Christ and his doctrine, that he did not interpose as a Judge or a Divider in matters of this nature, but left them as he found them, for *his kingdom is not of this world*; and in this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, not to wade far into controversies relating to them, but to leave that to those whose proper business it is. Ministers, that would mind their busi-

ness and please their Master, must not *entangle themselves in the affairs of this life*; they forfeit the guidance of God's Spirit, and the convoy of his providence, when they thus go out of their way. Christ discusses not the emperor's title, but enjoins a peaceable subjection to the powers that be. The government therefore had no reason to take offence at his determination, but to thank him, for it would strengthen Cæsar's interest with the people, who held him for a Prophet; and yet such was the impudence of his prosecutors, that, though he had expressly charged them to *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, they laid the direct contrary in his indictment, that he *forbade to give tribute to Cæsar*, Luke 23. 2. As to the people, the Pharisees could not accuse him to them, because they themselves had, before they were aware, yielded the premises, and then it was too late to evade the conclusion. Note, Though truth seeks not a fraudulent concealment, yet it sometimes needs a prudent management, to prevent the offence which may be taken at it.

[2.] His adversaries were reprov'd. *First*, Some of them would have had him made it unlawful to give tribute to Cæsar, that they might have a pretence to save their money. Thus many excuse themselves from that which they must do, by arguing whether they may do it or no. *Secondly*, They all withheld from God his dues, and are reprov'd for that: while they were vainly contending about their civil liberties, they had lost the life and power of religion, and needed to be put in mind of their duty to God, with that to Cæsar.

[3.] His disciples were instructed, and standing rules left to the church,

First, That the Christian religion is no enemy to civil government, but a friend to it. Christ's kingdom doth not clash or interfere with the kingdoms of the earth, in any thing that pertains to their jurisdiction. By Christ kings reign.

Secondly, It is the duty of subjects to render to magistrates that which, according to the laws of their country, is their due. The higher powers, being intrusted with the public welfare, the protection of the subject, and the conservation of the peace, are entitled, in consideration thereof, to a just proportion of the public wealth, and the revenue of the nation. *For this cause, pay we tribute, because they attend continually to this very thing*; (Rom. 13. 6.) and it is doubtless a greater sin to cheat the government than to cheat a private person. Though it is the constitution that determines what is Cæsar's, yet, when that is determined, Christ bids us render it to him; my coat is my coat, by the law of man; but he is a thief, by the law of God, that takes it from me.

Thirdly, When we render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, we must remember withal to render to God the things that are God's. If our purses be Cæsar's, our consciences are God's; he hath said, *My son, give me thy heart*; he must have the innermost and uppermost place there; we must render to God that which is his due, out of our time, and out of our estates; from them he must have his share, as well as Cæsar his; and, if Cæsar's commands interpose with God's, *we must obey God rather than men*.

Lastly, Observe how they were nonplussed by this answer; they *marvell'd, and left him, and went their way*, v. 22. They admir'd his sagacity in discovering and evading a snare which they thought so craftily laid. Christ is, and will be, the Wonder, not only of his beloved friends, but of his baffled enemies. One would think, they should have marvell'd and followed him, marvell'd, and submitted to him; no, they marvell'd, and left him. Note, There are many in whose eyes Christ is marvellous,

and yet not precious. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it, his power, but will not submit to it. *They went their way*, as persons shamed, and made an inglorious retreat. The stratagem being defeated, they quitted the field. Note, There is nothing got by contending with Christ.

23. The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24. Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. 26. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27. And last of all the woman died also. 28. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine.

We have here Christ's dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; it was the same day on which he was attacked by the Pharisees about paying tribute. Satan was now more busy than ever to ruffle and disturb him; it was *an hour of temptation*, Rev. 3. 10. The truth as it is in Jesus will still meet with contradiction, in some branch or other of it. Observe here,

I. The opposition which the Sadducees made to a very great truth of religion; they say, *There is no resurrection*, as there are some fools who say, *There is no God*. These heretics were called *Sadducees*, from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Socheus, who flourished about two hundred and eighty-four years before our Saviour's birth. They lie under heavy censures among the writers of their own nation, as men of base and debauched conversations, which their principles led them to. They were the fewest in number of all the sects among the Jews, but generally persons of some rank. As the Pharisees and Essenes seem'd to follow Plato and Pythagoras, so the Sadducees were much of the genius of the Epicureans, they denied the resurrection, they said, There is no future state, no life after this; that, when the body dies, the soul is annihilated, and dies with it; that there is no state of rewards or punishments in the other world; no judgment to come in heaven or hell. They maintained, that, except God, there is no spirit, (Acts 23. 8.) nothing but matter and motion. They would not own the divine inspiration of the prophets, nor any revelation from heaven, but what God himself spake upon mount Sinai. Now, the doctrine of Christ carried

that great truth, of the resurrection and a future state, much farther than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the Sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. The Pharisees and Sadducees were contrary to each other, and yet confederates against Christ. Christ's gospel hath always suffered between superstitious ceremonious hypocrites and bigots on the one hand, and profane deists and infidels on the other. The former abusing, the latter despising, the *form* of godliness, but both denying the *power* of it.

II. The objection they made against the truth, which was taken from a supposed case of a woman that had seven husbands successively; now, they take it for granted, that, if there be a resurrection, it must be a return to such a state as this we are now in, and to the same circumstances, like the imaginary Platonic year; and if so, it is an invincible absurdity for this woman in the future state to have seven husbands, or else an insuperable difficulty which of them should have her; he whom she had first, or he whom she had last, or he whom she loved best, or he whom she lived longest with.

1. They suggest the law of Moses in this matter, (v. 24.) that the next of kin should marry the widow of him that died childless; (Deut. 25. 5.) we have it practised, Ruth 4. 5. It was a political law, founded in the particular constitution of the Jewish commonwealth, to preserve the distinction of families and inheritances, of both which there was special care taken in that government.

2. They put a case upon this statute, which, whether it were a *case in fact*, or only a *moot case*, is not at all material; if it had not really occurred, yet possibly it might. It was of seven brothers, who married the same woman, v. 25—27. Now, this case supposes,

(1.) The desolations that death sometimes makes in families when it comes with commission; how it often sweeps away a whole fraternity in a little time: seldom (as the case is put) according to seniority, (the land of darkness is without any order,) but *heaps upon heaps*; it diminishes families that had multiplied greatly, Ps. 107. 38, 39. When there were seven brothers grown up to man's estate, there was a family very likely to be built up; and yet this numerous family leaves *neither son nor nephew, nor any remaining in their dwellings*, Job 18. 19. Well may we say then, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it*. Let none be sure of the advancement and perpetuity of their names and families, unless they could *make a covenant of peace with death*, or be at an *agreement with the grave*.

(2.) The obedience of these seven brothers to the law, though they had a power of refusal under the penalty of a reproach, Deut. 25. 7. Note, Discouraging providences should not keep us from doing our duty; because we must be governed by the rule, not by the event. The seventh, who ventured last to marry the widow, (many a one would say,) was a *bold* man. I would say, if he did it purely in obedience to God, he was a *good* man, and one that made conscience of his duty.

But, *last of all, the woman died also*. Note, Survivorship is but a reprieve; they that live long, and bary their relations and neighbours one after another, do not thereby acquire an immortality; no, their day will come to fall. Death's bitter cup goes round, and, sooner or later, we must all pledge in it, Jer. 25. 26.

3. They propose a doubt upon this case; (v. 28.) "*In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven?*" You cannot tell whose; and therefore we must conclude *there is no resurrection*." The Pharisees, who professed to believe a resurrection, had very gross and carnal notions concerning it, and con-

cerning the future state; expecting to find there, as the Turks in their paradise, the delights and pleasures of the animal life, which perhaps drove the Sadducees to deny the thing itself; for nothing gives greater advantage to atheism and infidelity, than the carnality of those that make religion, either in its professions or in its prospects, a servant to their sensual appetites and secular interests; while those that are erroneous deny the truth, those that are superstitious betray it to them. Now they, in this objection, went upon the Pharisees' hypothesis. Note, It is not strange that carnal minds have very false notions of spiritual and eternal things. The natural man receiveth not these things, *for they are foolishness to him*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. Let truth be set in a clear light, and then it appears in its full strength.

III. Christ's answer to this objection; by reproving their ignorance, and rectifying their mistake, he shews the objection to be fallacious and unconvincing.

1. He reproves their ignorance; (v. 28.) *Ye do err*. Note, Those do greatly err, in the judgment of Christ, who deny the resurrection and a future state. Here Christ reproves with the meekness of wisdom, and is not so sharp upon them (whatever was the reason) as sometimes he was upon the chief priests and elders; *Ye do err, not knowing*. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error; those that are in the dark, miss their way. The patrons of error do, *therefore*, resist the light, and do what they can to take away the key of knowledge; *Ye do err* in this matter, *not knowing*. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error about the resurrection and the future state. *What* it is in its particular instances, the wisest and best know not; it doth not yet appear what we shall be, it is a glory that is to be revealed; when we speak of the state of separate souls, the resurrection of the body, and of eternal happiness and misery, we are soon at a loss; we cannot order our speech, by reason of darkness, but that it *is*, is a thing about which we are not left in the dark; blessed be God, we are not; and those who deny it, are guilty of a willing and affected ignorance. It seems there were some Sadducees, some such monsters, among professing Christians, *some among you, that say, There is no resurrection of the dead*; (1 Cor. 15. 12.) and some that did in effect deny it, by turning it into an allegory, saying, *The resurrection is past already*. Now observe,

(1.) *They know not the power of God*; which would lead men to infer, that there *may* be a resurrection and a future state. Note, The ignorance, disbelief, or weak belief, of God's power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly their's who deny the resurrection. When we are told of the soul's existence and agency in a state of separation from the body, and especially that a dead body, which has lain many ages in the grave, and is turned into common and undistinguished dust, that this shall be raised the same body that it was, and live, move, and act, again; we are ready to say, *How can these things be?* Nature allows it for a maxim, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*—*The habits attaching to a state of existence vanish irrecoverably with the state itself*. If a man die, shall he live again? And vain men, because they cannot comprehend the *way* of it, question the *truth* of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with God, all these difficulties vanish. This, therefore, we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised; and if so, *why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Acts 26. 8. His power far exceeds the power of nature.

(2.) *They know not the scriptures*, which de-

cadedly affirm that there shall be a resurrection and a future state. The power of God, determined and engaged by his promise, is the foundation for faith to build upon. Now, the scriptures speak plainly, that the soul is immortal, and there is another life after this; it is the scope both of the law and of the prophets, that *there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust*, Acts 24. 14, 15. Job knew it, (Job 19. 26.) Ezekiel foresaw it, (Ezek. 37.) and Daniel plainly foretold it, Dan. 12. 2. Christ rose again *according to the scriptures*; (1 Cor. 15. 3.) and so shall we. Those, therefore, who deny it, either have not conversed with the scriptures, or do not believe them, or do not take the true sense and meaning of them. Note, Ignorance of the scripture is the rise of abundance of mischief.

2. He rectifies their mistake, and (v. 30.) corrects those gross ideas which they had of the resurrection and a future state, and fixes these doctrines upon a true and lasting basis. Concerning that state, observe,

(1.) It is not like the state we are now in upon earth; *They neither marry, nor are given in marriage*. In our present state, marriage is necessary; it was instituted in innocency; whatever intermission or neglect there has been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be to the end of time. In the old world, they were *marrying, and giving in marriage*; the Jews in Babylon, when cut off from other ordinances, yet were bid to *take them wives*, Jer. 29. 6. All civilized nations have had a sense of the obligation of the marriage covenant; and it is requisite for the gratifying of the desires, and recruiting the deficiencies, of the human nature. But, in the resurrection, there is no occasion for marriage; whether in glorified bodies there will be any distinction of sexes some too curiously dispute; (the ancients are divided in their opinions about it;) but whether there will be a distinction or no, it is certain that there will be no conjunction; where God will be *all in all*, there needs no other *meet-helf*; the body will be *spiritual*, and there will be in it no carnal desires to be gratified: when the mystical body is completed, there will be no further occasion to *seek a godly seed*, which was one end of the institution of marriage, Mal. 2. 15. In heaven there will be no decay of the individuals, and therefore no eating and drinking; no decay of the species, and therefore no marrying; *where there shall be no more deaths*, (Rev. 21. 4.) there needs be no more births. The married state is a composition of joys and cares; those that enter upon it, are taught to look upon it as subject to changes, *richer and poorer, sickness and health*; and therefore it is fit for this mixed, changing world; but, as in hell, where there is no joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride shall be heard no more at all, so in heaven, where there is all joy, and no care, or pain, or trouble, there will be no marrying. The joys of that state are pure and spiritual, and arise from the marriage of all of them to the Lamb, not of any of them to one another.

2. It is like the state angels are now in, in heaven; *They are as the angels of God in heaven*; they are so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them *sit with him in heavenly places*, Eph. 2. 6. The spirits of just men already made perfect, are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12. 22, 23. Man, in his creation, was *made a little lower than the angels*; (Ps. 8. 5.) but, in his complete redemption and renovation, will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glori-

ous, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits, (1 Cor. 15. 42, &c.) swift and strong like them. We should *therefore* desire and endeavour to do the will of God now as the angels do it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels, who always behold our Father's face. He saith nothing of the state of the wicked in the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.

IV. Christ's argument to confirm this great truth of the resurrection and a future state; the matters being of great concern he did not think it enough (as in some other disputes) to discover the fallacy and sophistry of the objections, but backed the truth with a solid argument; for Christ *brings forth judgment to truth* as well as victory, and enables his followers to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Now observe,

1. Whence he fetched his argument—from the scripture; that is the great magazine, or armory, whence we may be furnished with spiritual weapons, offensive and defensive. *It is written*, is Goliath's sword. *Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God?* Note, (1.) What the scripture speaks, God speaks. (2.) What was spoken to Moses, was spoken to us; it was spoken and *written for our learning*. (3.) It concerns us to read and hear what God hath spoken, because it is spoken to us. It was spoken to you Jews, in the first place, for to them were committed the oracles of God. The argument is fetched from the books of Moses, because the Sadducees received *them* only, as some think, or, however, them chiefly, for canonical scriptures; Christ therefore fetched his proof from the most indisputable fountain. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for, though the law of Moses supposes the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses; because so much of that law was peculiar to that people, and was therefore guarded, as municipal laws used to be, with temporal promises and threatenings, and the more express revelation of a future state was reserved for the latter days; but our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection, even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture-treasure lies under ground, that must be digged for.

2. What his argument was; (v. 32.) *I am the God of Abraham*. This was not an express proof, *totidem verbis—in so many words*; and yet it was really a conclusive argument. Consequences from scripture, if rightly deduced, must be received as scripture; for it was written for those that have the use of reason.

Now the drift of the argument is to prove,

(1.) That there is a future state, another life after this, in which the righteous shall be truly and constantly happy. This is proved from what God said; *I am the God of Abraham*.

[1.] For God to be any one's God, supposes some very extraordinary privilege and happiness; unless we know fully what God is, we could not comprehend the riches of that word, *I will be to thee a God*, that is, a Benefactor like myself. The God of Israel is a God to Israel, (1 Chron. 17. 24.) a spiritual Benefactor; for he is the Father of spirits, and blessed with spiritual blessings: it is to be an all-sufficient Benefactor, a God that is enough, a complete Good, and an eternal Benefactor; for he is himself an everlasting God, and will be to those that are in covenant with him an everlasting Good. This great word God had often said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was intended as a recompence for their singular faith and obedience, in quitting their country at God's call. The Jews had a

profound veneration for those three patriarchs, and would extend the promise God made them to the uttermost.

[2.] It is manifest that these good men had no such extraordinary happiness in *this* life, as might look any thing like the accomplishment of so great a word as that. They were strangers in the land of promise, wandering, pinched with famine; they had not a foot of ground of their own but a burying-place, which directed them to look for something beyond this life. In present enjoyments they came far short of their neighbours that were strangers to this covenant. What was there in this world to distinguish them and the heirs of their faith from other people, any whit proportionable to the dignity and distinction of this covenant? If no happiness had been reserved for these great and good men on the other side death, that melancholy word of poor Jacob's, when he was old, (Gen. 47. 9.) *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal reproach to the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, of that God who had so often called himself *the God of Jacob*.

[3.] Therefore there must certainly be a future state, in which, as God will ever live to be eternally rewarding, so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will ever live to be eternally rewarded. That of the apostle, (Heb. 11. 16.) is a key to this argument, where, when he had been speaking of the faith and obedience of the patriarchs in the land of their pilgrimage, he adds, *Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God*; because he has provided for them a city, a heavenly city; implying, that if he had not provided so well for them in the other world, considering how they sped in this, he would have been ashamed to have called himself *their God*; but now he is not, having done that for them which answers it in its true intent and full extent.

(2.) That the soul is immortal, and the body shall rise again, to be united; if the former point be gained, these will follow; but they are likewise proved by considering the time when God spake this; it was to Moses at the bush, long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were dead and buried; and yet God saith not, "I was," or "have been," but *I am, the God of Abraham*. Now, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. He is a living God, and communicates vital influence to those to whom he is a God. If, when Abraham died, there had been an end of him, there had been an end likewise of God's relation to him as his God; but, at that time, when God spake to Moses, he was the God of Abraham, and therefore Abraham must be then alive; which proves the immortality of the soul in a state of bliss; and that, by consequence, infers the resurrection of the body; for there is such an inclination in the human soul to its body, as would make a final and eternal separation inconsistent with the bliss of those that have God for *their God*. The Sadducees' notion was, that the union between body and soul is so close, that, when the body dies, the soul dies with it. Now, upon the same hypothesis, if the soul lives, as it certainly does, the body must, sometime or other, live with it. And besides, the Lord is for the body, it is an essential part of the man; there is a covenant with the dust, which will be remembered, otherwise *the man* would not be happy. The charge which the dying patriarchs gave concerning their bones, and that *in faith*, was an evidence that they had some expectation of the resurrection of their bodies. But this doctrine was reserved for a more full revelation after the resurrection of Christ, who *was the first fruits of them that slept*.

Lastly, We have the issue of this dispute. The Sadducees were *put to silence*, (v. 34.) and so put to shame. They thought, by their subtlety, to put Christ to shame, when they were preparing shame

for themselves. But the multitude *were astonished at his doctrine*, v. 33. 1. Because it was new to them. See to what a sad pass the exposition of scripture was come among them, when people were astonished at it as a miracle, to hear the fundamental promise applied to this great truth; they had sorry Scribes, or this had been no news to them. 2. Because it had something in it very good and great. Truth often shews the brighter, and is the more admired, for its being opposed. Observe, Many gainsayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savingly converted; yet, even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls, God magnifies his law, magnifies his gospel, and makes both honourable.

34. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. 35. Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him* a question, tempting him, and saying, 36. Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38. This is the first and great commandment. 39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Here is a discourse which Christ had with a Pharisee lawyer, about the great commandment of the law. Observe,

I. The combination of the Pharisees against Christ, v. 34. They heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, had stopped their mouths, though their understandings were not opened; and they were gathered together, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectual asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to tempt him, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling him who had puzzled the Sadducees. They were more vexed that Christ was honoured, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced; being more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. Note, It is an instance of Pharisaical envy and malice, to be displeased at the maintaining of a confessed truth, when it is done by those we do not like; to sacrifice a public good to private piques and prejudices. Blessed Paul was otherwise minded, Phil. 1. 18.

II. The lawyer's question, which he put to Christ. The lawyers were students in, and teachers of, the law of Moses, as the Scribes were; but some think that in *this* they differed, that they dealt more in practical questions than the Scribes; they studied and professed casuistical divinity. This lawyer asked him a question, tempting him: not with any design to insnare him, as appears by St. Mark's relation of the story, where we find that this was he to whom Christ said, *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*, Mark 12. 34, but only to see what he would say, and to draw on discourse with him, to satisfy his own and his friends' curiosity.

1. The question was, *Master, which is the great commandment of the law?* A needless question, when all the things of God's law are great things, (Hos. 8. 12.) and the wisdom from above is without partiality, partiality in the law, (Mal. 2. 9.) and hath respect to them all. Yet, it is true, there are some

commands that are the principles of the oracles of God, more extensive and inclusive than others. Our Saviour speaks of the *weightier matters of the law*, ch. 23, 23.

2. The design was to try him, or tempt him; to try, not so much his knowledge as his judgment. It was a question disputed among the critics in the law. Some would have the law of circumcision to be the great commandment, others the law of the sabbath, others the law of sacrifices, according as they severally stood affected, and spent their zeal; now they would try what Christ said to this question, hoping to incense the people against him, if he should not answer according to the vulgar opinion; and if he should magnify one commandment, they would reflect on him as vilifying the rest. The question was harmless enough, and it appears, by comparing Luke 10, 27, 28, that it was an adjudged point among the lawyers, that the *love of God* and our *neighbour* is the *great commandment*, and the sum of all the rest, and Christ had there approved it; so that the putting of it to him, here, seems rather a scornful design to catechise him as a child, than a spiteful design to dispute with him as an adversary.

III. Christ's answer to this question. It is well for us that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer. It is no disparagement to great men to answer plain questions. Now, Christ recommends to us those as the great commandments, not which are so exclusive of others, but which are *therefore* great, because, inclusive of others. Observe,

1. Which these great commandments are; (v. 37—39.) not the judicial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that the people of the Jews, to whom they pertained, were so little; not the ceremonial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that they were waxen old, and were ready to vanish away; nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbour, which are the spring and foundation of all the rest, which (these being supposed) will follow of course.

(1.) All the law is fulfilled in one word, and that is, *love*. See Rom. 13, 10. All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. Love is the leading affection, which gives law, and gives ground, to the rest; and therefore that, as the main fort, is to be first secured and garrisoned for God. Man is a creature cut out for love; thus therefore is the law written in the heart, that it is a *law of love*. Love is a short and sweet word; and if that be the *fulfilling of the law*, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.

(2.) The *love of God* is the first and great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commands of the first table. The proper act of love being complacency, good is the proper object of it. Now God, being good infinitely, originally, and eternally, is to be loved in the first place, and nothing loved beside him, but what is loved for him. *Love* is the first and great thing that God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing that we should devote to him.

Now here we are directed,

[1.] To love God as our's; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* as thine. The first commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other god*; which implies, that we must have him for our God, and that will engage our love to him. Those that made the sun and moon their gods, loved them, Jer. 8, 2. Judges 18, 24. To love God as our's, is to love him because he is our's, our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and to conduct ourselves to him as our's, with obedience to

him, and dependence on him. We must love God as reconciled to us, and made our's by covenant; that is the foundation of this, *Thy God*.

[2.] To love him *with all our heart, and soul, and mind*. Some make these to signify one and the same thing, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind, are the will, affections, and understanding; or the vital, sensitive, and intellectual, faculties. Our love of God must be a sincere love, and not in word and tongue only, as their's is, who say they love him, but their hearts are not with him. It must be a strong love, we must love him in the most intense degree; as we must *praise* him, so we must *love* him, with all that is *within us*, Ps. 103, 1. It must be a singular and superlative love, we must love him more than any thing else; this way the stream of our affections must entirely run. The heart must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. *This is the first and great commandment*; for obedience to this is the spring of obedience to all the rest; which is then only acceptable, when it flows from love.

(3.) To love our neighbour as ourselves is the second great commandment; (v. 39.) *It is like unto that first*; it is inclusive of all the precepts of the second table, as that is of the first. *It is like it*, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother, whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our love to God, whom we have not seen, 1 John 4, 20.

[1.] It is implied, that we do, and should, love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified; but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be preserved and sanctified. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard to the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

[2.] It is prescribed, that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We must honour and esteem all men, and must wrong and injure none; must have a good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; nay, in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, and must make ourselves servants to the true welfare of others, and be willing to *spend and be spent for them, to lay down our lives for the brethren*.

2. Observe what the weight and greatness of these commandments is; (v. 40.) *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; that is, This is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion, which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching and writing of the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonial must give way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel too, only supposing this love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake. All hangs on these two commandments, as the effect doth both on its efficient and on its final cause; for *the fulfilling of the law is love*, (Rom. 13, 10,) and *the end of the law is love*, 1 Tim. 1, 5. The law of love is the nail, is the nail in the sure place, fastened

by the masters of assemblies, (Ecc. 12. 11.) on which is hung all the glory of the law and the prophets, (Isa. 22. 24.) a nail that shall never be drawn; for on this nail all the glory of the new Jerusalem shall eternally hang. *Love never faileth.* Into these two great commandments therefore let our hearts be delivered as into a mould: in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names, and strifes of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hung, and to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these let every thing else be made to bow.

41. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42. Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.* 43. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46. And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

Many questions the Pharisees had asked Christ, of which, though they thought to pose him, they did but expose themselves; but now let him ask them a question; and he will do it when they are gathered together, v. 41. He did not take some one of them apart from the rest, (*ne Hercules contra duos—Hercules himself may be overmatched,*) but, to shame them the more, he took them all together, when they were in confederacy and consultation against him, and yet puzzled them. Note, God delights to baffle his enemies when they most strengthen themselves; he gives them all the advantages they can wish for, and yet conquers them. *Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces,* Isa. 3. 9, 10. Now here,

1. Christ proposes a question to them, which they could easily answer; it was a question in their own catechism; "*What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?*" Whose son do you expect the Messiah to be, who was promised to the fathers?" This they could easily answer, *The son of David.* It was the common periphrasis of the Messiah; they called him *the son of David.* So the Scribes, who expounded the scripture, had taught them, from Ps. 89. 35, 36. *I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever,* (Isa. 9. 7.) *upon the throne of David.* And Isa. 11. 1. *A rod out of the stem of Jesse.* The covenant of royalty made with David was a figure of the covenant of redemption made with Christ, who, as David, was made King *with an oath*, and was first humbled and then advanced. If Christ was the son of David, he was really and truly man. Israel said, *We have ten parts in David;* and Judah said, *He is our bone and our flesh;* what part have we then in the Son of David, who took our nature upon him?

What think ye of Christ? They had put questions to him, one after another, out of the law; but he comes and puts a question to them upon the promise. Many are so full of the law, that they forget Christ, as if their duties would save them without his merit and grace. It concerns each of us seriously to ask ourselves, What think we of Christ? Some think not of him at all, he is not in all, not in any, of their thoughts; some think meanly, and some think hardly, of him; but, to them that believe he is precious; and how precious then are the thoughts of him! While

the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of another beloved, the spouse thinks of him as the Chief of ten thousands.

II. He starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not so easily solve, v. 43—45. Many can so readily affirm the truth, that they think they have knowledge enough to be proud of, who, when they are called to confirm the truth, and to vindicate and defend it, show they have ignorance enough to be ashamed of. The objection Christ raised was, *If Christ be David's son, how then doth David, in spirit, call him Lord?* He did not hereby design to insnare them, as they did him, but to instruct them in a truth they were loath to believe—that the expected Messiah is God.

1. It is easy to see that David calls Christ *Lord*, and this in spirit, being divinely inspired, and actuated therein by a spirit of prophecy: for it was *the Spirit of the Lord that spake by him*, 2 Sam. 23. 1, 2. David was one of those *holy men that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, especially in calling Christ *Lord*; for it was then, as it is still, (1 Cor. 12. 3.) that *no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* Now, to prove that David, in spirit, called Christ *Lord*, he quotes Ps. 110. 1. which psalm the Scribes themselves understood of Christ; of him it is certain, the prophet there speaks of him and of no other man; and it is a prophetic summary of the doctrine of Christ, it describes him executing the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation and also in his exaltation.

Christ quotes the whole verse, which shows the Redeemer in his exaltation; (1.) *Sitting at the right hand of God.* His sitting denotes both rest and rule; his sitting at God's right hand denotes superlative honour and sovereign power. See in what great words this is expressed; (Heb. 8. 1.) *He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty.* See Phil. 2. 9. Eph. 1. 21. He did not take this honour to himself, but was entitled to it by covenant with his Father, and invested in it by commission from him, and here is that commission. (2.) *Subduing his enemies.* There he shall sit, till they be all made either his friends or his footstool. *The carnal mind, wherever it is, is enmity to Christ;* and that is subdued in the *conversion of the willing people that are called to his foot,* (as the expression is, Isa. 41. 2.) and in the confusion of his impenitent adversaries, who shall be brought under his foot, as the kings of Canaan were under the feet of Joshua.

But that which this verse is quoted for, is, that David calls the Messiah *his Lord*; *The Lord, Jehovah, said unto my Lord.* This intimates to us, that, in expounding scripture, we must take notice of, and improve, not only that which is the main scope and sense of a verse, but of the words and phrases, by which the Spirit chooses to express that sense, which have often a very useful and instructive significance. Here is a good note from that word, *My Lord.*

2. It is not so easy for those who believe not the Godhead of the Messiah, to clear this from an absurdity, if Christ be David's son. It is incongruous for the father to speak of his son, the predecessor of his successor, as his *Lord*. If David call him *Lord*, that is laid down, (v. 45.) as the *magis notum—the more evident truth;* for whatever is said of Christ's humanity, and humiliation, must be construed and understood in consistency with the truth of his divine nature and dominion. We must hold this fast, that he is David's *Lord*, and by that explain his being David's son. The seeming differences of scripture, as here, may not only be accommodated, but contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole. *Amice scripturarum lites, utinam et nostræ—The differences observable in the scriptures are of a friendly kind; would to God that our differences were of the same kind!*

III. We have here the success of this gentle trial which Christ made of the Pharisees' knowledge, in two things.

1. It puzzled them; (v. 46.) *No man was able to answer him a word.* Either it was their ignorance that they did not know, or their impiety that they would not own, the Messiah to be God; which truth was the only key to unlock this difficulty. What those Rabbins could not then answer, blessed be God, the plainest Christian, that is led into the understanding of the gospel of Christ, can now account for; that Christ, as God, was David's *Lord*; and Christ, as man, was David's *son*. This he did not now himself explain, but reserved it till the proof of it was completed by his resurrection; but we have it fully explained by him in his glory; (Rev. 22. 16.) *I am the root and offspring of David.* Christ, as God, was David's *root*; Christ, as man, was David's *offspring*. If we hold not fast this truth, that Jesus Christ is over all God blessed for ever, we run ourselves into inextricable difficulties. And well might David, his remote ancestor, call him *Lord*, when Mary, his immediate mother, after she had conceived him, called him, *Lord and God, her Saviour*, Luke 1. 46, 47.

2. It silenced them, and all others that sought occasion against him: *Neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more such captious, tempting, insinuating questions.* Note, God will glorify himself in the silencing of many whom he will not glorify himself in the salvation of. Many are convinced, that are not converted, by the word. Had these been converted, they would have asked him more questions, especially that great question, *What must we do to be saved?* But, since they could not gain their point, they would have no more to do with him. But thus all that strive with their Master shall be convinced, as these Pharisees and lawyers here were, of the inequality of the match.

CHAP. XXIII.

In the foregoing chapter, we had our Saviour's discourses with the Scribes and Pharisees; here we have his discourse concerning them, or rather against them. I. He allows their office, v. 2, 3. II. He warns his disciples not to imitate their hypocrisy and pride, v. 4, 12. III. He exhibits a charge against them for divers ligatures and misdemeanors, corrupting the law, opposing the gospel, and treacherous dealing both with God and man; and to each article he prefixes a woe, v. 13, 33. IV. He passes sentence upon Jerusalem, and foretells the ruin of the city and temple, especially for the sin of persecution, v. 34, 39.

1. **T**HEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2. Saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7. And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8. But he not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9. And call no man

your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. 11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

We find not Christ, in all his preaching, so severe upon any sort of people as upon these *Scribes and Pharisees*; for the truth is, nothing is more directly opposite to the spirit of the gospel than the temper and practice of that generation of men, who were made up of pride, worldliness, and tyranny, under a cloak and pretence of religion; yet these were the idols and darlings of the people, who thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee. Now Christ directs his discourse, here, *to the multitude, and to his disciples*, (v. 1.) to rectify their mistakes concerning these Scribes and Pharisees, by painting them out in their true colours, and so to take off the prejudice which some of the multitude had conceived against Christ and his doctrine, because it was opposed by those men of their church that called themselves the people's guides. Note, It is good to know the true characters of men, that we may not be imposed upon by great and mighty names, titles, and pretensions to power. People must be told of *the wolves*, (Acts 20. 29, 30.) *the dogs*, (Phil. 3. 2.) *the deceitful workers*, (2 Cor. 11. 13.) that they may know where to stand upon their guard. And not only the mixed multitude, but even the disciples, need these cautions; for good men are apt to have their eyes dazzled with worldly pomp.

Now, in this discourse,

I. Christ allows their office as expositors of the law; *The Scribes and Pharisees*, (that is, the whole Sanhedrim, who sat at the helm of church-government, who were all called *Scribes*, and were some of them Pharisees,) *they sit in Moses' seat*, (v. 2.) as public teachers and interpreters of the law; and, the law of Moses being the municipal law of their state, they were as judges, or a bench of justices; teaching and judging seem to be equivalent, comparing 2 Chron. 17. 7, 9. with 2 Chron. 19. 5, 6, 8. They were not the itinerant judges, that rode the circuit, but the standing bench, that determined on appeals, special verdicts, or writs of error, by the law; they sat in Moses' seat, not as he was mediator between God and Israel, but only as he was chief justice, Exod. 18. 26. Or, we may apply it, not to the Sanhedrim, but to the other Pharisees and Scribes that expounded the law, and taught the people how to apply it to particular cases. *The pulpit of wood*, such as was made for Ezra, *that ready scribe in the law of God*, (Neh. 8. 4.) is here called *Moses' seat*; because Moses had those in every city, (so the expression is, Acts 15. 21.) who, in those pulpits, preached him; this was their office, and it was just and honourable; it was requisite that there should be some at whose mouth the people might *inquire the law*, Mal. 2. 7. Note, 1. Many a good place is filled with bad men; it is no new thing for the vilest men to be exalted even to *Moses' seat*; (Ps. 12. 8.) and when it is so, the men are not so much honoured by the seat as the seat is dishonoured by the men. Now they that sat in Moses' seat were so wretchedly degenerated, that it was time for the great Prophet to arise, like unto Moses, to erect another seat. 2. Good and useful offices and powers are not *therefore* to be condemned and abolished, because they fall sometimes into the hands of bad men, who abuse them. We must not *therefore* pull down Moses' seat, because Scribes and Pharisees

have got possession of it; rather than so, *let both grow together until the harvest*, ch. 13. 30.

Hence he infers, (v. 3.) "*Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do.*" As far as they sit in *Moses' seat*, that is, read and preach the law that was given by Moses," (which, as yet, continued in full force, power, and virtue,) "and judge according to that law, so far you must hearken to them, as remembrancers to you of the written word." The Scribes and Pharisees made it their business to study the scripture, and were well acquainted with the language, history, and customs, of it, and its style and phraseology. Now Christ would have the people to make use of the helps they gave them for the understanding of the scripture, and do accordingly. As long as their comments did illustrate the text, and not pervert it; did make plain, and not make void, *the commandment of God*; so far they must be observed and obeyed, but with caution and a judgment of discretion. Note, We must not think the worse of good truths for their being preached by bad ministers; nor of good laws for their being executed by bad magistrates. Though it is most desirable to have our food brought by angels, yet, if God sends it us by ravens, if it be good and wholesome, we must take it, and thank God for it. Our Lord Jesus premiseth this, to prevent the cavil which some would be apt to make at his following discourse; as if, by condemning the Scribes and Pharisees, he designed to bring the law of Moses into contempt, and to draw people off from it; whereas he *came not to destroy, but to fulfil*. Note, It is wisdom to obviate the exceptions which may be taken at just proofs, especially when there is occasion to distinguish between officers and their offices, *that the ministry be not blamed*, when the ministers are.

II. He condemns the men. He had ordered the multitude to do as they taught; but, here, he annexeth a caution not to do as they did, to beware of their leaven; *Do not ye after their works*. Their traditions were their works, were their idols, the works of their fancy. Or, "Do not according to their example." Doctrines and practices are spirits that must be tried, and, where there is occasion, must be carefully separated and distinguished: and, as we must not swallow corrupt doctrines for the sake of any laudable practices of those that teach them, so we must not imitate any bad examples for the sake of the plausible doctrines of those that give them. The Scribes and Pharisees boasted as much of the goodness of their works as of the orthodoxy of their teaching, and hoped to be justified by them: it was the plea they put in; (Luke 18. 11, 12.) and yet these things, which they valued themselves so much upon, were an abomination in the sight of God.

Our Saviour here, and in the following verses, specifies divers particulars of their works, wherein we must not imitate them. In general, they are charged with hypocrisy, dissimulation, or double dealing, in religion; a crime which cannot be inquired of at men's bar, because we can only judge according to outward appearance; but God, who searcheth the heart, can convict of hypocrisy; and nothing is more displeasing to him, for he desireth truth.

Four things are in these verses charged upon them.

1. Their saying and doing were two things.

Their practice was no way agreeable either to their preaching or to their profession; for *they say, and do not*; they teach out of the law that which is good, but their conversation gives them the lie; and they seem to have found another way to heaven for themselves than what they shew to others. See this illustrated and charged home upon them, Rom. 2. 17—24. Those are of all sinners most inexcusable, that allow themselves in the sins they condemn in

others, or in worse. This doth especially touch wicked ministers, who will be sure to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites; (ch. 24. 51.) for what greater hypocrisy can there be, than to press that upon others, to be believed and done, which they themselves disbelieve and disobey; pulling down, in their practice, what they build up in their preaching; when in the pulpit, preaching so well, that it is pity they should ever come out; but, when out of the pulpit, living so ill, that it is pity they should ever come in; like bells, that call others to church, but hang out of it themselves; or mercurial posts, that point the way to others, but stand still themselves. Such will be judged out of *their own mouths*.

It is applicable to all others that say, and do not; that make a plausible profession of religion, but do not live up to that profession; that make fair promises, but do not perform their promises; are full of good discourse, and can lay down the law to all about them, but are empty of good works; great talkers, but little doers; *the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau*. *Vox, et præterea nihil—mere sound*. They speak fair, *I go, sir*; but there is no trusting them, for *there are seven abominations in their heart*.

2. They were very severe in imposing upon others those things which they were not themselves willing to submit to the burthen of; (v. 4.) *They bind heavy burthens, and grievous to be borne*; not only insisting upon the minute circumstances of the law, which is called a *yoke*, (Acts 15. 10.) and pressing the observation of them with more strictness and severity than God himself did, (whereas the maxim of the lawyers is, *Apices juris non sunt jura—Mere points of law are not law*,) but by adding to his words, and imposing their own inventions and traditions, under the highest penalties. They loved to shew their authority and to exercise their domineering faculty, lording it over God's heritage, and saying to men's souls, *Bow down, that we may go over*; witness their many additions to the law of the fourth commandment, by which they made the sabbath a burthen on men's shoulders, which was designed to be the joy of their hearts. Thus, with force and cruelty, did those shepherds *rule the flock*, as of old, Ezek. 34. 4.

But see their hypocrisy: *They themselves will not move them with one of their fingers*. (1.) They would not exercise themselves in those things which they imposed upon others: they pressed upon the people a strictness in religion, which they themselves would not be bound by; but secretly transgressed their own traditions, which they publicly enforced. They indulged their pride in giving law to others; but consulted their ease in their own practice. Thus it has been said, to the reproach of the popish priests, that they fast with wine and sweetmeats, while they force the people to fast with bread and water; and decline the penances they enjoin the laity. (2.) They would not ease the people in these things, nor put a finger to lighten their burthen, when they saw it pinched them. They could find out loose constructions to put upon God's law, and could dispense with that, but would not bate an ace of their own impositions, nor dispense with a failure in the least punctilio of them. They allowed no chancery to relieve the extremity of their common law. How contrary to this was the practice of Christ's apostles, who would allow to others that use of Christian liberty, which, for the peace and edification of the church, they would deny themselves in! They would lay no other burthen than necessary things, and those easy, Acts 15. 28. How carefully doth Paul spare those to whom he writes! 1 Cor. 7. 28.—9. 12.

3. They were all for show, and nothing for sub-

stance, in religion; (v. 5.) *All their works they do to be seen of men.* We must do such good works, that they who see them may glorify God; but we must not proclaim our good works, with design that others may see them, and glorify us; which our Saviour here chargeeth upon the Pharisees in general, as he had done before in the particular instances of prayer and giving of alms. All their end was to be praised of men, and therefore all their endeavour was to be seen of men, to *make a fair show in the flesh.* In those duties of religion which fall under the eye of men, none were so constant and abundant as they; but in what lies between God and their souls, in the retirement of their closets, and the recesses of their hearts, they desire to be excused. The *form* of godliness will get them a name to live, which is all they aim at, and therefore they trouble not themselves with the *power* of it, which is essential to a life indeed. He that doth all to be seen, doth nothing to the purpose.

He specifies two things which they did, to be seen of men.

(1.) *They made broad their phylacteries.* Those were little scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written, with great niceness, these four paragraphs of the law, Exod. 13. 2—11. Exod. 13. 11—16. Deut. 6. 4—9. Deut. 11. 13—21. These were sewn up in leather, and worn upon their foreheads and left arms. It was a tradition of the elders, which had reference to Exod. 13. 9. and Prov. 7. 3. where the expressions seem to be figurative, intimating no more than that we should bear the things of God in our minds as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes. Now the Pharisees made broad these phylacteries, that they might be thought more holy, and strict, and zealous, for the law, than others. It is a gracious ambition, to covet to be really more holy than others, but it is a proud ambition to covet to appear so. It is good to excel in real piety, but not to exceed in outward shows; for overdoing is justly suspected of design, Prov. 27. 14. It is the guise of hypocrisy, to make more ado than needs in external services, more than is needful either to prove, or to improve, the good affections and dispositions of the soul.

(2.) *They enlarged the borders of their garments.* God appointed the Jews to make borders, or fringes, upon their garments, (Numb. 15. 38.) to distinguish them from other nations, and to be a memorandum to them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees were not content to have these borders like other people's, which might serve God's design in appointing them; but they must be larger than ordinary, to answer their design of making themselves to be taken notice of; as if they were more religious than others. But those who thus enlarge their phylacteries, and the borders of their garments, while their hearts are straitened, and destitute of the love of God and their neighbour, though they may now deceive others, will in the end deceive themselves.

4. They much affected pre-eminence and superiority, and prided themselves extremely in it. Pride was the darling reigning sin of the Pharisees, *the sin that did most easily beset them*, and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to witness against.

(1.) He describes their pride, v. 6, 7. They courted and coveted,

[1.] Places of honour and respect. In all public appearances, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, they expected, and had, to their hearts' delight, the uppermost rooms, and the chief seats. They took place of all others, and precedence was adjudged to them, as persons of the greatest note and merit; and it is easy to imagine what a complacency they took in it; *they loved to have the pre-eminence*, 3 John 9. It is not possessing the uppermost rooms,

nor sitting in the chief seats, that is condemned, (somebody must sit uppermost,) but *loving* them; for men to value such a little piece of ceremony as sitting highest, going first, taking the wall, or the better hand, and to value themselves upon it, to seek it, and to feel resentment if they have it not; what is that but making an idol of ourselves, and then falling down and worshipping it?—the worst kind of idolatry! It is bad any where, but especially in the synagogues. There to seek honour to ourselves, where we appear in order to give glory to God, and to humble ourselves before him, is indeed to mock God, instead of serving him. David would willingly lie at the threshold in God's house; so far was he from coveting the chief seat there, Ps. 84. 10. It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine, and make a figure there.

[2.] Titles of honour and respect. They *love a greetings in the markets*, loved to have people put off their hats to them, and shew them respect when they met them in the streets. Oh how it pleased them, and fed their vain humour, *digito monstrare, et dicere, Hic est*—to be pointed out, and to have it said, *This is he*, to have way made for them in the crowd of market-people; "Stand off, here is a Pharisee coming!" and to be complimented with the high and pompous title of *Rabbi, Rabbi!* This was meat, and drink, and dainties to them; and they took as great a satisfaction in it as Nebuchadnezzar did in his palace, when he said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* The greetings would not have done them half so much good, if they had not been in the markets, where every body might see how much they were respected, and how high they stood in the opinion of the people. It was but a little before Christ's time, that the Jewish teachers, the masters of Israel, had assumed the titles of *Rabbi, Rab, and Rabban*, which signifies *great, or much*; and was construed as *Doctor, or My lord*. And they laid such a stress upon it, that they gave it for a maxim, that "he who salutes his teacher, and does not call him Rabbi, provokes the Divine Majesty to depart from Israel." So much religion did they place in that which was but a piece of good manners! For him that is taught, in the word, to give respect to him that teaches, is commendable enough in him that gives it; but for him that teaches, to love it, and demand it, and affect it, to be puffed up with it, and to be displeased if it be omitted, is sinful and abominable; and, instead of teaching, he has need to learn the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is, Humility.

(2.) He cautions his disciples against being herein like them; herein they must not do after their works; "But he not ye called so, for ye shall not be of such a spirit," v. 8, &c.

Here is, [1.] A prohibition of pride. They are here forbidden,

First, To challenge titles of honour and dominion, to themselves, v. 8, 10. It is repeated twice; *Be not called Rabbi, neither be ye called Master or Guide*; not that it is unlawful to give civil respect to those that are over us in the Lord, nay, it is an instance of the honour and esteem which it is our duty to shew them; but, 1. Christ's ministers must not affect the name of *Rabbi*, or *Master*, by way of distinction from other people; it is not agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, for them to covet or accept the honour which they have that are in kings' palaces. 2. They must not assume the authority and dominion implied in those names; they must not be magisterial, nor domineer over their brethren, or over God's heritage, as if they had dominion over the faith of Christians; what they received of the Lord, all must receive from them; but in other things they must not make their opinions and wills

a rule and standard to all other people, to be admitted with an implicit obedience. The reasons for this prohibition are,

(1.) *One is your Master, even Christ, v. 8. and again, v. 10.* Note, [1.] Christ is our Master, our Teacher, our Guide. Mr. George Herbert, when he named the name of *Christ*, usually added, *My Master*. [2.] Christ only is our Master, ministers are but ushers in the school, Christ only is the Master, that great Prophet whom we must hear, and be ruled and overruled by; whose word must be an oracle and a law to us; *Verily I say unto you*, must be enough to us. And if he only be our Master, then for his ministers to set up for dictators, and to pretend to a supremacy, and an infallibility, is a daring usurpation of that honour of Christ which he will not give to another.

(2.) *All ye are brethren.* Ministers are brethren not only to one another, but to the people; and therefore it ill becomes them to be masters, when there are none for them to master it over but their brethren; yea, and we are all younger brethren, otherwise the eldest might claim an *excellency of dignity and power*, Gen. 49. 3. But, to preclude that, Christ himself is *the First-born among many brethren*, Rom. 8. 29. Ye are brethren, as ye are all disciples of the same Master. School-fellows are brethren, and, as such, should help one another in getting their lesson; but it will by no means be allowed, that one of the scholars step into the master's seat, and give law to the school. If we are all brethren, we must not be *many masters*, Jam. 3. 1.

Secondly, They are forbidden to ascribe such titles to others; (v. 9.) "*Call no man your father upon the earth*; constitute no man the father of your religion, that is, the founder, author, director, and governor, of it." The fathers of our flesh must be called *fathers*, and as such we must give them *reverence*; but God only must be owned as the *Father of our spirits*, Heb. 12. 9. Our religion must not be derived from, or made to depend upon, any man. We are born again to the spiritual and divine life, *not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God; not of the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God*. Now the will of man, not being the rise of our religion, must not be the rule of it. We must not *jurare in verba magistris—swear to the dictates of any creature*, not the wisest or best, nor pin our faith on any man's sleeve, because we know not whether he will carry it. St. Paul calls himself a *Father* to those whose conversion he had been an instrument of; (1 Cor. 4. 15. Phil. 10.) but he pretends to no dominion over them, and uses that title to denote, not authority, but affection; therefore he calls them not his *obliged*, but his *beloved*, sons, 1 Cor. 4. 14.

The reason given, is, *One is your Father, who is in heaven*. God is our Father, and is All in all in our religion. He is the Fountain of it, and its Founder; the Life of it, and its Lord; from whom alone, as the Original, our spiritual life is derived, and on whom it depends. He is the *Father of all lights*, (Jam. 1. 17.) that *one Father, from whom are all things, and we in him*, Eph. 4. 6. Christ having taught us to say, *Our Father, who art in heaven*, let us call no man *Father upon earth*; no man, because man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, hewn out of the same rock with us; especially not upon earth, for man upon earth is a sinful worm; *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not*, and therefore no one is fit to be called *Father*.

[2.] Here is a precept of humility and mutual subjection, (v. 11.) *He that is greatest among you shall be your servant*; not only call himself so, (we know of one that styles himself *Servus servorum Dei*—*Servant of the servants of God*, but acts as Rabbi, and father, and master, and *Dominus Deus*

noster—*The Lord our God*, and what not,) but he shall be so. Take it as a promise; "*He shall be accounted greatest, and stand highest in the favour of God, that is most submissive and serviceable*;" or as a precept; "*He that is advanced to any place of dignity, trust, and honour, in the church, let him be your servant*;" (some copies read *est*, for *erat*.) "*let him not think that his patent of honour is a writ of ease*; no; *he that is greatest is not a lord, but a minister*." St. Paul, who knew his privilege as well as duty, though *free from all, yet made himself servant of all*; (1 Cor. 9. 19.) and our Master frequently pressed it upon his disciples, to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all offices of Christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he hath set us an example.

[3.] Here is a good reason for all this, v. 12. Consider,

First, The punishment intended for the proud; *Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased*. If God give them repentance, they will be abased in their own eyes, and will abhor themselves for it; if they repent not, sooner or later they will be abased before the world. Nebuchadnezzar, in the height of his pride, was turned to be a fellow-commoner with the beasts; Herod, to be a feast for the worms; and Babylon, that sat as a queen, to be the scorn of nations. God made the proud and aspiring priests contemptible and base, (Mal. 2. 9.) and the lying prophet to be *the tail*, Isa. 9. 15. But, if proud men have not marks of humiliation set upon them in this world, there is a day coming, when they shall *rise to everlasting shame and contempt*; (Dan. 12. 2.) *so plentifully will he reward the proud doer!* Ps. 31. 23.

Secondly, The preferment intended for the humble; *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted*. Humility is that *ornament which is in the sight of God of great price*. In this world the humble have the honour of being accepted with the holy God, and respected by all wise and good men; of being qualified for, and often called out to, the most honourable services; for honour is like the shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, and grasp at it, but follows those that flee from it. However, in the other world, they that have humbled themselves in contrition for their sin, in compliance with their God, and in condescension to their brethren, shall be exalted to inherit the throne of glory: shall be not only owned, but crowned, before angels and men.

13. But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. 17. Ye fools, and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or

the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18. And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19. Ye fools, and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. 23. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 25. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which* is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. 28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 29. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

In these verses we have eight woes levelled directly against the Scribes and Pharisees by our Lord Jesus Christ, like so many claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning, from mount Sinai. *Three* woes are made to look very dreadful; (Rev. 8. 13.—9. 12.) but here are *eight* woes, in opposition to the eight beatitudes, Matth. 5. 3. The gospel has its woes as well as the law, and gospel-curses are of all other the heaviest. These woes are the more remarkable, not only because of the authority, but because of the meekness and gentleness, of him that denounced them. He came to bless, and loved to bless; but, if his wrath be kindled, there is surely cause for it: and who shall entreat for him that the

great Intercessor pleads against? A woe from Christ is a remediless woe.

This is here the burthen of the song, and it is a heavy burthen; *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.* Note, 1. The Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites; that is it in which all the rest of their bad characters are summed up; it was the leaven which gave the relish to all they said and did. A hypocrite is a stage-player in religion; (that is the primary signification of the word;) he personates, or acts, the part of one that he neither is, nor may be; or, perhaps, that he neither is, nor would be. 2. That hypocrites are in a woeful state and condition. *Woe to hypocrites*; so he said, whose saying that their case is miserable makes it so; while they live, their religion is vain; when they die, their ruin is great.

Now each of these woes against the Scribes and Pharisees has a reason annexed to it, containing a separate crime charged upon them, proving their hypocrisy, and justifying the judgment of Christ upon them; for his woes, his curses, are never causeless.

1. They were sworn enemies to the gospel of Christ, and consequently to the salvation of the souls of men; (v. 13.) *They shut up the kingdom of heaven against men*, that is, they did all they could to keep people from believing in Christ, and so entering into his kingdom. Christ came to *open the kingdom of heaven*, that is, to lay open for us a *new and living way* into it, to bring men to be subjects of that kingdom. Now the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses' seat, and pretended to the key of knowledge, ought to have contributed their assistance herein, by opening those scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at the Messiah and his kingdom, in their true proper sense; they that undertook to expound Moses and the prophets, should have shewed the people how they testified of Christ; that Daniel's weeks were expiring, *the sceptre was departed from Judah*, and therefore now was the time for the Messiah's appearing. Thus they might have facilitated that great work, and have helped thousands to heaven; but, instead of this, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; they made it their business to press the ceremonial law, which was now in the vanishing, to suppress the prophecies, which were now in the accomplishing, and to beget and nourish up in the minds of people prejudices against Christ and his doctrine.

1. They would not go in themselves; *Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?* (John 7. 48.) No; they were too proud to stoop to his meanness, too formal to be reconciled to his plainness; they did not like a religion which insisted so much on humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and spiritual worship. Repentance was the door of admission into this kingdom, and nothing could be more disagreeable to the Pharisees, who justified and admired themselves, than to repent, that is, to accuse, and abase, and abhor themselves; therefore they *went not in themselves*; but that was not all,

2. They would not *suffer them that were entering, to go in*. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but it is worse to keep others from him; yet that is commonly the way of hypocrites: they do not love that any should go beyond them in religion, or be better than they. Their not going in themselves, was a hindrance to many; for, they having so great an interest in the people, multitudes rejected the gospel only because their leaders did; but, besides that, they opposed both Christ's entertainment of sinners, (Luke 7. 39.) and sinners' entertaining of Christ; they perverted his doctrine, confronted his miracles, quarrelled with his disciples, and represented him, and his institutes and

economy, to the people in the most disingenuous, disadvantageous, manner imaginable; they thundered out their excommunications against those that confessed him, and used all their wit and power to serve their malice against him; and thus they *shut up the kingdom of heaven*, so that *they who would enter into it must suffer violence*, (ch. 11. 12.) and *press into it*, (Luke 16. 16.) through a crowd of Scribes and Pharisees, and all the obstructions and difficulties they could contrive to lay in their way. How well is it for us, that our salvation is not intrusted in the hands of any man, or company of men, in the world; if it were, we were undone. They that shut out of the church, would shut out of heaven, if they could; but the malice of men cannot make the promise of God to his chosen of no effect; blessed be God, it cannot.

II. They made religion and the form of godliness a cloak and stalking-horse to their covetous practices and desires, v. 14. Observe here,

1. What their wicked practices were; they *devoured widows' houses*, either by quartering themselves and their attendants upon them for entertainment, which must be of the best for men of their figure; or by insinuating themselves into their affections, and so getting to be the trustees of their estates, which they could make an easy prey of; for who could presume to call such as they were to an account? The thing they aimed at, was, to enrich themselves; and, this being their chief and highest end, all considerations of justice and equity were laid aside, and even widows' houses were sacrificed to this. Widows are of the weaker sex in its weakest state, easily imposed upon; and therefore they fastened on them, to make a prey of. They devoured those whom, by the law of God, they were particularly obliged to protect, patronise, and relieve. There is a woe in the Old Testament to those that *made widows their prey*; (Isa. 10. 1, 2.) and Christ here seconded it with his woe. God is the Judge of the widows; they are his peculiar care, he *establisheth their border*, (Prov. 15. 25.) and *espouseth their cause*; (Exod. 22. 22, 23.) yet these were they whose houses the Pharisees devoured by wholesale; so greedily were they to get *their bellies filled with the treasures of wickedness*! Their devouring denotes not only covetousness, but cruelty in their oppression, described Mic. 3. 3. *They eat the flesh, and flay the skin*; and, doubtless, they did all this under colour of law; for they did it so artfully, that it passed uncensured, and did not at all lessen the people's veneration for them.

2. What was the cloak with which they covered this wicked practice; *for a pretence they made long prayers*; very long indeed, if it be true which some of the Jewish writers tell us, that they spent three hours at a time in the formalities of meditation and prayer, and did it thrice every day, which is more than an upright soul, that makes conscience of being inward with God in the duty, dare pretend ordinarily to do; but to the Pharisees it was easy enough, who never made a business of the duty, and always made a trade of the outside of it. By this craft they got their wealth, and maintained their grandeur. It is not probable that these long prayers were extemporary, for then (as Mr. Baxter observes) the Pharisees had much more the gift of prayer than Christ's disciples had; but rather that they were stated forms of words in use among them, which they said over by tale, as the papists drop their beads. Christ doth not here condemn long prayers, as in themselves hypocritical; nay, if there were not a great appearance of good in them, they would not have been used for a pretence; and the cloak must be very thick which was used to cover such wicked practices. Christ himself *continued all night in prayer to God*, and we are com-

manded to *pray without ceasing* too soon; where there are many sins to be confessed, and many wants to pray for the supply of, and many mercies to give thanks for, there is occasion for long prayers. But the Pharisees' long prayers were made up of vain repetitions, and (which was the end of them) they were for a *pretence*; by them they got the reputation of pious devout men, that loved prayer, and were the favourites of Heaven; and by this means people were made to believe it was not possible that such men as they should cheat them; and, therefore, happy the widow that could get a Pharisee for her trustee, and guardian to her children! Thus, while they seemed to soar heavenward, upon the wings of prayer, their eye, like the kite's, was all the while upon their prey on the earth, some widows' house or other that lay convenient for them. Thus circumcision was the cloak of Shechemites' covetousness, (Gen. 34. 22, 23.) the payment of a vow in Hebron the cover of Absalom's rebellion, (2 Sam. 15. 7.) a fast in Jezreel must patronise Naboth's murder, and the extirpation of Baal is the footstool of Jehu's ambition. Pious priests, under pretence of long prayers for the dead, masses, and dirges, and I know not what, enrich themselves by devouring the houses of the widows and fatherless. Note, It is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety, however it passeth now, will be reckoned for as double iniquity, *in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men*.

3. The doom passed upon them for this; *Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation*. (1.) There are degrees of damnation; there are some, whose sin is more inexcusable, and whose ruin will therefore be more intolerable. (2.) The pretences of religion, with which hypocrites disguise, or excuse, their sin now, will aggravate their condemnation shortly. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that that very thing by which sinners hope to expiate and atone for their sins, will come against them, and make their sins more exceeding sinful. But it is sad for the criminal, when his defence proves his offence, and his plea (*We have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name made long prayers*,) heightens the charge against him.

III. While they were such enemies to the conversion of souls to Christianity, they were very industrious in the perversion of them to their faction. They shut up the kingdom of heaven against those that would turn to Christ, but at the same time *compassed sea and land to make proselytes to themselves*, v. 15. Observe here,

1. Their commendable industry in making proselytes to the Jewish religion, not only proselytes of the gate, who obliged themselves to no more than the observance of the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, but proselytes of *righteousness*, who addicted themselves wholly to all the rites of the Jewish religion, for that was the game they flew at; for this, for one such, though but one, they compassed sea and land, had many a cunning reach, and laid many a plot, rid and run, and sent and wrote, and laboured unweariedly. And what did they aim at? Not the glory of God, and the good of souls; but that they might have the credit of making them proselytes, and the advantage of making a prey of them when they were made. Note, (1.) The making of proselytes, if it be to the truth and serious godliness, and be done with a good design, is a good work, well worthy of the utmost care and pains. Such is the value of souls, that nothing must be thought too much to do to save a soul from death. The industry of the Pharisees herein may shew the negligence of many, who would be thought to act from better principles, but will be at no pains or cost to

propagate the gospel. (2.) To make a proselyte, sea and land must be compassed; all ways and means must be tried; first one way, and then another must be tried, all little enough; but all well paid, if the point be gained. (3.) Carnal hearts seldom shrink from the pains necessary to carry on their carnal purposes; when a proselyte is to be made to serve a turn for themselves, they will compass sea and land to make him, rather than be disappointed.

2. Their cursed impiety in abusing their proselytes when they were made; "Ye make him the disciple of a Pharisee presently, and he sucks in all a Pharisee's notions; and so ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Note, (1.) Hypocrites, while they fancy themselves heirs of heaven, are, in the judgment of Christ, the children of hell. The rise of their hypocrisy is from hell, for the devil is the father of lies; and the tendency of their hypocrisy is toward hell, that is the country they belong to, the inheritance they are heirs to; they are called *children of hell*, because of their rooted enmity to the kingdom of heaven, which was the principle and genius of Pharisaism. (2.) Though all that maliciously oppose the gospel are children of hell, yet some are twofold more so than others, more furious, and bigoted, and malignant. (3.) Perverted proselytes are commonly the greatest bigots; the scholars outdid their masters. [1.] In fondness of ceremony; the Pharisees themselves saw the folly of their own impositions, and in their hearts smiled at the obsequiousness of those that conformed to them; but their proselytes were eager for them. Note, Weak heads commonly admire those shows and ceremonies which wise men (however for public ends they may countenance them) cannot but think meanly of. [2.] In fury against Christianity; the proselytes readily imbibed the principles which their crafty leaders were not wanting to possess them with, and so became extreme hot against the truth. The most bitter enemies the apostles met with in all places, were, the Hellenist Jews, who were mostly proselytes, Acts 13. 45.—14. 2, 19.—17. 5.—18. 6. Paul, a disciple of the Pharisees, was *exceedingly mad against the Christians*, (Acts 26. 11.) when his master, Gamaliel, seems to have been more moderate.

IV. Their seeking of their own worldly gain and honour more than God's glory, put them upon coining false and unwarrantable distinctions, with which they led the people into dangerous mistakes, particularly in the matter of oaths; which, as an evidence of a universal sense of religion, have been by all nations accounted sacred; (v. 16.) *Ye blind guides*. Note, 1. It is sad to think how many are under the guidance of such as are themselves blind; who undertake to shew others that way which they are themselves willingly ignorant of. *His watchmen are blind*; (Isa. 56. 10.) and too often the people love to have it so, and say to the seers, *See not*. But the case is bad, when the leaders of the people cause them to err, Isa. 9. 16. 2. Though the condition of those whose guides are blind is very sad, yet that of the blind guides themselves is yet more woeful. Christ denounces a woe to the blind guides that have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

Now, to prove their blindness, he specifies the matter of swearing, and shews what corrupt casuists they were.

(1.) He lays down the doctrine they taught.

[1.] They were allowed swearing by creatures, provided they were consecrated to the service of God, and stood in any special relation to him. They allowed swearing by the temple and the altar, though they were the work of men's hands, intended to be the servants of God's honour, not sharers in it. An oath is an appeal to God, to his omniscience and

justice; and to make this appeal to any creature, is to put that creature in the place of God. See Deut. 6. 13.

[2.] They distinguished between an oath by the temple and an oath by the gold of the temple; an oath by the altar and an oath by the gift upon the altar; making the latter binding, but not the former. Here was a double wickedness; *First*, that there were some oaths which they dispensed with, and made light of, and reckoned a man was not bound by to assert the truth, or perform a promise. They ought not to have sworn by the temple, or the altar; but, when they had so sworn, they were taken in the words of their mouth. That doctrine cannot be of the God of truth, which gives countenance to the breach of faith, in any case whatsoever. Oaths are edged-tools, and are not to be jested with. *Secondly*, That they preferred the gold before the temple, and the gift before the altar, to encourage people to bring gifts to the altar, and gold to the treasurers of the temple, which they hoped to be gainers by. They who had made gold their hope, and whose eyes were blinded by gifts in secret, were great friends to the Corban; and gain being their godliness, by a thousand artifices they made religion truckle to their worldly interests. Corrupt church-guides make things to be sin or no sin, as it serves their purposes, and lay a much greater stress on that which concerns their own gain, than on that which is for God's glory and the good of souls.

(2.) He shews the folly and absurdity of this distinction; (v. 17, 19.) *Ye fools, and blind*. It was in the way of a necessary reproof, not an angry reproach, that Christ called them *fools*. Let it suffice us, from the word of wisdom, to show the folly of sinful opinions and practices; but, for the fastening of the character upon particular persons, leave that to Christ, who knows what is in man, and has forbidden us to say, *Thou fool*.

To convict them of folly, he appeals to themselves, *Whether is greater, the gold*, (the golden vessels and ornaments, or the gold in the treasury,) *or the temple that sanctifies the gold; the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift?* Any one will own, *Propter quod aliquid, est tale, id est magis tale*—That, on account of which any thing is qualified in a particular way, must itself be much more qualified in the same way. They that swore by the gold of the temple, had an eye to it as holy; but what was it that made it holy but the holiness of the temple, to the service of which it was appropriated? And therefore the temple cannot be less holy than the gold, but must be more so; for the less is blessed and sanctified of the better, Heb. 7. 7. The temple and altar were dedicated to God, fixedly, the gold and gift but secondarily. Christ is our Altar, (Heb. 13. 10.) our Temple; (John 2. 21.) for it is he that sanctifies all our gifts, and puts an acceptableness in them, 1 Pet. 2. 5. Those that put their own works into the place of Christ's righteousness in justification, are guilty of the Pharisees' absurdity, who preferred the gift before the altar. Every true Christian is a living temple; and by virtue thereof common things are sanctified to him; *unto the pure all things are pure*, (Tit. 1. 15.) and *the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife*, 1 Cor. 7. 14.

(3.) He rectifies the mistake, (v. 20—22.) by reducing all the oaths they had invented to the true intent of an oath, which is, By the name of the Lord; so that though an oath by the temple, or the altar, or heaven, be formally bad, yet they are binding. *Quod fieri non debuit, factum valet*—Engagements which ought not to have been made, are yet, when made, binding. A man shall never take advantage of his own fault.

[1.] He that swears by the altar, let him not

think to shake off the obligation of it by saying, "The altar is but wood, and stone, and brass;" for his oath shall be construed most strongly against himself; because he was culpable, and so as that the obligation of it may be preserved, *ut res potius valeat quam pereat—the obligation being hereby strengthened rather than destroyed*. And therefore an oath by the altar should be interpreted by it and by all things thereon; for the appurtenances pass with the principal. And the things thereon being offered up to God, to swear by it and them, was, in effect, to call God himself to witness: for it was the altar of God; and he that went to that, went to God, Ps. 43. 4.—26. 6.

[2.] He that swears by the temple, if he understand what he does, cannot but apprehend that the ground of such a respect to it, is, not because it is a fine house, but because it is the house of God, dedicated to his service, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; and therefore he swears *by it, and by him that dwells therein*; there he was pleased in a peculiar manner to manifest himself, and give tokens of his presence; so that whoso swears by it, swears by him who had said, *This is my rest, here will I dwell*. Good Christians are God's temples, and the Spirit of God dwells in them, (1 Cor. 3. 16.—6. 19.) and God takes what is done to them as done to himself; he that grieves a gracious soul, grieves it, and *the Spirit that dwells in it*, Eph. 4. 30.

[3.] If a man swears by heaven, he sins; (ch. 5. 34.) yet he shall not therefore be discharged from the obligation of his oath; no, God will make him know, that the heaven he swears by is his throne; (Isa. 66. 1.) and he that swears by the throne, appeals to him that sits upon it; who, as he resents the affront done to him in the form of the oath, so he will certainly revenge the greater affront done to him by the violation of it. Christ will not countenance the evasion of a solemn oath, though ever so plausible.

V. They were very strict and precise in the smaller matters of the law, but as careless and loose in the weightier matters, v. 23, 24. They were *partial in the law*, (Mal. 2. 9.) would pick and choose their duty, according as they were interested or stood affected. Sincere obedience is universal, and he that from a right principle obeys any of God's precepts, will have respect to them all, Ps. 119. 6. But hypocrites, who act in religion for themselves, and not for God, will do no more in religion than they can serve a turn by for themselves. The partiality of the Scribes and Pharisees appears here, in two instances.

1. They observed smaller duties, but omitted greater: they were very exact in paying tithes, till it came to *mint, anise, and cummin*, their exactness in tithing of which would not cost them much, but would be cried up, and they should buy reputation cheap. The Pharisee boasted of this, *I give tithes of all that I possess*, Luke 18. 12. But it is probable that they had ends of their own to serve, and would find their own account in it; for the priests and Levites, to whom the tithes were paid, were in their interests, and knew how to return their kindness. Paying tithes was their duty, and what the law required; Christ tells them they ought not to leave it undone. Note, All ought in their places to contribute to the support and maintenance of a standing ministry: withholding tithes is called *robbing God*, Mal. 3. 8—10. They that are taught in the word, and do not communicate to them that teach them, that love a cheap gospel, come short of the Pharisees.

But that which Christ here condemns them for, is, that they omitted the weightier matters of the law, *judgment, mercy, and faith*; and their niceness in

paying tithes, was, if not to atone before God, yet at least to excuse and palliate to men the omission of those. All the things of God's law are weighty, but those are most weighty which are most expressive of inward holiness in the heart; the instances of self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to God, in which lies the life of religion. Judgment and mercy toward men, and faith toward God, are the weightier matters of the law, the good things which the Lord our God requires, (Mic. 6. 8.) to do justly, and love mercy, and humble ourselves by faith to walk with God. This is the obedience which is better than sacrifice or tithe; judgment is preferred before sacrifice, Isa. 1. 11. To be just to the priests in their tithe, and yet to cheat and defraud every body else, is but to mock God, and deceive ourselves. Mercy also is preferred before sacrifice, Hos. 6. 6. To feed those who made themselves fat with the offerings of the Lord, and at the same time to shut up the bowels of compassion from a brother or a sister that is naked, and destitute of daily food, to pay tithe-mint to the priest, and to deny a crumb to Lazarus, is to lie open to that judgment without mercy, which is awarded to those who pretended to judgment, and shewed no mercy; nor will judgment and mercy serve without faith in divine revelation; for God will be honoured in his truths as well as in his laws.

2. They avoided lesser sins, but committed greater; (v. 24.) *Ye blind guides*; so he had called them before, (v. 16.) for their corrupt teaching; here he calls them so for their corrupt living, for their example was leading as well as their doctrine; and in this also they were blind and partial; they *strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel*. In their doctrine they strained at gnats, warned people against every the least violation of the tradition of the elders. In their practice they strained at gnats, heaved at them, with a seeming dread, as if they had a great abhorrence of sin, and were afraid of it in the least instance; but they made no difficulty of those sins which, in comparison with them, were as a camel to a gnat; when they devoured widows' houses, they did indeed *swallow a camel*; when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood, and yet scrupled to put the returned money into the treasury; (ch. 27. 6.) when they would not go into the judgment-hall, for fear of being defiled, and yet would stand at the door, and cry out against the holy Jesus; (John 18. 28.) when they quarrelled with the disciples for eating with unwashed hands, and yet, for the filling of the Corban, taught people to break the fifth commandment, they strained at gnats, or lesser things, and yet swallowed camels. It is not the scrupling of a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained at; but the doing of that, and then swallowing a camel. In the lesser matters of the law to be superstitious, and to be profane in the greater, is the hypocrisy here condemned.

VI. They were all for the outside, and not at all for the inside, of religion. They were more desirous and solicitous to appear pious to men, than to approve themselves so toward God. This is illustrated by two similitudes:

1. They are compared to a vessel that is clean washed on the outside, but all dirt within, v. 25, 26. The Pharisees placed religion in that which at best was but a point of decency—the *washing of cups*, Mark 7. 4. They were in care to eat their meat in clean cups and platters, but made no conscience of getting their meat by extortion, and using it to excess. Now, what a foolish thing would it be for a man to wash only the outside of a cup, which is to be looked at, and to leave the inside dirty, which is to be used? so they do, who only avoid scandalous sins that would spoil their reputation with men,

but allow themselves in heart-wickedness, which renders them odious to the pure and holy God. In reference to this, observe,

(1.) The practice of the Pharisees; they made clean the outside. In those things which fell under the observation of their neighbours, they seemed very exact, and carried on their wicked intrigues with so much artifice, that their wickedness was not suspected; people generally took them for very good men. But within, in the recesses of their hearts, and the close retirements of their lives, they were full of extortion and excess; of violence and incontinence; (so Dr. Hammond;) that is, of injustice and intemperance. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. Their inward part was very wickedness; (Ps. 5. 9.) and that we are really, which we are inwardly.

(2.) The rule Christ gives, in opposition to this practice, v. 26. It is addressed to the blind Pharisees. They thought themselves the *seers of the land*, but (John 9. 40.) Christ calls them *blind*. Note, Those are blind, in Christ's account, who (how quick-sighted soever they are in other things) are strangers, and no enemies, to the wickedness of their own hearts; who see not, and hate not, the secret sin that lodgeth there. Self-ignorance is the most shameful and hurtful ignorance, Rev. 3. 17. The rule is, *Cleanse first that which is within*. Note, The principal care of every one of us should be to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. The main business of a Christian lies within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit. Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, unseen and unobserved; those must first be mortified and subdued. Those sins must be conscientiously abstained from, which the eye of God only is a witness to, who searcheth the heart.

Observe the method prescribed; *Cleanse first that which is within*; not that *only*, but that *first*; because, if due care be taken concerning that, the outside will be clean also. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy; but if renewing, sanctifying grace make clean the inside, that will have an influence upon the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart be well kept, all is well, for *out of it are the issues of life*; the eruptions will vanish of course. If the heart and spirit be made new, there will be a newness of life; here therefore we must begin with ourselves; first cleanse that which is within; we then make sure work, when this is our first work.

2. They are compared to *whited sepulchres*, v. 27, 28.

(1.) They were fair without, like sepulchres, *which appear beautiful outward*. Some make it to refer to the custom of the Jews to whiten graves, only for the notifying of them, especially if they were in unusual places, that people might avoid them, because of the ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a grave, Numb. 19. 16. And it was part of the charge of the overseers of the highways, to repair that whitening when it was decayed. Sepulchres were thus made remarkable, 2 Kings 23. 16, 17. The formality of hypocrites, by which they study to recommend themselves to the world, doth but make all wise and good men the more careful to avoid them, for fear of being defiled by them. *Be ware of the Scribes*, Luke 20. 46. It rather alludes to the custom of whitening the sepulchres of eminent persons, for the beautifying of them. It is said here, (v. 29.) that they *garnished the sepulchres of the righteous*; as it is usual with us to erect monuments upon the graves of great persons, and to strew flowers on the graves of dear friends. Now the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or the dressing up of

a dead body, only for show. The top of their ambition was to *appear righteous before men*, and to be applauded and had in admiration by them. But,

(2.) They were foul within, like sepulchres, *full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness*; so vile are our bodies, when the soul has deserted them! Thus were they full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Hypocrisy is the worst iniquity of all other. Note, It is possible for those that have their hearts full of sin, to have their lives free from blame, and to appear very good. But what will it avail us, to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master doth not say, *Well done?* When all other graves are opened, these whited sepulchres will be looked into, and the dead men's bones, and all the uncleanness, shall be brought out, and be spread before all the host of heaven, Jer. 8. 1, 2. For it is the day when God shall judge, not the shows, but the secrets, of men. And it will then be small comfort to them, who shall have their portion with hypocrites, to remember how credibly and plausibly they went to hell, applauded by all their neighbours.

VII. They pretended a deal of kindness for the memory of the prophets that were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those that were present with them. This is put last, because it was the blackest part of their character. God is jealous for his honour in his laws and ordinances, and resents it if they be profaned and abused; but he has often expressed an equal jealousy for his honour in his prophets and ministers, and resents it worse, if they be wronged and persecuted: and therefore, when our Lord Jesus comes to this head, he speaks more fully than upon any of the other; (v. 29—37.) for he that toucheth his ministers, *toucheth his Anointed*, and toucheth the *apple of his eye*. Observe here,

1. The respect which the Scribes and Pharisees pretended for the prophets that were gone, v. 29, 30. This was the varnish, and that in which they outwardly appeared righteous.

(1.) They honoured the relics of the prophets, they built their tombs, and garnished their sepulchres. It seems, the places of their burial were known, David's sepulchre was with them, Acts 2. 29. There was a title upon the sepulchre of the *man of God*, (2 Kings 23. 17.) and Josiah thought it respect enough not to *move his bones*, v. 18. But they would do more, rebuild and beautify them. Now consider this, [1.] As an instance of honour done to deceased prophets, who, while they lived, were counted as the off-scouring of all things, and had all manner of evil spoken against them falsely. Note, God can extort, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the honour of piety and holiness. Them that honour God, he will honour, and sometimes with those from whom contempt is expected, 2 Sam. 6. 22. *The memory of the just is blessed*, when the names of those that hated and persecuted them shall be covered with shame. The honour of constancy and resolution, in the way of duty, will be a lasting honour; and those that are manifest to God, will be manifest in the consciences of those about them. [2.] As an instance of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees who paid their respect to them. Note, Carnal people can easily honour the memories of faithful ministers that are dead and gone, because they do not reprove them, nor disturb them, in their sins. Dead prophets are *seers* that *see not*, and those they can bear well enough; they do not torment them, as the living witnesses do, that bear their testimony *viva voce*—*with a living voice*, Rev. 11. 10. They can pay respect to the writings of the dead prophets, which tell them what they *should be*; but not the reproofs of the living prophets, which tell them what they *are*. *Sit divus, modo non sit vivus*.—*Let there be saints, but let them not be living here*. The extravagant respect which the

church of Rome pays to the memory of saints departed, especially the martyrs, dedicating days and places to their names, enshrining their relics, praying to them, and offering to their images, while they make themselves drunk with the blood of the saints of their own day, is a manifest proof that they not only *succeed*, but *exceed*, the Scribes and Pharisees in a counterfeit hypocritical religion, which builds the prophets' tombs, but hates the prophets' doctrine.

(2.) They protested against the murder of them; (v. 30.) *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them.* They would never have consented to the silencing of Amos, and the imprisonment of Micaiah, to the putting of Hanani in the stocks, and Jeremiah in the dungeon, to the stoning of Zechariah, the mocking of all the messengers of the Lord, and the abuses put upon his prophets; no, not they, they would sooner have lost their right hands than have done any such thing. *What, is thy servant a dog?* And yet they were at this time plotting to murder Christ, *to whom all the prophets bore witness.* They think, if they had lived in the days of the prophets, they would have heard them gladly, and obeyed; and yet they rebelled against the light that Christ brought into the world. But it is certain, a Herod and a Herodias to John the Baptist, would have been an Ahab and a Jezebel to Elijah. Note, The deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears very much in this, that, while they go down the stream of the sins of their own day, they fancy they should have swum against the stream of the sins of the former days; that, if they had had other people's opportunities, they would have improved them more faithfully; if they had been in other people's temptations, they would have resisted them more vigorously; when yet they improve not the opportunities they have, nor resist the temptations they are in. We are sometimes thinking, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, how constantly we would have followed him; we would not have despised and rejected him, as they then did; and yet Christ in his spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated.

2. The enmity and opposition to Christ and his gospel, notwithstanding, and the ruin they were bringing upon themselves and upon that generation thereby, v. 31—33. Observe here,

(1.) The indictment proved; *Ye are witnesses against yourselves.* Note, Sinners cannot hope to escape the judgment of Christ, for want of proof against them, when it is easy to find them witnesses against themselves; and their very pleas will not only be overruled, but turned to their conviction, and *their own tongues* shall be made to *fall upon them*, Ps. 64. 8.

[1.] By their own confession, it was the great wickedness of their forefathers, to kill the prophets; so that they knew the fault of it, and yet were themselves guilty of the same fact. Note, They who condemn sin in others, and yet allow the same or worse in themselves, are of all others most inexcusable, Rom. 1. 32.—2. 1. They knew they ought not to have been partakers with persecutors, and yet were the followers of them. Such self-contradictions now will amount to self-condemnations in the great day. Christ puts another construction upon their building of the tombs of the prophets than what they intended; as if by beautifying their graves they justified their murderers, (Luke 11. 48.) for they persisted in the sin.

[2.] By their own confession, these notorious persecutors were their ancestors; *Ye are the children of them.* They meant no more than that they were their children by blood and nature; but Christ turns it upon them, that they were so by spirit and disposition; *You are of those fathers, and their lusts you*

will do. They are, as you say, *your fathers*, and you *patrizare*—take after your fathers; it is the sin that runs in the blood among you. *As your fathers did, so do ye*, Acts 7. 51. They came of a persecuting race, were a seed of evil doers, (Isa. 1. 4.) *risen up in their fathers' stead*, Numb. 32. 14. Malice, envy, and cruelty, were bred in the bone with them, and they had formerly espoused it for a principle, to do as their fathers did, Jer. 44. 17. And it is observable here, (v. 30.) how careful they are to mention the relation; "They were *our* fathers, that killed the prophets, and they were men in honour and power, whose sons and successors we are." If they had detested the wickedness of their ancestors, as they ought to have done, they would not have been so fond to call them *their fathers*; for it is no credit to be akin to persecutors, though they have ever so much dignity and dominion.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them. Christ here proceeds,

[1.] To give them up to sin, as irreclaimable; (v. 32.) *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* If Ephraim be joined to idols, and hate to be reformed, let him alone. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Christ knew they were now contriving his death, and in a few days would accomplish it: "Well," saith he, "go on with your plot, take your course, walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes, and see what will come of it. *What thou doest, do quickly.* You will but fill up the measure of guilt, which will then overflow in a deluge of wrath." Note, *First*, There is a measure of sin to be filled up, before utter ruin comes upon persons and families, churches and nations. God will bear long, but the time will come, when he can no longer forbear, Jer. 44. 22. We read of the measure of the Amorites that was to be filled, (Gen. 15. 16.) of the harvest of the earth being ripe for the sickle, (Rev. 14. 15, 19.) and of sinners making an end to deal treacherously, arriving at a full stature in treachery, Isa. 53. 1. *Secondly*, Children fill up the measure of their fathers' sins when they are gone, if they persist in the same, or the like. That national guilt which brings national ruin, is made up of the sin of many in several ages, and in the successions of societies there is a score going on; for God justly visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children that tread in the steps of it. *Thirdly*, Persecuting Christ, and his people and ministers, is a sin that fills the measure of a nation's guilt sooner than any other. This was it that brought wrath without remedy upon the fathers, (2 Chron. 36. 16.) and wrath to the utmost upon the children too, 1 Thess. 2. 16. This was that fourth transgression, of which, when added to the other three, the Lord would not turn away the punishment, Amos 1. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13. *Fourthly*, It is just with God to give those up to their own heart's lusts, who obstinately persist in the gratification of them. Those who will run headlong to ruin, let the reins be laid on their neck, and it is the saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell.

[2.] He proceeds to give them up to ruin as irrecoverable, to a personal ruin in the other world; (v. 33.) *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* These are strange words to come from the mouth of Christ, into whose lips grace was poured. But he can and will speak terror, and in these words he explains and sums up the eight woes he had denounced against the Scribes and Pharisees.

Here is, *First*, The description; *Ye serpents.* Doth Christ call names? Yes, but this doth not warrant us to do so. He infallibly knew what was in man, and knew them to be subtle as serpents cleaving to the earth, feeding on dust; they had a specious outside, but were within malignant, had poison

under their tongues; the seed of the old serpent. They were a generation of *vipers*; they, and those that went before them, they, and those that joined with them, were a generation of envenomed, enraged, spiteful adversaries to Christ and his gospel. They loved to be called, of men, *Rabbi, rabbi*, but Christ calls them *serpents*, and *vipers*; for he gives men their true characters, and delights to put contempt upon the proud.

Secondly, Their doom. He represents their condition as very sad, and in a manner desperate; *How can ye escape the damnation of hell?* Christ himself preached hell and damnation, for which his ministers have often been reproached by those that care not to hear of it. Note, 1. The damnation of hell will be the fearful end of all impenitent sinners. This doom, coming from Christ, was more terrible than coming from all the prophets and ministers that ever were, for he is the Judge, into whose hands the keys of hell and death are put, and his saying they were damned made them so. 2. There is a way of escaping this damnation, this is implied here; some are *delivered from the wrath to come*. 3. Of all sinners, those who are of the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees are least likely to escape this damnation; for repentance and faith are necessary to that escape; and how will *they* be brought to these, who are so conceited of themselves, and so prejudiced against Christ and his gospel, as they were? How could *they* be healed and saved, who would not bear to have their wound searched, nor the balm of Gilead applied to it? Publicans and harlots, who were sensible of their disease, and applied themselves to the Physician, were more likely to escape the damnation of hell than those; who, though they were in the high road to it, were confident they were in the way to heaven.

34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some of them ye shall kill and crucify*; and *some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city*: 35. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We have left the blind leaders fallen into the ditch, under Christ's sentence, into the damnation of hell; let us see what will become of the blind followers, of the body of the Jewish church, and particularly Jerusalem.

I. Jesus Christ designs yet to try them with the means of grace; *I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes*. The connexion is strange; "*You are a generation of vipers, not likely to escape the damnation of hell*;" one would think it should follow, "Therefore you shall never have a prophet sent to

you any more;" but no, "*Therefore I will send unto you prophets*, to see if you will yet at length be wrought upon, or else to leave you inexcusable, and to justify God in your ruin." It is therefore ushered in with a note of admiration, behold! Observe,

1. It is Christ that sends them; *I send*. By this he avows himself to be God, having power to gift and commission prophets. It is an act of kingly office; he sends them as ambassadors to treat with us about the concerns of our souls. After his resurrection, he made this word good, when he said, *Send I you*, John 20. 21. Though now he appeared mean, yet he was intrusted with this great authority.

2. He sends them to the Jews first; "*I send them to you*." They began at Jerusalem; and, wherever they went, they observed this rule, to make the first tender of gospel-grace to the Jews, Acts 13. 46.

3. Those he sends are called *prophets, wise men, and scribes*, Old-Testament names for New-Testament officers; to shew that the ministers sent to them now should not be inferior to the prophets of the Old Testament, to Solomon the wise, or Ezra the scribe. The extraordinary ministers, who in the first ages were divinely inspired, were as the prophets commissioned immediately from heaven; the ordinary settled ministers, who were then, and continue in the church still, and will do to the end of time, are, as the wise men and scribes, to guide and instruct the people in the things of God. Or, we may take the apostles and evangelists for the prophets and wise men, and the pastors and teachers for the scribes, *instructed to the kingdom of heaven*; (ch. 13. 52.) for the office of a scribe was honourable till the men dishonoured it.

II. He foresees and foretells the ill usage that his messengers would meet with among them; "*Some of them ye shall kill and crucify*, and yet I will send them." Christ knows beforehand how ill his servants will be treated, and yet sends them, and appoints them their measure of sufferings; yet he loves them never the less for his thus exposing them, for he designs to glorify himself by their sufferings, and them after them; he will counterbalance them, though not prevent them. Observe,

1. The cruelty of these persecutors; *Ye shall kill and crucify them*. It is no less than the blood, the life-blood, that they thirst after; their lust is not satisfied with any thing short of their destruction, Exod. 15. 9. They killed the two James's, crucified Simon the son of Cleophas, and scourged Peter and John; thus did the members partake of the sufferings of the Head, he was killed and crucified, and so were they. Christians must expect to resist unto blood.

2. Their unwearied industry; *Ye shall persecute them from city to city*. As the apostles went from city to city, to preach the gospel, the Jews dodged them, and haunted them, and stirred up persecution against them, Acts 14. 19.—17. 12. They that *did not believe in Judea*, were more bitter enemies to the gospel than any other unbelievers, Rom. 15. 31.

3. The pretence of religion in this; they scourged them in their synagogues, their places of worship, where they kept their ecclesiastical courts, so that they did it as a piece of service to the church; cast them out, and said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, Isa. 66. 5. John 16. 2.

III. He imputes the sin of their fathers to them, because they imitated it; *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth*, v. 35, 36. Though God bear long with a persecuting generation, he will not bear always; and patience abused, turns into the greatest wrath. The longer sinners have been heaping up treasures of wickedness, the deeper and fuller will the treasures of wrath be; and the breaking of them up will be like breaking up the fountains of the great deep.

Observe, 1. The extent of this imputation ; it takes in *all the righteous blood shed upon the earth*, that is, the blood shed for righteousness' sake, which has all been laid up in God's treasury, and not a drop of it lost, for it is *precious*, Ps. 72. 14. He dates the account *from the blood of righteous Abel*, thence this *æra martyrum*—*age of martyrs*, commences ; he is called *righteous Abel*, for he obtained witness from heaven that he was *righteous*, *God testifying of his gifts*. How early did martyrdom come into the world ! The first that died, died for his religion, and, *being dead, he yet speaketh*. His blood not only cried against Cain, but continues to cry against all that walk in the way of Cain, and hate and persecute their brother, *because their works are righteous*. He extends it to the blood of *Zacharias the son of Barachias*, (v. 36.) not *Zecharias the prophet*, (as some would have it,) though he was the *son of Barachias*, (Zech. 1. 1.) nor *Zecharias*, the father of John Baptist, as others say ; but, as is most probable, *Zechariah the son of Jehoiada*, who was slain in the court of the Lord's house, 2 Chron. 24. 20, 21. His father is called *Barachias*, which signifies much the same with *Jehoiada* ; and it was usual among the Jews for the same person to have two names ; *whom ye slew*, ye of this nation, though not of this generation. This is specified, because the requiring of that is particularly spoken of, (2 Chron. 24. 22.) as that of *Abel's* is. The Jews imagined that the captivity had sufficiently atoned for that guilt ; but Christ lets them know that it was not yet fully accounted for, but remained upon the score. And some think that this is mentioned with a prophetic hint, for there was one *Zecharias*, the son of *Baruch*, whom *Josephus* speaks of, (*De Bello Judaico*, lib. 5. cap. 1.) who was a just and good man, who was killed in the temple a little before it was destroyed by the Romans. Archbishop Tillotson thinks that Christ both alludes to the history of the former *Zecharias* in *Chronicles*, and foretells the death of this latter in *Josephus*. Though the latter was not yet slain, yet, before this destruction comes, it would be true that they had slain him ; so that all shall be put together from first to last.

2. The effect of it ; *All these things shall come ; all the guilt of this blood, all the punishment of it, it shall all come upon this generation*. The misery and ruin that are coming upon them shall be so very great, that, though, considering the evil of their own sins, it was less than even those deserved ; yet, comparing it with other judgments, it will seem to be a general reckoning for all the wickedness of their ancestors, especially their persecutions, to all which God declared this ruin to have special reference and relation. The destruction shall be so dreadful, as if God had once for all arraigned them for all the righteous blood shed in the world. It shall come upon this generation ; which intimates, that it shall come quickly ; some here shall live to see it. Note, The sorer and nearer the punishment of sin is, the louder is the call to repentance and reformation.

IV. He laments the wickedness of Jerusalem, and justly upbraids them with the many kind offers he had made them, v. 37. See with what concern he speaks of that city : *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem !* The repetition is emphatical, and bespeaks abundance of commiseration. A day or two before, Christ had wept over Jerusalem, now he sighed and groaned over it. Jerusalem, *the vision of peace*, (so it signifies,) must now be the seat of war and confusion. Jerusalem, that had been *the joy of the whole earth*, must now be a hissing, and an astonishment, and a by word : Jerusalem, that has been a city compact together, shall now be shattered and ruined by its own intestine broils. Jerusalem, *the place that God has chosen to put his name there*, shall now be abandoned to the spoil and the robbers, Lam. 1. 1.—4.1.

But wherefore will the Lord do all this to Jerusalem ! Why ? *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned*, Lam. 1. 8.

1. She persecuted God's messengers ; *Thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee*. This sin is especially charged upon Jerusalem, because there the Sanhedrim, or great council, sat, who took cognisance of church-matters, and therefore a prophet could not perish but in Jerusalem, Luke 13. 33. It is true, they had not now a power to put any man to death, but they killed the prophets in popular tumults, mobbed them, as Stephen, and put the Roman powers on to kill them. At Jerusalem, where the gospel was first preached, it was first persecuted, (Acts 8. 1.) and that place was the head-quarters of the persecutors, thence warrants were issued out to other cities, and thither the saints were brought bound, Acts 9. 2. *Thou stonest them* : that was a capital punishment, in use only among the Jews. By the law, false prophets and seducers were to be stoned, (Deut. 13. 10.) under colour of which law, they put the true prophets to death. Note, It has often been the artifice of Satan, to turn that artillery against the church, which was originally planted in the defence of it. Brand the true prophets as seducers, and the true professors of religion as heretics and schismatics, and then it will be easy to persecute them. There was abundance of other wickedness in Jerusalem ; but this was the sin that made the loudest cry, and which God had an eye to more than any other, in bringing that ruin upon them, as 2 Kings 24. 4. 2 Chron. 36. 16. Observe, Christ speaks in the present tense ; *Thou killest, and stonest* ; for all they had done, and all they would do, was present to Christ's notice.

2. She refused and rejected Christ, and gospel-offers. The former was a sin *without remedy*, this against the remedy. Here is, (1.) The wonderful grace and favour of Jesus Christ toward them ; *How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings !* Thus kind and condescending are the offers of gospel-grace, even to Jerusalem's children, bad as she is, the inhabitants, the little ones not excepted.

[1.] The favour proposed, was the gathering of them. Christ's design is to gather poor souls, gather them in from their wanderings, gather them home to himself, as the Centre of unity ; for to him must the gathering of the people be. He would have taken the whole body of the Jewish nation into the church, and so gathered them all (as the Jews used to speak of proselytes) *under the wings of the Divine Majesty*. It is here illustrated by a humble similitude ; *as a hen clucks her chickens together*. Christ would have gathered them, *First*, With such a tenderness of affection as the hen does, which has, by instinct, a peculiar concern for her young ones. Christ's gathering of souls comes from his love, Jer. 31. 3. *Secondly*, for the same end. *The hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, for protection and safety, and for warmth and comfort ; poor souls have in Christ both refuge and refreshment. The chickens naturally run to the hen for shelter, when they are threatened by the birds of prey ; perhaps Christ refers to that promise, (Ps. 91. 4.) *He shall cover thee with his feathers*. There is healing under Christ's wings ; (Mal. 4. 2.) that is more than the hen has for her chickens.

[2.] The forwardness of Christ to confer this favour. His offers are, *First*, Very free ; *I would have done it*. Jesus Christ is truly willing to receive and save poor souls that come to him. He desires not their ruin, he delights in their repentance. *Secondly*, Very frequent ; *How often !* Christ often came up to Jerusalem, preached, and wrought miracles

there; and the meaning of all this, was, he would have gathered them. He keeps account how often his calls have been repeated. As often as we have heard the sound of the gospel, as often as we have felt the strivings of the Spirit, so often Christ would have gathered us.

[3.] Their wilful refusal of this grace and favour; *Ye would not.* How emphatically is their obstinacy opposed to Christ's mercy! I would, and *ye would not.* He was willing to save them, but they were not willing to be saved by him. Note, It is wholly owing to the wicked wills of sinners, that they are not gathered under the wings of the Lord Jesus. They did not like the terms upon which Christ proposed to gather them; they loved their sins, and yet trusted to their righteousness; they would not submit either to the grace of Christ or to his government, and so the bargain broke off.

V. He reads Jerusalem's doom; (v. 38, 39.) *Therefore behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* Both the city and the temple, God's house and their own, all shall be laid waste. But it is especially meant of the temple, which they boasted of, and trusted to; that holy mountain because of which they were so haughty. Note, They that will not be gathered by the love and grace of Christ, shall be consumed and scattered by his wrath; *I would, and ye would not.* *Israel would none of me, so I gave them up,* Ps. 81. 11, 12.

1. Their house shall be *deserted*; *It is left unto you.* Christ was now departing from the temple, and never came into it again, but by his word abandoned it to ruin. They doated on it, would have it to themselves; Christ must have no room or interest there. "Well," saith Christ, "it is left to you; take it, and make your best of it; I will never have any thing more to do with it." They had made it a *house of merchandise, and a den of thieves*, and so it is left to them. Not long after this, the voice was heard in the temple, "Let us depart hence." When Christ went, *Ichabod, the glory departed.* Their city also was left to them, destitute of God's presence and grace; he was no longer a *Wall of fire about them, nor the glory in the midst of them.*

2. It shall be *desolate*; *It is left unto you desolate*; it is left *barren—a wilderness.* (1.) It was immediately, when Christ left it, in the eyes of all that understood themselves, a very dismal melancholy place. Christ's departure makes the best furnished, best replenished, place a wilderness, though it be the temple, the chief place of concourse; for what comfort can there be where Christ is not? Though there may be a crowd of other contentments, yet if Christ's special spiritual presence be withdrawn, that soul, that place, is *become a wilderness, a land of darkness, as darkness itself.* This comes of men's rejecting Christ, and driving him away from them. (2.) It was, not long after, destroyed and ruined, and *not one stone left upon another.* The lot of Jerusalem's enemies will now become Jerusalem's lot, *to be made of a city a heap, of a defended city a ruin.* (Isa. 25. 2.) *a lofty city laid low, even to the ground,* Isa. 26. 5. The temple, that holy and beautiful house, became desolate. When God goes out, all enemies break in.

Lastly, Here is the final farewell that Christ took of them and their temple; *Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh.* This bespeaks,

1. His departure from them. The time was at hand, when he should leave the world, to go to his Father, and be seen no more. *After his resurrection, he was seen only by a few chosen witnesses,* and they saw him not long, but he soon removed to the invisible world, and there will be till the time of the *restitution of all things*, when his welcome at his first coming will be repeated with loud acclama-

tions. *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Christ will not be seen again till he come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him; (Rev. 1. 7.) and then, even they, who, when time was, rejected and pierced him, will be glad to come in among his adorers; then every knee shall bow to him, even those that had bowed to Baal; and even the workers of iniquity will then cry, *Lord, Lord,* and will own, when his wrath is kindled, that *blessed are all they that put their trust in him.* Would we have our lot in that day with those that say, *Blessed is he that cometh*; let us be with them now, with them that truly worship, and truly welcome, Jesus Christ.

2. Their continued blindness and obstinacy; *Ye shall not see me*, that is, not see me to be the Messiah, (for otherwise they did see him upon the cross,) not see the light of the truth concerning me, nor the things that belong to your peace, *all ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh.* They will never be convinced, till Christ's second coming convince them, when it will be too late to make an interest in him, and nothing will remain but a fearful looking for of judgment. Note, (1.) Wilful blindness is often punished with judicial blindness. If they will not see, they shall not see. With this word he concludes his public preaching. *After his resurrection*, which was the sign of the prophet Jonas, they should have no other sign given them, till they should see the sign of the Son of man, ch. 24. 30. (2.) When the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, he will convince all, and will force acknowledgments from the proudest of his enemies of his being the Messiah, and even they shall be found hars to him. They that would not now come at his call, shall then be forced to depart with his curse. The chief priests and scribes were displeased with the children for crying *hosanna* to Christ; but the day is coming, when proud persecutors would gladly be found in the condition of the meanest and poorest they now trample upon. They who now reproach and ridicule the hosannas of the saints, will be of another mind shortly; it were therefore better to be of that mind now. Some make this to refer to the conversion of the Jews to the faith of Christ; then they shall see him, and own him, and say, *Blessed is he that cometh*; but it seems rather to look further, for the complete manifestation of Christ, and conviction of sinners, are reserved to be the glory of the last day.

CHAP. XXIV.

Christ's preaching was mostly practical; but, in this chapter, we have a prophetic discourse, a prediction of things to come; such, however, as had a practical tendency, and was intended, not to gratify the curiosity of his disciples, but to guide their consciences and conversations, and it is therefore concluded with a practical application. The church has always had particular prophecies, beside general promises, both for direction and for encouragement to believers; but it is observable, Christ preached this prophetic sermon in the close of his ministry, as the Apocalypse is the last book of the New Testament, and the prophetic books of the Old Testament are placed last, to intimate to us, that we must be well grounded in plain truths and duties, and those must first be well digested, before we dive into those things that are dark and difficult; many run themselves into confusion by beginning their Bible at the wrong end. Now, in this chapter, we have, I. The occasion of this discourse, v. 1..3. II. The discourse itself, in which we have, 1. The prophecy of divers events, especially referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter ruin of the Jewish church and nation, which were now hastening on, and were completed about forty years after: the prefaces to that destruction, the concomitants and consequences of it, yet looking further, to Christ's coming at the end of time, and the consummation of all things, of which that was a type and figure, v. 4..31. 2. The practical application of this prophecy for the awakening and quickening of his disciples to prepare for these great and awful things, v. 32..51.

1. **A**ND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Here is,

1. Christ's quitting the temple, and his public work there. He had said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, *Your house is left unto you desolate*; and here he made his words good, *He went out, and departed from the temple*. The manner of expression is observable: he not only went out of the temple, but departed from it, took his final farewell of it; he departed from it, never to return to it any more; and then immediately follows a prediction of its ruin. Note, That house is left desolate indeed, which Christ leaves. *Woe unto them when I depart*, Hos. 9. 12. Jer. 6. 8. It was now time to groan out their *Ichabod*, *The glory is departed, their defence is departed*. Three days after this, the veil of the temple was rent; when Christ left it, all became *common and unclean*; but Christ departed not till they drove him away; did not reject them, till they first rejected him.

II. His private discourse with his disciples; he left the temple, but he did not leave the twelve, who were the seed of the gospel-church, which the casting off of the Jews was the enriching of. When he left the temple, his disciples left it too, and came to him. Note, It is good being where Christ is, and leaving that which he leaves. They came to him, to be instructed in private, when his public preaching was over; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He had spoken of the destruction of the Jewish church to the multitude in parables, which here, as usual, he explains to his disciples. Observe,

1. His disciples came to him, to shew him the buildings of the temple. It was a stately and beautiful structure, one of the wonders of the world; no cost was spared, no art left untried, to make it sumptuous. Though it came short of Solomon's temple, and its beginning was small, yet its latter end did greatly increase. It was richly furnished with gifts and offerings, to which there were continual additions made. They shewed Christ these things, and desired him to take notice of them, either,

(1.) As being greatly pleased with them themselves, and expecting he should be so too. They had lived mostly in Galilee, at a distance from the temple, had seldom seen it, and therefore were the more struck with admiration at it, and thought he should admire, as much as they did, *all this glory*; (Gen. 31. 1.) and they would have him divert himself (after his preaching, and from his sorrow which they saw him perhaps almost overwhelmed with) with looking about him. Note, Even good men are apt to be too much enamoured with outward pomp and gaiety, and to overvalue it, even in the things of God; whereas we should be as Christ was, dead to it, and look upon it with contempt. The temple was indeed glorious, but, [1.] Its glory was sullied and stained with the sin of the priests and people; that wicked doctrine of the Pharisees, which preferred the gold before the temple that sanctified it, was enough to deface the beauty of all the ornaments

of the temple. [2.] Its glory was eclipsed and outdone by the presence of Christ in it, who was *the Glory of this latter house*, (Hag. 2. 9.) so that the buildings had no glory, in comparison with that Glory which excelled.

Or, (2.) As grieving that this house should be left desolate: they shewed him the buildings, as if they would move him to reverse the sentence; "Lord, let not this holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, be made a desolation." They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they had so much admired, when the people were wicked, 2 Chron. 7. 21. *This house, which is high, sin will bring low*. Christ had lately looked upon the *precious souls, and wept for them*, Luke 19. 41. The disciples look upon the pompous buildings, and are ready to weep for them. In this, as in other things, *his thoughts are not like ours*. It was weakness, and meanness of spirit, in the disciples, to be so fond of fine buildings; it was a childish thing. *Animo magno nihil magnun—To a great mind nothing is great*. Seneca.

2. Christ, hereupon, foretells the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place, : 2. Note, A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory will help to take us off from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body will be shortly worms'-meat, and the most beautiful building a ruinous heap. And shall we then set our eyes upon that which so soon is not, and look upon that with so much admiration, which ere long we shall certainly look upon with so much contempt? *See ye not all these things?* They would have Christ look upon them, and be as much in love with them as they were; he would have them look upon them, and be as dead to them as he was. There is such a sight of these things as will do us good; so to see them as to see through them, and to see to the end of them.

Christ, instead of reversing the decree, ratifies it; *Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another*.

(1.) He speaks of it as a certain ruin; "*I say unto you*. I, that know what I say, and know how to make good what I say; take my word for it, it shall be so; *I, the Amen, the true Witness, say it to you*." All judgment being committed to the Son, the threatenings, as well as the promises, are all *yea, and amen, in him*, Heb. 6. 17, 18.

(2.) He speaks of it as an utter ruin. The temple shall not only be stripped, and plundered, and defaced, but utterly demolished and laid waste; *Not one stone shall be left upon another*. Notice is taken, in the building of the second temple, of the *laying of one stone upon another*; (Hag. 2. 15.) and here, in the ruin, of *not leaving one stone upon another*. History tells us, that this was fulfilled in the latter; for though Titus, when he took the city, did all he could to preserve the temple, yet he could not restrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly; and it was done to that degree, that Turnus Rufus ploughed up the ground on which it had stood: thus that scripture was fulfilled, (Mic. 3. 12.) *Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field*. And afterward, in Julian the Apostate's time, when the Jews were encouraged by him to rebuild their temple, in opposition to the Christian religion, what remained of the ruins was quite pulled down, to level the ground for a new foundation; but the attempt was defeated by the miraculous eruption of fire out of the ground, which destroyed the foundation they laid, and frightened away the builders. Now this prediction of the final and irreparable ruin of the temple, includes a prediction of the period of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.

3. The disciples, not disputing either the truth or

the equity of this sentence, nor doubting of the accomplishment of it, inquire more particularly of the time when it should come to pass, and the signs of its approach, &c. 3. Observe,

(1.) Where they made this inquiry; privately, *as he sat upon the mount of Olives*; probably, he was returning to Bethany, and there sat down by the way, to rest him; the mount of Olives directly faced the temple, and from thence he might have a full prospect of it at some distance; there he sat as a Judge upon the bench, the temple and city being before him as at the bar, and thus he passed sentence on them. We read (Ezek. 11. 23.) of the removing of the glory of the Lord from the temple to the mountain; so Christ, the great Shechinah, here removes to this mountain.

(2.) What the inquiry itself was; *When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Here are three questions.

[1.] Some think, these questions do all point at one and the same thing—the destruction of the temple, and the period of the Jewish church and nation, which Christ had himself spoken of at his coming, (*ch.* 16. 28.) and which would be the consummation of the age, (for so it may be read,) the finishing of that dispensation. Or, they thought the destruction of the temple must needs be the end of the world. If that house be laid waste, the world cannot stand; for the Rabbins used to say, that the house of the sanctuary was one of the seven things for the sake of which the world was made; and they think, if so, the world will not survive the temple.

[2.] Others think their question, *When shall these things be?* refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other two to the end of the world; or Christ's coming may refer to his setting up his gospel-kingdom, and the end of the world to the day of judgment. I rather incline to think that their question looked no further than the event Christ now foretold; but it appears, by other passages, that they had very confused thoughts of future events; so that perhaps it is not possible to put any certain construction upon this question of their's.

But Christ, in his answer, though he does not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples, (that must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit,) yet looks further than their question, and instructs his church, not only concerning the great events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming at the end of time, which here he insensibly slides into a discourse of, and of that, it is plain, he speaks in the next chapter, which is a continuation of this sermon.

4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. 9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one

another. 11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. 17. Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. 20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. 24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25. Behold, I have told you before. 26. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. 27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. 29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The disciples had asked concerning the times, *When these things should be?* Christ gives them no answer to that, after what number of days and years

his prediction should be accomplished, for *it is not for us to know the times*; (Acts 1. 7.) but they had asked, *What shall be the sign?* That question he answers fully, for we are concerned to *understand the signs of the times*, ch. 16. 3. Now the prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand—the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but as the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have an immediate reference to the affairs of the Jews and the revolutions of their state, under the figure of them, do certainly look further, to the gospel-church and the kingdom of the Messiah, and are so expounded in the New Testament; and such expressions are found in those predictions as are peculiar thereto, and not applicable otherwise; so this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgment; and, as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype; and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples, tends more to engage their caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen, than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. This is that good understanding of the times which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do: and so this prophecy is of standing lasting use to the church, and will be so to the end of time; for *the thing that has been, is that which shall be*, (Ecc. 1. 5, 6, 7, 9.) and the series, connexion, and presages, of events, are much the same still that they were then; so that upon the prophecy of this chapter, pointing at that event, moral prognostications may be made, and such constructions of the signs of the times, as the wise man's heart will know how to improve.

I. Christ here foretells the going forth of deceivers; he begins with a caution, *Take heed that no man deceive you*. They expected to be told when these things should be, to be let into that secret; but this caution is a check to their curiosity, "*What is that to you?*" Mind you your duty, follow me, and be not seduced from following me." Those that are most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them, are easiest imposed upon by seducers, 2 Thess. 2. 3. The disciples, when they heard that the Jews, their most inveterate enemies, should be destroyed, might be in danger of falling into security; "Nay," saith Christ, "you are more exposed other ways." Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.

Three times in this discourse he mentions the appearing of *false prophets*, which was, 1. A presage of Jerusalem's ruin. Justly were they who killed the true prophets, left to be insnared by false prophets; and they who crucified the true Messiah, left to be deceived and broken by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. The appearing of these was the occasion of dividing that people into parties and factions, which made their ruin the more easy and speedy; and the sin of the many, that were led aside by them, helped to fill the measure. 2. It was a trial to the disciples of Christ, and therefore agreeable to their state of probation, *that they which are perfect may be made manifest*.

Now concerning these deceivers, observe here,

(1.) The pretences they should come under. Satan acts most mischievously, when he appears as an angel of light; the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil.

[1.] There should appear *false prophets*, (v. 11, 24.) the deceivers would pretend to divine inspiration, and immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such there had been

formerly, (Jer. 23. 16. Ezek. 13. 6.) as was foretold, Deut. 13. 3. Some think, the seducers here pointed to were such as had been settled teachers in the church, and had gained reputation as such, but afterward betrayed the truth they had taught, and revolted to error; and from such the danger is the greater, because least suspected. One false traitor in the garrison may do more mischief than a thousand avowed enemies without.

[2.] There should appear *false Christs*, coming in *Christ's name*, (v. 5.) assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him, and saying, *I am Christ*, *pseudo-Christs*, v. 24. There was at that time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messias; they spoke of him, as *he that shall come*; but when he did come, the body of the nation rejected him; which those who were ambitious of making themselves a name, took advantage of, and set up for Christs. Josephus speaks of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Theudas, that was defeated by Cuspius Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dosetheus said, he was the Christ foretold by Moses, *Origen adversus Celsum*. See Acts 5. 36, 37.—21. 28. Simon Magus pretended to be *the great power of God*, Acts 8. 10. In after-ages there have been such pretenders; one about a hundred years after Christ, that called himself *Bar-cokobas*—*The son of a star*, but proved *Bar-cosba*—*The son of a lie*. About fifty years ago, Sabbati-Levi set up for a Messiah in the Turkish empire, and was greatly caressed by the Jews; but in a short time his folly was made manifest: see Sir Paul Rycaut's *History*. The popish religion doth, in effect, set up a false Christ; the Pope comes, in Christ's name, as his vicar, but invades and usurps all his offices, and so is a rival with him, and, as such, an enemy to him, a deceiver, and an antichrist.

[3.] These false Christs and false prophets would have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw people in to them, v. 23. Then when public troubles are great and threatening, and people will be catching at any thing that looks like deliverance, then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them; then they will say, *Lo, here is a Christ*, or there is one; but do not mind them: the true Christ did not strive, or cry; nor was it said of him, *Lo here!* or, *Lo there!* (Luke 17. 21.) therefore if any man say so concerning him, look upon it as a temptation. The hermits, who place religion in a monastical life, say, *He is in the desert*; the priests, who make the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, "*He is in the cupboards*—*in the cupboard, in the secret chambers*;" lo, he is in this shrine, in that image." Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and Christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die, with them; "*Lo, he is in this church, in that council*;" whereas Christ is All in all, not here or there, but meets his people "*in blessing in every place where he records his name*."

(2.) The proof they should offer for the making good of these pretences; *They shall shew great signs and wonders*, (v. 24.) not true miracles, those are a divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore, if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to that rule given of old, (Deut. 13. 1, 2, 3.) *If the sign or wonder come to pass, yet follow not him that would draw you to serve other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you*. But these were lying wonders wrought by Satan, (God permitting him,) who is the *prince of the power of the air*, 2 Thess. 2. 9. It is not said, *They shall work miracles*, but, *They shall shew great signs*; they are but a show; either they impose upon men's credulity by false narratives, or deceive their

senses by tricks of legerdemain, or arts of divination, as the magicians of Egypt by their enchantments.

(3.) The success they should have in these attempts.

[1.] *They shall deceive many*, (v. 5.) and again, v. 11. Note, The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls; few find the strait gate, but many are drawn into the broad way; many will be imposed upon by their signs and wonders, and many drawn in by the hopes of deliverance from their oppressions. Note, Neither miracles nor multitudes are certain signs of a true church; for *all the world wonders after the beast*, Rev. 13. 3.

[2.] *They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect*, v. 24. This bespeaks, *First*, The strength of the delusion; it is such as many shall be carried away by, (so strong shall the stream be,) even those that were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will be a protection. *Secondly*, The safety of the elect in the midst of this danger, which is taken for granted in that parenthesis, *If it were possible*, plainly implying that it is not possible, for they are kept by the power of God, that the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand. It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away, (Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.) but not for those that were elected. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not to be imagined, for whom he did predestinate, he called, justified, and glorified, Rom. 8. 30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him he will lose none, John 10. 28. Grotius will have this to be meant of the great difficulty of drawing the primitive Christians from their religion, and quotes it as used proverbially by Galen; when he would express a thing very difficult and morally impossible, he saith, "You may sooner draw away a Christian from Christ."

(4.) The repeated cautions which our Saviour gives to his disciples to stand upon their guard against them; therefore he gave them warning, that they might watch; (v. 25.) *Behold, I have told you before*. He that is told before where he will be assaulted, may save himself, as the king of Israel did, 2 Kings 6. 9, 10. Note, Christ's warnings are designed to engage our watchfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they shall be preserved by the use of appointed means, and a due regard to the cautions of the word; we are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

[1.] We must not believe those that say, *Lo, here is Christ*; or, *Lo, he is there*, v. 23. We believe that the true Christ is the right hand of God, and that his spiritual presence is where two or three are gathered together in his name; believe not those therefore who would draw you off from a Christ in heaven, by telling you he is any where on earth; or draw you off from the catholic church on earth, by telling you he is here, or he is there; believe it not. Note, There is not a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity. The simple believeth every word, and runs after every cry. *Μήνους ἀπιστίας—Beware of believing*.

[2.] We must not go forth after those that say, *He is in the desert*, or, *He is in the secret chambers*, v. 26. We must not hearken to every empiric and pretender, nor follow every one that puts up the finger to point us to a new Christ, and a new gospel; "Go not forth, for if you do, you are in danger of being taken by them; therefore keep out of harm's way, be not carried about with every wind, many

a man's vain curiosity to go forth hath led him into a fatal apostasy; your strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace."

II. He foretells wars and great commotions among the nations, v. 6, 7. When Christ was born, there was a universal peace in the empire, the temple of Janus was shut; but think not that Christ came to send, or continue, such a peace; (Luke 12. 51.) no, his city and his wall are to be built even in troublesome times, and even wars shall forward his work. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword did never depart from their house, the sword of the Lord was never quiet, because he had given it a charge against a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath, and by it brought ruin upon them.

Here is, 1. A prediction of the event of the day; You will now shortly hear of wars, and rumours of wars. When wars are, they will be heard; for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa. 9. 5. See how terrible it is, (Jer. 4. 10.) *Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of wars*! Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after new things, cannot but hear the rumours of war. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those that will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. God has a sword ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, his new covenant. *Nation shall rise up against nation*, that is, one part or province of the Jewish nation against another, one city against another; (2 Chron. 15. 5, 6.) and in the same province and city one party or faction shall rise up against another, so that they shall be devoured by, and dashed in pieces against, one another, Isa. 9. 19, 21.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; See that ye be not troubled. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yet, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid, no not of the evil tidings of wars, and rumours of wars; no not the noise of *Arm, arm*. *Be not troubled*; *μηδ' ἐκταράσθε—Be not put into confusion or commotion*; not put into throes, as a woman with child by a fright; See that ye be not—*ἐκταράσθε*. Note, There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart when there are wars abroad; and it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, for two reasons:

(1.) Because we are bid to expect this; the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted; and therefore all those things must come to pass; the world is gone out of God's mouth, and it shall be accomplished in its season. Note, The consideration of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing the thing that is appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is an interpretative quarrel with that appointment. Let us therefore acquiesce, because these things must come to pass; not only necessitate decreti—as the product of the divine counsel, but necessitate medi—as a means in order to a further end. The old house must be taken down, (though it cannot be done without noise, and dust, and danger,) ere the new fabric can be erected; the things that are shaken, (and ill shaken they were,) must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, Heb. 12. 27.

(2.) Because we are still to expect worse; *The end is not yet*; the end of time is not, and, while time lasts, we must expect trouble, and that the end of one affliction will be but the beginning of another; or, "The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments than one made use of to

bring down the Jewish power; more vials of wrath must yet be poured out; there is but one woe past, more woes are yet to come, more arrows are yet to be spent upon them out of God's quiver; therefore be not troubled, do not give way to fear and trouble, sink not under the present burthen, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you. Be not troubled to hear of wars and rumours of wars; for then what will become of you when the famines and pestilences come?" If it be to us a vexation but to *understand the report*, (Isa. 28. 19.) what will it be to feel the stroke when it *toucheth the bone and the flesh*? If running with the footmen weary us, how shall we contend with horses? And if we be frightened at a little brook in our way, *what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan*? Jer. 12. 5.

III. He foretells other judgments more immediately sent of God—*famines, pestilences, and earthquakes*. Famine is often the effect of war, and pestilence of famine. These were the three judgments which David was to choose one out of; and he was in a great strait, for he knew not which was the worst: but what dreadful desolations will they make, when they all pour in together upon a people? Beside war, (and that is enough,) there shall be,

1. *Famine*, signified by the *black horse* under the *third seal*, Rev. 6. 5, 6. We read of a famine in Judea, not long after Christ's time, which was very impoverishing; (Acts 11. 28, 29.) but the sorest famine was in Jerusalem during the siege. See Lam. 4. 9, 10.

2. *Pestilences*, signified by the *pale horse*, and *Death upon him*, and the *grave at his heels*, under the *fourth seal*, Rev. 6. 7, 8. This destroys without distinction, and in a little time lays heaps upon heaps.

3. *Earthquakes in divers places*, or from place to place, pursuing those that flee from them, as they did from the earthquake in the days of *Uzziah*, Zech. 14. 5. Great desolations have sometimes been made by earthquakes, of late and formerly; they have been the death of many, and the terror of more. In the apocalyptic visions, it is observable, that earthquakes bode good, and no evil, to the church, Rev. 6. 12. Compare v. 15.—11. 12, 13, 19.—16. 17—19. When God *shakes terribly the earth*, (Isa. 2. 21.) it is to *shake the wicked out of it*, (Job 38. 13.) and to introduce the *Desire of all nations*, Hag. 2. 6, 7. But here they are spoken of as dreadful judgments, and yet but the *beginning of sorrows*, *Divar*—of *travailing pains*, quick, violent, yet tedious too. Note, When God judgeth, he will overcome; *when he begins in wrath, he will make a full end*, 1 Sam. 3. 12. When we look forward to the eternity of misery that is before the obstinate refusers of Christ and his gospel, we may truly say, concerning the greatest temporal judgments, "They are but the beginning of sorrows: bad as things are with them, there is worse behind."

IV. He foretells the persecution of his own people and ministers, and a general apostacy and decay in religion, thereupon, v. 9, 10, 12, 13. Observe,

1. The *cross* itself foretold, v. 9. Note, Of all future events, we are as much concerned, though commonly as little desirous, to know of our own sufferings as of any thing else. Then, when famines and pestilences prevail, then they shall impute them to the Christians, and make that a pretence for persecuting them; *Christianos ad leones*—*Away with Christians to the lions*. Christ had told his disciples, when he first sent them out, what hard things they should suffer, but they had hitherto experienced little of it, and therefore he reminds them again, that the less they had suffered, the more there was behind to be filled up, Col. 1. 24.

(1.) They shall be *afflicted* with bonds and im-

prisonments, *cruel mockings and scourgings*, as blessed Paul; (2 Cor. 11. 23, 25.) not killed outright, but *killed all the day long, in deaths often*, killed so as to feel themselves die, *made a spectacle to the world*, 1 Cor. 4. 9, 11.

(2.) They shall be *killed*; so cruel are the church's enemies, that nothing less will satisfy them than the blood of the saints, which they thirst after, suck, and shed, like water.

(3.) They shall be *hated of all nations for Christ's name's sake*, as he had told them before, ch. 10. 22. The world was generally leavened with enmity and malignity to Christians; the Jews, though spiteful to the heathen, were never persecuted by them so as the Christians were; they were hated by the Jews that were dispersed among the nations, were the common butt of the world's malice. What shall we think of this world, when the best men had the worst usage in it? It is the cause that makes the martyr, and comforts him; it was for Christ's sake that they were thus hated; their professing and preaching his name incensed the nations so much against them; the devil, finding a fatal shock thereby given to his kingdom, and that his time was likely to be short, *came down, having great wrath*.

2. *The offence of the cross*, v. 10, 12. Satan thus carries on his interest by force of arms, though Christ, at length, will bring glory to himself out of the sufferings of his people and ministers. Three ill effects of persecution are here foretold:

(1.) The *apostacy* of some. When the profession of Christianity begins to cost men dear, *then shall many be offended*, shall first fall out with, and then fall off from, their profession; they will begin to pick quarrels with their religion, sit loose to it, grow weary of it, and at length revolt from it. Note, [1.] It is no new thing (though it is a strange thing) for those that have known the way of righteousness, to turn aside out of it. Paul often complains of deserters, who began well, but sometimes hindered them. They were with us, but went out from us, because never truly of us, 1 John 2. 19. We are told of it before. [2.] Suffering times are shaking times; and those fall in the storm, that stood in fair weather, like the *stony-ground hearers*, ch. 13. 21. Many will follow Christ in the sunshine, who will shift for themselves, and leave him to do so too, in the cloudy dark day. They like their religion while they can have it cheap, and sleep with it in a whole skin, but, if their profession cost them any thing, they quit it presently.

(2.) The *malignity* of others. When persecution is in fashion, envy, enmity, and malice, are strangely diffused into the minds of men by contagion: and charity, tenderness, and moderation, are looked upon as singularities, which make a man like a speckled bird. Then *they shall betray one another*, that is, "Those that have treacherously deserted their religion shall hate and betray those who adhere to it, for whom they have pretended friendship." Apostates have commonly been the most bitter and violent persecutors. Note, Persecuting times are discovering times. Wolves in sheep's clothing will then throw off their disguise, and appear wolves: they shall *betray one another, and hate one another*. The times must needs be perilous, when treachery and hatred, two of the worst things that can be, because directly contrary to two of the best, (truth and love,) shall have the ascendant. This seems to refer to the barbarous treatment which the several contending factions among the Jews gave to one another; and justly were they, who eat up God's people as they eat bread, left thus to bite and devour one another till they were *consumed one of another*; or it may refer to the mischiefs done to Christ's disciples by those that were nearest to them, as ch. 10. 21. *The brother shall deliver up the brother to death*.

(3.) The general *declining* and *cooling* of most, v. 12. In seducing times, when false prophets arise, in persecuting times, when the saints are hated, expect these two things:

[1.] The *abounding* of iniquity; though the world always lies in wickedness, yet there are some times in which it may be said, that *iniquity doth* in a special manner abound; as when it is more extensive than ordinary, as in the old world, when *all flesh had corrupted their way*; and when it is more *excessive* than ordinary, when *violence is risen up to a rod of wickedness*, (Ezek. 7. 11.) so that hell seems to be broke loose in blasphemies against God, and enmities to the saints.

[2.] The *abating* of love; this is the consequence of the former; *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*. Understand it in general of true serious godliness, which is all summed up in *love*; it is too common for professors of religion to grow cool in their profession, when the wicked are hot in their wickedness; as the church of Ephesus in bad times *left her first love*, Rev. 2. 2, 4. Or, it may be understood more particularly of brotherly love. When iniquity abounds, seducing iniquity, persecuting iniquity, this grace commonly waxes cold. Christians begin to be shy and suspicious one of another, affections are alienated, distances created, parties made, and so love comes to nothing. The devil is the accuser of the brethren, not only to their enemies, which makes persecuting iniquity abound, but one to another, which makes the love of many to wax cold.

This gives a melancholy prospect of the times, that there shall be such a great decay of love; but, *First*, It is of the love of *many* not of *all*. In the worst of times, God has his remnant that hold fast their integrity, and retain their zeal, as in Elijah's days, when he thought himself left alone. *Secondly*, This love is grown cold, but not dead; it abates, but is not quite cast off. There is life in the root, which will shew itself when the winter is past. The new nature may *wax cold*, but shall not *wax old*, for then it would decay and vanish away.

3. Comfort administered in reference to this offence of the cross, for the support of the Lord's people under it; (v. 13.) *He that endures to the end shall be saved*. (1.) It is comfortable to those who wish well to the cause of Christ in general, that, though many are offended, yet some shall endure to the end. When we see so many drawing back, we are ready to fear that the cause of Christ will sink for want of supporters, and his name be left and forgotten for want of some to make profession of it; but even at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace, Rom. 11. 5. It is spoken of the same time that this prophecy has reference to; a remnant who are not of them that *draw back unto perdition*, but believe and persevere to the *saving of the soul*; they endure to the end, to the end of their lives, to the end of their present state of probation, or to the end of these suffering trying times, to the last encounter, though they should be called to resist unto blood. (2.) It is comfortable to those who do thus endure to the end, and suffer for their constancy, that they shall be saved. Perseverance wins the crown through free grace, and shall wear it. *They shall be saved*; perhaps they may be delivered out of their troubles, and comfortably survive them in this world; but it is the eternal salvation that is here intended. They that endure to the end of their days, shall then receive the end of their faith and hope, *even the salvation of their souls*. 1 Pet. 1. 9. Rom. 2. 7. Rev. 3. 20. The crown of glory will make amends for all; and a believing regard to that will enable us to choose rather to die at a stake with the persecuted, than to live in a palace with the persecutors.

V. He foretells the preaching of the gospel in all

the world; (v. 14.) *This gospel shall be preached, and then shall the end come*. Observe here, 1. It is called *the gospel of the kingdom*, because it reveals the kingdom of grace, which leads to the kingdom of glory, sets up Christ's kingdom in this world; and secures our's in the other world. 2. This gospel, sooner or later, is to be preached in all the world, to every creature, and all nations are to be disciplined by it; for in it Christ is to be *Salvation to the ends of the earth*; for this end the gift of tongues was the *first-fruits of the Spirit*. 3. The gospel is preached *for a witness to all nations*, that is, a faithful declaration of the mind and will of God concerning the duty which God requires from man, and the recompence which man may expect from God. It is a *record*, (1 John 3. 11.) it is a *witness*, for those who believe, that they shall be saved, and against those who persist in unbelief, that they shall be damned. See Mark 16. 16. But how does this come in here?

(1.) It is intimated that the gospel should be, if not heard, yet at least heard of, throughout the then known world, before the destruction of Jerusalem; that the Old-Testament church should not be quite dissolved till the New-Testament was pretty well settled, had got considerable footing, and began to make some figure. Better is the face of a corrupt degenerate church than none at all. Within forty years after Christ's death, the *sound of the gospel was gone forth to the ends of the earth*, Rom. 10. 18. St. Paul *fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum*; and the other apostles were not idle. The persecuting of the saints at Jerusalem helped to disperse them, so that they *went every where, preaching the word*, Acts 8. 1, 4. And when the tidings of the Redeemer are sent over all parts of the world, then shall come the end of the Jewish state. Thus, that which they thought to prevent, by putting Christ to death, they thereby procured; all men *believed on him, and the Romans came, and took away their place and nation*, John 11. 48. Paul speaks of the gospel being *come to all the world, and preached to every creature*, Col. 1. 6, 23.

(2.) It is likewise intimated, that, even in times of temptation, trouble, and persecution, the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached and propagated, and shall force its way through the greatest opposition. Though the enemies of the church grow very *hot*, and many of her friends very *cool*, yet the gospel shall be preached. And even *then*, when many fall by the sword and by flame, and many do wickedly, and are corrupted by flatteries, yet then the people that do know their God shall be strengthened to do the greatest exploits of all, in instructing many; see Dan. 11. 32, 33. and see an instance, Phil. 1. 12—14.

(3.) That which seems chiefly intended here, is, that the end of the world shall be *then*, and not till then, when the gospel has done its work in the world. The gospel shall be preached, and that work carried on, when you are dead; so that all nations, first or last, shall have either the enjoyment, or the refusal, of the gospel; and *then cometh the end*, when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, *even the Father*; when the mystery of God shall be finished, the mystical body completed, and the nations either converted and saved, or convicted and silenced, by the gospel; *then shall the end come*, of which he had said before, (v. 6, 7.) *not yet*, not till those intermediate counsels be fulfilled. The world shall stand as long as any of God's chosen ones remain uncalled; but, when they are all gathered in, it will be set on fire immediately.

VI. He foretells more particularly the ruin that was coming upon the people of the Jews, their city, temple, and nation, v. 15, 16, 17. Here he comes more closely to answer their question concerning the deso-

Iation of the temple; and what he said here would be of use to his disciples, both for their conduct and for their comfort, in reference to that great event; he describes the several steps of that calamity, such as are usual in war.

1. The Romans *setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place*, v. 15. Now, (1.) Some understand by this an image, or statue, set up in the temple by some of the Roman governors, which was very offensive to the Jews, provoked them to rebel, and so brought the desolation upon them. The image of Jupiter Olympius, which Antiochus caused to be set upon the altar of God, is called *ββλιον μα ιερουσαλως*—*The abomination of desolation*, the very word here used by the historian, 1 Mac. 1. 54. Since the captivity in Babylon, nothing was, nor could be, more distasteful to the Jews than an image in the holy place, as appeared by the mighty opposition they made when Galigula offered to set up his statue there, which had been of fatal consequence, if it had not been prevented, and the matter accommodated, by the conduct of Petronius; but Herod did set up an eagle over the temple-gate; and, some say, the statue of Titus was set up in the temple. (2.) Others choose to expound it by the parallel place, (Luke 21. 20.) *when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies*. Jerusalem was the holy city, Canaan the holy land, the mount Moriah, which lay about Jerusalem, for its nearness to the temple, was, they thought, in a particular manner, holy ground; on the country lying round about Jerusalem the Roman army was encamped, that was the abomination that made desolate. The land of an enemy is said to be *the land which thou abhorrest*; (Isa. 7. 16.) so an enemy's army, to a weak but wilful people, may well be called *the abomination*. Now this is said to be *spoken of by Daniel the prophet*, who spake more plainly of the Messiah and his kingdom than any of the Old-Testament prophets did. He speaks of an abomination making desolate, which should be set up by Antiochus; (Dan. 11. 31.—12. 11.) but this, that our Saviour refers to, we have in the message that the angel brought him, (Dan. 9. 27.) of what should come at the end of seventy weeks, long after the former; *for the overspreading of abominations*, or, as the margin reads it, *with the abominable armies*, (which comes home to the prophecy here,) *he shall make it desolate*. Armies of idolaters may well be called *abominable armies*; and, some think, the tumults, insurrections, and abominable factions and seditions, in the city and temple, may at least be taken in as part of the abomination making desolate. Christ refers them to that prophecy of Daniel, that they might see how the ruin of their city and temple was spoken of in the Old Testament, which would both confirm his prediction, and take off the odium of it. They might likewise from thence gather the time of it—soon after the cutting off Messiah the Prince; the sin that procured it—their rejecting him, and the certainty of it—it is a desolation determined. As Christ by his precepts confirmed the law, so by his predictions he confirmed the prophecies of the Old Testament, and it will be of good use to compare both together.

Reference being here had to a prophecy, which is commonly dark and obscure, Christ inserts this memorandum, "*Whoso readeth, let him understand*"; whoso readeth the prophecy of Daniel, let him understand that it is to have its accomplishment now shortly in the desolations of Jerusalem." Note, Those that read the scriptures should labour to understand the scriptures, else their reading is to little purpose; we cannot use that which we do not understand. See John 5. 39. Acts 8. 30. The angel, that delivered this prophecy to Daniel, stirred him up to know and understand, Dan. 9. 23. And we must not despair of understanding even dark pro-

phesies; the great New-Testament prophecy is called *a revelation*, not a *secret*. Now, *things revealed belong to us*, and therefore must be humbly and diligently searched into. Or, *Let him understand*, not only the scriptures which speak of those things, but by the scriptures, let him *understand the times*, Chron. 12. 32. Let him observe and take notice so some read it; let him be assured, that, notwithstanding the vain hopes with which the deluded people feed themselves, the abominable armies will make desolate.

2. The means of preservation which thinking men should betake themselves to; (v. 16, 20.) *Then let them which are in Judea flee*. Then conclude there is no other way to help yourselves than by flying for the same. We may take this,

(1.) As a prediction of the ruin itself; that it should be irresistible; that it would be impossible for the stoutest hearts to make head against it, or contend with it, but they must have recourse to the last shift, getting out of the way. It speaks that which Jeremiah so much insisted upon, but in vain, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, that it would be to no purpose to resist, but that it was their wisdom to yield and capitulate; so Christ here, to shew how fruitless it would be to stand it out, bids every one make the best of his way.

(2.) We may take it as a direction to the followers of Christ what to do, not to *say*, *A confederacy* with those who fought and warred against the Romans for the preservation of their city and nation, only that they might consume the wealth of both upon their lusts; (for to this very affair the struggles of the Jews against the Roman power, some years before their final overthrow, the apostle refers, Jam. 4. 1—3.) but let them acquiesce in the decree that was gone forth, and with all speed quit the city and country, as they would quit a falling house or a sinking ship, as Lot quitted Sodom, and Israel the tents of Dathan and Abiram; he shews them,

[1.] Whither they must flee—from Judea to the mountains; not the mountains round about Jerusalem, but those in the remote corners of the land, which would be some shelter to them, not so much by their strength as by their secrecy. Israel is said to be *scattered upon the mountains*; (2 Chron. 18. 16.) and see Heb. 11. 38. It would be safer among the lion's dens, and the mountains of the leopards, than among the seditious Jews, or the enraged Romans. Note, In times of imminent peril and danger, it is not only lawful, but our duty, to seek our own preservation by all good and honest means; and if God opens a door of escape, we ought to make our escape, otherwise we do not trust God, but tempt him. There may be a time when even *those that are in Judea*, where God is known, and his name is great, must *flee to the mountains*; and while we only go out of the way of danger, not out of the way of duty, we may trust God to provide *a dwelling for his outcasts*, Isa. 16. 4, 5. In times of public calamity, when it is manifest that we cannot be serviceable at home, and may be safe abroad, Providence calls us to make our escape. He that flees may fight again.

[2.] What haste they must make, v. 17, 18. The life will be in danger, in imminent danger, the scourge will slay suddenly; and therefore *he that is on the house-top*, when the alarm comes, let him not *come down into the house*, to look after his effects there, but go the nearest way down, to make his escape; and so he that shall be in the field will find it his wisest course to run immediately, and not return to fetch his clothes or the wealth of his house, for two reasons, *First*, Because the time which would be taken up in packing up his things would delay his flight. Note, When death is at the door, delays are dangerous; it was the charge to Lot

Look not behind thee. Those that are convinced of the misery of a sinful state, and the ruin that attends them in that state, and, consequently, of the necessity of their fleeing to Christ, must take heed, lest, after all these convictions, they perish eternally by delays. *Secondly,* Because the carrying of his clothes, and his other moveables and valuables, with him, would but burthen him, and clog his flight. The Syrians, in their flight, *cast away their garments,* 2 Kings 7. 15. At such a time we must be thankful if our lives be given us for a prey, though we can save nothing, Jer. 45. 4, 5. *For the life is more than meat,* ch. 6. 25. Those who carried off least, were safest in their flight. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator—The penniless traveller can lose nothing by robbers.* It was to his own disciples that Christ recommended this forgetfulness of their house and clothes, who had a habitation in heaven, treasure there, and durable clothing, which the enemy could not plunder them of. *Omnia mea mecum porto—I have all my property with me,* said Bias the philosopher in his flight empty-handed. He that has grace in his heart, carries his all along with him, when stript of all.

Now, those to whom Christ said this immediately, did not live to see this dismal day, none of all the twelve but John only; they needed not to be hidden in the mountains, (Christ hid them in heaven,) but they left the direction to their successors in profession, who pursued it, and it was of use to them; for, when the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea saw the ruin coming on, they all retired to a town called *Pella*, on the other side Jordan, where they were safe; so that, of the many thousands that perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, there was not so much as one Christian. See *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 5.* Thus the prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself, Prov. 22. 3. Heb. 11. 7. This warning was not kept private. St. Matthew's gospel was published long before that destruction, so that others might have taken the advantage of it; but their perishing through their unbelief of this, was a figure of their eternal perishing through their unbelief of the warnings Christ gave concerning the wrath to come.

[3.] Whom it would go hard with at that time; (v. 19.) *Woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck.* To this same event that saying of Christ at his death refers, (Luke 23. 29.) They shall say, *Blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck.* Happy are they that have no children to see the murder of; but most unhappy they whose wombs are then bearing, their paps then giving suck; they of all others will be in the most melancholy circumstances. *First,* To them the famine would be most grievous, when they should see the tongue of the sucking child cleaving to the roof of his mouth for thirst, and themselves by the calamity made more cruel than the sea monsters, Lam. 4. 3, 4. *Secondly,* To them the sword would be most terrible, when it is in the hand of worse than brutal rage. It is a direful midwifery, when the women with child come to be ripped up by the enraged conqueror, (2 Kings 15. 16. Hos. 13. 16. Amos 1. 13.) or the children brought forth to the murderers, Hos. 9. 13. *Thirdly,* To them also the flight would be most afflictive; the women with child cannot make haste, or go far; the sucking child cannot be left behind, or, if it should, can a woman forget it, that she should not have compassion on it? If it be carried along, it retards the mother's flight, and so exposes her life, and is in danger of Mephibosheth's fate, who was lamed by a fall he got in his nurse's flight, 2 Sam. 4. 4.

[4.] What they should pray against at that time—that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath day, v. 20. Observe, in general, it becomes

Christ's disciples, in times of public trouble and calamity, to be much in prayer; that is a salve for every sore, never out of season, but in a special manner seasonable when we are distressed on every side. There is no remedy but you must flee, the decree is gone forth, so that God will not be entreated to take away his wrath, no not if *Noah, Daniel, and Job, stood before him.* Let it suffice thee, speak no more of that matter, but labour to make the best of that which is; and when you cannot in faith pray that you may not be forced to flee, yet pray that the circumstances of it may be graciously ordered, that though the cup may not pass from you, yet the extremity of the judgment may be prevented. Note, God has the disposing of the circumstances of events, which sometimes make a great alteration one way or other; and therefore in those our eyes must be ever toward him. Christ's bidding them pray for this favour, intimates his purpose of granting it to them; and in a general calamity we must not overlook a circumstantial kindness, but see and own wherein it might have been worse. Christ still bids his disciples to pray for themselves and their friends, that, whenever they were forced to flee, it might be in the most convenient time. Note, When trouble is in prospect, at a great distance, it is good to lay in a stock of prayers beforehand; they must pray, *First, That their flight,* if it were the will of God, *might not be in the winter,* when the days are short, the weather cold, the ways dirty, and therefore travelling very uncomfortable, especially for whole families. Paul hastens Timothy to come to him before winter, 2 Tim. 4. 21. Note, Though the ease of the body is not to be mainly consulted, it ought to be duly considered; though we must take what God sends, and when he sends it, yet we may pray against bodily inconveniences, and are encouraged to do so, in that *the Lord is for the body.* *Secondly,* That it might not be on the sabbath day; not on the Jewish sabbath, because travelling then would give offence to them who were angry with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on that day; not on the Christian sabbath, because being forced to travel on that day would be a grief to themselves. This intimates Christ's design, that a weekly sabbath should be observed in his church, after the preaching of the gospel to all the world. We read not of any of the ordinances of the Jewish church, which were purely ceremonial, that Christ ever expressed any care about, because they were all to vanish; but for the sabbath he often shewed a concern. It intimates likewise that the sabbath is ordinarily to be observed as a day of rest from travel and worldly labour; but that, according to his own explication of the fourth commandment, works of necessity were lawful on the sabbath day, as this of fleeing from an enemy to save our lives: had it not been lawful, he would have said, "Whatever becomes of you, do not flee on the sabbath day, but abide by it, though you die by it." For we must not commit the least sin, to escape the greatest trouble. But it intimates, likewise, that it is very uneasy and uncomfortable to a good man, to be taken off by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the sabbath day. We should pray that we may have quiet undisturbed sabbaths, and may have no other work than sabbath work to do on sabbath days; that we may attend upon the Lord without distraction. It was desirable, that, if they must flee, they might have the benefit and comfort of one sabbath more to help to bear their charges. To flee in the winter is uncomfortable to the body; but to flee on the sabbath day is so to the soul, and the more so when it remembers former sabbaths, as Ps. 42. 4.

3. The greatness of the troubles which should immediately ensue; (v. 21.) *Then shall be great tribu-*

lation: then when the measure of iniquity is full; then when the servants of God are sealed and secured, then come the troubles; nothing can be done against Sodom till Lot is entered into Zoar, and then look for fire and brimstone immediately. *There shall be great tribulation.* Great indeed, when within the city plague and famine raged, and (worse than either) faction and division, so that every man's sword was against his fellow; then, and there, it was, that the hands of the pitiful women flayed their own children. Without the city was the Roman army, ready to swallow them up, with a particular rage against them, not only as Jews, but as rebellious Jews. War was the only one of the three sore judgments that David excepted against; but that was it by which the Jews were ruined; and there were famine and pestilence in extremity, besides. Josephus's *History of the Wars of the Jews* has in it more tragical passages than perhaps any history whatsoever.

(1.) It was a desolation unparalleled, such as *was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be.* Many a city and kingdom has been made desolate, but never any with desolation like this. Let not daring sinners think that God has done his worst, he can heat the furnace seven times, and yet seven times hotter, and will, when he sees greater and still greater abominations. The Romans, when they destroyed Jerusalem, were degenerated from the honour and virtue of their ancestors, which had made even their victories easy to be vanquished. And the wilfulness and obstinacy of the Jews themselves contributed much to the increase of the tribulation. No wonder that the ruin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled ruin, when the sin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled sin—even their crucifying Christ. The nearer any people are to God in profession and privileges, the greater and heavier will his judgments be upon them, if they abuse those privileges, and be false to that profession. Amos 3. 2.

(2.) It was a desolation which, if it should continue long, would be intolerable, *so that no flesh should be saved, v. 22.* So triumphantly would death ride, in so many dismal shapes, and with such attendants, that there would be no escaping, but, first or last, all would be cut off. He that escaped one sword, would fall by another, Isa. 24. 17, 18. The computation which Josephus makes of those that were slain in several places amounts to above two millions, *No flesh shall be saved*; he doth not say, "*No soul shall be saved,*" for the destruction of the flesh may be for the saving of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus; but temporal lives will be sacrificed so profusely, that one would think, if it last a while, it would make a full end.

But here is one word of comfort in the midst of all this terror—that for the elects' sake these days shall be shortened, not made shorter than what God had determined, (for that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolate, Dan. 9. 27.) but shorter than what he might have decreed, if he had dealt with them according to their sins; shorter than what the enemy designed, who would have cut all off, if God, who made use of them to serve his own purpose, had not set bounds to their wrath; shorter than one, who judged by human probabilities, would have imagined. Note, [1.] In times of common calamity God manifests his favour to the elect remnant; his jewels which he will then make up; his peculiar treasure, which he will secure when the lumber is abandoned to the spoiler. [2.] The shortening of calamities is a kindness God often grants for the elects' sake. Instead of complaining that our afflictions last so long, if we consider our defects, we shall see reason to be thankful that they do not last always; when it is bad with us, it becomes us to say, "Blessed be God that it is no

worse; blessed be God that it is not hell, endless and remediless misery." It was a lamenting church that said, *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*; and it is for the sake of the elect, lest their spirit should fail before them, if he should contend for ever, and lest they should be tempted to put forth, if not their heart, yet their hand, to iniquity.

And now comes in the repeated caution, which was opened before, to take heed of being insnared by false Christs, and false prophets, (v. 23, &c.) who would promise them deliverance, as the lying prophets in Jeremiah's time, (Jer. 14. 13.—23. 16, 17.—27. 16.—28. 2.) but would delude them. Times of great trouble are times of great temptation, and therefore we have need to double our guard then. If they shall say, *Here is a Christ, or there is one*, that shall deliver us from the Romans, do not heed them, it is all but talk; such a deliverance is not to be expected, and therefore not such a deliverer.

VII. He foretells the sudden spreading of the gospel in the world about the time of these great events; (v. 27, 28.) *As the lightning comes out of the east, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.* It comes in here, as an antidote against the poison of those seducers that said, *Lo, here is Christ*, or, *Lo, he is there*; compare Luke 17. 23, 24. Hearken not to them, for the coming of the Son of man will be as the lightning.

1. It seems primarily to be meant of his coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in the world; where the gospel came in its light and power, there the Son of man came, and in a way quite contrary to the fashion of the seducers and false Christs, who came creeping in the desert, or the secret chambers; (2 Tim. 3. 6.) whereas Christ comes not with such a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The gospel would be remarkable for two things:

(1.) Its swift spreading; it shall fly as the lightning; so shall the gospel be preached and propagated. The gospel is light: (John 3. 19.) and it is not in this as the lightning, that it is a sudden flash, and away, for it is sun-light, and day-light; but it is as lightning in these respects:

[1.] It is light from heaven, as the lightning. It is God, and not man, that sends the lightnings, and summons them, that they may go, and say, *Here we are*, Job 38. 35. It is God that directs it: (Job 37. 3.) To man it is one of nature's miracles, above his power to effect, and one of nature's mysteries, above his skill to account for, but is from above; *his lightnings lightened the world*, Ps. 97. 4.

[2.] It is visible and conspicuous as the lightning. The seducers carried on their depths of Satan in the desert, and the secret chambers, shunning the light; heretics were called *lucifuge*—light-shunners. But truth seeks no corners, however it may sometimes be forced into them, as the woman in the wilderness, though clothed with the sun, Rev. 12. 1, 6. Christ preached his gospel openly, (John 18. 20.) and his apostles on the house-top, (ch. 10. 27.) not in a corner, Acts 26. 26. See Ps. 98. 2.

[3.] It was sudden and surprising to the world as the lightning; the Jews indeed had predictions of it, but to the Gentiles it was altogether unlooked for, and came upon them with an unaccountable energy or over they were aware. It was *light out of darkness*, ch. 4. 16. 2 Cor. 4. 6. We read of the discomfiting of armies by lightning, 2 Sam. 22. 15. Ps. 144. 6. The powers of darkness were dispersed and vanquished by the gospel-lightning.

[4.] It spreads far and wide, and that quickly and irresistibly, like the lightning, which comes, suppose out of the east, (Christ is said to ascend from the east, Rev. 7. 2. Isa. 41. 2.) and lighteneth to the west. The propagating of Christianity to so

many distant countries, of divers languages, by such unlikely instruments, destitute of all secular advantages, and in the face of so much opposition, and this in so short a time, was one of the greatest miracles that was ever wrought for the confirmation of it; here was Christ upon his white horse, denoting speed as well as strength, and *going on conquering and to conquer*, Rev. 6. 2. Gospel-light rose with the sun, and went with the same, so that the beams of it reached to the ends of the earth, Rom. 10. 18. Compare with Ps. 19. 3, 4. Though it was fought against, it could never be cooped up in a desert, or in a secret place, as the seducers were; but by this, according to Gamaliel's rule, proved itself to be of God, that it could not be overthrown, Acts 5. 38, 39. Christ speaks of *shining into the west*, because it spread most effectually into those countries which lay west from Jerusalem, as Mr. Herbert observes in his *Church-Militant*. How soon did the gospel-lightning reach this island of Great Britain! Tertullian, who wrote in the second century, takes notice of it, *Britannorum, inaccessa Romanis loca, Christe tamen subdita*—*The fastnesses of Britain, though inaccessible by the Romans, were occupied by Jesus Christ*. This was the Lord's doing.

(2.) Another thing remarkable concerning the gospel, was, its strange success in those places to which it was spread; it gathered in multitudes, not by external compulsion, but, as it were, by such a natural instinct and inclination, as brings the birds of prey to their prey; for *where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*, (v. 28.) where Christ is preached, souls will be gathered in to him. The *lifting up of Christ from the earth*, that is, the preaching of Christ crucified, which, one would think, should drive all men from him, will draw all men to him, (John 12. 32.) according to Jacob's prophecy, that to him shall the *gathering of the people be*, Gen. 49. 10. See Isa. 60. 8. The eagles will be where the carcase is, for it is food for them, it is a feast for them; *where the slain are, there is she*, Job 39. 30. Eagles are said to have a strange sagacity and quickness of scent to find out the prey, and then fly swiftly to it, Job 9. 26. So those, whose spirits God shall stir up, will be effectually drawn to Jesus Christ, to feed upon him; whither should the eagle go but to the prey? Whither should the soul go but to Jesus Christ, who has the words of eternal life? The eagles will distinguish what is proper for them from that which is not; so those who have spiritual senses exercised, will know the voice of the good Shepherd from that of a thief and a robber. Saints will be where the true Christ is, not the false Christs. This is applicable to the desires that are wrought in every gracious soul after Christ, and communion with him. Where he is in his ordinances, there will his servants choose to be. A living principle of grace is a kind of natural instinct in all the saints, drawing them to Christ, to live upon him.

2. Some understand these verses of the coming of the Son of man to *destroy Jerusalem*, Mal. 3. 1, 2, 5. So much was there of an extraordinary display of divine power and justice in that event, that it is called the *coming of Christ*.

Now here are two things intimated concerning it.

(1.) That to the most it would be as unexpected as a flash of lightning, which indeed gives warning of the clap of thunder which follows, but is itself surprising. The seducers say, *Lo, here is Christ* to deliver us; or there is one, a creature of their own fancies; but here they are aware the wrath of the Lamb, the true Christ, will arrest them, and they shall not escape.

(2.) That it might be as justly expected as that the eagle should fly to the carcasses; though they put far from them the evil day, yet the desolation

will come as certainly as the birds of prey to a dead carcase, that lies exposed in the open field. [1.] The Jews were so corrupt and degenerate, so vile and vicious, that they were become a carcase, obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God: they were also so factious and seditious, and every way so provoking to the Romans, that they had made themselves obnoxious to their resentments, and an inviting prey to them. [2.] The Romans were as an eagle, and the ensign of their armies was an eagle. The army of the Chaldeans is said to *fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat*, Hab. 1. 8. The ruin of the New-Testament Babylon is represented by a call to the birds of prey to come and feast upon the slain, Rev. 19. 17, 18. Notorious malefactors have their eyes eaten out by the *young eagles*, Prov. 30. 17. The Jews were hung up in chains, Jer. 7. 33.—16. 4. [3.] The Jews can no more preserve themselves from the Romans than the carcase can secure itself from the eagles. [4.] The destruction shall find out the Jews, wherever they are, as the eagle scents the prey. Note, When a people do by their sin make themselves carcasses, putrid and loathsome, nothing can be expected but that God should send eagles among them, to devour and destroy them.

3. It is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, and *our gathering together unto him*, 2 Thess. 2. 1. Now see here,

(1.) How he shall come; *as the lightning*. The time was now at hand, when he should *depart out of the world, to go to the Father*. Therefore those that inquire after Christ must not go into the desert or the secret places, nor listen to every one that will put up the finger to invite them to a sight of Christ; but let them look upward, for the heavens must contain him, and thence *we look for the Saviour*; (Phil. 3. 20.) he shall come in the clouds, as the lightning doth, and *every eye shall see him*, as they say it is natural for all living creatures to turn their faces toward the lightning, Rev. 1. 7. Christ will appear to all the world, from one end of heaven to the other; nor shall any thing be hid from the light and heat of that day.

(2.) How the saints shall be gathered to him; as the eagles are to the carcase by natural instinct, and with the greatest swiftness and alacrity imaginable. Saints, when they shall be fetched to glory, will be carried as on eagles' wings, (Exod. 19. 4.) as on angels' wings. *They shall mount up with wings, like eagles*, and, like them, renew their youth.

VIII. He foretells his second coming at the *end of time*, v. 20, 30, 31. *The sun shall be darkened, &c.*

1. Some think this is to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, denotes the eclipse of the glory of that state, its convulsions, and the general confusion that attends that desolation. Great slaughter and devastation are in the Old Testament thus set forth; (as Isa. 13. 10.—34. 4. Ezek. 32. 7. Joel 2. 31.) or by the sun, moon, and stars, may be meant the temple, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, which should all come to ruin. The *sign of the Son of man*, (v. 30.) means a signal appearance of the power and justice of the Lord Jesus in it, avenging his own blood on them that imprecated the guilt of it upon them and their children; and the *gathering of the elect*, (v. 31.) signifies the delivering of a remnant from this sin and ruin.

2. It seems rather to refer to Christ's second coming. The destruction of the particular enemies of the church was typical of the complete request of them all; and therefore what will be done really, at the great day, may be applied metaphorically to those destructions; but still we must attend to the

principal scope of them; and, while we are all agreed to expect Christ's second coming, what need is there to put such strained constructions, as some do, upon these verses, which speak of it so clearly, and so agreeably to other scriptures, especially when Christ is here answering an inquiry concerning his coming at the end of the world, which Christ was never shy of speaking of to his disciples?

The only objection against this, is, that it is said to be *immediately after the tribulation of those days*; but, as to that, (1.) It is usual, in the prophetic style, to speak of things great and certain as near and just at hand, only to express the greatness and certainty of them. Enoch spake of Christ's second coming as within ken, *Behold, the Lord cometh*, Jude 14. (2.) *A thousand years are*, in God's sight *but as one day*, 2 Pet. 3. 8. It is there urged, with reference to this very thing, and so it might be said to be immediately after. The tribulation of those days includes not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but all the other tribulations which the church must pass through; not only its share in the calamities of the nations, but the tribulations peculiar to itself; while the nations are torn with wars, and the church with schisms, delusions, and persecutions, we cannot say that the tribulation of those days is over; the whole state of the church on earth is militant, we must count upon that; but when the church's tribulation is over, her warfare accomplished, and what is behind of the sufferings of Christ filled up, then look for the end.

Now, concerning Christ's second coming, it is here foretold,

[1.] That there shall be then a great and amazing change of the creatures, and particularly the heavenly bodies; (v. 29.) *The sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light*. The moon shines with a borrowed light, and therefore if the sun, from whom she borrows her light, is turned into darkness, she must fail of course, and become bankrupt. *The stars shall fall*; they shall lose their light, and disappear, and be as if they were fallen; and *the powers of heaven shall be shaken*. This intimates,

First, That there shall be a great change, in order to the making of all things new. Then shall be the *restitution of all things*, when the heavens shall not be cast away as a rag, but *changed as a vesture*, to be worn in a better fashion, Ps. 102. 26. They shall *pass away with a great noise*, that there may be *new heavens*, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 13.

Secondly, It shall be a visible change, and such as all the world must take notice of; for such the darkening of the sun and moon cannot but be: and it would be an amazing change; for the heavenly bodies are not so liable to alteration as the creatures of this lower world are. The days of heaven, and the continuance of the sun and moon, are used to express that which is lasting and unchangeable; (as Ps. 89. 29, 36, 37.) yet they shall thus be shaken.

Thirdly, It shall be a universal change. If the sun be turned into darkness, and the powers of heaven be shaken, the earth cannot but be turned into a dungeon, and its foundation made to tremble. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken*. When the stars of heaven drop, no marvel if the *everlasting mountains melt*, and the *perpetual hills bow*. Nature shall sustain a general shock and convulsion, which yet shall be no hinderance to the joy and rejoicing of heaven and earth *before the Lord, when he cometh to judge the world*; (Ps. 96. 11, 13.) they shall, as it were, *glory in the tribulation*.

Fourthly, The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, which were made to rule over the day, and over the night, (which is the first dominion we find of any creature, Gen. 1. 16, 18.) signifies the *putting down of all rule, authority, and power*, (even

that which seems of the greatest antiquity and usefulness,) *that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the Father*, and he may be *All in all*, 1 Cor. 15. 24, 28. The sun was darkened at the death of Christ, for then was, in one sense, *the judgment of this world*, (John 12. 31.) an indication what would be at the general judgment.

Fifthly, The glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus, who will then shew himself as the *Brightness of his Father's glory*, and the *express Image of his person*, will darken the sun and moon, as a candle is darkened in the beams of the noon-day sun; they will have no glory, *because of the Glory that excelleth*, 2 Cor. 3. 10. *Then the sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded*, when God shall appear, Isa. 24. 23.

Sixthly, The sun and moon shall be then darkened, because there will be no more occasion for them. To sinners that choose their portion in this life, all comfort will be eternally denied; as they shall not have a drop of water, so not a ray of light. Now God causeth his Son to rise on the earth, but then *Interdico tibi sole et luna—I forbid thee the light of the sun and the moon*. Darkness must be their portion. To the saints that had their treasure above, such light of joy and comfort will be given as shall supersede that of the sun and moon, and render it useless. What need is there of vessels of light, when we come to the *Fountain and Father of light*? See Isa. 60. 19. Rev. 22. 5.

[2.] That then shall appear *the sign of the Son of man in heaven*, (v. 30.) the Son of man himself, as it follows here, *They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds*. At his first coming, he was *Set for a Sign that should be spoken against*; (Luke 2. 34.) but, at his second coming, a Sign that should be admired. Ezekiel was a *son of man*, set for a sign, Ezek. 12. 6. Some make this a prediction of the harbingers and forerunners of his coming, giving notice of his approach; *a light shining before him, and the fire devouring*, (Ps. 50. 3. 1 Kings 19. 11, 12.) *the beams coming out of his hand, where had long been the hiding of his power*, Hab. 3. 4. It is a groundless conceit of some of the ancients, that this sign of the Son of man will be the sign of the cross displayed as a banner. It will certainly be such a clear convincing sign as will dash infidelity quite out of countenance, and fill their faces with shame, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming*?

[3.] That then *all the tribes of the earth shall mourn*, v. 30. See Rev. 1. 7. *All the kindreds of the earth shall then wail because of him*; some of all the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall mourn; for the greater part will tremble at his approach, while the chosen remnant, one of a family and two of a tribe, shall lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, and their Redeemer. Note, Sooner or later, all sinners will be mourners; penitent sinners look to Christ, and mourn after a godly sort; and they who sow in those tears, shall shortly reap in joy; impenitent sinners shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and, though they laugh now, shall mourn and weep, after a devilish sort, in endless horror and despair.

[4.] That then they shall see the *Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*. Note, *First*, The judgment of the great day will be committed to the Son of man, both in pursuance, and in recompence, of his great undertaking for us as Mediator, John 5. 22, 27. *Secondly*, The Son of man will at that day come in the clouds of heaven. Much of the sensible intercourse between heaven and earth is by the clouds; they are betwixt them, as it were, the *medium participationis*—the medium of participation, drawn by heaven from the earth, distilled by heaven upon the

earth. Christ went to heaven in a cloud, and *will in like manner come again*, Acts 1. 9, 11. *Behold, he cometh in the clouds*, Rev. 1. 7. A cloud will be the Judge's chariot, (Ps. 104. 3.) his robe, (Rev. 10. 1.) his pavilion, (Ps. 18. 11.) his throne, (Rev. 14. 14.) When the world was destroyed by water, the judgment came in the clouds of heaven, for the windows of heaven were opened; so shall it be when it shall be destroyed by fire. Christ went before Israel in a cloud, which had a bright side and a dark side; so will the cloud have in which Christ will come at the great day, it will bring forth comfort and terror. *Thirdly*, He will come with *power and great glory*: his first coming was in weakness and great meanness; (2 Cor. 13. 4.) but his second coming will be with power and glory, agreeable both to the dignity of his person and to the purposes of his coming. *Fourthly*, He will be seen with bodily eyes in his coming: *therefore* the Son of man will be the Judge, that he may be seen, that sinners thereby may be no more confounded, who shall see him as Balaam did, *but not nigh*, (Numb. 24. 17.) see him, but not as their's. It added to the torment of that damned sinner, that *he saw Abraham afar off*. "Is this he whom we have slighted, and rejected, and rebelled against; whom we have crucified to ourselves afresh; who might have been our Saviour, but is our Judge, and will be our enemy for ever?" *The Desire of all nations* will then be their dread.

[5.] That he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, v. 31. Note, *First*, The angels shall be attendants upon Christ at his second coming; they are called *his* angels, which proves him to be God and Lord of the angels; they shall be obliged to wait upon him. *Secondly*, These attendants shall be employed by him as officers of the court in the judgment of that day; they are now ministering spirits sent forth by him, (Heb. 1. 14.) and will be so then. *Thirdly*, Their ministrations will be ushered in with a great sound of a trumpet, to awaken and alarm a sleeping world. This trumpet is spoken of, 1 Cor. 15. 52. and 1 Thess. 4. 16. At the giving of the law on mount Sinai, the sound of the trumpet was remarkably terrible; (Exod. 19. 13, 16.) but much more will it be so in the great day. By the law, trumpets were to be sounded for the calling of assemblies, (Numb. 10. 2.) in praising God, (Ps. 81. 3.) in offering sacrifices, (Numb. 10. 10.) and in proclaiming the year of jubilee, (Lev. 25. 9.) Very fitly, therefore, shall there be the sound of a trumpet at the last day, when the general assembly shall be called, when the praises of God shall be gloriously celebrated, when sinners shall fall as sacrifices to divine justice, and when the saints shall enter upon their eternal jubilee.

[6.] That they shall gather together his elect from the four winds. At the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be a general meeting of all the saints. *First*, The elect only will be gathered, the chosen remnant, who are but few in comparison with the many that are only called. This is the foundation of the saints' eternal happiness, that they are God's elect. The gifts of love to eternity follow the thoughts of love from eternity; and *The Lord knows them that are his*. *Secondly*, The angels shall be employed to bring them together, as Christ's servants, and as the saints' friends; we have the commission given them, Ps. 50. 5. *Gather my saints together unto me*; nay, it will be said to them, *Habetis fratres—These are your brethren*; for the elect will then be equal to the angels, Luke 20. 36. *Thirdly*, They shall be gathered from one end of heaven to the other; the elect of God are scattered abroad, (John 11. 52.) there are some in all places, in all nations; (Rev. 7. 9.) but when that great gathering day comes,

there shall not one of them be missing; distance of place shall keep none out of heaven, if distance of affection do not. *Undique ad celos tantundem est via—Heaven is equally accessible from every place*. See ch. 8. 11. Isa. 43. 6.—49. 12.

32. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. 33. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors. 34. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. 36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43. But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. 45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 47. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; 49. And shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, 50. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, 51. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We have here the practical application of the foregoing prediction; in general, we must expect and prepare for the events here foretold.

I. We must expect them: "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree, v. 32, 33. Now learn what use to make of the things you have heard; so observe and understand the signs of the times, and compare them with the predictions of the word, as from thence to

foresee what is at the door, that you may provide accordingly." The parable of the fig-tree is no more than this, that its budding and blossoming are a presage of summer; for as the *stork* in the heaven, so the trees of the field, *know their appointed time*. The beginning of the working of second causes assures us of the progress and perfection of it. Thus, when God begins to fulfil prophecies, he will make an end. There is a certain series in the works of providence, as there is in the works of nature. The signs of the times are compared with the prognostics of the face of the sky, (ch. 16. 3.) so here with those of the face of the earth; when that is renewed, we foresee that summer is coming, not immediately, but at some distance; after the branch grows tender, we expect the March winds, and the April showers, before the summer comes; however, we are sure it is coming; "so likewise ye, when the gospel-day shall dawn, count upon it, that through this variety of events, which I have told you of, the perfect day will come. *The things revealed must shortly come to pass*; (Rev. 1. 1.) they must come in their own order, in the order appointed for them. *Know that it is near.*" He does not here say what, but it is that which the hearts of his disciples are upon, and which they are inquisitive after, and long for; *the kingdom of God is near*, so it is expressed in the parallel place, Luke 21. 31. Note, When the trees of righteousness begin to bud and blossom, when God's people promise faithfulness, it is a happy presage of good times. In them God begins his work, first prepares their heart, and then he will go on with it; for, *as for God, his work is perfect*; and he will revive it in the midst of their years.

Now, touching the events foretold here, which we are to expect,

1. Christ here assures us of the certainty of them; (v. 35.) *Heaven and earth shall pass away*; they continue this day indeed, according to God's ordinance, but they shall not continue for ever; (Ps. 102. 25, 26. 2 Pet. 3. 10.) *but my words shall not pass away*. Note, The word of Christ is more sure and lasting than heaven and earth. *Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it?* We may build with more assurance upon the word of Christ than we can upon the pillars of heaven, or the strong foundations of the earth; for, when they shall be made to tremble and totter, and shall be no more, the word of Christ shall remain, and be in full force, power, and virtue. See 1 Pet. 1. 24, 25. *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than the word of Christ*; so it is expressed, Luke 16. 17. Compare Isa. 54. 10. The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them, but do not think that therefore the word of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very pure, and therefore very sure.

2. He here instructs us as to the time of them, v. 34, 36. As to this, it is well observed by the learned Grotius, that there is a manifest distinction made between the *παύται*, (v. 34.) and the *ἐσθλὴν*, (v. 36.) *these things, and that day and hour*; which will help to clear this prophecy.

(1.) As to *these things*—the wars, seductions, and persecutions, here foretold, and especially the ruin of the Jewish nation; "*This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled*"; (v. 34.) there are those now alive that shall see Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish church brought to an end." Because it might seem strange, he backs it with a solemn asseveration; "*Verily, I say unto you*. You may take my word for it, these things are at the

door." Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them to prepare for it. Note, There may be greater trials and troubles yet before us, in our own day, than we are aware of. They that are old, know not what sons of Anak may be reserved for their last encounters.

(2.) But as to *that day and hour* which will put a period to time, *that knows no man*, v. 36. Therefore take heed of confounding these two, as they did, who, from the words of Christ, and the apostles' letters, inferred, that *the day of Christ was at hand*, 2 Thess. 2. 2. No, it was not; *this generation*, and many another, *shall pass*, before *that day and hour* come. Note, [1.] There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called *the day of the Lord*, because so unalterably fixed. None of God's judgments are adjourned *sine die*—without the appointment of a certain day. [2.] That day and hour are a great secret.

Prudens futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocte premit Deus.

But Heav'n has wisely hid from human sight
The dark decrees of future fate,
And sown their seeds in depth of night.—Hon.

No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any divine discovery. We all know that there shall be such a day; but none knows when it shall be, no, not the angels; though their capacities for knowledge are great, and their opportunities of knowing this advantageous, (they dwell at the fountain-head of light,) and though they are to be employed in the solemnity of that day, yet they are not told when it shall be: none knows, but my Father only. This is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming is, to those who are watchful, a *savour of life unto life*, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is a *savour of death unto death*, and makes them more careless.

II. To this end we must expect these events—that we may prepare for them; and here we have a caution against security and sensuality, which will make it a dismal day indeed to us, v. 37—41. In these verses we have such an idea given us of the judgment day, as may serve to startle and awaken us, that we may not sleep, as others do.

It will be a surprising day, and a separating day.

1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge was to the old world, v. 37—39. That which he here intends to describe, is, the posture of the world at the coming of the Son of man; besides his first coming to save, he has other comings, to judge. He saith, (John 9. 39.) *For judgment I am come*; and for judgment he will come; for all judgment is committed to him, both that of the word, and that of the sword.

Now this here is applicable,

(1.) To *temporal judgments*, particularly that which was now hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews; though they had fair warning given them of it, and there were many prodigies that were presages of it, yet it found them secure, crying, *Peace and safety*, 1 Thess. 5. 3. The siege was laid to Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, when they were met at the passover in the midst of their mirth: like the roen of Laish, they dwelt careless when the ruin arrested them, Judg. 18. 7, 27. The destruction of Babylon, both that in the Old Testament, and that in the New, comes, when she saith, *I shall be a lady for ever*, Isa. 47. 7—9. Rev. 18. 7. Therefore the plagues come in a moment, in one day. Note, Men's unbelief shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

(2.) To the eternal judgment; so the judgment of

the great day is called, Heb. 6. 2. Though notice has been given of it from Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be unlooked for by the most of men; the latter days, which are nearest to that day, will produce scoffers, that say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. 3. 3, 4. Luke 18. 8. Thus it will be when the world that now is shall be destroyed by fire; for thus it was when the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, 2 Pet. 3. 6, 7. Now Christ here shews what were the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came.

[1.] They were sensual and worldly; *they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage.* It is not said, They were killing and stealing, and whoring and swearing; (these were indeed the horrid crimes of some of the worst of them; *the earth was full of violence*;) but they were all of them, except Noah, over head and ears in the world, and regardless of the word of God, and this ruined them. Note, Universal neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to any people than particular instances here and there of daring irreligion. *Eating and drinking* are necessary to the preservation of man's life; *marrying, and giving in marriage*, are necessary to the preservation of mankind; but, *Licetis perimus omnes—These lawful things undo us*, unlawfully managed. First, They were unreasonable in it, inordinate and entire in the pursuit of the delights of sense, and the gains of the world; they were wholly taken up with these things, *ἔσθαι καὶ πίνειν—they were eating; they were in these things* as in their element, as if they had their being for no other end than *to eat and drink*, Isa. 56. 12. Secondly, They were unreasonable in it; they were entire and intent upon the world and the flesh, when the destruction was at the door, which they had had such fair warning of. They were eating and drinking, when they should have been repenting and praying; when God, by the ministry of Noah, called to *weeping and mourning, then joy and gladness*. This was to them, as it was to Israel afterwards, the unpardonable sin, (Isa. 22. 12, 14.) especially, because it was in defiance of those warnings, by which they should have been awakened. *“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; if it must be a short life, let it be a merry one.”* The apostle James speaks of this as the general practice of the wealthy Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem; when they should have been *weeping for the miseries that were coming upon them, they were living in pleasure, and nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter*, Jam. 5. 1, 5.

[2.] They were secure and careless; *they knew not, until the flood came*, v. 39. *Knew not!* Surely, they could not but know. Did not God, by Noah, give them fair warning of it? Did he not call them to repentance, while his long-suffering waited? 1 Pet. 3. 19, 20. But they knew not, that is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not know. Note, What we know of the things that be *long to our everlasting peace*, if we do not mix faith with it, and improve it, is all one as if we did not know it at all. Their *not knowing* is joined with their *eating, and drinking, and marrying*; for, First, Therefore they were sensual, because they were secure. Note, The reason why people are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures, of this world, is, because they do not know, and believe, and consider, the eternity which they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright, that all these things might shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do. Secondly, Therefore they were secure, because they were sensual; therefore they knew not that the flood was coming, because they were eating and drinking; were so taken up with things seen and present, that

they had neither time nor heart to mind the things not seen as yet, which they were warned of. Note, As security bolsters men up in their brutal sensuality, so sensuality rocks them asleep in their carnal security. *They knew not until the flood came.* 1. The flood did come, though they would not foresee it. Note, Those that will not know by faith, shall be made to know by feeling, *the wrath of God revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness.* The evil day is never the further off for men's putting it far off from them. 2. They did not know it till it was too late to prevent it, as they might have done, if they had known it in time, which made it so much the more grievous. Judgments are most terrible and amazing to the secure, and those that have made a jest of them.

The application of this, concerning the old world, we have in these words; *So shall the coming of the Son of man be*; that is, (1.) In such a posture shall he find people, eating and drinking, and not expecting him. Note, Security and sensuality are likely to be the epidemical diseases of the latter days. *All slumber and sleep, and at midnight the bridegroom comes.* All are on their watch, and at their ease. (2.) With such a power, and for such a purpose, will he come upon them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably, so shall secure sinners, that mocked at Christ and his coming, be taken away by *the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes*; which will be like the coming of the deluge, a destruction which there is no fleeing from.

2. It will be a separating day; (v. 40, 41.) *Then shall two be in the field.* Two ways this may be applied:

(1.) We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; *some believed the things which were spoken*, and were taken to Christ; *others believed not*, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, *grinding in the same mill*, those of the same family, nay, these that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ came to send. Luke 12. 49, 51. This renders free grace the more obliging, that it is distinguishing; *to us, and not to the world*, (John 14. 22.) nay, to us, and not to those in the same field, the same mill, the same house.

When ruin came upon Jerusalem, a distinction was made by Divine Providence, according to that which had been before made by divine grace; for all the Christians among them were saved from perishing in that calamity, by the special care of Heaven. If two were at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus *the meek of the earth are hid in the day of the Lord's anger*, (Zeph. 2. 3.) either in heaven, or under heaven. Note, Distinguishing preservations, in times of general destruction, are special tokens of God's favour, and ought to be acknowledged. If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and on our left, are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, *It is of the Lord's mercies*, and it is a great mercy.

(2.) We may apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made on that day. He had said before, (v. 31.) that the

elect will be *gathered together*. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashes mixed, yet shall arise, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left to *shame and everlasting contempt*, Dan. 12. 2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, *in the field, at the mill*; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy, prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath, prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken to *meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them*; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners—that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people. [1.] Are they mean and despised in the world, as the man-servant in the field, or the maid at the mill? (Exod. 11. 5.) Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are *heirs of the kingdom*. [2.] Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places, where one would not expect to find the heirs of glory, *in the field, at the mill*? Yet the angels will find them there, (hidden, as Saul among the stuff, when they are to be enthroned,) and fetch them thence; and well may they be said to be *changed*, for a very great change it will be, to go to heaven from ploughing and grinding. [3.] Are they weak, and unable of themselves to move heavenward? They shall be taken, or *laid hold on*, as Lot was taken out of Sodom, by a gracious violence, Gen. 19. 16. Those whom Christ had once apprehended and laid hold on, he will never lose his hold of. [4.] Are they intermixed with others, linked with them in the same habitations, societies, employments? Let not that discourage any true Christian; God knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and dross in the same lump, the wheat and the chaff in the same floor.

III. Here is a general exhortation to us, to *watch and be ready* against that day comes, enforced by divers weighty considerations, v. 42, &c. Observe,

1. The duty required; *Watch, and be ready*, v. 42, 44.

(1.) *Watch therefore*, v. 42. Note, It is the great duty and interest of all the disciples of Christ, to watch, to be awake, and keep awake, that they may mind their business. As a sinful state and way is compared to *sleep*, senseless and inactive, (1 Thess. 5. 4.) so a gracious state and way is compared to *watching* and *waking*. We must watch for our Lord's coming to us, in particular, at our death, *after which is the judgment*, that is, the *great day* with us, the end of our time; and his coming at the end of all time to judge the world, the *great day* with all mankind. To watch, implies not only to believe that our Lord will come, but to desire that he would come, to be often thinking of his coming, and always looking for it, as sure and near, and the time of it uncertain. To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we would be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in. To watch, is to be aware of the first notices of his approach, that we may immediately attend his motions, and address ourselves to the duty of meeting him. Watching is supposed to be in the night, which is sleeping time; while we are in this world, it is *night* with us, and we must take pains to keep ourselves awake.

(2.) *Be ye also ready*. We wake in vain, if we

do not get ready. It is not enough to *look for* seven things; but we must therefore *give diligence*, 2 Pet. 8. 11, 14. We have then our Lord to attend upon, and we must have our lamps ready trimmed; a cause to be tried, and we must have our plea ready drawn, and signed by our Advocate; a reckoning to make up, and we must have our accounts ready stated and balanced; there is an inheritance which we then hope to enter upon, and we must have ourselves ready, made meet to partake of it, Col. 1. 12.

2. The reasons to induce us to this watchfulness, and diligent preparation for that day; which are two:

(1.) Because the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain. This is the reason immediately annexed to the double exhortation; (v. 42, 44.) and it is illustrated by a comparison, v. 43. Let us consider, then,

[1.] That *we know not what hour he will come*, v. 42. We know not the day of our death, Gen. 27. 2. We may know that we have but a little time to live; *The time of my departure is at hand*; (2 Tim. 4. 6.) but we cannot know that we have a long time to live, for our souls are continually in our hands; nor can we know how little a time we have to live, for it may prove less than we expect: much less do we know the time fixed for the general judgment. Concerning both we are kept at uncertainty, that we might, every day, expect that which may come any day; may never boast of a year's continuance, (Jam. 4. 13.) no, nor of to-morrow's return, as if it were our's, Prov. 27. 1. Luke 12. 20.

[2.] That *he may come at such an hour as we think not*, v. 44. Though there be such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself; though we know not *when* he will come, we are sure *he will come*. His parting word was, *Surely I come quickly*: his saying, "I come *surely*," obliges us to expect him; his saying, "I come *quickly*," obliges us to be always expecting him; for it keeps us in a state of expectancy. *In such an hour as you think not*, that is, such an hour as they who are unready and unprepared, think not; (v. 50.) nay, such an hour as the most lively expectants perhaps thought least likely. The bridegroom came when the wise were slumbering. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than that of particular presages and prognostications, which we are sometimes tempted vainly to desire and wish for.

[3.] That the children of this world are thus wise in their generation, that, when they know of a danger approaching, they will keep awake, and stand on their guard against it. This he shews in a particular instance, v. 43. If the master of a house had notice, that a thief would come such a night, and such a watch of the night, (for they divided the night into four watches, allowing three hours to each,) and would make an attempt upon his house, though it were the midnight watch, when he was most sleepy, yet he would be up, and listen to every noise in every corner, and be ready to give him a warm reception. Now, though we know not *just when* our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he *will come*, and come *quickly*, and without any other warning than what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. Note, *First*, We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up, that house is our own souls, which we must *keep with all diligence*. *Secondly*, The day of the Lord comes by *surprise*, as a *thief in the night*. Christ chooses to come when he is least expected, that the triumphs of his enemies may be turned into the greater shame, and the fears of his friends into the greater joy. *Thirdly*, If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, and we shall lose all

we are worth, not as by a thief, unjustly, but as by a just and legal process; death and judgment will seize upon all we have, to our irreparable damage, and utter undoing. Therefore be ready, *be ye also ready*; as ready at all times as the good man of the house would be at the hour when he expected the thief; we must put on the armour of God, that we may not only stand in that evil day, but, as more than conquerors, may divide the spoil.

(2.) Because the issue of our Lord's coming will be very happy and comfortable to those that shall be found ready, but very dismal and dreadful to those that are not, *v. 45, &c.* This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants, when their lord comes to reckon with them. It is likely to be well or ill with us to eternity, according as we are found ready or unready at that day; for Christ comes to *render to every man according to his works*. Now this parable, with which the chapter closes, is applicable to all Christians, who are, in profession and obligation, God's servants; but it seems especially intended as a warning to ministers; for the servant spoken of is a *steward*. Now, observe what Christ here saith,

[1.] Concerning the *good servant*; he shews here what he is—a *ruler of the household*; what, being so, he should be—*faithful and wise*, and what, if he be so, he shall be eternally—*blessed*. Here are good instructions and encouragements to the ministers of Christ.

First, We have here his place and office. He is one whom his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Note, 1. The church of Christ is his household, or family, standing in relation to him as the Father and Master of it. It is the *household of God*, a family named from Christ, Eph. 3. 15. 2. Gospel-ministers are appointed *rulers* in the household; not as princes, (Christ has entered a caveat against that,) but as stewards, or other subordinate officers; not as lords, but as guides; not to prescribe new ways, but to shew and lead in the ways that Christ has appointed: that is the signification of the *ἐπίσκοποι*, which we translate, *having rule over you*; (Heb. 13. 17.) as *overseers*, not to cut out new work, but to direct in, and quicken to, the work which Christ has ordered; that is the signification of *ἐπίσκοποι*—*bishops*. They are rulers by Christ; what power they have is derived from him, and none may take it from them, or abridge it to them; he is one whom the Lord has made ruler; Christ has the making of ministers. They are rulers under Christ, and act in subordination to him; and rulers for Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom. 3. The work of gospel-ministers, is, to give to Christ's household their meat in due season, as stewards, and therefore they have the keys delivered to them. (1.) Their work is to give, not take themselves, (Ezek. 34. 8.) but give to the family what the Master has bought, to *dispense* what Christ has purchased. And to ministers it is said, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, Acts 20. 35. (2.) It is to give meat; not to give law, (that is Christ's work,) but to deliver those doctrines to the church, which, if duly digested, will be nourishment to souls. They must give, not the poison of false doctrines, not the stones of hard and unprofitable doctrines, but the meat that is sound and wholesome. (3.) It must be given in due season, *ὡς καιρὸς*—*while there is time for it*; when eternity comes, it will be too late; we must work while it is day; or in time, that is, whenever any opportunity offers itself, or in the stated time, time after time, according as the duty of every day requires.

Secondly, His right discharge of his office. The good servant, if thus preferred, will be a good steward; for,

1. He is *faithful*; stewards must be so, 1 Cor. 4. 2. He that is *trusted*, must be trusty; and the greater the trust is, the more is expected from him. It is a great good thing that is committed to *ministers*; (2 Tim. 2. 2.) and they must be faithful, as Moses was, Heb. 3. 2. Christ counts those ministers, and those only, that are *faithful*, 1 Tim. 1. 12. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is one that sincerely designs his Master's honour, not his own; delivers the *whole counsel of God*, not his own fancies and conceits; follows Christ's institutions, and adheres to them; regards the meanness, reproves the greatest, and doth not respect persons.

2. He is wise to understand his duty, and the proper season of it; and in guiding of the flock there is need, not only of the integrity of the heart, but the skilfulness of the hands. Honesty may suffice for a good servant, but wisdom is necessary to a good steward; for it is profitable to direct.

3. He is doing, *so doing*, as his office requires. The ministry is a good work, and they whose office it is have always something to do; they must not indulge themselves in ease, nor leave the work undone, or carelessly turn it off to others, but be doing, and doing to the purpose; *so doing*, giving meat to the household, minding their own business, and not meddling with that which is foreign; *so doing*, as the Master has appointed, as the office imports, and as the case of the family requires; not *talking*, but *doing*. It was the motto Mr. Perkins used, *Minister verbi es—You are a minister of the word*. Not only *Age—Be doing*; but, *Hoc age—Be so doing*.

4. He is found doing when his Master comes; which intimates, (1.) Constancy at his work. At what hour soever his Master comes, he is found busy at the work of the day. Ministers should not leave empty spaces in their time, lest their Lord should come in one of those empty spaces. As with a good God the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so with a good man, a good minister, the end of one duty is the beginning of another. When Calvin was persuaded to renit his ministerial labours, he answered, with some resentment, "What, would you have my Master find me idle?" (2.) Perseverance in his work till the Lord come. *Hold fast till then*, Rev. 2. 25. *Continue in these things*, 1 Tim. 4. 16.—6. 14. Endure to the end.

Thirdly, The recompense of reward intended him for this, in three things:

1. He shall be taken notice of. This is intimated in these words, Who then is that *faithful and wise servant*? Which supposes that there are but few who answer this character: such an interpreter is *one of a thousand*, such a faithful and wise steward. Those who thus distinguish themselves now by humility, diligence, and sincerity, in their work, Christ will in the great day both dignify and distinguish by the glory conferred on them.

2. He shall be blessed; *Blessed is that servant*; and Christ's pronouncing him blessed makes him so. All the dead that die in the Lord are blessed, Rev. 14. 13. But there is a peculiar blessedness secured to them that approve themselves faithful stewards, and are found so doing. Next to the honour of those who die in the field of battle, suffering for Christ as the martyrs, is the honour of those that die in the field of service, ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, for Christ.

3. He shall be preferred; (*v. 47.*) *He shall make him ruler over all his goods*. The allusion is to the way of great men, who, if the stewards of their house conduct themselves well in that place, commonly prefer them to be the managers of their estates: thus Joseph was preferred in the house of Potiphar; Gen. 39. 4, 6. But the greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of

glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon his faithful watchful servants in the world to come. What is here said by a similitude, is the same that is said more plainly, John 12. 26. *Him will my Father honour.* And God's servants, when thus preferred, shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness, to bear that weight of glory, so that there is no danger from these servants when they reign.

[2.] Concerning the *evil servant*. Here we have, *First*, His description given; (v. 48, 49.) where we have the wretch drawn in his own colours. The vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of men is a wretched Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister. *Corruptio optima est pessima—What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst.* Wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem is a horrible thing indeed, Jer. 23. 14. Here is,

1. The cause of his wickedness; and that is, a practical disbelief of Christ's second coming; *He hath said in his heart, My Lord delays his coming;* and therefore he begins to think he will never come, but has quite forsaken his church. Observe, (1.) Christ knows what *they* say in their hearts, who with their lips cry, *Lord, Lord*, as this servant here. (2.) The delay of Christ's coming, though it is a gracious instance of his patience, is greatly abused by wicked people, whose hearts are thereby hardened in their wicked ways. When Christ's coming is looked upon as doubtful, or a thing at an immense distance, the hearts of men are *fully set to do evil*, Eccl. 8. 11. See Ezek. 12. 27. They that walk by sense, are ready to say of the unseen Jesus, as the people did of Moses, when he tarried in the mount upon their errand, *We wot not what is become of him*, and therefore *up, make us gods*, the world a god, the belly a god, any thing but him that should be.

2. The particulars of his wickedness; and they are sins of the first magnitude; he is a slave to his passions and his appetites.

(1.) Persecution is here charged upon him. *He begins to smite his fellow-servants.* Note, [1.] Even the stewards of the house are to look upon all the servants of the house as their fellow servants, and therefore are forbidden to *lord it over them*. If the angel call himself *fellow-servant* to John, (Rev. 19. 10.) no marvel if John have learned to call himself *brother* to the Christians of the churches of Asia, Rev. 1. 9. [2.] It is no new thing to see evil servants smiting their fellow-servants; both private Christians and faithful ministers. He smites them, either because they reprove him, or because they will not bow and do him reverence; will not say as he saith, and do as he doeth, against their consciences: he smites them with the tongue, as they smote the prophet, Jer. 18. 18. And if he got power into his hand, or can press those into his service, that have, as the ten horns upon the head of the beast, it goes further. Pashur the priest smote Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks, Jer. 20. 1. The revolvers have often been, of all others, most *profound to make slaughter*, Hos. 5. 2. The steward, when he smites his fellow servants, does it under colour of his Master's authority, and in his name; he says, *Let the Lord be glorified*; (Isa. 66. 5.) but he shall know, that he could not put a greater affront upon his Master.

(2.) Profaneness and immorality; *He begins to eat and drink with the drunken.* [1.] He associates with the worst of sinners, has fellowship with them, is intimate with them; he walks in their counsel, stands in their way, sits in their seat, and sings their songs. The drunken are the merry jovial company, and those he is for, and thus he hardens them in their wickedness. [2.] He does like them; *eats, and drinks, and is drunken*; so it is in Luke. This is an inlet to all manner of sin. Drunk-

ness is a leading wickedness; they who are slaves to that, are never masters of themselves in any thing else. The persecutors of God's people have commonly been the most vicious and immoral men. Persecuting consciences, whatever the pretensions be, are commonly the most profligate and debauched consciences. What will not *they* be drunk with, that will be *drunk with the blood of the saints*? Well, this is the description of a wicked minister, who yet may have the common gifts of learning and utterance above others; and, as hath been said of some, may preach so well in the pulpit, that it is pity he should ever come out, and yet live so ill out of the pulpit, that it is pity he should ever come in.

Secondly, His doom read, v. 50, 51. The coat and character of wicked ministers will not only not secure them from condemnation, but will greatly aggravate it. They can plead no exemption from Christ's jurisdiction, whatever they pretend to in the church of Rome, from that of the civil magistrate; there is no benefit of clergy at Christ's bar. Observe,

1. The surprise that will accompany his doom; (v. 50.) *The Lord of that servant will come.* Note, (1.) Our putting off the thoughts of Christ's coming, will not put off his coming. Whatever fancy he deludes himself with, his Lord will come. The unbelief of man shall not make that great promise, or threatening, (call it which you will,) of no effect. (2.) The coming of Christ will be a most dreadful surprise to secure and careless sinners, especially to wicked ministers; *He shall come in a day when he looketh not for him.* Note, Those that have slighted the warnings of the word, and silenced those of their own consciences concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any other warnings: those will be adjudged sufficient legal notice given, whether taken or no; and no unfairness can be charged on Christ, if he come suddenly, without giving other notice. Behold, he has told us before.

2. The severity of his doom, v. 51. It is not more severe than righteous, but it is a doom that carries in it utter ruin, wrapt up in two dreadful words, *death and damnation.*

(1.) Death. His Lord shall *cut him asunder*, *ἀποκομῆν ὅντιν*, "he shall cut him off from the land of the living," from the congregation of the righteous, shall separate him unto evil; which is the definition of a *curse*, (Deut. 29. 21.) shall cut him down, as a tree that cumbereth the ground; perhaps it alludes to the sentence often used in the law, *That soul shall be cut off from his people*; denoting an utter extirpation. Death cuts off a good man, as a choice imp is cut off, to be grafted in a better stock; but it cuts off a wicked man, as a withered branch is cut off for the fire. Cuts him off from this world which he set his heart so much upon, and was, as it were, one with. Or, as we read it, *shall cut him asunder*, that is, part body and soul, send the body to the grave, to be a prey for worms, and the soul to hell, to be a prey for devils, and there is the sinner cut asunder. The soul and body of a godly man at death part fairly, the one cheerfully lifted up to God, the other left to the dust; but the soul and body of a wicked man at death are cut asunder, torn asunder, for to them death is the *king of terrors*, Job 18. 14. The wicked servant divided himself between God and the world, Christ and Belial, his profession and his lusts, justly therefore will he thus be divided.

(2.) Damnation. *He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites*, and a miserable portion it will be, for *there shall be weeping*. Note, [1.] There is a place and state of everlasting misery in the other world, where there is nothing but *weeping and gnashing of teeth*; which speaks the soul's tribulation and anguish under God's indignation and

wrath. [2.] The divine sentence will appoint this place and state, as the portion of those who, by their own sin, were fitted for it. Even he of whom he said that he was *his* Lord, shall thus appoint him his portion. He that is now the *Saviour*, will then be the *Judge*, and the everlasting state of the children of men will be as he appoints. They that chose the portion for their portion in this life, will have hell for their portion in the other life. *This is the portion of a wicked man from God, Job 20, 29.* [3.] Hell is the proper place of hypocrites. This wicked servant has *his portion with the hypocrites*. They are, as it were, the freeholders, other sinners are but as inmates with them, and have but a portion of their misery. When Christ would express the most severe punishment in the other world, he calls it *the portion of hypocrites*. If there be any place in hell hotter than other, as it is like there is, it will be the allotment of those that have the form, but hate the power, of godliness. [4.] Wicked ministers will have their portion in the other world with the worst of sinners, even with the hypocrites, and justly, for they are the worst of hypocrites. The blood of Christ, which they have by their profaneness trampled under their feet, and the blood of souls, which they have by their unfaithfulness brought upon their heads, will bear hard upon them in that *place of torment*. *Son, remember*, will be as cutting a word to a minister, if he perish, as to any other sinner whatsoever. Let them, therefore, who preach to others, fear, lest they themselves should be cast-away.

CHAP. XXV.

This chapter continues and concludes our Saviour's discourse, which began in the foregoing chapter, concerning his second coming and the end of the world. This was his farewell-sermon of caution, as that, John 14, 15, and 16, was of comfort, to his disciples; and they had need of both in a world of so much temptation and trouble as this is. The application of that discourse, was, Watch therefore, and be ye also ready. Now, in prosecution of these serious awakening cautions, in this chapter we have three parables, the scope of which is the same—to quicken us all with the utmost care and diligence to get ready for Christ's second coming, which, in all his farewells to his church, mention was made of, as in that before he died, (John 11, 2.) in that at his ascension, (Acts 1, 11.) and in that at the shutting up of the canon of the scripture, Rev. 22, 20. Now it concerns us to prepare for Christ's coming: I. That we may then be ready to attend upon him; and this is shewed in the parable of the ten virgins, v. 1. . . 13. II. That we may then be ready to give up our account to him; and this is shewed in the parable of the three servants, v. 14. . . 30. III. That we may then be ready to receive from him our final sentence, and that it may be to eternal life; and this is shewed in a more plain description of the process of the judgment, v. 31. . . 46. These are things of awful consideration, because of everlasting concern to every one of us.

1. **WHEN** shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps

are gone out. 9. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. 11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Here,

I. That in general which is to be illustrated, is, *the kingdom of heaven*, the state of things under the gospel, the external kingdom of Christ, and the administration and success of it. Some of Christ's parables had shewed us what it is like now in the present reception of it, as *ch. 13*. This tells us what it shall be like, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and that kingdom delivered up to the Father. The administration of Christ's government toward the ready and the unready, in the great day, may be illustrated by this similitude; or the kingdom is put for the subjects of the kingdom. The professors of Christianity shall then be likened to these ten virgins, and shall be thus distinguished.

II. That by which it is illustrated, is, a marriage solemnity. It was a custom sometimes used among the Jews, on that occasion, that the bridegroom came, attended with his friends, late in the night, to the house of the bride, where she expected him, attended with her bride-maids; who, upon notice given of the bridegroom's approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands, to light him into the house with ceremony and formality, in order to the celebration of the nuptials with great mirth. And some think that on these occasions they had usually *ten virgins*; for the Jews never held a synagogue, circumcised, kept the passover, or contracted marriage, but ten persons at least were present. Boaz, when he married Ruth, had *ten witnesses*, Ruth 4, 2. Now in this parable,

1. The *Bridegroom* is our Lord Jesus Christ; he is so represented in the 45th Psalm, Solomon's Song, and often in the New Testament. It bespeaks his singular and superlative love to, and his faithful and inviolable covenant with, his spouse, the church. Believers are now betrothed to Christ; (Hos. 2, 19.) but the solemnizing of the marriage is reserved for the great day, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, will have made herself completely ready, Rev. 19, 7, 9.

2. The virgins are the professors of religion, members of the church; but here represented as *her companions*, (Ps. 45, 14.) as elsewhere her *children*, (Isa. 54, 1.) her *ornaments*, Isa. 49, 18. They that follow the Lamb, are said to be virgins; (Rev. 14, 4.) this denotes their beauty and purity; they are to be presented as chaste virgins to Christ, 2 Cor. 11, 2. The bridegroom is a king; so these virgins are *maids of honour*, virgins *without number*, (Cant. 6, 8.) yet here said to be *ten*.

3. The office of these virgins is to meet the bridegroom, which is as much their happiness as their duty. They come to wait *upon* the bridegroom when he appears, and in the mean time to wait *for* him. See here the nature of Christianity. As Christians, we profess ourselves to be, (1.) Attendants upon Christ, to do him honour, as the glorious Bridegroom, to be to him for a name and a praise, especially then when he shall come to be glorified

in his saints. We must follow him as honorary servants do their masters, John 12. 26. Hold up the name, and hold forth the praise, of the exalted Jesus; this is our business. (2.) Expectants of Christ, and of his second coming. As Christians, we profess, not only to believe and look for, but to love and long for, the appearing of Christ, and to act in our whole conversation with regard to it. The second coming of Christ is the centre in which all the lines of our religion meet, and to which the whole of the divine life hath a constant reference and tendency.

4. Their chief concern is, to have lights in their hands, when they attend the bridegroom, thus to do him honour and to do him service. Note, Christians are children of light. The gospel is light, and they who receive it, must not only be enlightened by it themselves, but must *shine as lights must hold it forth*, Phil. 2. 15, 16. This in general.

Now, concerning these ten virgins, we may observe,

(1.) Their different character, with the proof and evidence of it.

(1.) Their character was, that *five were wise, and five foolish*, (v. 2.) and *wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness*; so saith Solomon, a competent judge, Eccl. 2. 13. Note, Those of the same profession and denomination among men, may yet be of characters vastly different in the sight of God. Sincere Christians are the *wise* virgins, and hypocrites the *foolish ones*, as in another parable they are represented by wise and foolish builders. Note, Those are wise or foolish indeed, that are so in the affairs of their souls. True religion is true wisdom: sin is folly, but especially the sin of hypocrisy, for those are the greatest fools that *are wise in their own conceit*, and those the worst of sinners, that *feign themselves just men*. Some observe, from the equal number of the wise and foolish, what a charitable decorum (it is Archbishop Tillotson's expression) Christ observes, as if he would hope that the number of true believers were near equal to that of hypocrites, or, at least, would teach us to hope the best concerning those that profess religion, and to think of them with a bias to the charitable side. Though, in judging of ourselves, we ought to remember that the gate is strait, and few find it, yet, in judging of others, we ought to remember, that the Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory.

[2.] The evidence of this character was in the very thing which they were to attend to; by that they are judged of.

First, It was the folly of the foolish virgins, that they *took their lamps, and took no oil with them*, v. 3. They had just oil enough to make their lamps burn for the present, to make a show with, as if they intended to meet the bridegroom; but no cruse or bottle of oil with them for a recruit, if the bridegroom tarried; thus hypocrites,

1. They have no principle within. They have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, rooted dispositions, and settled resolutions, which is necessary to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. They act under the influence of external inducements, but are void of spiritual life; like a tradesman, that sets up without a stock, or the seed on the stony ground, that wanted root.

2. They have no prospect of, nor make provision for, what is to come. They took lamps for a present show, but not oil for after-use. This incogitancy is the ruin of many professors; all their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours, whom they now converse with, not to approve themselves to Christ, whom they must hereafter appear before; as if any thing will serve, provided it will but serve for the present. Tell them of things not

seen as yet, and you are like Lot to his sons in law, as one that mocked. They do not provide for hereafter, as the ant does, nor *lay up for the time to come*, 2 Cor. 12. 14.

Secondly, It was the wisdom of the wise virgins, that they *took oil in their vessels with their lamps*, v. 4. They had a good principle within, which would maintain and keep up their profession. 1. The heart is the vessel, which it is our wisdom to get furnished; for out of a good treasure there, good things must be brought; but if that root be rottenness, the blossom will be dust. 2. Grace is the oil which we must have in this vessel; in the tabernacle there was constant provision made of oil for the light, Exod. 35. 14. Our light must shine before men in good works; but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion, with an eye to what is before us. They that took oil in their vessels, did it upon supposition, that perhaps the bridegroom might tarry. Note, In looking forward, it is good to prepare for the worst, to lay in for a long siege. But remember that this oil, which keeps the lamp burning, is derived to the candlestick from Jesus Christ, the great and good Olive, by the golden pipes of the ordinances, as it is represented in that vision, (Zech. 4. 2, 3, 12.) which is explained John 1. 16. *Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace*.

(2.) Their common fault, during the bridegroom's delay; *They all slumbered and slept*, v. 25. Observe here,

[1.] The bridegroom tarried, that is, he did not come out so soon as they expected. What we look for as certain, we are apt to think is very near; many in the apostles' times imagined the *day of the Lord was at hand*, but it is not so. Christ, as to us, seems to tarry, and yet really *does not*, Hab. 2. 3. There is good reason for the Bridegroom's tarrying; there are many intermediate counsels and purposes to be accomplished, the elect must all be called in, God's patience must be manifested, and the saints' patience tried, the harvest of the earth must be ripened, and so must the harvest of heaven too. But, though Christ tarry past our time, he will not tarry past the due time.

[2.] While he tarried, those that waited for him grew careless, and forgot what they were attending; *They all slumbered and slept*; as if they had given over looking for him; for, *when the Son of man comes, he will not find faith*, Luke 18. 8. Those that inferred the suddenness of it from its certainty, when that answered not their expectation, were apt, from the delay, to infer its uncertainty. The wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish slept; so some distinguish it; however, they were both faulty. The wise virgins kept their lamps burning, but did not keep themselves awake. Note, Too many good Christians, when they have been long in profession, grow remiss in their preparations for Christ's second coming; they intermit their care, abate their zeal, their graces are not lively, nor their works found perfect before God; and though all *love* be not lost, yet the *first love* is left. If it was hard to the disciples to watch with Christ *an hour*, much more to watch with him *an age*. *I sleep*, saith the spouse, but *my heart wakes*. Observe, *First*, They slumbered, and then they slept. Note, One degree of carelessness and remissness makes way for another. Those that allow themselves in slumbering, will scarcely keep themselves from sleeping; the refore dread the beginning of spiritual decays; *Veniens occurrit morbo—Attend to the first symptoms of disease*. The ancients generally understood that the virgins' slumbering and sleeping, of their dying; they all died, wise and foolish, (Ps. 49. 10.) before re judg

ment-day. So *Ferus, Antequam veniat sponsus, omnibus obdormiscendum est, hoc est, moriendum—Before the Bridegroom come, all must sleep, that is, die.* So Calvin. But I think it is rather to be taken as we have opened it.

(3.) The surprising summons given them to attend the bridegroom; (v. 6.) *At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh.* Note, [1.] Though Christ tarry long, he will come at last; though he seems slow, he is sure. In his first coming, he was thought long by those that waited for the consolation of Israel; yet in the *fulness of time* he came; so his second coming, though long deferred, is not forgotten; his enemies shall find, to their cost, that forbearance is no acquittance; and his friends shall find, to their comfort, that *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie.* The year of the redeemed is fixed, and it will come. [2.] Christ's coming will be at our midnight, when we least look for him, and are most disposed to take our rest. His coming for the relief and comfort of his people, often is when the good intended seems to be at the greatest distance; and his coming to reckon with his enemies, is when they put the evil day farthest from them. It was at midnight that the first-born of Egypt were destroyed, and Israel delivered, Exod. 12. 22. Death often comes when it is least expected; the soul is *required this night*, Luke 12. 20. Christ will come when he pleases, to shew his sovereignty, and will not let us know when, to teach us our duty. [3.] When Christ comes, we must *go forth to meet him.* As Christians, we are bound to attend all the motions of the Lord Jesus, and meet him in all his outgoings. When he comes to us at death, we must go forth out of the body, out of the world, to meet him with affections and workings of soul suitable to the discoveries we then expect him to make of himself. *Go ye forth to meet him*, is a call to those who are habitually prepared, to be actually ready. [4.] The notice given of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will be awakening; *There was a cry made.* His first coming was not with any observation at all, nor did they say, *Lo, here is Christ*, or *Lo, he is there*; *he was in the world, and the world knew him not*; but his second coming will be with the observation of all the world; *Every eye shall see him.* There will be a cry from heaven, for he shall *descend with a shout, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment*; and a cry from the earth too, *a cry to rocks and mountains*, Rev. 6. 16.

(4.) The address they all made to answer this summons; (v. 7.) *They all arose, and trimmed their lamps*, snuffed them, and supplied them with oil, and went about with all expedition to put themselves in a posture to receive the bridegroom. Now, [1.] This, in the wise virgins, bespeaks an actual preparation for the Bridegroom's coming. Note, Even those that are best prepared for death, have, upon the immediate arrests of it, work to do to get themselves actually ready, that they may be *found in peace* (2 Pet. 3. 14.) *found doing*, (ch. 24. 46.) and not *found naked*, 2 Cor. 5. 3. It will be a day of search and inquiry; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found. When we see the day approaching, we must address ourselves to our dying work with all seriousness, renewing our repentance for sin, our consent to the covenant, our farewells to the world; and our souls must be carried out toward God in suitable breathings. [2.] In the foolish virgins, it denotes a vain confidence, and conceit of the goodness of their state, and their readiness for another world. Note, Even counterfeit graces will serve a man to make a show of when he comes to die, as well as they have done all his life long; the hypocrite's hopes blaze when they are just expiring, like a lightening before death.

(5.) The distress which the foolish virgins were in, for want of oil, v. 8, 9. This bespeaks, [1.] The apprehensions which some hypocrites have of the misery of their state, even on this side death, when God opens their eyes to see their folly, and themselves perishing *with a lie in their right hand.* Or, however, [2.] The real misery of their state on the other side death, and in the judgment; how fair their fair, but false, profession of religion, will be from availing them any thing in the great day; see what comes of it.

First, Their lamps are gone out. The lamps of hypocrites often go out in this life; when they who have begun in the spirit end in the flesh, and the hypocrisy breaks out in an open apostacy, 2 Pet. 2. 20. The profession withers, and the credit of it is lost; the hopes fail, and the comfort of them is gone; how often is the *candle of the wicked thus put out?* Job 21. 17. Yet many a hypocrite keeps up his credit, and the comfort of his profession, such as it is, to the last; but what is it when *God takes away his soul?* Job 27. 8. If his candle be not put out *before him*, it is put out *with him*, Job 18. 5, 6. He shall *lie down in sorrow*, Isa. 50. 11. The gains of a hypocritical profession will not follow a man to judgment, ch. 7. 22, 23. The lamps are gone out, when the hypocrite's hope proves *like the spider's web*, (Job 8. 11, &c.) and like *the giving up of the ghost*, (Job 11. 20.) like Absalom's mule that left him in the oak.

** Secondly*, They wanted oil to supply them when they were going out. Note, Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An external profession, well humoured, may carry a man far, but it will not carry him through; it may light him along this world, but the damps of the valley of the shadow of death will put it out.

Thirdly, They would gladly be beholden to the wise virgins for a supply out of their vessels; *Give us of your oil.* Note, The day is coming when carnal hypocrites would gladly be found in the condition of true Christians. Those who now hate the strictness of religion, will, at death and judgment, wish for the solid comforts of it. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death, of the righteous. The day is coming when those who now look with contempt upon humble contrite saints, would gladly get an interest in them, and would value those as their best friends and benefactors, whom now they *set with the dogs of their flock.* *Give us of your oil*; that is, "Speak a good word for us;" so some; but there is no occasion for vouchers in the great day, the Judge knows what is every man's true character. But is it not well that they are brought to say, *Give us of your oil?* It is so; but, 1. This request was extorted by sensible necessity. Note, Those will see their need of grace hereafter, when it should save them, who will not see their need of grace now, when it should sanctify and rule them. 2. It comes too late. God would have given them oil, had they asked in time; but there is no buying when the market is over, no bidding when the inch of candle is dropped.

Fourthly, They were denied a share in their companions' oil. It is a sad presage of a repulse with God, when they were thus repulsed by good people. *The wise answered, Not so*; that peremptory denial is not in the original, but supplied by the translators: these wise virgins would rather give a reason, without a positive refusal, than (as many do) give a positive refusal, without a reason. They were well inclined to help their neighbours in distress; but, *We must not*, we cannot, we dare not, do it, *lest there be not enough for us and you*; charity begins at home; but *go, and buy for yourselves.* Note, 1. Those that would be saved, must

have grace of their own. Though we have benefit by the communion of saints, and the faith and prayers of others may now redound to our advantage, yet our own sanctification is indispensably necessary to our own salvation. The just shall live by his faith. Every man shall give account of himself, and therefore let every man *prove his own work*; for he cannot get another to muster for him in that day. 2. Those that have most grace have none to spare; all we have is little enough for ourselves to appear before God in. The best have need to borrow from Christ, but they have none to lend to any of their neighbours. The church of Rome, which dreams of works of supererogation and the imputation of the righteousness of saints, forgets that it was the wisdom of the wise virgins to understand that they had but oil enough for themselves, and none for others. But observe, These wise virgins did not upbraid the foolish with their neglect, nor boast of their own forecast, nor torment them with suggestions tending to despair, but gave them the best advice the case will bear, *Go ye rather to them that sell*. Note, Those that deal foolishly in the affairs of their souls are to be pitied, and not insulted over; for who made thee to differ? When ministers attend such as have been mindless of God and their souls all their days, but are under death-bed convictions; and, because true repentance is never too late, direct them to repent, and turn to God, and close with Christ; yet, because late repentance is seldom true, they do but as these wise virgins did by the foolish, even make the best of bad. They can but tell them what is to be done, if it be not too late; but whether the door may not be shut before it is done, is an unspeakable hazard. It is good advice now, if it be taken in time, *Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves*. Note, Those that would have grace, must have recourse to, and attend upon, the means of grace. See Isa. 55. 1.

(6.) The coming of the bridegroom, and the issue of all this different character of the wise and foolish virgins. See what came of it.

[1.] *While they went out to buy, the bridegroom came*. Note, With regard to those that put off their great work to the last, it is a thousand to one, that they have not time to do it then. Getting grace is a work of time, and cannot be done in a hurry. While the poor awakened soul addresses itself, upon a sick-bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, it scarcely knows which end to begin at, or what to do first; and presently death comes, judgment comes, and the work is undone, and the poor sinner undone for ever. This comes of having oil to buy when we should burn it, and grace to get when we should use it.

The bridegroom came. Note, Our Lord Jesus will come to his people, at the great day, as a bridegroom; will come in pomp and rich attire, attended with his friends: now that the Bridegroom is taken away from us, *we fast*, (ch. 9. 15.) but then will be an everlasting feast. Then the Bridegroom will fetch home his bride, to be *where he is*, (John 17. 24.) and will *rejoice over his bride*, Isa. 62. 5.

[2.] *They that were ready went in with him to the marriage*. Note, *First*, To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ to the marriage, to be in his immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. *Secondly*, Those, and those only, shall go to heaven hereafter, that are made ready for heaven here, that are *wrought to the self-same thing*, 2 Cor. 5. 5. *Thirdly*, The suddenness of death, and of Christ's coming to us then, will be no obstruction to our happiness, if we have been habitually prepared.

[3.] *The door was shut*, as is usual when all the company is come that are to be admitted. The

door was shut, *First*, To secure those that were with in; that, being now made *pillars in the house of our God*, they may go no more out, Rev. 3. 12. Adam was put into paradise, but the door was left open, and so he went out again; but when glorified saints are put into the heavenly paradise, they are shut in. *Secondly*, To exclude those that were out. The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then will be shut out for ever. Now the gate is strait, yet it is open; but then it will be shut and bolted, and a *great gulf fixed*. This was like the shutting of the door of the ark when Noah was in; as he was thereby preserved, so all the rest were finally abandoned.

[4.] The foolish virgins came when it was too late, (v. 11.) *Afterward came also the other virgins*. Note, *First*, There are many that will seek admission into heaven when it is too late; as profane Esau, who *afterward would have inherited the blessing*. God and religion will be glorified by those late solicitations, though sinners will not be saved by them; it is for the honour of *Lord, Lord*, that is, of fervent and importunate prayer, that those who slight it now will flee to it shortly, and it will not be called whining and canting then. *Secondly*, The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them very far in their expectations of happiness. They go to heaven-gate, and demand entrance, and yet are shut out; lifted up to heaven in a fond conceit of the goodness of their state, and yet thrust down to hell.

[5.] They were *rejected*, as Esau was; (v. 12.) *I know you not*. Note, We are all concerned to *seek the Lord while he may be found*; for there is a time coming when he will not be found. Time was, when, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, would have sped well, by virtue of that promise, *Knock, and it shall be opened to you*; but now it comes too late. The sentence is solemnly bound on with, *Verily I say unto you*, which amounts to no less than *swearing in his wrath, that they shall never enter into his rest*. It bespeaks him resolved, and them silenced by it.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from this parable; (v. 13.) *Watch therefore*. We had it before, (ch. 24. 42.) and here it is repeated, as the most needful caution. Note, 1. Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be wakeful. 2. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain; *we know neither the day nor the hour*. Therefore every day and every hour we must be ready, and not off our watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day. Be thou in the *fear of the Lord* every day, and *all the day long*.

14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20. And so he that had received five talents came, and

brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22. He also that had received two talents came, and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24. Then he which had received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: 25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast *that is thine*. 26. His lord answered and said unto him, *Thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: 27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. 29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We have here the parable of the *talents* committed to three servants; this implies that we are in a state of work and business, as the former implies that we are in a state of expectancy. *That* shewed the necessity of habitual preparation, *this* of actual diligence in our present work and service. *In that*, we were stirred up to do well for our own souls; *in this*, to lay out ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others.

In this parable, 1. The *Master* is Christ, who is the absolute Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, and in a special manner of his church; into his hands all things are delivered. 2. The *servants* are Christians, his own servants, so they are called; born in his house, bought with his money, devoted to his praise, and employed in his work. It is probable that *ministers* are especially intended here, who are more immediately attending on him, and sent by him. St. Paul often calls himself a *servant of Jesus Christ*. See 2 Tim. 2. 24.

We have three things, in general, in this parable. 1. The trust committed to these servants; Their master delivered to them his goods: having appointed them to work, (for Christ keeps no servants to be idle,) he left them something to work upon. Note, *∴* Christ's servants have and receive their all from him: for they are of themselves worth nothing, nor

have any thing they can call their own but sin. 2. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. Our privileges are intended to find us with business. The *manifestation of the Spirit* is given to every man to *profit* *withal*. 3. Whatever we receive to be made use of for Christ, still the property is vested in him; we are but tenants upon his land, *stewards of his manifold grace*, 1 Pet. 4. 10. Now observe here,

(1.) On what occasion this trust was committed to these servants: The master was *travelling into a far country*. This is explained, Eph. 4. 8. *When he ascended on high, he gave gifts unto men*. Note, [1.] When Christ went to heaven, he was as a man *travelling into a far country*; that is, he went with a purpose to be away a great while. [2.] When he went, he took care to furnish his church with all things necessary for it during his personal absence. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed to his church truths, laws, promises, and powers; these were the *τραπεζαίαι*—*the great depositum*, (as it is called, 1 Tim. 6. 20. 2 Tim. 1. 14.) the *good thing* that is committed to us; and he sent his Spirit to enable his servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe those laws, to improve and apply those promises, and to exercise and employ those powers, ordinary or extraordinary. Thus Christ, at his ascension, left his goods to his church.

(2.) In what proportion this trust was committed. [1.] He gave *talents*; a talent of silver is computed to be in our money three hundred fifty-three pounds eleven shillings and ten pence half-penny; so the learned Bishop Cumberland. Note, Christ's gifts are rich and valuable, the purchases of his blood inestimable, and none of them mean. [2.] He gave to some more, to others less; to one *five* talents, to another *two*, to another *one*; to every one according to his several ability. When Divine Providence has made a difference in men's ability, as to mind, body, estate, relation, and interest, divine grace dispenses spiritual gifts accordingly, but still the ability itself is from him. Observe, *First*. Every one had some one talent at least, and that is not a despicable stock for a poor servant to begin with. *A soul* of our own is the *one* talent we are every one of us intrusted with, and it will find us with work. *Hoc nempe ob homine exigitur, ut prosit hominibus; si fieri potest, multis; si minus, paucis; si minus, proximis; si minus, sibi: nam cum se utilem cæteris efficit, commune agit negotium. Et si quis bene de se meretur, hoc ipso aliis prodest quod aliis profuturum parat*—*It is the duty of a man to render himself beneficial to those around him; to a great number, if possible; but if this is denied him, to a few; to his intimate connexions; or, at least, to himself. He that is useful to others, may be reckoned a common good. And whoever entitles himself to his own approbation, is serviceable to others, as forming himself to those habits which will result in their favour.* Seneca de Otio Sapient. *Secondly*. All had not alike, for they had not alike abilities and opportunities. God is a free Agent, *dividing to every man severally as he will*; some are cut out for service in one kind, others in another, as the members of the natural body. When the householder had thus settled his affairs, he *straightway took his journey*. Our Lord Jesus, when he had given commandments to his apostles, as one in haste to be gone, went to heaven.

II. The different management and improvement of this trust, which we have an account of, v. 16—19.

1. Two of the servants did well.

(1.) They were diligent and faithful; *They went, and traded*; they put the money they were intrusted with to the use for which it was intended—*laid it out in goods, and made returns of it*; as soon as ever their master was *gone*, they immediately applied

themselves to their business. Those that have so much work to do, as every Christian has, need to set about it quickly, and lose no time. *They went, and traded.* Note, A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman. Trades are called *mysteries*, and *without controversy great is the mystery of godliness*; it is a manufacture trade; there is something to be done by us upon our own hearts, and for the good of others. It is a merchant-trade; things of less value to us are parted with for things of greater value; *wisdom's merchandise*, Prov. 3. 15. Matth. 13. 45. A tradesman is one who, having made his trade his choice, and taken pains to learn it, makes it his business to follow it, lays out all he has for the advancement of it, makes all other affairs bend to it, and lives upon the gain of it. Thus does a true Christian act in the work of religion; we have no stock of our *own* to trade with, but trade as factors with our Master's stock. The endowments of the mind—reason, wit, learning, must be used in subserviency to religion; the enjoyments of the world—estate, credit, interest, power, preferment, must be improved for the honour of Christ. The ordinances of the gospel, and our opportunities of attending them, bibles, ministers, sabbaths, sacraments, must be improved for the end for which they were instituted, and communion with God kept up by them, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit must be exercised; and this is trading with our talents.

(2.) They were successful; they doubled their stock, and in a little time made *cent. per cent.* of it: he that had *five talents* soon made them *other five*. Trading with our talents is not always successful with others, but, however, it shall be so to ourselves, Isa. 49. 4. Note, The hand of the diligent makes rich in graces, and comforts, and treasures of good works. There is a great deal to be got by industry in religion.

Observe, The returns were in proportion to the receivings. [1.] From those to whom God hath given five talents, he expects the improvement of five, and to reap plentifully where he sows plentifully. The greater gifts any have, the more pains they ought to take, as those must that have a large stock to manage. [2.] From those to whom he has given but two talents, he expects only the improvement of two, which may encourage those who are placed in a lower and narrower sphere of usefulness; if they lay out themselves to do good according to the best of their capacity and opportunity, they shall be accepted, though they do not so much good as others.

2. The third did ill; (v. 18.) *He that had received the one talent, went and hid his lord's money.* Though the parable represents but one in three unfaithful, yet, in a history that answers this *parable*, we find the disproportion quite the other way, when *ten lepers were cleansed, nine of the ten hid the talent, and only one returned to give thanks*, Luke 17. 17, 18. The unfaithful servant was he that had but one talent: doubtless, there are many that have five talents, and bury them all; great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them: but Christ would hint to us, (1.) That, if he that had but one talent be reckoned with thus for burying that one, much more will they be accounted offenders that have more, that have many, and bury them. If he that was but of small capacity was cast into outer darkness, because he did not improve what he had, as he might have done, *of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that tramples under foot the greatest advantages?* (2.) That those who have least to do for God, frequently do least of what they have to do. Some make it an excuse for their laziness, that they have not the opportunities of serving God that others have; and, because they have not wherewithal to

do what they say they would, they will not do what we are sure they can, and so sit down and do nothing: it is really an aggravation of their sloth, that when they have but one talent to take care about, they neglect that one.

He digged in the earth, and hid the talent, for fear it should be stolen; he did not mispend or misemploy it, did not embezzle it or squander it away, but he *hid it*. Money is like manure, (so my lord Bacon used to say,) good for nothing in the heap, but it must be spread; yet it is an evil which we have often seen under the sun, *treasure heaped together*, (Jam. 5. 3. Eccl. 6. 1, 2.) which does good to nobody; and so it is in spiritual gifts; many have them, and make no use of them for the end for which they were given them. Those that have estates, and do not lay them out in works of piety and charity; that have power and interest, and do not with it promote religion in the places where they live; ministers that have capacities and opportunities of doing good, but do not stir up the gift that is in them, are those slothful servants that seek their own things more than Christ's.

He hid his *lord's* money; had it been his *own*, he might have done as he pleased; but whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our *own*, we are but stewards of them, and must give account to our Lord, whose goods they are. It was an aggravation of his slothfulness, that his fellow-servants were busy and successful in trading, and their zeal should have provoked his. Are others active, and shall we be idle?

III. The account of this improvement, v. 19. 1. The account is deferred; it is not till *after a long time* that they are reckoned with; not that the master neglects his affairs, or that God is *slack concerning his promise*; (2 Pet. 3. 9.) no, he is *ready to judge*; (1 Pet. 4. 5.) but every thing must be done in its time and order. 2. Yet the day of account comes at last; *The lord of those servants reckoneth with them*. Note, The stewards of the manifold grace of God must shortly give account of their *stewardship*. We must all be reckoned with—what good have we got to our own souls, and what good have we done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. See Rom. 14. 10, 11. Now here is,

(1.) The good account of the faithful servants, and there observe,

[1.] The servants *giving up the account*; (v. 20, 22.) "*Lord thou deliverdest to me five talents, and to me two; behold, I have gained five talents, and I two talents more.*"

First, Christ's faithful servants acknowledge with thankfulness his vouchsafements to them; *Lord, thou deliverdest to me such and such things*. Note, 1. It is good to keep a particular account of our receivings from God, to remember what we have received, that we may know what is expected from us, and may render according to the benefit. 2. We must never look upon our improvements but with a general mention of God's favour to us, of the honour he has put upon us, in intrusting us with his goods, and of that grace which is the spring and fountain of all the good that is in us, or is done by us. For, the truth is, The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for making use of us, and enabling us, for his service.

Secondly, They produce, as an evidence of their faithfulness, what they have gained. Note, God's good stewards have something to show for their diligence: *Shew me thy faith by thy works*. He that is a good man, *let him shew it*, Jam. 3. 13. If we be careful in our spiritual trade, it will soon be seen by us, and *our works will follow us*, Rev. 14. 13. Not that the saints will, in the great day, make mention of their own good deeds; no, Christ will do that for them; (v. 35.) but it intimates, that they who

faithfully improve their talents *shall have boldness in the day of Christ*, 1 John 2. 28.—4. 17. And it is observable, that he who had but *two* talents, gave up his account as cheerfully as he who had *five*; for our comfort, in the day of account, will be according to our faithfulness, not according to our usefulness; our sincerity, not our success; according to the uprightness of our hearts, not according to the degree of our opportunities.

[2.] The master's acceptance and approbation of their account, v. 21, 23.

First, He commended them; *Well done, good and faithful servant*. Note, The diligence and integrity of those who approve themselves the good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, will certainly be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at his appearing, 1 Pet. 1. 7. Those that own and honour God now, he will own and honour shortly. 1. Their persons will be accepted; *Thou good and faithful servant*. He that knows the integrity of his servants now, will witness to it in the great day; and they that are found faithful shall be called so. Perhaps they were censured by men, as *righteous overmuch*; but Christ will give them their just characters of *good and faithful*. 2. Their performances will be accepted; *Well done*. Christ will call those, and those only, *good servants*, that have done well; for it is *by patient continuance in well-doing* that we seek for this glory and honour; and if we seek, we shall find; if we do that which is good, and do it well, we shall have *praise of the same*. Some masters are so morose, that they will not commend their servants, though they do their work ever so well; it is thought enough not to chide: but Christ will commend his servants that do well; whether their praise be of men or no, it is of him; and if we have the good word of our Master, the matter is not great what our fellow-servants say of us; if he saith, *Well done*, we are happy, and it should then be a small thing to us to be judged of men's judgment; as, on the contrary, not he who commendeth himself, or whom his neighbours commend, is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Secondly, He rewards them. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with bare commendation; no, all their work and labour of love shall be rewarded.

Now this reward is here expressed two ways.

1. In one expression agreeable to the parable; *Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things*. It is usual, in the courts of princes and families of great men, to advance those to higher offices that have been faithful in lower. Note, Christ is a Master that will prefer his servants who acquit themselves well. Christ has honour in store for those that honour him—a crown, (2 Tim. 4. 8.) a throne, (Rev. 3. 21.) a kingdom, ch. 25. 34. Here they are beggars, in heaven they shall be rulers. The upright shall have dominion; Christ's servants are all princes.

Observe the disproportion between the work and the reward; there are but few things in which the saints are serviceable to the glory of God, but there are many things wherein they shall be glorified with God. What charge we receive from God, what work we do for God in this world, is but little, very little, compared with the joy set before us. Put together all our services, all our sufferings, all our improvements, all the good we do to others, all we get to ourselves, and they are but a few things, next to nothing, not worthy to be compared, not fit to be named, the same day with the glory to be revealed.

2. In another expression, which slips out of the parable into the thing signified by it; *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. Note, (1.) The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs

of comfort shall be opened to them, and the fountains of joy broken up. Where there are the vision and fruition of God, a perfection of holiness, and the society of the blessed, there cannot be but a fulness of joy. (2.) This joy is the *joy of our Lord*; the joy which he himself has purchased and provided for them; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer. It is the joy which he himself is in the possession of, and which he had his eye upon when he *endured the cross, and despised the shame*, Heb. 12. 2. It is the joy of which he himself is the Fountain and Centre. It is the joy of our Lord, for it is *joy in the Lord*, who is our exceeding Joy. Abraham was not willing that the *steward of his house*, though *faithful*, should be his heir; (Gen. 15. 3.) but Christ admits his faithful stewards into his own joy, to be joint-heirs with him. (3.) Glorified saints shall enter into this joy, shall have a full and complete possession of it, as the heir, when he comes of age, enters upon his estate, or as they that were ready *went* in to the marriage feast. Here the joy of our Lord enters into the saints, in the earnest of the Spirit; shortly they shall enter into it, shall be in it to eternity, as in their element.

(2.) The bad account of the slothful servant. Observe,

[1.] His apology for himself, v. 24, 25. Though he had received but *one* talent, for that one he is called to account. The smallness of our receiving will not excuse us from a reckoning. None shall be called to an account for more than they have received; but for what we have we must all account.

Observe, *First*, What he confides in. He comes to the account with a deal of assurance, relying on the plea he had to put in, that he was able to say, *Lo, there thou hast that is thine*; if I have not made it more, as the others have done, yet this I can say, I have not made it less." This, he thinks, may serve to bring him off, if not with praise, yet with safety.

Note, Many a one goes very securely to judgment, presuming upon the validity of a plea that will be overruled as vain and frivolous. Slothful professors, that are afraid of doing too much for God, yet hope to come off as well as those that take so much pains in religion. Thus the *sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason*, Prov. 26. 16. This servant thought that his account would pass well enough, because he could say, *There thou hast that is thine*. "Lord, I was no spendthrift of my estate, no prodigal of my time, no profaner of my sabbaths, no opposer of good ministers and good preaching; Lord, I never ridiculed my Bible, nor set my wits to work to banter religion, nor abused my power to persecute any good man; I never drowned my parts, nor wasted God's good creatures in drunkenness and gluttony, nor ever to my knowledge did I injury to any body." Many, that are called Christians, build great hopes for heaven upon their being able to make such an account; yet all this amounts to no more than, *There thou hast that is thine*; as if no more were required, or could be expected.

Secondly, What he confesses. He owns the burying of his talent, *I hid thy talent in the earth*. He speaks as if that were no great fault; nay, as if he deserved praise for his prudence in putting it in a safe place, and running no hazards with it. Note, It is common for people to make a very light matter of that which will be their condemnation in the great day. Or, if he was conscious to himself that it was his fault, it intimates how easily slothful servants will be convicted in the judgment; there will need no great search for proof, for *their own tongue shall fall upon them*.

Thirdly, What he makes his excuse; *I knew that*

thou wast a hard man, and I was afraid. Good thoughts of God would beget love, and that love would make us diligent and faithful; but hard thoughts of God beget fear, and that fear makes us slothful and unfaithful. His excuse bespeaks,

1. The sentiments of an enemy; *I knew thee, that thou art a hard man.* This was like that wicked saying of the house of Israel, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, Ezek. 18. 25. Thus his defence is his defence. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way*, and then, as if that would mend the matter, *his heart fretteth against the Lord.* This is covering the transgression, as Adam, who implicitly laid the fault on God himself; *The woman which thou gravest me.* Note, Carnal hearts are apt to conceive false and wicked opinions concerning God, and with them to harden themselves in their evil ways. Observe how confidently he speaks; *I knew thee to be so.* How could he know him to be so? *What iniquity have we or our fathers found in him?* Jer. 2. 5. Wherein has he wearied us with our work, or deceived us in his wages? Mic. 6. 3. Has he been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness? Thus long God has governed the world, and may ask, with more reason than Samuel himself could, *Whom have I defrauded, or whom have I oppressed?* Does not all the world know the contrary, that he is so far from being a hard Master, that *the earth is full of his goodness*, so far from reaping where he sowed not, that he sows a great deal where he reaps nothing? For *he causes the sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful, and fills their hearts with food and gladness*, who says to the Almighty, *Depart from us.* This suggestion bespeaks the common reproach which wicked people cast upon God, as if all the blame of their sin and ruin lay at his door, for denying them his grace; whereas it is certain that never any, who faithfully improved the common grace they had, perished for want of special grace; nor can any shew what could in reason have been done more for an unfruitful vineyard than God has done in it. God does not demand brick, and deny straw; no, whatever is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant; so that if we perish, it is owing to ourselves.

2. The spirit of a slave; *I was afraid.* This ill affection toward God arose from his false notions of him; and nothing is more unworthy of God, nor more hinders our duty to him, than slavish fear. This has bondage and torment, and is directly opposite to that entire love which the great commandment requires. Note, Hard thoughts of God drive us from, and cramp us in, his service. Those who think it impossible to please him, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion.

[2.] His Lord's answer to this apology. His plea will stand him in no stead, it is overruled, nay, it is made to turn against him, and he is struck speechless with it; for here we have his conviction and his condemnation.

First, His conviction, v. 26, 27. Two things he is convicted of.

1. Slothfulness; *Thou wicked and slothful servant.* Note, Slothful servants are wicked servants, and will be reckoned with as such by their Master; for he that is *slothful in his work*, and neglects the good that God has commanded, is *brother to him that is a great waster*, by doing the evil that God has forbidden, Prov. 18. 9. He that is careless in God's work, is near akin to him that is busy in the devil's work, *Satis est mali nihil fecisse boni*—*To do no good is to incur very serious blame.* Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; slothfulness makes way for wickedness; all become filthy, for there is none that doeth good, Ps. 14. 3. When the house is empty, the unclean spirit takes possession. Those that are idle in the affairs of their souls, are

not only idle, but something worse, 1 Tim. 5. 13. When men sleep, the enemy sows tares.

2. Self-contradiction; (v. 26, 27.) *Thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers.* Note, The hard thoughts which sinners have of God, though false and unjust, will be so far from justifying their wickedness and slothfulness, that they will rather aggravate and add to their guilt. Three ways this may be taken; (1.) "Suppose I had been so hard a Master, shouldest not thou therefore have been the more diligent and careful to please me, if not for love, yet for fear, and for that reason oughtest not thou to have minded thy work?" If our God be a consuming fire, in consideration of that, let us study how to serve him. Or, thus, (2.) "If thou didst think me to be a hard Master, and therefore durst not trade with the money thyself, for fear of losing by it, and being made to stand to the loss, yet thou mightest have put it into the hands of the exchangers, or goldsmiths, mightest have brought it into the bank, and then at my coming, if I could not have had the greater improvement, by trade and merchandise, (as of the other talents,) yet I might have had the lesser improvement, of bare interest, and should have received my own with usury;" which, it seems, was a common practice at that time, and not disallowed by our Saviour. Note, If we could not, or durst not, do what we would, yet that excuse will not serve, when it will be made to appear that we did not do what we could and durst. If we could not find in our hearts to venture upon more difficult and hazardous services, yet will that justify us in shrinking from those that were more safe and easy? Something is better than nothing; if we fail of shewing our courage in bold enterprises, yet we must not fail to testify our good-will in honest endeavours; and our Master will not despise the day of small things. Or thus, (3.) "Suppose I did reap where I sowed not, yet that is nothing to thee, for I had sowed upon thee, and the talent was my money, which thou wast intrusted with, not only to keep, but to improve." Note, In the day of account, wicked and slothful servants will be left quite without excuse; frivolous pleas will be overruled, and every mouth will be stopped; and those who now stand so much upon their own justification, will not have one word to say for themselves.

Secondly, His condemnation. The slothful servant is sentenced,

1. To be deprived of his talent; (v. 28, 29.) *Take therefore the talent from him.* The talents were first disposed of by the Master, as an absolute Owner, but this was now disposed of by him as a Judge; he takes it from the unfaithful servant, to punish him, and gives it to him that was eminently faithful, to reward him. And the meaning of this part of the parable we have in the reason of the sentence, (v. 29.) *To every one that hath shall be given.* This may be applied, (1.) To the blessings of this life—worldly wealth and possessions. These we are intrusted with, to be used for the glory of God, and the good of those about us. Now he that hath these things, and useth them for these ends, he shall have abundance; perhaps abundance of the things themselves, at least, abundance of comfort in them, and of better things; but from him that hath not, that is, that hath these things as if he had them not, had not power to eat of them, or to do good with them, *Quaro deest, tam quod habet, quam quod non habet*—The miser may be considered as destitute of what he has, as well as of what he has not, they shall be taken away. Solomon explains this, (Prov. 11. 24.) *There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.* Giving to the poor,

trading with what we have, and the returns will be rich; it will multiply the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse; but those that are sordid, and niggardly, and uncharitable, will find that those riches, which are so got, *perish by evil travel*, Eccl. 5. 13, 14. Sometimes Providence strangely transfers estates from those that do no good with them, to those that do; they are *gathered for him that will pity the poor*. Prov. 28. 8. See Prov. 13. 22. Job 27. 16, 17. Eccl. 2. 26. (2.) We may apply it to the means of grace. They who are diligent in improving the opportunities they have, God will enlarge them, *will set before them an open door*; (Rev. 3. 8.) but they who know not the day of their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. For proof of this, *go see what God did to Shiloh*, Jer. 7. 12. (3.) We may apply it to the common gifts of the Spirit. He that hath these, and doeth good with them, shall have abundance: these gifts improve by exercise, and brighten by being used; the more we do, the more we may do, in religion; but those who stir not up the gift that is in them, who do not exert themselves according to their capacity, their gifts rust, and decay, and go out like a neglected fire. From him, that hath not a living principle of grace in his soul, shall be taken away the common gifts which he hath, as the lamps of the foolish virgins went out for want of oil, vi. 8. Thus the arm of the *idle shepherd*, which he had sluggishly folded up in his bosom, comes to be dried up, and his right eye, which he had carelessly or wilfully shut, becomes utterly darkened, as it is threatened, Zech. 11. 17.

2. He is sentenced to be *cast into outer darkness*, vi. 30. Here,

(1.) His character is that of an *unprofitable servant*. Note, Slothful servants will be reckoned with as unprofitable servants, who do nothing to the purpose of their coming into the world, nothing to answer the end of their birth or baptism, who are no way serviceable to the glory of God, the good of others, or the salvation of their own souls. A slothful servant is a withered member in the body, a barren tree in the vineyard, an idle drone in the hive, he is good for nothing. In one sense, we are all *unprofitable servants*; (Luke 17. 10.) we cannot *profit God*, Job 22. 2. But to others, and to ourselves, it is required that we be profitable; if we be not, Christ will not own us as his servants; it is not enough not to do hurt, but we must do good, must bring forth fruit, and though thereby God is not profited, yet he is glorified, John 15. 8.

(2.) His doom is, to be *cast into outer darkness*. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour slides insensibly out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and it serves as a key to the whole; for, *outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, is, in Christ's discourse, the common periphrasis of the miseries of the damned in hell. Their state is, [1.] Very dismal; it is outer darkness. Darkness is uncomfortable and frightful, it was one of the plagues of Egypt. In hell there are *chains of darkness*, 2 Pet. 2. 4. In the dark *no man can work*, a fit punishment for a slothful servant. It is *outer darkness, out from the light of heaven, out from the joy of their Lord*, into which the faithful servants were admitted; *out from the feast*. Compare *ch. 18. 12.—22. 13.* [2.] Very doleful; there is weeping, which bespeaks great sorrow; and gnashing of teeth, which bespeaks great vexation and indignation. This will be the portion of the slothful servant.

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32. And before him shall be gathered all

nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36. Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38. When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39. Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. 41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. 42. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

We have here a description of the process of the last judgment in the great day. There are some passages in it that are parabolical; as the separating between the sheep and the goats, and the dialogues between the Judge and the persons judged: but there is no thread of similitude carried through the discourse, and therefore it is rather to be called a draught or delineation of the final judgment, than a parable; it is, as it were, the explanation of the former parables. And here we have,

1. The placing of the Judge upon the judgment-seat: (vi. 30.) *When the Son of man shall come*. Observe here,

1. That there is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, in the world of recompence or retribution, according to what he did in this world of trial and probation, which is to be judged of by the rule of the everlasting gospel.

2. The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by him

God will judge the world, (Acts 17. 31.) and to him all judgment is committed, and therefore the judgment of that day, which is the centre of all. Here, as elsewhere, when the last judgment is spoken of, Christ is called *the Son of man*, because he is to judge the sons of men; (and, being himself of the same nature, he is the more unexceptionable; and because his wonderful condescension to take upon him our nature, and to become the Son of man, will be recompensed by his exaltation in that day, and an honour put upon the human nature.

3. Christ's appearing to judge the world will be splendid and glorious. Agrippa and Bernice came to the judgment-seat with *great pomp*; (Acts 25. 23.) but that was (as the original word is) *great fancy*. Christ will come to the judgment-seat in real glory; the Sun of righteousness shall then shine in his meridian lustre, and the Prince of the kings of the earth shall shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honours of his excellent majesty; and all the world shall see what the saints only do now believe—that he is the brightness of his Father's glory. He shall come not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as Mediator: his first coming was under a black cloud of obscurity; his second will be in a bright cloud of glory. The assurance Christ gave his disciples of his future glory, might help to take off the offence of the cross, and his approaching disgrace and suffering.

4. When Christ comes in his glory to judge the world, he will bring all his holy angels with him. This glorious person will have a glorious retinue, his holy myriads, who will be not only his attendants, but ministers of his justice; they shall come with him both for state and service. They must come to call the court, (1 Thess. 4. 16.) to gather the elect, (*ch.* 24. 31.) to bundle the tares; (*ch.* 13. 40.) to be witnesses of the saint's glory, (Luke 12. 8.) and of sinners' misery, Rev. 14. 10.

5. He will then sit upon the throne of his glory. He is *now* sat down with the Father upon his throne; and it is a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly; it is a throne of government, the throne of his father David; he is a priest upon that throne: but *then* he will sit upon the throne of glory, the throne of judgment. See Dan. 7. 9, 10. Solomon's throne, though there was not its like in any kingdom, was but a dunghill to it. Christ, in the days of his flesh, was arraigned as a Prisoner at the bar; but, at his second coming, he will sit as a Judge upon the bench.

II. The appearing of all the children of men before him; (*v.* 32.) *Before him shall be gathered all nations*. Note, The judgment of the great day will be a general judgment. All must be summoned before Christ's tribunal; all of every age of the world, from the beginning to the end of time; all of every place on earth, even from the remotest corners of the world, most obscure, and distant from each other; all nations, all those nations of men that are made of one blood, to dwell on all the face of the earth.

III. The distinction that will then be made between the precious and the vile: *He shall separate them one from another*, as the tares and wheat are separated at the harvest, the good fish and bad at the shore, the corn and chaff in the floor. Wicked and godly here dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not certainly distinguishable one from another; such are the infirmities of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners, and one event to both: but in that day they will be separated, and parted for ever; *Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked*, Mal. 3. 18. They cannot separate themselves one from another in this world, (1 Cor. 5. 10.) nor can any one else separate them; (*ch.* 13. 29.)

but the Lord knows them that are his, and he can separate them. This separation will be so exact, that the most inconsiderable saints shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner hid in the crowd of saints; (Ps. 1. 5.) but every one shall go to his own place. This is compared to a shepherd's dividing between the sheep and the goats; it is taken from Ezek. 34. 17. *Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle*. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he now feeds his flock like a shepherd, and will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are not, as Laban divided his sheep from Jacob's, and set three days' journey between them, Gen. 30. 33, 36. 2. The godly are like sheep—innocent, mild, patient, useful; the wicked are like goats, a baser kind of animal, unsavoury and unruly. These sheep and goats are here feeding all day in the same pasture, but will be coted at night in different folds. Being thus divided, he will set the *sheep on his right hand*, and the *goats on his left*, *v.* 33. Christ puts honour upon the godly, as we shew respect to those we set on our right hand; but the wicked shall rise to everlasting shame, Dan. 12. 2. It is not said that he shall put the rich on his right hand, and the poor on his left: the learned and noble on his right hand, and the unlearned and despised on his left; but the godly on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. All other divisions and subdivisions will then be abolished; but the great distinction of men into saints and sinners, sanctified and unsanctified, will remain for ever, and men's eternal state will be determined by it. The wicked took up with left-hand blessings, riches and honour, and so shall their doom be.

IV. The process of the judgment concerning each of these;

1. Concerning the godly, on the right hand. Their cause must be first dispatched, that they may be assessors with Christ in the judgment of the wicked, whose misery will be aggravated by their seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, Luke 13. 28. Observe here,

(1.) The *glory* conferred upon them; the sentence by which they shall be not only acquitted, but preferred and rewarded, (*v.* 34.) *The King shall say unto them*. He that was the Shepherd, (which speaks the care and tenderness wherewith he will make this disquisition,) is here the King, which speaks the authority wherewith he will then pronounce the sentence: where the word of this King is, there is power. Here are two things in this sentence:

[1.] The acknowledging of the saints to be the blessed of the Lord; *Come, ye blessed of my Father*. First, He pronounces them *blessed*; and his saying they are blessed, makes them so. The law curses them for their many discontinuances; but Christ having redeemed them from the curse of the law, and purchased a blessing for them, commands a blessing on them. Secondly, *Blessed of his Father*; reproached and cursed by the world, but blessed of God. As the Spirit glorifies the Son, (John 16. 14.) so the Son glorifies the Father, by referring the salvation of the saints to him as the First Cause; all our blessings in heavenly things flow to us from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 3. Thirdly, *He calls them to come*: this *come* is, in effect, *"Welcome, ten thousand welcomes, to the blessed of my Father; come to me, come to be for ever with me; you that followed me, bearing the cross, now come along with me wearing the crown. The blessed of my Father are the beloved of my soul, that have been too long at a distance from me; come now, come into my bosom, come into my arms, come into my dearest embraces!"* Oh with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day! We now come boldly to the throne of grace, but we

sl all then come boldly to the throne of glory; and this word holds out the golden sceptre, with an assurance that our requests shall be granted to more than the half of the kingdom. Now the Spirit saith, *Come*, in the word; and the bride saith, *Come*, in prayer; and the result hereof is a sweet communion: but the perfection of bliss will be, when *the King shall say, Come*.

[2.] The admission of the saints into the blessedness and kingdom of the Father; *Inherit the kingdom prepared for you*.

First, The happiness they shall be possessed of is very rich; we are told what it is by him who had reason to know it, having purchased it for them, and possessed it himself.

1. It is a *kingdom*; which is reckoned the most valuable possession on earth, and includes the greatest wealth and honour. Those that inherit kingdoms, wear all the glories of the crown, enjoy all the pleasures of the court, and command the peculiar treasures of the provinces; yet this is but a faint resemblance of the felicity of the saints in heaven. They that here are beggars, prisoners, accounted as the off-scouring of all things, shall then inherit a kingdom, Ps. 113. 7. Rev. 2. 26, 27.

2. It is a kingdom *prepared*: the happiness must needs be great, for it is the product of the divine counsels. Note, There is great preparation made for the entertainment of the saints in the kingdom of glory. The Father designed it for them in his thoughts of love, and provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power. The Son purchased it for them, and is entered as the Forerunner to prepare a place, John 14. 2. And the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, in effect, is preparing it for them.

3. It is prepared *for them*. This bespeaks, (1.) The suitableness of this happiness: it is in all points adapted to the nature of a soul, and to the new nature of a sanctified soul. (2.) Their property and interest in it. It is prepared on purpose for them; not only for such as you, but for you, you by name, you personally and particularly, who were chosen to salvation through sanctification.

4. It is prepared *from the foundation of the world*. This happiness was designed for the saints, and they for it, before time began, from all eternity, Eph. 1. 4.

The end, which is last in execution, is first in intention: Infinite Wisdom had an eye to the eternal glorification of the saints, from the first founding of the creation; *All things are for your sakes*, 2 Cor. 4. 15. Or, it denotes the preparation of the place of this happiness, which is to be the seat and habitation of the blessed, in the very beginning of the work of creation, Gen. 1. 1. There in the heaven of heavens the morning stars were singing together, when the foundations of the earth were fastened, Job 38. 4—7.

Secondly, The tenure by which they shall hold and possess it is very good, they shall come and *inherit it*. What we come to by inheritance, is not got by any procurement of our own, but purely, as the lawyers express it, *by the act of God*. It is God that makes heirs, heirs of heaven. We come to an inheritance by virtue of our sonship, our adoption; *if children, then heirs*. A title by inheritance is the sweetest and surest title; it alludes to possessions in the land of Canaan, which passed by inheritance, and would not be alienated longer than to the year of jubilee. Thus is the heavenly inheritance indefeasible, and unalienable. Saints, in this world, are as heirs under age, tutored and governed till the time appointed of the Father; (Gal. 4. 1.) and then they shall be put in full possession of that which now through grace they have a title to; *Come, and inherit it*.

(2.) The ground of this, (v. 35, 36.) *For I was an*

hungered, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that any good works of ours merit the happiness of heaven, by any intrinsic worth or excellency in them, our goodness extends not unto God; but it is plain that Jesus Christ will judge the world by the same rule by which he governs it, and therefore will reward those that have been obedient to that law: and mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as their evidence of an interest in Christ, and his purchase. This happiness will be adjudged to obedient believers, not upon a *quantum meruit*—an estimate of merit, which supposes a proportion between the work and the reward, but upon the promise of God purchased by Jesus Christ, and the benefit of it secured under certain provisos and limitations; and it is the purchase and promise that give the title, the obedience is only the qualification of the person designed. An estate made by deed or will upon condition, when the condition is performed according to the true intent of the donor or testator, becomes absolute; and then, though the title be built purely upon the deed or will, yet the performing of the condition must be given in evidence; and so it comes in here: for Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him, and who patiently continue in well-doing.

Now the good works here mentioned are such as we commonly call works of charity to the poor: not but that many will be found on the right hand, who never were in a capacity to feed the hungry or clothe the naked, but were themselves fed and clothed by the charity of others; but one instance of sincere obedience is put for all the rest, and it teaches us this in general, that faith working by love is all in all in Christianity; *Shew me thy faith by thy works*; and nothing will abound to a good account hereafter, but the fruits of righteousness in a good conversation now. The good works here described imply three things, which must be found in all that are saved.

[1.] Self-denial, and contempt of the world; reckoning the things of the world no further good things, than as we are enabled to do good with them: and those who have not wherewithal to do good, must shew the same disposition, by being contentedly and cheerfully poor. Those are fit for heaven that are mortified to the earth.

[2.] Love to our brethren; which is the second great commandment, the fulfilling of the law, and an excellent preparative for the world of everlasting love. We must give proof of this love by our readiness to do good, and to communicate; good wishes are but mockeries without good works, Jam. 2. 15, 16. 1 John 3. 17. Those that have not to give, must shew the same disposition some other way.

[3.] A believing regard to Jesus Christ. That which is here rewarded, is the relieving the poor for Christ's sake, out of love to him, and with an eye to him. This puts an excellency upon the good work, when in it we serve the Lord Christ, which those may do, that work for their own living, as well as those that help to keep others alive. See Eph. 6. 5—7. Those good works shall then be accepted which are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col. 3. 17.

I was hungry, that is, my disciples and followers were so, either by the persecutions of enemies for well doing, or by the common dispensations of Providence; for in these things there is one even to the righteous and wicked: and *you gave them meat*. Note, *First*, Providence so variously orders and disposes of the circumstances of his people in this world, as that while some are in a condition to give relief, others need it. It is no new thing for those that are feasted with the dainties of heaven to be hungry and thirsty, and to want daily food; for those that are at home in God, to be strangers in a strange land;

for those that have put on Christ, to want clothes to keep them warm; for those that have healthful souls, to have sickly bodies; and for those to be in prison, that Christ has made free. *Secondly*, Works of charity and beneficence, according as our ability is, are necessary to salvation; and there will be more stress laid upon them in the judgment of the great day, than is commonly imagined; these must be the proofs of our love, and of our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. 9. 13. But they that shew no mercy shall have judgment without mercy.

Now this reason is modestly excepted against by the righteous, but is explained by the Judge himself.

1. It is questioned by the righteous, v. 37—39. Not as if they were loath to inherit the kingdom, or were ashamed of their good deeds, or had not the testimony of their own consciences concerning them; but, (1.) The expressions are parabolical, designed to introduce and impress these great truths, that Christ has a mighty regard to works of charity, and is especially pleased with kindnesses done to his people for his sake. Or, (2.) They speak the humble admiration which glorified saints will be filled with, to find such poor and worthless services, as theirs are, so highly celebrated, and richly rewarded: *Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?* Note, Gracious souls are apt to think meanly of their own good deeds; especially as unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Far from this is the temper of those who said, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* Isa. 58. 3. Saints in heaven will wonder what brought them thither, and that God should so regard them and their services. It even put Nathanael to the blush, to hear Christ's encomium of him: *Whence knowest thou me?* John 1. 47, 48. See Eph. 3. 20. "*When saw we thee an hungered?*" We have seen the poor in distress many a time; but when saw we thee?" Note, Christ is more among us than we think he is; surely the Lord is in this place, by his word, his ordinances, his ministers, his Spirit, yea, and his poor, and we know it not; *When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee*, John 1. 48.

2. It is explained by the Judge himself; (v. 40.) *Inasmuch as you have done it to these my brethren*, to the least, to one of the least of them, *ye have done it unto me*. The good works of the saints, when they are produced in the great day, (1.) Shall all be remembered; and not the least, not one of the least, overlooked, no not a cup of cold water. (2.) They shall be interpreted most to their advantage, and the best construction that can be put upon them. As Christ makes the best of their infirmities, so he makes the most of their services.

We see what recompences Christ has for those that feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; but what will become of the godly poor, that had not wherewithal to do so? Must they be shut out? No, [1.] Christ will own them, even the least of them, as his brethren; he will not be ashamed, nor think it any disparagement to him, to call them brethren, Heb. 2. 11. In the height of his glory, he will not disown his poor relations; Lazarus is there laid in his bosom, as a friend, as a brother. Thus he will confess them, ch. 10. 32. [2.] He will take the kindnesses done to them, as done to himself; *Ye have done it to me*; which shew a respect to the poor that were relieved, as well as to the rich that did relieve them. Note, Christ espouses his people's cause, and interests himself in their interests, and reckons himself received, and loved, and owned in them. If Christ himself were among us in poverty, how readily would we relieve him? In prison, how frequently would we visit him? We are ready to envy the honour they had, who ministered to him of their substance, Luke 8. 4. Wherever poor saints and

poor ministers are, there Christ is ready to receive our kindnesses in them, and they shall be put to his account.

2. Here is the process concerning the wicked, those on the left hand. And in that we have,

(1.) The sentence passed upon them, v. 41. It was a disgrace to be set on the left hand; but that is not the worst of it, he shall say to them, *Depart from me, ye cursed*. Every word has terror in it, like that of the trumpet at mount Sinai, waxing louder and louder, every accent more and more doleful, and exclusive of comfort.

[1.] To be so near to Christ was some satisfaction, though under his frowns; but that will not be allowed, *Depart from me*. In this world they were often called to come to Christ, to come for life and rest, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls; justly therefore are they bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. "Depart from me the Fountain of all good, from me the Saviour, and therefore from all hope of salvation; I will never have any thing more to say to you, or do with you." Here, they said to the Almighty, *Depart from us*; then, he will choose their delusions, and say to them, *Depart from me*. Note, It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ.

[2.] If they must depart, and depart from Christ, might not they be dismissed with a blessing, with one kind and compassionate word at least; No, *Depart, ye cursed*. They that would not come to Christ, to inherit a blessing, must depart from him under the burthen of a curse, that curse of the law on every one that breaks it, Gal. 3. 10. *As they loved cursing, so it shall come unto them*. But observe, The righteous are called the *blessed of my Father*: for their blessedness is owing purely to the grace of God and his blessing, but the wicked are called only *ye cursed*, for their damnation is of themselves. Hath God sold them? No, they have sold themselves, have laid themselves under the curse, Isa. 50. 1.

[3.] If they must depart, and depart with a curse, may they not go into some place of ease and rest? Will it not be misery enough for them to bewail their loss? No, there is a punishment of sense as well as loss; they must depart into *fire*, into torment as grievous as that of fire is to the body, and much more. This fire is the wrath of the eternal God fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of sinners that have made themselves fuel for it. Our God is a consuming Fire, and sinners fall immediately into his hands, Heb. 10. 31. Rom. 2. 8, 9.

[4.] If into fire, may it not be some light or gentle fire? No, it is *prepared fire*; it is a torment *ordained of old*, Isa. 30. 33. The damnation of sinners is often spoken of as an act of the divine power; *he is able to cast into hell*. In the vessels of wrath he makes his power known; it is a *destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*. In it shall be seen what a provoked God can do to make a provoking creature miserable.

[5.] If into fire, prepared fire, Oh let it be but of short continuance, let them but pass through fire! No, the fire of God's wrath will be an *everlasting fire*; a fire, that, fastening and preying upon immortal souls, can never go out for want of fuel; and, being kindled and kept burning by the wrath of an immortal God, can never go out for want of being blown and stirred up; and, the streams of mercy and grace being for ever excluded, there is nothing to extinguish it. If a drop of water be denied to cool the tongue, buckets of water will never be granted to quench this flame.

[6.] If they must be doomed to such a state of endless misery, yet may they not have some good company there? No, none but *the devil and his angels*, their sworn enemies, that helped to bring them

to this misery, and will triumph over them in it. They served the devil while they lived, and therefore are justly sentenced to be where he is, as those that served Christ are taken to be with him where he is. It is terrible to lie in a house haunted with devils; what will it be then to be companions with them for ever? Observe here, *First*, Christ intimates that there is one that is the prince of the devils, the ringleader of the rebellion, and that the rest are his angels, his messengers, by whose agency he supports his kingdom. Christ and his angels will in that day triumph over the dragon and his, Rev. 12. 7. *Secondly*, The fire is said to be prepared, not primarily for the wicked, as the kingdom is prepared for the righteous; but it was originally intended for the devil and his angels. If sinners make themselves associates with Satan by indulging their lusts, they may thank themselves if they become sharers in that misery which was prepared for him and his associates. Calvin notes upon this, that *therefore* the torment of the damned is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, to cut off all hope of escaping it; the devil and his angels are already made prisoners in that pit, and can worms of the earth think to escape?

(2.) The reason of this sentence assigned. God's judgments are all just, and he will be justified in them. He is Judge himself, and therefore the heavens shall declare his righteousness.

Now, [1.] All that is charged upon them, on which the sentence is grounded, is, omission; as, before, the servant was condemned, not for wasting his talent, but for burying it; so here, he doth not say, "I was hungry and thirsty, for you took my meat and drink from me; I was a stranger, for you banished me; naked, for you stripped me; in prison, for you laid me there;" but, "When I was in these distresses, you were so selfish, so taken up with your own ease and pleasure, made so much of your labour, and were so loath to part with your money, that you did not minister, as you might have done, to my relief and succour. You were like those epicures that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos 6. 4—6. Note, Omissions are the ruin of thousands.

[2.] It is the omission of works of charity to the poor. They are not sentenced for omitting their sacrifices and burnt offerings, (they abounded in these, Ps. 51. 8.) but for omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith. The Ammonites and Moabites were excluded the sanctuary, because they *met not Israel with bread and water*, Deut. 23. 3, 4. Note, Uncharitableness to the poor is a damning sin. If we will not be brought to works of charity by the hope of reward, let us be influenced by fear of punishment: for they shall have judgement without mercy, that have shewed no mercy. Observe, He doth not say, "I was sick, and you did not cure me; in prison, and you did not release me;" (perhaps that was more than they could do;) but, "You visited me not, which you might have done." Note, Sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which it was in the power of the hand to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more formidable will the doom of the cruel be, the doom of persecutors! Now this reason of the sentence is,

First, Objected against by the prisoners, (v. 41.) *Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst? Condemned sinners, though they have no plea that will bear them out, will yet in vain offer at excuses.* Now, 1. The manner of their pleading bespeaks their present precipitation. They cut it short, as men in haste: *When saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked?* They are not to repeat the charge, as conscious to themselves of their own guilt, and un-

able to bear the terrors of the judgment. Nor will they have time allowed them to insist upon such frivolous pleas; for it is all (as we say) but "trifling with the court." 2. The matter of their plea bespeaks their former inconsideration of that which they might have known, but would not tell, now that it was too late. They, that had slighted and persecuted poor Christians, would not own that they had slighted and persecuted Christ: no, they never intended any affront to him, nor expected that so great a matter would have been made of it. They imagined it was only a company of poor, weak, silly, and contemptible people, who made more ado than needed about religion, that they put those slights upon; but they who do so will be made to know, either in the day of their conversion, as Paul, or of their condemnation, as these here, that it was *Jesus whom they persecuted*. And if they say, *Behold, we know it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?* Prov. 24. 11, 12.

Secondly, Justified by the Judge, who will convince all the ungodly of the hard speeches spoken against him in those that are his, Jude 15. He goes by this rule; (v. 45.) *Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.* Note, What is done against the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, even the least of them, he takes as done against himself. He is reproached and persecuted in them, for they are reproached and persecuted for his sake, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. He that touches them touches him in a part no less tender than the apple of his eye.

Lastly, Here is the execution of both these sentences, v. 46. Execution is the life of the law, and Christ will take care that that be done according to the sentence.

1. *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.* Sentence will then be executed speedily, and no reprieve granted, nor any time allowed to move in arrest of judgment. The execution of the wicked is first mentioned; for first the tares are gathered and burned. Note, (1.) The punishment of the wicked in the future state will be an everlasting punishment, for that state is an unalterable state. It can neither be thought that sinners should change their own natures, nor that God should give his grace to change them, when in this world the day of grace was mispent, the Spirit of grace resisted, and the means of grace abused and baffled. (2.) The wicked shall be made to go away into that punishment; not that they will go voluntarily, no, they are driven from light into darkness; but it bespeaks an irresistible conviction of guilt, and a final despair of mercy.

2. *The righteous shall go away into life eternal;* that is, they shall inherit the kingdom, v. 34. Note, (1.) Heaven is life, it is all happiness. The life of the soul results from its union with God by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that of the body from its union with the soul by the animal spirits. The heavenly life consists in the vision and fruition of God, in a perfect conformity to him, and an immediate uninterrupted communion with him. (2.) It is eternal life. There is no death to put a period to the life itself, nor old age to put a period to the comfort of it, or any sorrow to imber it. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way; and so shall our end be. Even the heathen had some notion of these different states of good and bad in the other world. Cicero, in his *Tusculan Questions*, lib. 1. brings in Socrates thus speaking, *Duce sunt viæ, duplicesque cursus è corpore exeuntium: Nam qui se vitis humanis contaminarunt, et libidinibus se tradiderunt, iis devium quoddam iter est, seclusum à consilio deorum; qui autem se integros castosque servarunt; quibusque fuerit minima cum corporibus contagio, suntque in corporibus humanis vitam imi-*

tati deorum, iis ad illos à quibus sunt profecti facile patet reditus—Two paths open before those who depart out of the body: Such as have contaminated themselves with human vices, and yielded to their lusts, occupy a path that conducts them far from the assembly and council of the gods; but the upright and chaste, such as have been least defiled by the flesh, and have imitated, while in the body, the gods, these find it easy to return to the sublime beings from whom they came.

CHAP. XXVI.

The narrative of the death and sufferings of Christ is more particularly and fully recorded by all the four evangelists than any part of his history; for what should we determine, and desire to know, but Christ, and him crucified? And this chapter begins that memorable narrative. The year of the redeemed was now come, the seventy weeks determined were now accomplished, when transgression must be finished, reconciliation made, and an everlasting righteousness brought in, by the cutting off of the Messiah the Prince, Dan. 9. 24, 26. That awful scene is here introduced, to be read with reverence and holy fear. In this chapter, we have, 1. The preliminaries or prefaces, to Christ's sufferings. 1. The previous notice given by him of it to his disciples, v. 1, 2. 2. The rulers' conspiracy against him, v. 3, 4, 5. 3. The anointing of his head at a supper in Bethany, v. 6, 7, 13. 4. Judas's bargain with the priests to betray him, v. 14, 15, 16. 5. Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, v. 17, 18, 25. 6. His instituting the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples after it, v. 26, 27, 35. 7. His entrance upon them, and some of the particulars of them. 1. His agony in the garden, v. 36, 37, 46. 2. The seizing of him by the officers, with Judas's help, v. 47, 48, 56. 3. His arraignment before the chief priest, and his condemnation in his court, v. 57, 58, 68. 4. Peter's denying him, v. 69, 70, 75.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, 2. Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the passover*, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. 3. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. 4. And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. 5. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Here is, 1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of the near approach of his sufferings, v. 1, 2. While his enemies were preparing trouble for him, he was preparing himself and his followers for it. He had often told them of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at the door; *after two days*. Note, After many former notices of trouble, we still have need of fresh ones. Observe,

(1.) The time when he gave this alarm; *when he had finished all these sayings*. [1.] Not till he had finished all he had to say. Note, Christ's witnesses die not till they have finished their testimony. When Christ had gone through his undertaking as a Prophet, he entered upon the execution of his office as a Priest. [2.] After he had finished these sayings, which go immediately before; he had bid his disciples expect sad times, bonds and afflictions, and then tells them, *The Son of man is betrayed*; to intimate that they should fare no worse than he should, and that his sufferings should take the sting out of theirs. Note, Thoughts of a suffering Christ are great supports to a suffering Christian, suffering with him and for him.

(2.) The thing itself he gave them notice of; *The Son of man is betrayed*. The thing was not only so sure, but so near, that it was as good as done. Note,

It is good to make sufferings, that are yet to come, as present to us. He is betrayed, for Judas was then contriving and designing to betray him.

2. The plot of the chief priests, and scribes and elders of the people, against the life of our Lord Jesus, v. 3—5. Many consultations had been held against the life of Christ; but this plot was laid deeper than any yet, for the grandees were all engaged in it. The chief priests, who presided in ecclesiastical affairs; the elders, who were judges in civil matters; and the scribes, who, as doctors of the law, were directors to both—these composed the Sanhedrim, or great council, that governed the nation, and these were confederate against Christ. Observe, (1.) The place where they met; *in the palace of the high priest*, who was the centre of their unity in this wicked project. (2.) The plot itself; *to take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him*; nothing less than his blood, his life-blood, would serve their turn. So cruel and bloody have been the designs of Christ's and his church's enemies. (3.) The policy of the plotters; *Not on the feast-day*. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but *lest there should be an uproar among the people*. They knew Christ had a great interest in the common people, of whom there was a great concourse on the feast-day, and they would be in danger of taking up arms against their rulers, if they should offer to lay violent hands on Christ, whom all held for a Prophet. They were awed, not by the fear of God, but by the fear of the people; all their concern was for their own safety, not God's honour. They would have it done at the feast; for it was a tradition of the Jews, that malefactors should be put to death at one of the three feasts, especially rebels and impostors, that *all Israel might see and fear*; but *not on the feast-day*.

6. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7. There came unto him a woman having an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. 8. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. 10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. 12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. 13. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

In this passage of story, we have,

1. The singular kindness of a good woman to our Lord Jesus in anointing his head, v. 6, 7. It was in Bethany, a village hard by Jerusalem, and in the house of Simon the leper. Probably, he was one who had been miraculously cleansed from his leprosy by our Lord Jesus, and he would express his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him; nor did Christ disdain to converse with him, to come in to him, and sup with him. Though he was cleansed, yet he was called *Simon the leper*. Those who are guilty of scandalous sins, will find, that, though the sin be

pardoned, the reproach will cleave to them, and will hardly be wiped away. The woman that did this is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was the same that was called *Mary Magdalene*. She had a *box of ointment very precious*, which she *poured upon the head* of Christ as he sat at meat. This, among us, would be a strange sort of compliment. But it was then accounted the highest piece of respect; for the smell was very grateful, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head. David had his *head anointed*, Ps. 23. 6. Luke 7. 46. Now this may be looked upon,

1. As an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed. To signify that she believed in him as God's Anointed, whom he had set King, she anointed him, and made him her King. They shall *appoint themselves one Head*, Hos. 1. 11. This is *kissing the Son*.

2. As an act of love and respect to him. Some think that this was she who *loved much* at first, and *washed Christ's feet with her tears*; (Luke 7. 47.) and that she had not left her first love, but was now as affectionate in the devotions of a grown Christian as she was in those of a young beginner. Note, Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good, no, nor good enough, to bestow upon him.

III. The offence which the disciples took at this. They *had indignation*, (v. 8, 9.) were vexed to see this ointment thus spent, which they thought might have been better bestowed.

1. See how they expressed their offence at it. They said, *To what purpose is this waste?* Now this speaks,

(1.) Want of tenderness toward this good woman, in interpreting her over-kindness (suppose it was so) to be wastefulness. Charity teaches us to put the best construction upon every thing that it will bear, especially upon the words and actions of those that are *zealously affected in doing a good thing*; though we may think them not altogether so discreet in it as they might be. It is true, there may be over-doing in well-doing; but thence we must learn to be cautious ourselves, lest we run into extremes, but not to be censorious of others; because that which we may impute to the want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather aim to do as much as they.

(2.) Want of respect to their Master. The best we can make of it, is, that they knew their Master was perfectly dead to all the delights of sense; he that was so much *grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, cared not for being *anointed with the chief ointments*, Amos 6. 6. And therefore they thought such pleasures ill bestowed upon one who took so little pleasure in them. But, supposing that, it did not become them to call it *waste*, when they perceived that he admitted and accepted it as a token of his friend's love. Note, We must take heed of thinking any thing waste, which is bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. We must not think that time waste that is spent in the service of Christ, or that money waste which is laid out in any work of piety; for, though it seem to be cast upon the waters, to be thrown down the river, we shall *find it again*, to advantage, *after many days*, Eccl. 1. 1.

2. See how they excuse their offence at it, and what pretence they made for it; *This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor*. Note, It is no new thing for bad affections to shelter themselves under specious covers; for people to shift off works of piety under colour of works of charity.

III. The reproof Christ gave to his disciples for the offence at this good woman; (v. 10, 11.) *Why trouble ye the woman?* Note, It is a great trouble to good

people to have their good works censured and misconstrued; and it is a thing that Jesus Christ takes very ill. He here took part with a good, honest, zealous, well-meaning, woman, against all his disciples, though they seem to have so much reason on their side; so heartily does he espouse the cause of the *offended little ones*, ch. 18. 10.

Observe his reason; *You have the poor always with you*. Note,

1. There are some opportunities of doing and getting good, which are constant, and which we must give constant attendance to the improvement of. Bibles we have always with us, sabbaths always with us, and so the *poor we have always with us*. Note, Those who have a heart to do good, never need to complain for want of opportunity. The poor never ceased even out of the land of Israel, Deut. 15. 11. We cannot but see some in this world who call for our charitable assistance, who are as God's receivers, some poor members of Christ, to whom he will have kindness shewn as to himself.

2. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good, which come but seldom, which are short and uncertain, and require more peculiar diligence in the improvement of them, and which ought to be preferred before the other; "*Me ye have not always*, therefore use me while ye have me." Note, (1.) Christ's constant *bodily* presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his *real* presence in the eucharist is a fond and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, *Me ye have not always*. (2.) Sometimes special works of piety and devotion should take place of common works of charity. The poor must not rob Christ; we must do good to all, but *especially to the household of faith*.

IV. Christ's approbation and commendation of the kindness of this good woman. The more his servants and their services are cavilled at by men, the more he manifests his acceptance of them. He calls it a *good work*, (v. 10.) and says more in praise of it than could have been imagined; particularly,

1. That the meaning of it was mystical; (v. 12.) *She did it for my burial*. (1.) Some think that she *intended* it so, and that the woman better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did; for which they were recompensed with the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection. (2.) However, Christ interpreted it so; and he is always willing to make the best, to make the most, of his people's well-meant words and actions. This was, as it were, the embalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was therefore done before; for it was fit that it should be done some time, to shew that he was still the Messiah, even when he seemed to be triumphed over by death. The disciples thought the ointment wasted which was poured upon his head. "But," saith he, "if so much ointment were poured upon a dead body, according to the custom of your country, you would not grudge it or think it waste. Now this is, in effect, so; the body she anoints is as good as dead, and her kindness is very seasonable for that purpose; therefore, rather than call it waste, put it upon that score."

2. That the memorial of it should be honourable; (v. 13.) *This shall be held for a memorial*. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that the preachers of Christ crucified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not choose but take notice of this passage, proclaim the notice of it, and perpetuate the memorial of it. And being once enrolled in these records, it was *graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever*, and could not possibly be forgotten. None of all the trumpets of fame sound so loud and so long as the everlasting gospel.

Note, (1.) The story of the death of Christ, though a tragical one, is gospel glad-tidings, because he died for us. (2.) The gospel was to be preached in the whole world; not in Judea only, but in every nation, to every creature. Let the disciples take notice of this, for their encouragement, that their sound should go to the ends of the earth. (3.) Though the honour of Christ is principally designed in the gospel, yet the honour of his saints and servants is not altogether overlooked. The memorial of this woman was to be preserved, not by dedicating a church to her, or keeping an annual feast in honour of her, or preserving a piece of her broken box for a sacred relic; but by mentioning her faith and piety in preaching of the gospel, for example to others, Heb. 6. 12. Hereby honour redounds to Christ himself, who, in this world, as well as in that to come, will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15. And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Immediately after an instance of the greatest kindness done to Christ, follows an instance of the greatest unkindness; such mixture is there of good and bad among the followers of Christ; he hath some faithful friends and some false and feigned ones. What could be more base than this agreement which Judas here made with the chief priests, to betray Christ to them?

I. The traitor was Judas Iscariot; he is said to be *one of the twelve*, as an aggravation of his villany. When the number of the disciples was multiplied, (Acts 6. 1.) no marvel if there were some among them that were a shame and trouble to them; but when there were but twelve, and one of them was a devil, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The twelve were Christ's chosen friends, that had the privilege of his special favour; they were his constant followers, that had the benefit of his most intimate converse, that upon all accounts had reason to love him and be true to him; and yet one of them betrayed him. Note, No bonds of duty or gratitude will hold those that have a devil, Mark 5. 3, 4.

II. Here is the proffer which he made to the chief priests; he went to them, and said, *What will ye give me?* v. 15. They did not send for him, nor make the proposal to him; they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. Note, there are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to shew it.

Observe, 1. What Judas promised; "*I will deliver him unto you.*" I will let you know where he is, and undertake to bring you to him, at such a convenient time and place, that you may seize him without noise, or danger of an uproar." In their conspiracy against Christ, this was it they were at a loss about, v. 4, 5. They durst not meddle with him in public, and knew not where to find him in private. Here the matter rested, and the difficulty was insuperable, till Judas came, and offered them his service. Note, Those that give up themselves to be led by the devil, find him readier than they imagine to help them at a dead-lift, as Judas did the chief priests. Though the rulers, by their power and interest, could kill him when they had him in their hands, yet none but a disciple could betray him. Note, The greater profession men make of religion,

and the more they are employed in the study and service of it, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. If Judas had not been an apostle, he could not have been a traitor; if men had not known the way of righteousness, they could not have abused it.

I will deliver him unto you. He did not offer himself, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, v. 59. And if there had been any thing to be alleged against him, which had but the colour of proof that he was an impostor, Judas was the likeliest person to have attested it; but this is an evidence of the innocence of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of his life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

2. What he asked in consideration of this undertaking; *What will ye give me?* This was the only thing that made Judas betray his Master; he hoped to get money by it: his Master had not given him any provocation, though he knew from the first that he had a devil; yet, for aught that appears, he shewed the same kindness to him that he did to the rest, and put no mark of disgrace upon him that might disoblige him; he had placed him in a post that pleased him, and made him purse-bearer; and though he had embezzled the common stock, for he is called a thief, (John 12. 6.) yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it; nor does it appear that he had any suspicion that the gospel was a cheat: no, it was not the hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but purely the love of the money; that, and nothing else, made Judas a traitor.

What will ye give me? Why, what did he want? Neither bread to eat, nor raiment to put on; neither necessities nor conveniences. Was not he welcome wherever his master was? Did he not fare as he fared? Had he not been but just now nobly entertained at a supper in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and a little before at another, where no less a person than Martha herself waited at table? And yet this covetous wretch could not be content, but comes basely cringing to the priests with, *What will ye give me?* Note, It is not the lack of money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil, and particularly of apostasy from Christ; witness Demas, 2 Tim. 4. 10. Satan tempted our Saviour with this bait, *All this will I give thee;* (ch. 4. 9.) but Judas offered himself to be tempted with it; he asks, *What will ye give me?* as if his Master was a commodity that stuck on his hands.

III. Here is the bargain which the chief priests made with him; they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; thirty shekels, which, in our money, is about three pounds eight shillings, so some; three pounds fifteen shillings, so others. It should seem, Judas referred himself to them, and was willing to take what they were willing to give; he catches at the first offer, lest the next should be worse. Judas had not been wont to trade high, and therefore a little money went a great way with him. By the law, (Exod. 21. 32.) thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave—a goodly price, at which Christ was valued! Zech. 11. 13. No wonder that Zion's sons, though comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, when Zion's King himself was thus undervalued. They covenanted with him; *ἔσταν—afferunt—they paid it down;* so some; gave him his wages in hand, to secure him and to encourage him.

IV. Here is the industry of Judas, in pursuance of his bargain; (v. 16.) he sought opportunity to betray him; his head was still working to find out how he might do it effectually. Note, 1. It is a

very wicked thing to seek opportunity to sin, and to devise mischief; for it argues the heart fully set on men to do evil, and a malice preposse. 2. Those that are *in*, think they must *on*, though the matter be ever so bad. After he had made that wicked bargain, he had time to repent, and to revoke it; but now, by his covenant, the devil has one hand more upon him than he had, and tells him that he must be true to his word, though ever so false to his Master, as Herod must behead John for his oath's sake.

17. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? 18. And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. 19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. 20. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. 21. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. 22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? 23. And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. 24. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. 25. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. Being made under the law, he submitted to all the ordinances of it, and to this among the rest; it was kept in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the birth-day of that people; it was a tradition of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and it was exactly fulfilled, for Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

I. The time when Christ ate the passover was the usual time appointed by God, and observed by the Jews: (v. 17.) *the first day of the feast of unleavened bread*, which that year happened on the fifth day of the week, which is our Thursday. Some have advanced a suggestion, that our Lord Jesus celebrated the passover at this time of day sooner than other people did; but the learned Dr. Whitby has largely disproved it.

II. The place where, was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples, upon their inquiry: (v. 17.) they asked, *Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover?* Perhaps Judas was one of those that asked this question, (where he would eat the passover,) that he might know the better to lay his train; but the rest of the disciples asked it as usual, that they might do their duty.

1. They took it for granted that their Master would eat the passover, though he was at this time persecuted by the chief priests, and his life sought; they knew that he would not be put by his duty,

either by frightenings without or fears within. Those do not follow Christ's example, who make it an excuse for their not attending on the Lord's supper, our gospel-passover, that they have many troubles and many enemies, are full of care and fear: for, if so, they have the more need of that ordinance, to help to silence their fears, and comfort them under their troubles, to help them in forgiving their enemies, and casting all their cares on God.

2. They knew very well that there must be preparation made for it, and that it was their business, as his servants, to make preparation: *Where wilt thou that we prepare?* Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be solemn preparation.

3. They knew that he had no house of his own wherein to eat the passover; in this, as in other things, *for our sakes he became poor*. Among all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King; but his kingdom was not of this world. See John 1. 11.

4. They would not pitch upon a place without direction from him, and from him they had direction; he sent them to *such a man*, (v. 18.) who probably was a friend and follower of his, and to his house he invited himself and his disciples.

(1.) Tell him, *My time is at hand*; he means the time of his death, elsewhere called *his hour*; (John 8. 20.—13. 1.) the time, the hour, fixed in the counsel of God, which his heart was upon, and which he had so often spoken of. He knew when it was at hand, and was busy accordingly; we *know not our time*, (Ecc. 9. 12.) and therefore must never be off our watch; *our time is always ready*, (John 7. 6.) and therefore we must be always ready. Observe, Because his time was at hand, he would keep the passover. Note, The consideration of the near approach of death should quicken us to a diligent improvement of all our opportunities for our souls. Is our time at hand, and an eternity just before us? *Let us then keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity*. Observe, When our Lord Jesus invited himself to this good man's house, he sent him this intelligence, that his time was at hand. Note, Christ's secret is with them that entertain him in their hearts. Compare John 14. 21. with Rev. 3. 20.

(2.) Tell him, *I will keep the passover at thy house*. This was an instance of his authority, as the Master, which, it is likely, this man acknowledged; he did not beg, but command, the use of his house for this purpose. Thus, when Christ by his Spirit comes into the heart, he demands admission, as one whose own the heart is, and cannot be denied; and he gains admission, as one who has all power in the heart, and cannot be resisted; if he saith, "I will keep a feast in such a soul," he will do it; for he works, and none can hinder; his people shall be willing, for he makes them so. *I will keep the passover with my disciples*. Note, Wherever Christ is welcome, he expects that his disciples should be welcome too. When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.

III. The preparation was made by the disciples; (v. 19.) *They did as Jesus had appointed*. Note, Those who would have Christ's presence with them in the gospel-passover, must strictly observe his instructions, and do as he directs; *They made ready the passover*; they got the lamb killed in the court of the temple, got it roasted, the bitter herbs provided, bread and wine, the cloth laid, and every thing set in readiness for such a sacred solemn feast.

IV. They ate the passover according to the law; (v. 20.) *He sat down*, in the usual table posture, not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps sitting low. It is the same word that is used for his posture at other meals, ch. 9. 10. Luke 7. 37. ch. 26. 7. It was only the first passover in Egypt, as most think, that was eaten with

their unsuited, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand, than had that it might be in a sitting posture. He sitting down denotes the composure of his mind, when he addressed himself to this solemnity; *He sat down with the twelve,* Judas not excepted. By the law, they were to take a lamb for a household, (Exod. 12. 3, 4.), which were to be not less than ten, nor more than twenty; Christ's disciples were his household. Note, They whom God has charged with families, must have their houses with them in serving the Lord.

V. We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples at the passover supper. The usual subject of discourse at that ordinance, was, the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; (Exod. 12. 26, 27.) but the great Passover is now ready to be offered, and the discourse of that swallows up all talk of the other, Jer. 16. 14, 15. Here is,

1. The general notice Christ gives his disciples of the treachery that should be among them; (v. 21.) *One of you shall betray me.* Observe, (1.) Christ knew it. We know not what troubles will befall us, nor whence they will arise; but Christ knew all his, which, as it proves his omniscience, so it magnifies his love, that he knew all things that should befall him, and yet did not draw back. He foresaw the treachery and baseness of a disciple of his own, and yet went on; took care of those that were given him, though he knew there was a Judas among them; would pay the price of our redemption, though he foresaw some would deny the Lord that bought them; and shed his blood, though he knew it would be trodden under foot as an unholy thing. (2.) When there was occasion, he let those about him know it. He had often told them, that the Son of man should be betrayed; now he tells them that one of them should do it, that, when they saw it, they might not only be the less surprised, but have their faith in him confirmed, John 13. 19. —14. 29.

2. The disciples' feelings on this occasion, v. 22. How did they take it?

(1.) *They were exceeding sorrowful.* [1.] It troubled them much to hear that their Master should be betrayed. When Peter was first told of it, he said, *Be it far from thee;* and therefore it must needs be a great trouble to him, and the rest of them, to hear that it was very near to him. [2.] It troubled them more to hear that one of them should do it. It would be a reproach to the fraternity for an apostle to prove a traitor, and this grieved them; gracious souls grieve for the sins of others, especially of those that have made a more than ordinary profession of religion, 2 Cor. 11. 29. [3.] It troubled them most of all, that they were left at uncertainty which of them it was, and each of them was afraid for himself, lest, as Hazael speaks, (2 Kings 8. 13.) he was the dog that should do this great thing. Those that know the strength and subtlety of the tempter, and their own weakness and folly, cannot but be in pain for themselves, when they hear that *the love of many will wax cold.*

(2.) *They began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?*

[1.] They were not apt to suspect Judas; though he was a thief, yet, it seems, he had carried it so plausibly, that those who were intimate with him were not jealous of him: none of them so much as looked upon him, much less said, *Lord, is it Judas?* Note, It is possible for a hypocrite to go through the world, not only undiscovered, but unsuspected: like bad money, so ingeniously counterfeited, that nobody questions it.

[2.] They were apt to suspect themselves; *Lord, is it I?* Though they were not conscious to themselves of any inclination that way, (no such thought had ever entered into their mind,) yet they feared

the worst, and asked Him, who knows us better than we know ourselves, *Lord, is it I?* Note, It will become the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, and therefore have reason, *not to be high-minded, but fear.* It is observable, that our Lord Jesus, just before he instituted the Lord's supper, put his disciples upon this trial and suspicion of themselves, to teach us to examine and judge ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

3. Further information given them concerning this matter, (v. 23, 24.) where Christ tells them, (1.) That the traitor was a familiar friend; *He that dipeth his hand with me in the dish;* that is, One of you that are now with me at the table. He mentions this to make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. Note, External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is a great aggravation of our falseness to him. It is base ingratitude to dip with Christ in the dish, and yet betray him. (2.) That this was according to the scripture, which would take off the offence at it. Was Christ betrayed by a disciple? So it was written; (Ps. 41. 9.) *He that did eat bread with me has lifted up the heel against me.* The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them. (3.) That it would prove a very dear bargain to the traitor; *Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.* This he said, not only to awaken the conscience of Judas, and bring him to repent, and revoke his bargain, but for warning to all others to take heed of sinning like Judas; though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that doth not make the sinner's condition the less woeful: *It had been good for that man, if he had not been born.* Note, The ruin that attends those who betray Christ, is so great, that it were more eligible, by far, not to be at all, than to be thus miserable.

4. The conviction of Judas, v. 25. (1.) He asked, *Is it I?* to avoid coming under the suspicion of guilt by his silence. He knew very well that it was he, and yet wished to appear a stranger to such a plot. Note, Many, whose consciences condemn them, are very industrious to justify themselves before men, and put a good face on it, with, *Lord, is it I?* He could not but know that Christ knew, and yet trusted so much to his courtesy, because he had hitherto concealed it, that he had the impudence to challenge him to tell; or, perhaps, he was so much under the power of infidelity, that he imagined Christ did not know it, as those who said, *The Lord shall not see,* (Ps. 94. 7.) and asked, *Can he judge through the dark clouds?* (2.) Christ soon answered his question; *Thou hast said,* that is, It is as thou hast said. This is not all spoken out so plain as Nathan's, *Thou art the man;* but it was enough to convict him, and, if his heart had not been wretchedly hardened, to have broken the neck of his plot, when he saw it discovered to his Master, and discovered by him. Note, They who are contriving to betray Christ, will, some time or other, betray themselves, and *their own tongues will fall upon them.*

26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: 28. For this is my blood of the new testament,

which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

We have here the institution of the great gospel-ordinance of the Lord's supper, which was received of the Lord. Observe,

I. The time when it was instituted—as they were eating. At the latter end of the passover-supper, before the table was drawn, because, as a feast upon a sacrifice, it was to come in the room of that ordinance. Christ is to us the Passover Sacrifice, by which atonement is made; (1 Cor. 5. 8.) *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.* This ordinance is to us the passover-supper, by which application is made, and commemoration celebrated, of a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt. All the legal sacrifices of propitiation being summed up in the death of Christ, and so abolished, all the legal feasts of rejoicing were summed up in this sacrament, and so abolished.

II. The institution itself. A sacrament must be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significance from the institution, from a divine institution: it is his prerogative, who established the covenant, to appoint the seals of it. Hence the apostle, (1 Cor. 11. 23, &c.) in that discourse of his concerning this ordinance, all along calls Jesus Christ *the Lord*, because as *Lord*, as Lord of the covenant, Lord of the church, he appointed this ordinance. In which,

1. The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread; he had said formerly, (John 6. 35.) *I am the Bread of life*, upon which metaphor this sacrament is built; as the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment. (ch. 4. 4.—6. 11.) so the life of the soul is supported and maintained by Christ's mediation.

(1.) *He took bread, $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon$ —he loaf*; some loaf that lay ready at hand, fit for the purpose; it was probably unleavened bread; but that circumstance not being taken notice of, we are not to bind ourselves to that, as some of the Greek churches do. His taking the bread was a solemn action, and was, probably, done in such a manner as to be observed by them that sat with him, that they might expect something more than ordinary to be done with it. Thus was the Lord Jesus set apart in the counsels of divine love for the working out of our redemption.

(2.) *He blessed it*; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words used by him upon this occasion; but what he said, no doubt, was accommodated to the business in hand, that New Testament, which by this ordinance was to be sealed and ratified. This was like God's blessing the seventh day, (Gen. 2. 3.) by which it was separated to God's honour, and made, to all that duly observe it, a blessed day; Christ could command the blessing, and we, in his name, are emboldened to beg the blessing.

(3.) *He brake it*; which denotes, [1.] The breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our use; *He was bruised for our iniquities*, as *bread-corn is bruised*; (Isa. 28. 28.) though *a bone of him was not broken*, (for all his breaking did not weaken him,) yet his flesh was broken with breach upon breach, and his wounds were multiplied, (John 19. 36.—11. 17.) and that pained him. God complains that he is broken with the *whorish heart of sinners*;

(Ezek. 6. 9.) his law broken, our covenants with him broken; now justice requires *breach for breach*, (Rev. 24. 20.) and Christ was broken, to satisfy that demand. [2.] The breaking of Christ's body to us, as the father of the family breaks the bread to the children. The breaking of Christ to us is to facilitate the application; every thing is made ready to us by the grants of God's word and the operations of his grace.

(4.) *He gave it to his disciples*, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast; it is not said, *He gave it to the apostles*, though they were so, and had been often called so before this, but *to the disciples*, because all the disciples of Christ have a right to this ordinance; and these shall have the benefit of it who are his disciples indeed; yet he gave it to them as he did the multiplied loaves, by them to be handed to all his other followers.

(5.) *He said, Take, eat; this is my body*, v. 26. He here tells them,

[1.] What they should do with it; "*Take, eat*; accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, approve of it, consent to it, come up to the terms on which the benefit of it is proposed to you; submit to his grace and to his government." Believing on Christ is expressed by *receiving him*, (John 1. 12.) and *feeding upon him*, John 6. 57, 58. Meat looked upon, or the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish us; it must be fed upon, so must the doctrine of Christ.

[2.] What they should have with it; *This is my body*, not *brave*—*this bread*, but *τῆς*—*this eating and drinking*. Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. *This is my body*, spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental language, like that, Exod. 12. 11. *It is the Lord's passover*. Upon a carnal and much mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

2. The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine; to make it a complete feast, here is not only bread to strengthen, but wine to *make glad the heart*, (v. 27, 28.) *He took the cup*, the grace-cup, which was set ready to be drank, after thanks returned, according to the custom of the Jews at the passover; this Christ took, and made the sacramental-cup, and so altered the property. It was intended for a *cup of blessing*, (so the Jews called it,) and therefore St. Paul studiously distinguished between the cup of blessing which *we* bless, and that which *they* bless. *He gave thanks*, to teach us, not only in every ordinance, but in every part of the ordinance, to have our eyes up to God.

This cup he gave to the disciples,

(1.) With a command: *Drink ye all of it*. Thus he welcomes his guests to his table, obliges them all to drink of his cup. Why should he so expressly command them all to drink, and to see that none let it pass them, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Surely it was because he foresaw how in after-ages this ordinance would be dismembered by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, with an express *non obstante—notwithstanding* to the command.

(2.) With an explication: *For this is my blood of the New Testament*. Therefore drink it with appetite, delight, because it is so rich a cordial. Hitherto the blood of Christ had been represented by

the blood of beasts, real blood; but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, metaphorical blood; so wine is called in an Old-Testament prophecy of Christ, Gen. 49. 10, 11.

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament.

[1.] *It is my blood of the New Testament.* The Old Testament was confirmed by the *blood of bulls and goats*; (Heb. 9. 16, 17. Exod. 24. 8.) but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, which is here distinguished from that; *It is my blood of the New Testament.* The covenant God is pleased to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death.

[2.] *It is shed*; it was not shed till next day, but it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as good as done. "Before you come to repeat this ordinance yourselves, it will be shed." He was *now ready to be offered*, and his blood to be poured out, as the blood of the sacrifices which made atonement.

[3.] *It is shed for many.* Christ came to confirm a covenant with many, (Dan. 9. 27.) and the intent of his death agreed. The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few; it confirmed a covenant which (saith Moses) the Lord has made with you, Exod. 24. 8. The atonement was made only for the children of Israel; (Lev. 16. 34.) but Jesus Christ is a Propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2. 2.

[4.] *It is shed for the remission of sins*, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption, which we have through his blood, is the remission of sins, Eph. 1. 7. The new covenant, which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ, is a charter of pardon, an act of indemnity, in order to a reconciliation between God and man; for sin was the only thing that made the quarrel, and without shedding of blood is no remission, Heb. 9. 22. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred upon all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, and the spring of everlasting comfort, ch. 9. 2, 3. A farewell is now bidden to the fruit of the vine, v. 29. Christ and his disciples had now feasted together, with a deal of comfort, in both an Old-Testament and a New-Testament festival, *fibula utrusque Testamenti—the connecting tie of both Testaments.* How amiable were these tabernacles! How good to be here! Never such a heaven upon earth as was at this table; but it was not intended for a perpetuity; he now told them, (John 16. 17.) that yet a little while and they should not see him: and again, a little while, and they should see him, which explains this here.

First, He takes leave of such communion; *I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine*, that is, Now that I am no more in the world, (John 17: 11.) I have had enough of it, and am glad to think of leaving it, glad to think that this is the last meal. *Farewell this fruit of the vine*, this passover-cup, this sacramental wine. Dying saints take their leave of sacraments, and the other ordinances of communion which they enjoy in this world, with comfort, for the joy and glory they enter into supersede them all; when the sun rises, farewell the candles.

Secondly, He assures them of a happy meeting again at last. It is a long, but not an everlasting, farewell; *until that day when I drink it new with you.* 1. Some understand it of the interviews he had with them after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation into the kingdom of his Father; and though during those forty days he did not converse with them so constantly as he had done, yet he did eat and drink with them, (Acts 10. 41.) which, as it confirmed their faith, so doubtless it greatly comforted their hearts, for they were overjoyed at it, Luke 24. 41. 2. Others understand it

of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake of in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus, represented here by the pleasures of a banquet of wine. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; *the wine of consolation* (Jer. 16. 7.) will there be always new, never flat or sour, as wine with long keeping; never nauseous or unpleasant, as wine to those that have drank much, but ever fresh. Christ will himself partake of these pleasures, it was *the joy set before him*, which he had in his eye, and all his faithful friends and followers shall partake with him.

Lastly, Here is the close of the solemnity with a hymn; (v. 30.) *They sang a hymn* or psalm; whether the psalm which the Jews usually sung at the close of the passover-supper, which they called the *great hallel*, that is, Ps. 113. and the five that follow it, or whether some new hymn, more closely adapted to the occasion, is uncertain; I rather think the former; had it been new, John would not have omitted to record it. Note, 1. Singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance. Christ's removing the hymn from the close of the passover to the close of the Lord's supper, plainly intimates that he intended that ordinance should continue in his church, that, as it had not its birth with the ceremonial law, so it should not die with it. 2. It is very proper after the Lord's supper, as an expression of our joy in God through Jesus Christ, and a thankful acknowledgment of that great love wherewith God has loved us in him. 3. It is not unseasonable, no, not in times of sorrow and suffering; the disciples were in sorrow, and Christ was entering upon his sufferings, and yet they could sing a hymn together. Our spiritual joy should not be interrupted by outward afflictions.

When this was done, they went out into the mount of Olives. He would not stay in the house, to be apprehended, lest he should bring the master of the house into trouble; nor would he stay in the city, lest it should occasion an uproar; but he retired into the adjacent country, the mount of Olives, the same mount that David in his distress went up the ascent of, weeping, 2 Sam. 15. 30. They had the benefit of moon-light for this walk, for the passover was always at the full moon. Note, After we have received the Lord's supper, it is good for us to retire for prayer and meditation, and to be alone with God.

31. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon the way, as they were going to the mount of Olives. Observe,

1. A prediction of the trial which both he and his disciples were now to go through. He here foretells,

1. A dismal scattering storm just arising, v. 31.

(1.) That they should all be offended because of

Christ that very night; that is, they would all be so frightened with the sufferings, they would not have the courage to cleave to him in them, but would all basely desert him; *Because of me this night*; *ὡς ἂν ἡ τὴν νύκτα τούτην*—*because of me, even because of this night*; so it might be read; that is, because of what happens to me this night. Note, [1.] Offences will come among the disciples of Christ in an hour of trial and temptation; it cannot be but they should, for they are weak, Satan is busy; God permits offences; even they whose hearts are upright may sometimes be overtaken with an offence.

[2.] There are some temptations and offences, the effects of which are general and universal among Christ's disciples; *All you shall be offended*. Christ had lately discovered to them the treachery of Judas; but let not the rest be secure; though there will be but one traitor, they will be all deserters. This he saith, to alarm them all, that they might all watch. [3.] We have need to prepare for sudden trials, which may come to extremity in a very little time. Christ and his disciples had eaten their supper well together in peace and quietness; yet that very night proved such a night of offence. How soon may a storm arise! We know not what a day or a night may bring forth, nor what great event may be in the teeming womb of a little time, Prov. 27. 1. [4.] The cross of Christ is the great stumbling-block to many that pass for his disciples; both the cross he bare for us, (1 Cor. 1. 23.) and that which we are called out to bear for him, ch. 16. 24.

(2.) That herein the scripture would be fulfilled; *I will smite the Shepherd*. It is quoted from Zech. 13. 7.

[1.] Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten. [2.] The scattering of the sheep, thereupon, in the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, his disciples ran, one one way, and another another; it was each one's care to shift for himself, and happy he that could get furthest from the cross.

• 2. He gives them the prospect of a comfortable gathering together again after this storm; (v. 32.) *"After I am risen again, I will go before you*. Though you will forsake me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will take care you shall not fall finally: we shall have a meeting again in Galilee, *I will go before you*, as the shepherd before the sheep." Some make the last words of that prophecy, (Zech. 13. 7.) a promise equivalent to this here; and *I will bring my hand again to the little ones*. There is no bringing them back but by bringing his hand to them. Note, The Captain of our salvation knows how to rally his troops, when, through their cowardice, they have been put into disorder.

II. The presumption of Peter, that he should keep his integrity, whatever happened; *Though all men be offended, yet will I never be offended*. Peter had a great stock of confidence, and was upon all occasions forward to speak, especially to speak for himself; sometimes it did him a kindness, but at other times it betrayed him, as it did here. Where observe,

1. How he bound himself with a promise, that he would never be offended in Christ; not only not this night, but at no time. If this promise had been made in a humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, it had been an excellent word. Before the Lord's supper, Christ's discourse led his disciples to examine themselves with, *Lord, is it I?* For that is our preparatory duty; after the ordinance, his discourse leads them to an *engaging* of themselves to close walking, for that is the subsequent duty.

2. How he fancied himself better armed against temptation than any one else, and this was his weak-

ness and folly; *Though all men shall be offended, yet will not I*. This was worse than Hazael's, *What! is thy servant a dog?* For he supposed the thing to be so bad, that no man would do it. But Peter supposes it possible that *some*, nay that *all*, might be offended, and yet he escape better than any. Note, It argues a great degree of self-conceit and self-confidence, to think ourselves either safe from the temptations, or free from the corruptions, that are common to men. We should rather say, If it be possible that others may be offended, there is danger that I may be so. But it is common for those who think too well of themselves, easily to admit suspicions of others. See Gal. 6. 1.

III. The particular warning Christ gave Peter of what he would do, v. 34. He imagined that in the hour of temptation he should come off better than any of them, and Christ tells him that he should come off worse. The warning is introduced with a solemn asseveration; *"Verily, I say unto thee*; take my word for it, who know thee better than thou knowest thyself." He tells him,

1. That he should deny him. Peter promised that he would not be so much as offended in him, not desert him; but Christ tells him that he will go further, he will disown him. He said, "Though all men, yet not I;" and he did it sooner than any.

2. How quickly he should do it; *this night*, before to-morrow, nay, *before cock-crowing*. Satan's temptations are compared to *darts*, (Eph. 6. 16.) which wound ere we are aware; *suddenly doth he shoot*. As we know not how near we may be to trouble, so we know not how near we may be to sin; if God leave us to ourselves, we are always in danger.

3. How often he should do it; *thrice*. He thought that he should never once do such a thing; but Christ tells him that he would do it again and again; for, when once our feet begin to slip, it is hard to recover our standing again. *The beginnings of sin are as the letting forth of water*.

IV. Peter's repeated assurances of his fidelity; (v. 35.) *Though I should die with thee*. He supposed the temptation strong, when he said, *Though all men do it, yet will not I*. But here he supposeth it stronger, when he puts it to the peril of life; *Though I should die with thee*. He knew what he *should* do—rather die with Christ than deny him, it was the condition of discipleship; (Luke 14. 26.) and he thought what he *would* do—never be false to his Master whatever it cost him; yet, it proved, he was. It is easy to talk boldly and carelessly of death at a distance; "I will rather die than do such a thing;" but it is not so soon done as said, when it comes to the setting-to, and death shows itself in its own colours.

What Peter said the rest subscribed to; *likewise also said all the disciples*. Note, 1. There is a proneness in good men to be over-confident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; but it is because we do not know ourselves. 2. Those often fall soonest and foulest, that are most confident of themselves. Those are least safe, that are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such; they are most off their guard, and God leaves them to themselves, to humble them. See 1 Cor. 10. 12.

36. Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. 38. Then saith he unto them, My soul is ex-

cooling sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? 41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 43. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. 44. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Hitherto, we have seen the preparatives for Christ's sufferings; now, we enter upon the bloody scene. In these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden. This was the beginning of sorrows to our Lord Jesus. Now the *sword of the Lord* began to awake against the *Man that was his fellow*; and how should it be quiet when the *Lord had given it a charge*? The clouds had been gathering a good while, and looked black. He had said, some days before, *Now is my soul troubled*, John 12. 27. But now the storm began in good earnest. He put himself into this agony, before his enemies gave him any trouble, to show that he was a Free-will-offering; that his life was not forced from him, but he *laid it down of himself*, John 10. 18. Observe,

I. The place where he underwent this mighty agony; it was in a place called *Gethsemane*. The name signifies, *torculus olei*—an olive-mill, a press for olives, like a wine-press, where they trod the olives, Mic. 6. 15. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. There our Lord Jesus began his passion, there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that we might partake of the root and fatness of that *good olive*. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone.

II. The company he had with him, when he was in this agony.

1. He took all the twelve disciples with him to the garden, except Judas, who was at this time otherwise employed. Though it was late in the night, near bed-time, yet they kept with him, and took this walk by moon-light with him, as Elisha, who, when he was told that his master should shortly be taken from his head, declared that he *would not leave him*, though he *led him about*; so these follow the Lamb, wheresoever he goes.

2. He took only Peter, and James, and John, with him into that corner of the garden where he suffered his agony. He left the rest at some distance, perhaps at the garden door, with this charge, *Sit ye here, while I go pray yonder*; like that of Abraham

to his *young men*, (Gen. 22. 5.) *Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship*. (1.) Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples, John 17. 1. Note, Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions. (2.) He ordered them to sit here. Note, We must take heed of giving any disturbance or interruption to those who retire for secret communion with God. He took these three with him, because they had been the witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration, (ch. 17. 1, 2.) and that would prepare them to be the witnesses of his agony. Note, Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory, and have conversed with the glorified saints upon the holy mount. *If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him*; and if we hope to reign with him, why should we not expect to suffer with him?

III. The agony itself that he was in; *He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy*. It is called an agony, (Luke 22. 44.) a conflict. It was not any bodily pain or torment that he was in, nothing occurred to hurt him; but, whatever it was, it was from within; he troubled himself, John 11. 33. The words here used are very emphatical; he began *λυπεῖσθαι καὶ θορυβεῖν*—to be sorrowful, and in a consternation. The latter word signifies such a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desirous of it. He had like a weight of lead upon his spirits. Physicians use a word near akin to it, to signify the disorder the man is in, in a fit of an ague, or beginning of a fever. Now was fulfilled Ps. 22. 14. *I am poured out like water, my heart is like wax, it is melted*; and all those passages in the Psalms, where David complains of the sorrow of his soul, Ps. 18. 4, 6.—42. 7.—55. 4, 5.—69. 1—3.—88. 3.—116. 3. and Jonah's complaint, ch. 2. 4, 5.

But what was the cause of all this? What was it that put him into this agony? *Why art thou cast down, blessed Jesus, and why disquieted*? Certainly, it was nothing of despair or distrust of his Father, much less any conflict or struggle with him. As the Father loved him because he laid down his life for the sheep, so he was entirely subject to his Father's will in it. But,

1. He engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness; so he intimates; (Luke 22. 53.) *This is your hour, and the power of darkness*; and he spake of it just before; (John 14. 30, 31.) *"The prince of this world comes"*. I see him rallying his forces, and preparing for a general assault; but *he has nothing in me, no garrisons in his interest, none that secretly hold correspondence with him*; and therefore his attempts, though fierce, will be fruitless: but *as the Father gave me commandment, so I do*; however it be, I must have a struggle with him, the field must be fairly fought; and therefore *arise, let us go hence, let us hasten to the field of battle, and meet the enemy*." Now is the close engagement in single combat between Michael and the dragon, hand to hand; *now is the judgment of this world*; the great cause is now to be determined, and the decisive battle fought, in which the *prince of this world* will certainly be beaten and cast out, John 12. 31. Christ, when he works salvation, is described like a champion taking the field, Isa. 59. 16—18. Now the serpent makes his fiercest onset on the Sea of the woman, and directs his sting, the sting of death, to his very heart; *animamque in vulnere ponit*—and the wound is mortal.

2. He was now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering upon were for our sins; they were all made to meet upon him, and he knew it. As we are obliged to be sorry for our particular sins, so was he grieved for the sins of us all.

So Bishop Pearson, *h.* 191. Now, in the valley of *Jehoshaphat*, where Christ now was, God gathered all nations, and pleaded with them in his Son, Joel 3. 2. 12. He knew the malignity of the sins that were laid upon him, how provoking to God, how ruining to him; and these being all set in order before him, and charged upon him, he was *sorrowful and very heavy*. Now it was that iniquities took hold on him; so that he was not able to look up, as was foretold concerning him, Ps. 40. 7, 12.

3. He had a full and clear prospect of all the sufferings that were before him. He foresaw the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their base ingratitude. He knew that he should now in a few hours be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; death in its most dreadful appearances, death in pomp, attended with all its terrors, looked him in the face; and this made him sorrowful, especially because it was the wages of our sin, which he had undertaken to satisfy for. It is true, the martyrs that have suffered for Christ have entertained the greatest torments, and the most terrible deaths, without any such sorrow and consternation; have called their prison their delectable orchards, and a bed of flames a bed of roses; but then, (1.) Christ was now denied the supports and comforts which they had; that is, he denied them to himself, and *his soul refused to be comforted*, not in passion, but in justice to his undertaking. Their cheerfulness under the cross was owing to the divine favour, which, for the present, was suspended from the Lord Jesus. (2.) His sufferings were of another nature from theirs. St. Paul, when he is to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith, can *joy and rejoice with them all*; but to be offered a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, is quite a different case. On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it; (*ch.* 5. 10, 12.) but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful and very heavy under it. And I is sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it.

IV. His complaint of this agony. Finding himself under the arrests of his passion, he goes to his disciples, (*v.* 39.) and,

1. He acquaints them with his condition; *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. It gives some little ease to a troubled spirit, to have a friend ready to unbosom itself to, and give vent to its sorrows. Christ here tells them, (1.) What was the seat of his sorrow; it was his soul that was now in an agony. This proves that Christ had a true human soul; for he suffered, not only in his body, but in his soul. We had sinned both against our own bodies, and against our souls; both had been used in sin, and both had been wronged by it; and therefore Christ suffered in soul as well as in body. (2.) What was the degree of his sorrow. He was *exceeding sorrowful, troubled*—compassed about with sorrows on all hands. It was sorrow in the highest degree, even unto death; it was a killing sorrow, such sorrow as no mortal man could bear and live. He was ready to die for grief; they were sorrows of death. (3.) The duration of it; it will continue even unto death. "My soul will be sorrowful as long as it is in this body: I see no outlet but death." He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, *It is finished*; that grief is now finished, which began in the garden. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be a *Man of sorrows*; (*Isa.* 53. 3.) he was so all along, we never read that he laughed; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

2. He bespeaks their company and attendance; *Tarry ye here, and watch with me*. Surely he was destitute indeed of help, when he entreated their's, who, he knew, would be but miserable comforters;

but he would hereby teach us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek, the assistance of our brethren, when at any time we are in an agony; *for two are better than one*. What he said to them, he saith to all, *Watch*, Mark 13. 37. Not only watch for him, in expectation of his future coming, but watch with him, in application to our present work.

V. What passed between him and his Father when he was in this agony; *Beings in an agony, he prayed*. Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially seasonable in an agony.

Observe, 1. The place where he prayed; *He went a little further*, withdrew from them, that the scripture might be fulfilled, *I have trod the wine-press alone*; he retired for prayer; a troubled soul finds most ease when it is alone with God, who understands the broken language of sighs and groans. Calvin's devout remark upon this is worth transcribing, *Utile est seorsim orare, tunc enim magis familiariter sese demutat fidelis animus, et simplicius sua vota, gemitus, curas, pavores, spes, et gaudia in Deum exonerat*—It is useful to pray apart; for then the faithful soul develops itself more familiarly, and with greater simplicity pours forth its petitions, groans, cares, fears, hopes, and joys, into the bosom of God. Christ has hereby taught us that secret prayer must be made secretly. Yet some think that even the disciples, whom he left at the garden door, overheard him; for, it is said, (*Heb.* 5. 7.) they were *strong cries*.

2. His posture in prayer; *He fell on his face*; his lying prostrate denotes, (1.) The agony he was in, and the extremity of his sorrow. Job, in great grief, *fell on the ground*; and great anguish is expressed by *rolling in the dust*, Mic. 1. 10. (2.) His humility in prayer. This posture was an expression of his *ὑποταγή*—his reverential fear; (spoken of *Heb.* 5. 7.) with which he offered up these prayers; and it was *in the days of his flesh*, in his estate of humiliation, to which hereby he accommodated himself.

3. The prayer itself; wherein we may observe three things.

(1.) The title he gives to God; *O my Father*. Thick as the cloud was, he could see God as a Father through it. Note, In all our addresses to God, we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time, *my Father*; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him, but to his father?

(2.) The favour he begs; *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me*. He calls his sufferings a *cup*; not a river, not a sea, but a cup, which we shall soon see the bottom of. When we are under troubles, we should make the best, the least, of them, and not aggravate them. His sufferings might be called a *cup*, because allotted him, as at least a cup was set to every mess. He begs that this cup might *pass from him*, that is, that he might avoid the sufferings now at hand; or, at least, that they might be shortened. This intimates no more than that he was really and truly Man, and as a man he could not but be averse to pain and suffering. This is the first and simple act of man's will—to start back from that which is sensibly grievous to us, and to desire the prevention and removal of it. The law of self-preservation is impressed upon the innocent nature of man, and rules there, till overruled by some other law; therefore Christ admitted, and expressed, a reluctance to suffer, to shew that he was *taken from among men*, (*Heb.* 5. 1.) was touched with the *feeling of our infirmities*, (*Heb.* 4. 15.) and *tempted as we are*; yet *without sin*. Note, A prayer of faith, against an affliction, may very well consist with the patience of hope under an affliction. When David

had said, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*; his very next words were, *Remove thy stroke away from me*, Ps. 39. 9, 10. But observe the proviso; *if it be possible*. If God may be glorified, man saved, and the ends of his undertaking answered, without his drinking of this bitter cup, he desires to be excused; otherw^{ise} se not. What we cannot do with the securing of our great end, we must reckon to be in effect impossible; Christ did so. *Id possumus quod jure possumus—We can do that which we can do lawfully*. We can do nothing, not only we may do nothing, against the truth.

(3.) His entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God; *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*. Not that the human will of Christ was adverse or averse to the divine will; it was only, in its first act, diverse from it; to which, in the second act of the will, which compares and chooses, he freely submits himself. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus, though he had a quick sense of the extreme bitterness of the sufferings he was to undergo, yet was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation, and *offered himself, and gave himself, for us*. [2.] The reason of Christ's submission to his sufferings, was, his Father's will; *as thou wilt*; v. 39. He grounds his own willingness upon the Father's will, and resolves the matter wholly into that; *therefore* he did what he did, and did it with delight, because it was the will of God, Ps. 40. 7. This he had often referred to, as that which put him upon, and carried him through, his whole undertaking; *This is the Father's will*, John 6. 39, 40. This he sought; (John 5. 30.) it was his *meat and drink* to do it, John 4. 34. [3.] In conformity to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit. We then are disposed as Christ was, when our wills are in every thing melted into the will of God, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood; *The will of the Lord be done*, Acts 21. 14.

4. The repetition of the prayer; *He went away again the second time, and prayed*, (v. 42.) and again the third time, (v. 44.) and all to the same purport; only, as it is related here, he did not, in the second and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. Note, Though we may pray to God to prevent and remove an affliction, yet our chief errand, and that which we should most insist upon, must be, that he will give us grace to bear it well. It should be more our care to get our troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. *He prayed, saying, Thy will be done*. Note, Prayer is the offering up, not only of our desires, but of our resignations, to God. It amounts to an acceptable prayer, when at any time we are in distress, to refer ourselves to God, and to commit our way and work to him; *Thy will be done*. The third time he said the same words, *τοὺς αὐτοὺς λόγους—the same word*, that is, the same matter or argument; he spake to the same purport. We have reason to think that this was not all he said, for it should seem, by v. 40. that he continued an hour in his agony and prayer; but, whatever more he said, it was to this effect, awfully impressed with the thought of his approaching sufferings, and yet resigned himself to God's will in them. In the expressions of which we may be sure he was not straitened.

But what answer had he to this prayer? Certainly it was not made in vain; he that heard him *always*, did not deny him *now*. It is true, the cup did not pass from him, for he withdrew that petition, and did not insist upon it; (if he had, for aught I know, the cup had passed away;) but he had an answer to his prayer; for, (1.) *He was strengthened with strength in his soul*, in the day when he cried; (Ps.

138. 3.) and that was a real answer, Luke 22. 43. (2.) He was delivered from that which he feared, which was, lest by impatience and distrust he should offend his Father, and so disable himself to go on with his undertaking, Heb. 5. 7.* In answer to his prayer, God provided that he should not fail or be discouraged.

VI. What passed between him and his three disciples at this time; and there we may observe,

1. The fault they were guilty of; that when he was in his agony, sorrowful and heavy, sweating, and wrestling, and praying, they were so little concerned, that they could not keep awake; he comes, and *finds them asleep*, v. 40. The strangeness of the thing should have roused their spirits to *turn aside now, and see this great sight—the bush burning, and yet not consumed*; much more should their love to their Master, and their care concerning him, have obliged them to a more close and vigilant attendance on him; yet they were so dull, that they could not keep their eyes open. What had become of us, if Christ had been now as sleepy as his disciples were? It is well for us, that our salvation is in the hand of one who *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. Christ engaged them to watch with him, as if he expected some succour from them, and yet they slept; surely it was the unkindest thing that could be. When David wept at this mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him; (2 Sam. 15. 30.) but when the Son of David was here in tears, his followers were asleep. His enemies, who watched for him, were wakeful enough; (Mark 14. 43.) but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! Note, Carelessness and carnal security, especially when Christ is in his agony, are great faults in any, but especially in those who profess to be nearest in relation to him. The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without, and fears within; and shall we he asleep then, like Gallio, that *cared for none of these things*; or those (Amos 6. 6.) that *lay at ease, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*?

2. Christ's favour to them, notwithstanding. Persons in sorrow are too apt to be cross and peevish with those about them, and to lay it grievously to heart, if they but seem to neglect them; but Christ in his agony is as meek as ever, and carries it as patiently toward his followers as toward his Father, and is not apt to take things ill.

When Christ's disciples put this slight upon him,

(1.) *He came to them*, as if he expected to receive some comfort from them; and if they had put him in mind of what they had heard from him concerning his resurrection and glory, perhaps it might have been some help to him; but, instead of that, they added grief to his sorrow; and yet he came to them, more careful for them than they were for themselves; when he was most engaged, yet he came to look after them; for those that were given him were upon his heart, living and dying.

(2.) He gave them a gentle reproof, for as many as he loves he rebukes; he directed it to Peter, who used to *speak* for them; let him now *hear* for them. The reproof was very melting; *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* He speaks as one amazed to see them so stupid; every word, when closely considered, shews the aggravated nature of the case. Consider, [1.] *Who they were*; "Could not ye watch—ye, my disciples and followers? No wonder if others neglect me, if the earth sit still, and he at rest; (Zech. 1. 11.) but from you I expected better things." [1.] *Who he was*; "Watch with me. It

* It is surprising that a suggestion so dishonourable to our Lord should have been entertained for a moment by so excellent a man.—Ed.

one of yourselves were ill and in an agony, it would be very unkind not to watch with him; but it is undutiful not to watch with your Master, who has long watched over you for good, has led you, and fed you, and taught you, borne you, and borne with you; do ye thus requite him?" He awoke out of his sleep, to help them when they were in distress; (*ch. 8. 26.*) and could not they keep awake, at least to shew their good-will to him, especially considering that he was now suffering *for them*, in an agony *for them*? *Jam tua res optatur—I am suffering in your cause.* [3.] How small a thing it was that he expected from them—only to *watch with him*. If he had bid them do some great things, had bid them be in an agony with him, or die with him, they thought they could have done it; and yet they could not do it, when he only desired them to *watch with him*, 2 Kings 5. 13. [4.] How short a time it was that he expected it—but *one hour*; they were not set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was, (Isa. 21. 8.) only *one hour*. Sometimes he *continued all night in prayer to God*, but did not then expect that his disciples should watch with him; only now, when he had but one hour to spend in prayer.

[3.] He gave them good counsel; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, v. 41. [1.] There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to him. [2.] There was danger of their entering into the temptation, as into a snare or trap; of their entering into a parley with it, or a good opinion of it, of their being influenced by it, and inclining to comply with it; which is the first step toward being overcome by it. [3.] He therefore exhorts them to watch and pray; *Watch with me, and pray with me*. While they were sleeping, they lost the benefit of joining in Christ's prayer. "*Watch yourselves, and pray yourselves. Watch and pray against this present temptation to drowsiness and security; pray that you may watch; beg of God by his grace to keep you awake, now that there is occasion.*" When we are drowsy in the worship of God, we should pray, as a good Christian once did, "*The Lord deliver me from this sleepy devil!*" *Lord, quicken thou me in thy way.* Or, "*Watch and pray against the further temptation you may be assaulted with; watch and pray lest this sin prove the inlet of in me more.*" Note, When we find ourselves entering into temptation, we have need to watch and pray.

[4.] He kindly excused for them; *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. We do not read of one word they had to say for themselves; (the sense of their own weakness stopped their mouth;) but then he had a tender word to say on their behalf, for it is his office to be an Advocate; in this he sets us an example of that love which *covers a multitude of sins*. He considered their frame, and did not chide them, for he remembered that they were but flesh; and *the flesh is weak, though the spirit be willing*, Ps. 78. 38. Note, [1.] Christ's disciples, as long as they are here in this world, have bodies as well as souls, and a principle of remaining corruption as well as of reigning grace, like Jacob and Esau, in the same womb, *Canaanites and Israelites* in the same land, Gal. 5. 17, 24. [2.] It is the unhappiness and burthen of Christ's disciples, that their bodies cannot keep pace with their souls in works of piety and devotion, but are many a time a cloud and clog to them; that, when the spirit is free, and disposed to that which is good, the flesh is averse and indisposed. This St. Paul laments; (Rom. 7. 22.) *With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin*. Our im-

potency in the service of God is the great iniquity and infidelity of our nature, and it arises from the sad remainder of corruption, which are the constant grief and burthen of God's people. [3.] Yet it is our comfort, that our Master graciously considers this, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, and pities and pardons the weakness and infirmity of the flesh; *for we are under grace, and not under the law*.

[5.] Though they continued dull and sleepy, he did not any further rebuke them for it; for, though we daily offend, yet he will not always chide. [1.] When he came to them the second time, we do not find that he said any thing to them; (v. 43.) *He findeth them asleep again*. One would have thought that he had said enough to them to keep them awake; but it is hard to recover from a spirit of slumber. Carnal security, when once it prevails, is not easily shaken off. *Their eyes were heavy*, which intimates that they strove against it as much as they could, but were overcome by it, like the spouse; *I slept, but my heart wakes*; (Cant. 5. 2.) and therefore their Master looked upon them with compassion. [2.] When he came the third time, he left them to be alarmed with the approaching danger; (v. 45, 46.) *Sleep on now, and take your rest*. This is spoken ironically; "Now sleep if you can, sleep if you dare; I would not disturb you, if Judas and his band of men would not." See here how Christ deals with those that suffer themselves to be overcome by security, and will not be awakened out of it; *First*, Sometimes he gives them up to the power of it; *Sleep on now*. He that will sleep, let him sleep still. The curse of spiritual slumber is the just punishment of the sin of it, Rom. 11. 8. Hos. 4. 17. *Secondly*, Many times he sends some startling judgment, to awaken those that would not be wrought upon by the word; and those who will not be alarmed by reasons and arguments, had better be alarmed by swords and spears, than left to perish in their security. Let those that would not believe, be made to feel.

As to the disciples here, 1. Their Master gave them notice of the near approach of his enemies, who, it is likely, were now within sight or hearing, for they came with candles and torches, and it is likely, made a great noise; *The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*. And again, *He is at hand, that doth betray me*. Note, Christ's sufferings were no surprise to him, he knew what, and when, he was to suffer. By this time the extremity of his agony was pretty well over, or, at least, diverted; while with an undaunted courage he addresses himself to the next encounter, as a champion to the combat. 2. He called them to rise, and be going; not, "Rise, and let us flee from the danger;" but, "Rise, and let us go meet it;" before he had prayed, he feared his sufferings, but now he had got over his fears. But, 3. He intimates to them their folly, in sleeping away the time which they should have spent in preparation; now it found them unready, and was a terror to them.

47. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. 49. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. 51. And,

behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 52. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? 55. In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. 56. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

We are here told how the blessed Jesus was seized, and taken into custody; this followed immediately upon his agony, *while he yet spake*; for from the beginning to the close of his passion he had not the least intermission or breathing time, but *deeply called unto deep*. His trouble hitherto was raised within himself; but now the scene is changed, now the Philistines are upon thee, thou blessed Samson; *the Breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, is taken in their pits*, Lam. 4. 20.

Now, concerning the apprehending of the Lord Jesus, observe,

1. Who the persons were that were employed in it. 1. Here was *Judas, one of the twelve*, at the head of this infamous guard: *he was guide to them that took Jesus*; (Acts 1. 16.) without his help they could not have found him in this retirement. Behold, and wonder: the first that appeared with his enemies, is one of his own disciples, who an hour or two ago was eating bread with him! 2. Here was *with him a great multitude*; that the scripture might be fulfilled, *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!* Ps. 3. 1. This multitude was made up partly of a detachment out of the guards, that were posted in the tower of Antonia by the Roman governor; these were Gentiles, *sinners*, as Christ calls them, *v. 45*. The rest were the servants and officers of the high priest, and they were Jews; they that were at variance with each other, agreed against Christ.

II. How they were armed for this enterprise.

1. What weapons they were armed with; They came *with swords and staves*. The Roman soldiers, no doubt, had swords; the servants of the priests, those of them that had not swords, brought staves or clubs. *Puror arma ministrat—Their rage supplied their arms*. They were not regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble. But wherefore is this ado? If they had been ten times as many, they could not have taken him had he not yielded; and, his hour being come for him to give up himself, all this force was needless. When a butcher goes into the field to take out a lamb for the slaughter, does he raise the militia, and come armed? No, he needs not; yet is there all this force used to seize the Lamb of God.

2. What warrant they were armed with; They came *from the chief priests, and elders of the people*; this armed multitude was sent by them upon this errand. He was taken up by a warrant from the great Sanhedrim, as a person obnoxious to them. Pilate, the Roman governor, gave them no warrant

to search for him, he had no jealousy of him; but they were men who pretended to religion, and presided in the affairs of the church, that were active in this prosecution, and were the most spiteful enemies Christ had. It was a sign that he was supported by a divine power, for, by all earthly powers, he was not only deserted, but opposed; Pilate upbraided him with it; *Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee to me*, John 18. 35.

III. The manner how it was done, and what passed at that time.

1. How Judas betrayed him; he did his business effectually, and his resolution in this wickedness may shame us who fail in that which is good. Observe,

(1.) The instructions he gave to the soldiers; (*v. 48.*) *He gave them a sign*; as commander of the party in this action, he gives the word or signal. He gave them a sign, lest by mistake they should seize one of the disciples instead of him, the disciples having so lately said, in Judas's hearing, that they would be willing to die for him. What abundance of caution was here, not to miss him—*That same is he*; and when they had him in their hands, not to lose him—*Hold him fast*; for he had sometimes escaped from those who thought to secure him; as Luke 4. 30. Though the Jews, who frequented the temple, could not but know him, yet the Roman soldiers perhaps had never seen him, and the sign was to direct them; and Judas by his kiss intended not only to distinguish him, but to detain him, while they came behind him, and laid hands on him.

(2.) The dissembling compliment he gave his Master. He came close up to Jesus; surely now, if ever his wicked heart will relent, surely, when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. Dares he to come into his very sight and presence to betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when *the Lord turned and looked upon him*, he relented presently; but Judas comes up to his Master's face, and betrays him. *Me mihi (perfidis) prodis? me mihi prodis?—Perfidious man, betrayest thou me to myself?* He said, *Hail, Master; and kissed him*. It should seem, our Lord Jesus had been wont to admit his disciples to such a degree of familiarity with him, as to give them his cheek to kiss after they had been any while absent, which Judas villainously used to facilitate his treason. A kiss is a token of allegiance and friendship, Ps. 2. 12. But Judas, when he broke all the laws of love and duty, profaned this sacred sign to serve his purpose. Note, There are many that betray Christ with a kiss, and *Hail, Master*; who, under pretence of doing him honour, betray and undermine the interests of his kingdom. *Met in ore, fel in corde—Honey in the mouth, gall in the heart.* Καταφιλήσας ἑν ἱερὸν φίλιν—To embrace is one thing, to love is another. Philo Judæus. Joab's kiss and Judas's were much alike.

(3.) The entertainment his Master gave him, *v. 50*.

[1.] He calls him *friend*. If he had called him *villain* and *traitor* *raca*, thou fool, and *child of the devil*, he had not miscalled him; but he would teach us under the greatest provocation to forbear bitterness and evil-speaking, and to shew all meekness. *Friend*, for a friend he had been, and should have been, and seemed to be. Thus he upbraids him, as Abraham, when he called the rich man in hell, *son*. He calls him *friend*, because he furthered his sufferings, and so befriended him; whereas he called Peter *Satan* for attempting to hinder them.

[2.] He asks him, *“If therefore art thou come? Is it peace, Judas? Explain thyself; if thou come as an enemy, what means this kiss? If as a friend, what mean these swords and staves? Wherefore art thou come? What harm have I done thee? Wherein*

have I wearied thee? τίς ἔγωγε τῷ τῷ—*Wherefore art thou present?* Why hadst thou not so much shame left thee, as to keep out of sight, which thou mightest have done, and yet have given the officers notice where I was?" This was an instance of great impudence, for him to be so forward and barefaced in this wicked transaction. But it is usual for apostates from religion to be the most bitter enemies to it; witness Julian. Thus Judas did his part.

2. How the officers and soldiers secured him; *Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him; they made him their prisoner. How were they not afraid to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed?* We may well imagine what rude and cruel hands they were, which this barbarous multitude laid on Christ; and now, it is probable, they handled him the more roughly for their being so often disappointed when they sought to lay hands on him. They could not have taken him, if he had not surrendered himself, and been delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Acts 2. 23. He who said concerning his anointed servants, *Touch them not, and do them no harm*, (Ps. 105. 14, 15.) spared not his anointed Son, but delivered him up for us all; and again, gave his Strength into captivity, his Glory into the enemies' hands, Ps. 78. 61. See what was the complaint of Job, (ch. 16. 11.) *God hath delivered me to the ungodly*, and apply that and other passages in that book of Job as a type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus was made a Prisoner, because he would in all things be treated as a malefactor, punished for our crime, and as a surety under arrest for our debt. The yoke of our transgressions was bound by the Father's hand upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, Lam. 1. 14. He became a Prisoner, that he might set us at liberty; for he said, *If ye seek me, let these go their way*; (John 18. 8.) and those are free indeed, whom he makes so.

3. How Peter fought for Christ, and was checked for his pains. It is here only said to be one of them that was with Jesus in the garden; but John 18. 10. we are told that it was Peter who signalized himself upon this occasion. Observe,

(1.) Peter's rashness; (v. 51.) *He drew his sword.* They had but two swords among them all, (Luke 22. 38.) and one of them, it seems, fell to Peter's share; and now he thought it was time to draw it, and he hid about him as if he would have done some great matters; but all the execution he did, was, the cutting off an ear from a servant of the high priest; designing, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, because he saw him more forward than the rest in laying hands on Christ, he missed his blow. But if he would be striking, in my mind he should rather have aimed at Judas, and have marked him for a rogue. Peter had talked much of what he would do for his Master, he would lay down his life for him; yea, that he would; and now he would be as good as his word, and venture his life to rescue his Master: and thus far was commendable, that he had a great zeal for Christ, and his honour and safety; but it was not according to knowledge, nor guided by discretion; for, [1.] He did it without warrant; some of the disciples asked indeed, *Shall we smite with the sword?* (Luke 22. 49.) But Peter struck before they had an answer. We must see not only our cause good, but our call clear, before we draw the sword; we must shew by what authority we do it, and who gave us that authority. [2.] He indiscreetly exposed himself and his fellow-disciples to the rage of the multitude; for what could they with two swords do against a band of men?

(2.) The rebuke which our Lord Jesus gave him; (v. 52.) *Put up again thy sword into its place.* He does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords that were drawn against him, he

left them to the judgment of God, who judges them that are without; but he commands Peter to put up his sword, does not chide him indeed for what he had done, because done out of good will, but stops the progress of his arms, and provides that it should not be drawn into a precedent. Christ's errand into the world was to make peace. Note, *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual*; and Christ's ministers, though they are his soldiers, do not war after the flesh, 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4. Not that the law of Christ overthrows either the law of nature or the law of nations, as far as those warrant subjects to stand up in defence of their civil rights and liberties, and their religion, when it is incorporated with them; but it provides for the preservation of public peace and order by forbidding private persons, *quā tales—as such*, to resist the powers that are; nay, we have a general precept that we *resist not evil*, (ch. 5. 39.) nor will Christ have his ministers propagate his religion by force of arms, *Religio cogi non potest; et defendenda non occidendo, sed moriendo—Religion cannot be forced; and it should be defended, not by killing, but by dying.* Lactantii Institut. As Christ forbade his disciples the sword of justice, (ch. 20. 25, 26.) so here the sword of war. Christ had Peter put up his sword, and never had him draw it again; yet that which Peter is here blamed for, is, his doing it unseasonably; the hour was come for Christ to suffer and die, he knew Peter knew it, the sword of the Lord was drawn against him, (Zech. 13. 7.) and for Peter to draw his sword for him, was like, *Master, spare thyself*.

Three reasons Christ gives to Peter for this rebuke:

[1.] His drawing the sword would be dangerous to himself, to his fellow-disciples; *They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*; they that use violence, fall by violence; and men hasten and increase their own troubles by blustering bloody methods of self-defence. They that take the sword before it is given them, that use it without warrant or call, expose themselves to the sword of war, or public justice. Had it not been for the special care and providence of the Lord Jesus, Peter and the rest of them had, for ought I know, been cut in pieces immediately. Grotius gives another, and a probable, sense of this blow, making those that take the sword to be, not Peter, but the officers and soldiers that take the swords to take Christ; *They shall perish with the sword.* "Peter, thou needest not draw thy sword to punish them. God will certainly, shortly, and severely, reckon with them." They took the Roman sword to seize Christ with, and by the Roman sword, not long after, they and their place and nation were destroyed. *Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because God will repay!* (Rom. 12. 19.) and therefore we must suffer with faith and patience, because persecutors will be paid in their own coin. See Rev. 13. 10.

[2.] It was needless for him to draw his sword in defence of his Master, who, if he pleased, could summon into his service all the hosts of heaven; (v. 53.) "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall send from heaven effectual succours?*" Peter, if I would put by these sufferings, I could easily do it without thy hand or thy sword." Note, God has no need of us, of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we look into the heavens, and see how he is attended there, we may easily infer, that *though we be righteous*, he is not beholden to us, Job 53. 5, 7. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was a voluntary weakness; he submitted to death, not because he could not, but because he would not,

contend with it. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves Christ crucified the power of God; even now, in the depth of his sufferings, he could call in the aid of legions of angels. Now *ἀπὸ—yet*; “Though the business is so far gone, I could yet with a word speaking turn the scale.” Christ here lets us know.

First, What a great interest he had in the Father; *I can pray to my Father, and he will send me help from the sanctuary.* I can *παράκλησις—demand of my Father these succours.* Christ prayed as one having authority. Note, It is a great comfort to God’s people, when they are surrounded with enemies on all hands, that they have a way open heavenward; if they can do nothing else, they can pray to him that can do every thing. And they who are much in prayer at other times, have most comfort in praying when troublesome times come. Observe, Christ saith, not only that God could send him such a number of angels, but that, if he insisted upon it, he would do it. Though he had undertaken the work of our redemption, yet, if he had desired to be released, it should seem by this that the Father would not have held him to it. He might yet have gone out free from the service, but he loved it, and would not; so that it was only with the cords of his own love that he was bound to the altar.

Secondly, What a great interest he had in the heavenly hosts; *He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels,* amounting to above seventy-two thousand. Observe here, 1. There is an *innumerable company of angels*, Heb. 12. 22. A detachment of more than twelve legions might be spared for our service, and yet there would be no miss of them from about the throne. See Dan. 7. 10. They are marshalled in exact order, like the well-disciplined legions; not a confused multitude, but regular troops; all know their post, and observe the word of command. 2. This innumerable company of angels are all at the disposal of our heavenly Father, and do his pleasure, Ps. 103. 20, 21. 3. These angelic hosts were ready to come in to the assistance of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, if he had needed or desired it. See Heb. 1. 6, 14. They would have been to him as they were to Elisha, *chariots of fire, and horses of fire*, not only to secure him, but to consume those that set upon him. 4. Our heavenly Father is to be eved and acknowledged in all the services of the heavenly hosts; *He shall give them me*: therefore angels are not to be prayed to, but the Lord of the angels, Ps. 91. 11. 5. It is matter of comfort to all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, that there is a world of angels always at the service of the Lord Jesus, that can do wonders. He that has the armies of heaven at his beck can do what he pleases among the *inhabitants of the earth*: *He shall presently give them me.* See how ready his Father was to hear his prayer, and how ready the angels were to observe his orders; they are willing servants, winged messengers, they *fly swiftly*. This is very encouraging to those that have the honour of Christ, and the welfare of the church, much at heart. Think they that they have more care and concern for Christ and his church, than God and the holy angels have?

[3.] It was no time to make any defence at all, or to offer to put by the stroke; *For how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* v. 54. It was written, that Christ should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, Isa. 53. 7. Should he summon the angels to his assistance, he would not be led to the slaughter at all; should he permit his disciples to fight, he would not be led as a lamb quietly and without assistance; therefore he and his disciples must yield to the accomplishment of the predictions. Note, In all difficult cases, the word of God must be conclusive against our own counsels, and nothing

must be done, nothing attempted, against the fulfilling of the scripture. If the easing of our pains, the breaking of our bonds, the saving of our lives, will not consist with the fulfilling of the scripture, we ought to say, “Let God’s word and will take place, let his law be magnified and made honourable, whatever becomes of us.” Thus Christ checked Peter, when he set up for his champion, and captain of his life-guard.

4. We are next told how Christ argued the case with them that came to take him; (v. 55.) though he did not resist them, yet he did reason with them. Note, It will consist with Christian patience under our sufferings, calmly to expostulate with our enemies and persecutors, as David with Saul, 1 Sam. 24. 14.—26. 18. *Are ye come out, (1.) With rage and enmity, as against a thief*, as if I were an enemy to the public safety, and deservedly suffered this? Thieves draw upon themselves the common odium; every one will lend a hand to stop a thief; and thus they fell upon Christ as the scourging of all things. If he had been the Plague of his country, he could not have been prosecuted with more heat and violence. (2.) With all this power and force, as against the worst of thieves, that dare the law, bid defiance to public justice, and add rebellion to their sin; You are come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, as if there were danger of resistance; whereas ye have killed the just One, and he doth not resist you, Jam. 5. 6. If he had not been willing to suffer, it was folly to come with swords and staves, for they could not conquer him; had he been minded to resist, he would have esteemed their iron as straw, and their swords and staves would have been as briars before a consuming fire; but, being willing to suffer, it was folly to come thus armed, for he would not contend with them.

He further expostulates with them, by reminding them how he had behaved himself hitherto toward them, and they toward him. [1.] Of his public appearance; *I sat daily with you in the temple teaching.* And, [2.] Of their public connivance; *Ye laid no hold on me.* How comes then this change? They were very unreasonable in treating him as they did. *First*, He had given them no occasion to look upon him as a thief, for he had taught in the temple. And such were the matter and such the manner of his teaching, that he was manifested in the consciences of all that heard him, not to be a bad man. Such gracious words as came from his mouth, were not the words of a thief, or of one that had a devil. *Secondly*, Nor had he given them occasion to look upon him as one absconded, or fled from justice, that they should come in the night to seize him; if they had any thing to say to him, they might find him every day in the temple, ready to answer all challenges, all charges, and there they might do as they pleased with him; for the chief priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus clandestinely, in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. Thus the greatest hero may be villainously assassinated in a corner, by one that in open field would tremble to look him in the face.

But all this was done, (so it follows, v. 56.) *that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.* It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment upon this story, and a direction to the Christian reader to compare it with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at it; or, whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why, though he could not but resent this base treatment, he yet submitted to it, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, to which he had just now referred himself, v. 54. Note, The scriptures are in the fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures, which spake of the

Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus.

5. How he was, in the midst of this distress, shamefully deserted by his disciples; *They all forsook him, and fled.*

(1.) 'This was their sin; and it was a great sin for them who had left all to follow him, now to leave him for they know not what. There was unkindness in it, considering the relation they stood in to him, the favours they had received from him, and the melancholly circumstances he was now in. There was unfaithfulness in it, for they had solemnly promised to adhere to him, and never to forsake him. He had indentured for their safe-conduct; (John 18. 8.) yet they could not rely upon that, but shifted for themselves by an inglorious flight. What folly was this, for fear of death, to flee from him whom they themselves knew and had acknowledged to be the *Fountain of life*? John 6. 67, 68. *Lord, what is man?*

(2.) It was a part of Christ's suffering, it added affliction to his bonds, to be thus deserted, as it did to Job; (*ch.* 19. 13.) *He hath put my brethren far from me; and to David; (Ps. 38. 11.)* *Lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore.* They should have staid with him, to minister to him, to countenance him, and, if need were, to be witnesses for him at his trial; but they treacherously deserted him, as, at St. Paul's first answer, *no man stood with him.* But there was a mystery in this. [1.] Christ, as a Sacrifice for sins, stood thus abandoned. The deer that, by the keeper's arrow, is marked out to be hunted and run down, is immediately deserted by the whole herd. In this he was made a Curse for us, being left as one separated to evil. [2.] Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he heeded not, so he had not, the assistance of any other in working out our salvation; he bore all, and did all himself. *He trod the wine-press alone,* and when there was none to uphold, then his own arm wrought salvation, Isa. 63. 3, 5. *So the Lord alone did lead his Israel, and they stand still, and only see this great salvation;* Deut. 32. 12.

57. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. 59. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60. But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61. And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He

hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands. 68. Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

We have here the arraignment of our Lord Jesus, in the ecclesiastical court, before the great Sanhedrim. Observe,

I. The sitting of the court; the scribes and the elders were assembled, though it was in the dead time of the night, when other people were fast asleep in their beds; yet, to gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves that natural rest, and sat up all night, to be ready to fall upon the prey which Judas and his men, they hoped, would seize.

See, 1. Who they were, that were assembled; the scribes, the principal teachers, and elders, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church: these were the most bitter enemies to Christ our great Teacher and Ruler, on whom therefore they had a jealous eye, as one that eclipsed them; perhaps some of these scribes and elders were not so malicious at Christ as some others of them were; yet, in concurrence with the rest, they made themselves guilty. Now the scripture was fulfilled; (*Ps.* 22. 16.) *The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me.* Jeremiah complains of an assembly of treacherous men; and David of his enemies gathering themselves together against him, *Ps.* 35. 15.

2. Where they were assembled; in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest; there they assembled two days before, to lay the plot, (*v.* 3.) and there they now convened again, to prosecute it. The high priest was *Ab-beth-din*—the father of the house of judgment, but he is now the patron of wickedness; his house should have been the sanctuary of oppressed innocence, but it is become the throne of iniquity; and no wonder, when even God's house of prayer was made a den of thieves.

II. The setting of the prisoner to the bar; they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away, hurried him, no doubt, with violence, led him as a trophy of their victory, led him as a victim to the altar; he was brought into Jerusalem through that which was called the sheep-gate, for that was the way into town from the mount of Olives; and it was so called because the sheep appointed for sacrifice were brought that way to the temple; very fitly therefore is Christ led that way, who is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Christ was led first to the high priest, for by the law all sacrifices were to be first presented to the priest, and delivered into his hand, *Lev.* 17. 5.

III. The cowardice and faint-heartedness of Peter; (*v.* 58.) *But Peter followed afar off.* This comes in here, with an eye to the following story of his denying him. He forsook him as the rest did, when he was seized, and what is here said of his following him is easily reconcilable with his forsaking him; such following was no better than forsaking him; for,

1. He followed him, but it was *afar off.* Some sparks of love and concern for his Master there were in his breast, and therefore he followed him; but fear and concern for his own safety prevailed, and therefore he followed afar off. Note, It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him; for to follow him afar off, is, by little and little, to go back from

him. There is danger in drawing back, nay, in looking back.

2. He followed him, but he *went in, and sat with the servants*. He should have gone up to the court, and attended on his Master, and appeared for him; but he went in where there was a good fire, and sat with the servants, not to silence their reproaches, but to screen himself. It was presumption in Peter thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so, throws himself out of God's protection. Christ had told Peter that he could not follow him now, and had particularly warned him of his danger *this night*; and yet he would venture into the midst of this wicked crew. It helped David to walk in his integrity, that he *hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked*.

3. He followed him, but it was only to *see the end*, led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator rather than as a disciple, a person concerned. He should have gone in, to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself, by observing Christ's behaviour under his sufferings; but went in, only to look about him; it is not unlikely that Peter went in, expecting that Christ would have made his escape miraculously out of the hands of his persecutors; that, having so lately struck them down, who came to seize him, he would now have struck them dead, who sat to judge him; and this he had a mind to see: if so, it was folly for him to think of seeing any other end than what Christ had foretold, that he should be put to death. Note, It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to inquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is our's.

IV. The trial of our Lord Jesus in this court.

1. They examined witnesses against him, though they were resolved, right or wrong, to condemn him; yet, to put the better colour upon it, they would produce evidence against him. The crimes properly cognizable in the court, were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. And observe here,

(1.) Their search for proof: *They sought false witness against him*; they had seized him, bound him, abused him, and after all are to seek for something to lay to his charge, and can shew no cause for his commitment. They tried if any of them could allege seemingly from their own knowledge any thing against him; and suggested one calumny and then another, which, if true, might touch his life. Thus *evil men dig up mischief*, Prov. 16. 27. Here they trod in the steps of their predecessors, who *devised devices against Jeremiah*, Jer. 18. 18.—20. 10. They made proclamation, that, if any one could give information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive it, and presently many bare false witness against him; (v. 60.) for if a ruler *hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*, and will carry false stories to him, Prov. 29. 12. This is an evil often seen under the sun, Eccl. 10. 5. If Naboth must be taken off, there are sons of Belial to swear against him.

(2.) Their success in this search; in several attempts they were baffled, they sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, and yet they found none; they could make nothing of it, could not take the evidence together, or give it any colour of truth or consistency with itself, no, not they themselves being judges. The matters alleged were such palpable lies, as carried their own confutation along with them. This redounded much to the honour of Christ now, when they were loading him with disgrace.

But at last they met with *two* witnesses, who, it seems, agreed in their evidence, and therefore were hearkened to, in hopes that now the point was gained.

The words they swore against him, were, that he should say, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days*, v. 61. Now by this they designed to accuse him, [1.] As an enemy to the temple, and one that sought for the destruction of it, which they could not bear to hear of; for they valued themselves by *the temple of the Lord*, (Jer. 7. 4.) and, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of that. Stephen was accused for *speaking against this holy place*, Acts 6. 13, 14. [2.] As one that dealt in witchcraft, or some such unlawful arts, by the help of which he could rear such a building in three days. They had often suggested that he was in league with Beelzebub; now, as to this, *First*, The words were misrecited; he said, *Destroy ye this temple*, (John 2. 19.) plainly intimating that he spake of a temple which his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, *I am able to destroy this temple*, as if the design against it were his. He said, *In three days I will raise it up*—*ἐγὼ ὡς ἔστιν*, a word properly used of a living temple; *I will raise it to life*. They come and swear that he said, *I am able, ἡδυνάμηναι—to build it*; which is properly used of a house-temple. *Secondly*, The words were misunderstood; *he spake of the temple of his body*, (John 2. 21.) and perhaps when he said, *this temple*, pointed to, or laid his hand upon, his own body; but they swore that he said *the temple of God*, meaning this holy place. Note, There have been, and still are, such as wrest the sayings of Christ to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16. *Thirdly*, Make the worst they could of it, it was no capital crime, even by their own law; if it had been, no question but he had been prosecuted for it, when he spake the words in a public discourse some years ago; nay, the words were capable of a laudable construction, and such as bespoke a kindness for the temple; if it were destroyed, he would exert himself to the utmost to rebuild it. But any thing that looked criminal, would serve to give colour to their malicious prosecution. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, *False witnesses are risen up against me*; (Ps. 27. 12.) and see Ps. 35. 11. *Though I have redeemed them, they have spoken lies against me*, Hos. 7. 13. We stand justly accused, the law accuseth us, Deut. 27. 26. John 5. 45. Satan and our own consciences accuse us, 1 John 3. 20. The creatures cry out against us. Now, to discharge us from all these just accusations, our Lord Jesus submitted to this, to be unjustly and falsely accused, that in the virtue of his sufferings we may be enabled to triumph over all challenges; *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* Rom. 8. 33, 34. He was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, have all manner of evil, not only said, but *sworn, against us falsely*, let us remember that we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

(3.) Christ's silence under all these accusations, to the amazement of the court, v. 62. The high priest, the judge of the court, arose in some heat, and said, *Answerest thou nothing?* Come, you the prisoner at the bar; you hear what is sworn against you, what have you now to say for yourself? What defence can you make? Or what pleas have you to offer in answer to this charge? *But Jesus held his peace*, (v. 63.) not as one sullen, or as one self-condemned, or as one astonished and in confusion; not because he wanted something to say, or knew not how to say it, but that the scripture might be fulfilled; (Isa. 53. 7.) *As the sheep is dumb before the shearer, and before the butcher, so he opened not his mouth*; and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spake mischievous things against him, was as a deaf man that heard not, Ps. 38. 12.—14. He was silent, because *his hour was come*; he would not deny the charge, because he was will

ing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as he had done many a time before. If God had entered into judgment with us, we had been *speechless*, (ch. 22. 12.) not able to *answer for one of a thousand*, Job 9. 3. Therefore, when Christ was made *Sin for us*, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, Heb. 12. 24. He stood mute at this bar, that he might have something to say at God's bar.

Well, this way will not do; *aliā aggredendum est viā—recourse must be had to some other expedient.*

2. They examined our Lord Jesus himself upon an oath like that *ex officio*; and, since they could not accuse him, they will try, contrary to the law of equity, to make him accuse himself.

(1.) Here is the interrogatory put to him by the high priest.

Observe, [1.] The question itself; *Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?* That is, *Whether thou pretend to be so?* For they will by no means admit it into consideration, whether he be really so or no; though the Messiah was to be the consolation of Israel, and glorious things were spoken concerning him in the Old Testament, yet so strangely besotted were they with a jealousy of any thing that threatened their exorbitant power and grandeur, that they would never enter into the examination of the matter, whether Jesus was the Messiah or no; never once put the case, Suppose he should be so; they only wished him to confess that he called himself so, that they might on that indict him as a deceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to?

[2.] The solemnity of the proposal of it; *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us.* Not that he had any regard to the living God, but took his name in vain; only thus he hoped to gain his point with our Lord Jesus; "If thou hast any value for the blessed name of God, and reverence for his Majesty, tell us this." If he should refuse to answer when he was thus adjured, they would charge him with contempt of the blessed name of God. Thus the persecutors of good men often take advantage against them by their consciences, as Daniel's enemies did against him in the matter of his God.

(2.) Christ's answer to his interrogatory, (v. 64.) in which,

[1.] He owns himself to be *the Christ, the Son of God*. *Thou hast said*; that is, "It is as thou hast said;" for in St. Mark it is, *I am*. Hitherto, he seldom professed himself expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine bespoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make a confession of it, *First*, Because that would have looked like a disowning of that truth which he came into the world to bear witness to. *Secondly*, It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment of this would give his enemies all the advantage they desired against him. He thus confessed himself, for example and encouragement to his followers, when they are called to it, to *confess him before men*, whatever hazards they run by it. And according to this pattern the martyrs readily confessed themselves Christians, though they knew they must die for it, as the martyrs at Thebais, *Euseb. Hist.* l. 8. c. 9. That Christ answered out of a regard to the adoration which Caiaphas had profanely used by the *living God*, I cannot think, any more than that he had any regard to the like adoration in the devil's mouth, Mark 5. 7.

[2.] He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and indeed to his whole estate of exaltation. It is probable that they looked upon him with a scornful disdainful smile, when he said, *I am*;

"A likely fellow," thought they, "to be the Messiah, which is expected to come in so much pomp and power;" and to that this *nevertheless* refers. "Though now you see me in this low and abject state, and think it a ridiculous thing for me to call myself the Messiah, *nevertheless* the day is coming when I shall appear otherwise." *Hereafter, ἐξ ἄρτι—modo—shortly*; for his exaltation began in a few days; now shortly his kingdom began to be set up; and *hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, to judge the world*; of which his coming shortly to judge and destroy the Jewish nation would be a type and earnest. Note, The terrors of the judgment-day will be a sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidelity, not in order to conversion, (that will be then too late,) but in order to an eternal confusion. Observe, *First* Whom they should see; *the Son of man*. Having owned himself the Son of God, even now in his estate of humiliation, he speaks of himself as the Son of man, even in his estate of exaltation; for he had these two distinct natures in one person. The incarnation of Christ has made him Son of God and Son of man; for he is *Immanuel*, God with us. *Secondly*, In what posture they should see him; 1. *Sitting on the right hand of power*, according to the prophecy of the Messiah; (Ps. 110. 1.) *Sit thou at my right hand*; which denotes both the dignity and the dominion he is exalted to. Though now he stood at the bar, they should shortly see him sit on the throne. 2. *Coming in the clouds of heaven*; this refers to another prophecy concerning the *Son of man*, (Dan. 7. 13, 14.) which is applied to Christ, (Luke 1. 33.) when he came to destroy Jerusalem; so terrible was the judgement, and so sensible the indications of the wrath of the Lamb in it, that it might be called a *visible appearance of Christ*; but, doubtless, it has reference to the general judgment; to this day he appeals, and summons them to an appearance, then and there to answer for what they are now doing. He had spoken of this day to his disciples awhile ago, for their comfort, and had bid them *lift up their heads for joy in the prospect of it*, Luke 21. 27, 28. Now he speaks of it to his enemies, for their terror; for nothing is more comfortable to the righteous, nor more terrible to the wicked, than Christ's judging the world at the last day.

V. His conviction upon this trial; *The high priest rent his clothes*, according to the custom of the Jews, when they heard or saw any thing done or said which they looked upon to be a reproach to God; as Isa. 36. 22.—37. 1. Acts 14. 14. Caiaphas would be thought extremely tender of the glory of God; (*Come, see his zeal for the Lord of hosts*;) but, while he pretended an abhorrence of blasphemy, he was himself the greatest blasphemer; he now forgot the law which forbade the high priest in any case to rend his clothes, unless we will suppose this an excepted case.

Observe, 1. The crime he was found guilty of; *blasphemy*. *He hath spoken blasphemy*; that is, he hath spoken reproachfully of the living God; that is the notion we have of blasphemy; because we by sin had reproached the Lord, therefore Christ, when *he was made sin for us*, was condemned as a blasphemer for the truth he told them.

2. The evidence upon which they found him guilty; *Ye have heard the blasphemy*; why should we trouble ourselves to examine witnesses any further? He owned the fact, that he did profess himself the *Son of God*; and then they made blasphemy of it, and convicted him upon his confession. The high priest triumphs in the success of the snare he had laid; "Now I think I have done his business for him." *Aha, so would we have it*. This was he indeed out of his own mouth at their bar, because we were liable to be so judged at God's bar. There is no re-

of witness against us; our own consciences are against us instead of a thousand witnesses.

VI. His sentence passed, upon this conviction, v. 66.

Here is, 1. Caiaphas's appeal to the bench; *What think ye?* See his base hypocrisy and partiality; when he had already prejudged the cause, and pronounced him a blasphemer, then, as if he were willing to be advised, he asks the judgment of his brethren; but, hide malice ever so cunningly under the robe of justice, some way or other it will break out. If he would have dealt fairly, he should have collected the votes of the bench *seriatim*—in order, and begun with the junior, and have delivered his own opinion last; but he knew that by the authority of his place he could sway the rest, and therefore declares his judgment, and presumes they are all of his mind; he takes the crime, with regard to Christ, *pro confesso*—as a crime confessed; and the judgment, with regard to the court, *pro concessio*—as a judgment agreed to.

2. Their concurrence with him; they say, *He is guilty of death*; perhaps they did not all concur, it is certain that Joseph of Arimathea, if he was present, dissented; (Luke 23. 51.) so did Nicodemus, and, it is likely, others with them; however, the majority carried it that way: but perhaps, this being an extraordinary council, or cabal rather, none had notice to be present but such as they knew would concur, and so it might be voted *nemine contradicente*—unanimously. The judgment was, "*He is guilty of death*; by the law he deserves to die." Though they had not power now to put any man to death, yet by such a judgment as this they made a man an outlaw among his people, (*qui caput gerit lupinum—he carries a wolf's head*; so our old law describes an outlaw,) and so exposed him to the fury either of a popular tumult, as Stephen was, or to be clamoured against before the governor, as Christ was. Thus was the Lord of life condemned to die, that through him there may be *no condemnation to us*.

VII. The abuses and indignities done to him after sentence passed; (v. 67, 68.) *Then*, when he was found guilty, they *spat in his face*. Because they had not power to put him to death, and could not be sure that they should prevail with the governor to be their executioner, they would do him all the mischief they could, now that they had him in their hands. Condemned prisoners are taken under the special protection of the law, which they are to make satisfaction to, and by all civilized nations have been treated with tenderness; sufficient is this punishment. But when they had passed sentence upon our Lord Jesus, he was treated as if hell had broken loose upon him, as if he were not only *worthy of death*, but as if that were too good for him, and he were unworthy of the compassion shewed to the worst malefactors. Thus *he was made a Curse for us*. But who were they that were thus barbarous? It should seem, the very same that had passed sentence upon him. *They said, He is guilty of death, and then they did spit in his face*. The priests began, and then no wonder if the servants, who would do any thing to make sport to themselves, and curry favour with their wicked masters, carried on the humour. See how they abused him.

1. *They spat in his face*. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 50. 6.) *He hid not his face from shame and spitting*. Job complained of this indignity done to him, and herein was a type of Christ; (Job 30. 10.) *They spare not to spit in my face*. It is an expression of the greatest contempt and indignation possible; looking upon him as more despicable than the very ground they spit upon. When Miriam was under the leprosy, it was looked upon as a disgrace to her, like that of *her father spitting in her face*,

Numb. 12. 14. He that refused to raise up seed to his brother was to undergo this dishonour, Deut. 25. 9. Yet Christ, when he was repairing the decays of the great family of mankind, submitted to it. That face which was *fairer than the children of men*, which was *white and ruddy*, and which angels reverence, was thus filthily abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that our's might not be filled with everlasting shame and contempt. They who now profane his blessed name, abuse this word, and hate his image on his sanctified ones, what do they better than spit in his face? They would do that, if it were in their reach.

2. *They buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands*. This added pain to the shame, for both came in with sin. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 50. 6.) *I gave my cheek to them that plucked off the hair; and (Lam. 3. 30.) He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled with reproach, and yet keepeth silence*; (v. 28.) and (Mic. 5. 1.) *They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek*; here the margin reads it, *They smote him with rods*; for so *ῥαβδον* signifies, and this he submitted to.

3. They challenged him to tell who struck him, having first blindfolded him; *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?* (1.) They made sport with him, as the Philistines did with Samson; it is grievous to those that are in misery, for people to make merry *about* them, but much more to make merry *with* them and their misery. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be, to shew that there was need of a religion that should recover men to humanity. (2.) They made sport with his prophetic office. They had heard him called a *prophet*, and that he was famed for wonderful discoveries; this they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of; as if the divine omniscience must stoop to a piece of children's play. They put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things; like Belshazzar's revels in the temple-bowls.

69. Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70. But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. 71. And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the story of Peter's denying his Master, and it comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus was now in the high priest's hall, not to be tried, but baited rather; and then it would have been some comfort to him to see his

friends near him. But we do not find any friend he had about the court, save Peter only, and it would have been better if he had been at a distance. Observe how he fell, and how he got up again by repentance.

1. His sin, which is here impartially related, to the honour of the penmen of scripture, who dealt faithfully. Observe,

1. The immediate occasion of Peter's sin. He sat without in the palace, among the servants of the high priest. Note, Bad company is to many an occasion of sin; and those who needlessly thrust themselves into it go upon the devil's ground, venture into his crowds, and may expect either to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter was, or to be ridiculed and abused, as his Master was; they scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. He that would keep God's commandments and his own covenant, must say to evil-doers, *Depart from me*, Ps. 119. 115. Peter spake from his own experience, when he warned his new converts to *save themselves from that untoward generation*; for he had like to have ruined himself by but going once among them.

2. The temptation to it. He was challenged as a retainer to Jesus of Galilee. First, one maid, and then another, and then the rest of the servants, charged it upon him; *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee*, v. 69. And again, *This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth*, v. 71. And again, (v. 73.) *Thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee* to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech bewrays him to be a disciple of Christ, by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus! Observe how scornfully they speak of Christ—Jesus of Galilee, and of Nazareth, upbraiding him with the country he was of; and how disdainfully they speak of Peter—*This fellow*; as if they thought it a reproach to them to have such a man in their company, and he was well enough served for coming among them; yet they had nothing to accuse him of, but that he was with Jesus, which, they thought, was enough to render him both a scandalous and a suspected person.

3. The sin itself. When he was charged as one of Christ's disciples, he denied it, was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him to believe that he had no knowledge of him, nor any kindness or concern for him.

(1.) Upon the first mention of it, he said, *I know not what thou sayest*. This was a shuffling answer; he pretended that he did not understand the charge, that he knew not whom she meant by *Jesus of Galilee*, or what she meant by being *with* him; so making strange of that which his heart was now as full of as it could be. [1.] It is a fault thus to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn; to pretend that we do not understand, or did not think of, or remember, that which yet we do apprehend, and did think of, and remember; this is a species of lying which we are more prone to than any other, because in this a man is not easily disproved; for, *who knows the spirit of a man, save himself?* But God knows it, and we must be restrained from this wickedness by a fear of him, Prov. 24. 12. [2.] It is yet a greater fault to be shy of Christ, to dissemble our knowledge of him, and to shift off a confession of him, when we are called to it; it is, in effect, to *deny* him.

(2.) Upon the next attack, he said, flat and plain, *I know not the man*, and backed it with an oath, v. 72. This was, in effect, to say, I will not own him, I am no Christian; for Christianity is the knowledge of Christ. Why, Peter? Canst thou look upon *thyself* prisoner at the bar, and say thou dost not

know him? Didst thou not quit all to follow him? And hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast thou forgotten all the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and all the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look him in the face, and say that thou dost not know him?

(3.) Upon the third assault, *he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man*, v. 74. This was worst of all, for the way of sin is downhill. He cursed and swore, [1.] To back what he said, and to gain credit to it, that they might not any more call it in question; he did not only *say* it, but *swear* it; and yet what he said was false. Note, We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother. [2.] He designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was none of Christ's disciples, for this was none of their language. Cursing and swearing suffice to prove a man no disciple of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies thus to *take his name in vain*.

This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ the Lord that bought us, by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him, and with his suffering people.

4. The aggravations of this sin; which may be of use to take notice of, that we may observe the like transgressions in our own sins. Consider, (1.) Who he was—an apostle, one of the first three, that had been upon all occasions the most forward to speak to the honour of Christ. The greater profession we make of religion, the greater is our sin, if, in any thing, we walk unworthily. (2.) What fair warning his Master had given him of his danger; if he had regarded this as he ought to have done, he would not have run himself into temptation. (3.) How solemnly he had promised to adhere to Christ in this night of trial; he had said again and again, *"I will never deny thee"*; no, I will die with thee first; yet he brake these bonds in sunder, and his word was yea and nay. (4.) How soon he fell into this sin after the Lord's supper. There to receive such an inestimable pledge of redeeming love, and yet the same night, before morning, to disown his Redeemer, was indeed *turning aside quickly*. (5.) How weak, comparatively, the temptation was; it was not the judge, or any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any, if he had owned it. This was but *running with the footmen*, Jer. 12. 5. (6.) How often he repeated it; even after the cock had crowed once he continued in the temptation, and a second and third time relapsed into the sin. Is this Peter? *How art thou fallen!*

Thus was his sin aggravated; but, on the other hand, there is this to extenuate it—that what he said he said in *his haste*, Ps. 116. 11. He fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design; his heart was against it; he spake very ill, but it was unadvisedly, and before he was aware.

II. Peter's repentance for this sin, v. 75. The former is written for our admonition, that we may not sin; but, if at any time we be overtaken, this is written for our imitation, that we may make haste to repent. Now observe,

1. What it was that brought Peter to repentance.

(1.) *The cock crew*; (v. 74.) a common contingency; but, Christ having mentioned the crowing of the cock in the warning he gave him, that made it a means of bringing him to himself. The word of Christ can put a significancy upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and by virtue of that word he can make it very beneficial to the souls of his people. The crowing of a cock is to Peter, instead of a John Baptist, the voice of one calling to repentance. Conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. When *David's heart smote him, the cock crew*. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though for the present overpowered by temptation, a little hint will serve, only for a memorandum, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path. Here was the crowing of a cock made a happy occasion of the conversion of a soul. Christ comes sometimes in mercy at cock-crowing.

(2.) *He remembered the words of the Lord*; this was it that brought him to himself, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow; a sense of his ingratitude to Christ, and the slight regard he had had to the gracious warning Christ had given him. Note, a serious reflection upon the words of the Lord Jesus will be a powerful inducement to repentance, and will help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the tokens of his love.

2. How his repentance was expressed; *He went out and wept bitterly*.

(1.) His sorrow was secret; he went out, out of the high priest's hall, vexed at himself that ever he came into it, now that he found what a snare he was in, and got out of it as fast as he could. He went out into the porch before, (v. 71.) and if he had gone quite off then, his second and third denial had been prevented; but then he came in again, now he went out and came in no more. He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might bemoan himself, *like the doves of the valleys*, Ezek. 6. 9. Jer. 9. 1, 2. He went out, that he might not be disturbed in his devotions on this sad occasion. We may then be most free in our communion with God, when we are most free from the converse and business of this world. In mourning for sin, we find families apart, and their wives apart, Zech. 12. 11, 12.

(2.) His sorrow was serious; *He wept bitterly*. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep, like that for an only son. Those that have sinned sweetly, must weep bitterly; for, sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy divine justice, (a sea of tears would not do that,) but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is the essence of repentance, to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin for the future the more loathsome. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often and openly, and in the mouth of danger; so far from ever saying, *I know not the man*, that he made all the house of Israel know assuredly that *this same Jesus was Lord and Christ*. True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but sincerely. Some of the ancients say, that, as long as Peter lived, he never heard a cock crow but it set him a weeping. Those that have truly sorrowed for sin, will sorrow upon every remembrance of it; yet not so as to hinder, but rather to increase, their joy in God, and in his mercy and grace.

CHAP. XXVII.

It is a very affecting story which is recorded in this chapter concerning the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus.

Considering the thing itself, there cannot be a more tragical story told us; common humanity would melt the heart, to find an innocent and excellent person thus misused. But, considering the design and fruit of Christ's sufferings, it is gospel, it is good news, that Jesus Christ was thus delivered for our offences; and there is nothing we have more reason to glory in than the cross of Christ. In this chapter, observe, I. How he was prosecuted. 1. The delivering of him to Pilate, v. 1, 2. 2. The despair of Judas, v. 3. 10. 3. The arraignment and trial of Christ before Pilate, v. 11. 14. 4. The clamours of the people against him, v. 15. 25. 5. Sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution, v. 26. II. How he was executed. 1. He was barbarously used, v. 27. 30. 2. Led to the place of execution, v. 31. 33. 3. There he had all possible indignities done him, and reproaches cast upon him, v. 34. 44. 4. Heaven frowned upon him, v. 45. 49. 5. Many remarkable things attended his death, v. 50. 56. 6. He was buried, and a watch set on his grave, v. 57. 66.

1. **W**HEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took council against Jesus to put him to death. 2. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. 3. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4. Saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood. 7. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 10. And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

We left Christ in the hands of the chief priests and elders, condemned to die, but they could only shew their teeth; about two years before this, the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishment; they could put no man to death, and therefore, early in the morning, another counsel is held, to consider what is to be done. And here we are told what was done in that morning-council, after they had been for two or three hours consulting with their pillows.

I. Christ is delivered up to Pilate, that he might execute the sentence they had passed upon him. Judea having been, almost one hundred years before this, conquered by Pompey, had ever since been tributary to Rome, and was lately made part of the province of Syria, and subject to the government of the president of Syria, under whom there were several *procurators*, who chiefly attended the business of the *revenues*, but sometimes, as Pilate particularly, had the whole power of the president lodged in them. This was a plain evidence that *the sceptre was departed from Judah*, and that therefore now

the *Shiloh must come*, according to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 10. Pilate is characterized, by the Roman writers of that time, as a man of a rough and haughty spirit, wilful and implacable, and extremely covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of their malice against Christ.

1. They bound Jesus. He was bound when he was first seized; but either they took off these bonds when he was before the council, or now they added to them. Having found him guilty, they tied his hands behind him, as they usually do with convicted criminals. He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he had soon broken these bonds, as Samson did his. We were fettered with the *bond of iniquity*, held in the cords of our sins; (Prov. 5. 22.) but God had bound the *yoke of our transgressions* upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, (Lam. 1. 14.) that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are *healed by his stripes*.

2. They led him away in a sort of triumph, led him as a lamb to the slaughter; so was he taken from prison and from judgment, Isa. 53. 7, 8. It was near a mile from Caiaphas's house to Pilate's. All that way they led him through the streets of Jerusalem, when, in the morning, they began to fill, to make him a spectacle to the world.

3. They delivered him to Pontius Pilate; according to that which Christ had often said, that he should be *delivered to the Gentiles*. Both Jews and Gentiles were obnoxious to the judgment of God, and concluded under sin, and Christ was to be the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore Christ was brought into the judgment both of Jews and Gentiles, and both had a hand in his death. See how these corrupt church-rulers abused the civil magistrate, making use of him to execute their unrighteous decrees, and inflict the grievance which they had prescribed, Isa. 10. 1. Thus have the kings of the earth been wretchedly imposed upon by the papal powers, and condemned to the drudgery of extirpating with the sword of war, as well as that of justice, those whom they have marked for heretics, right or wrong, to the great prejudice of their own interests.

II. The money which they had paid to Judas, for betraying Christ, is by him delivered back to them, and Judas, in despair, hangs himself. The chief priests and elders supported themselves with this, in prosecuting Christ, that his own disciple betrayed him to them; but now, in the midst of the prosecution, that strength failed them, and even he is made to them a witness of Christ's innocence, and a monument of God's justice; which served, 1. For glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and a specimen of his victory over Satan, who had entered into Judas. 2. For warning to his persecutors, and to leave them the more inexcusable. If their heart had not been fully set in them to do this evil, what Judas said and did, one would think, should have stopped the prosecution.

(1.) See here how Judas repented; not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined. Now observe here,

[1.] What induced him to repent. It was when he saw that he was condemned. Judas, it is probable, expected that either Christ would have made his escape out of their hands, or would so have pleaded his own cause at their bar as to have come off, and then Christ would have the honour, the Jews the shame, and he the money, and no harm done. This he had no reason to expect, because he had so often heard his Master say that he must be crucified; yet it is probable that he did expect it, and, when the event did not answer his vain fancy

then he fell into this horror, when he saw the stream strong against Christ, and him yielding to it. Note, Those who measure actions by the consequences of them, rather than by the divine law, will find themselves mistaken in their measures. The way of sin is down-hill; and if we cannot easily stop ourselves, much less can we stop others whom we have set a going in a sinful way. He repented himself; that is, he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, at himself, when reflecting upon what he had done. When he was tempted to betray his Master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the wine, when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dross, it but like a serpent, and stung like an adder. Now his conscience flew in his face; "What have I done! What a fool, what a wretch, am I, to sell my Master, and all my comfort and happiness in him, for such a trifle! All these abuses and indignities done him are chargeable upon me; it is owing to me that he is bound and condemned, spit upon and buffeted. I little thought it would have come to this, when I made that wicked bargain; so foolish was I, and ignorant, and so like a beast." Now he curses the bag he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his Master's goodness to him, which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned at, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions, and made them the more piercing. Now he found his Master's words true; *It were better for that man that he had never been born*. Note, Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels it will be turned into the gall of asps, (Job 20. 12—14.) like John's book, Rev. 10. 9.

[2.] What were the indications of his repentance.

First, He made restitution; He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, when they were all together publicly. Now the money burned in his conscience, and he was as sick of it as ever he had been fond of it. Note, That which is ill-gotten will never do good to those that get it, Jer. 13. 10. Job 20. 15. If he had repented, and brought the money back before he had betrayed Christ, he might have done it with comfort, then he had agreed while yet in the way; but now it was too late, now he cannot do it without horror, wishing ten thousand times he had never meddled with it. See Jam. 5. 3. He brought it again. Note, What is unjustly gotten must not be kept; for that is a continuance in the sin by which it was got, and such an avowing of it as is not consistent with repentance. He brought it to those from whom he had it, to let them know that he repented his bargain. Note, Those who have served and hardened others in their sin, when God gives them repentance, should let them know it, whose sins they have been partakers in, that it may be a means to bring them to repentance.

Secondly, He made confession; (v. 4.) *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood*. 1. To the honour of Christ, he pronounces his blood innocent. If he had been guilty of any sinful practices, Judas, as his disciple, would certainly have known it, and, as his betrayer, would certainly have discovered it; but he, freely, and without being urged to it, pronounces him innocent, to the face of those who had now pronounced him guilty. 2. To his own shame, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, "You have sinned in hiring me to do it;" but takes it all to himself; "I have sinned, in doing it." Thus far Judas went to ward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation

He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, *I have sinned, Father, against heaven.* He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

(2.) See here how the chief priests and elders entertained Judas's penitential confession; they said, *What is that to us? See thou to that.* He made them his confessors, and that was the *absolution* they gave him; more like the priests of devils than like the priests of the holy living God.

[1.] See here how carelessly they speak of the betraying of Christ. Judas had told them that the blood of Christ was innocent blood; and they said, *What is that to us?* Was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had now condemned it to be shed unjustly? Is this nothing to them? Does it give no check to the violence of their prosecution, no warning to take heed what they do to this just man? Thus do fools make a mock at sin, as if no harm were done, no hazard run, by the commission of the greatest wickedness. Thus light do many make of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

[2.] See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas; he said, *I have sinned,* and they said, *What is that to us?* What are we concerned in thy sin, that thou tellest us of it? Note, It is folly for us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are any way accessory to, or partakers in. Is it nothing to us, that God is dishonoured, souls wounded, Satan gratified and his interest served, and that we have aided and abetted it? If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder Naboth, is that nothing to Ahab? Yes, *he has killed,* for he has *taken possession,* 1 Kings 21. 19. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there were guilt in the matter, they tell Judas that he must *look to it,* he must *bear it.* First, Because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed *the greater sin;* (John 19. 11.) but it did not therefore follow that their's was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison. Secondly, Because he knew and believed him to be innocent. "If he be innocent, see thou to it, that is more than we know; we have adjudged him *guilty,* and therefore may justly prosecute him as such." Wicked practices are buoyed up by wicked principles, and particularly by his, That sin is sin only to those that think it to be so; that it is no harm to persecute a good man, if we take him to be a bad man; but those who thus think to mock God, will but deceive and destroy themselves.

[3.] See how carelessly they speak of the conviction, terror, and remorse, that Judas was under. They were glad to make use of him in the sin, and were then very fond of him; none more welcome to them than Judas, when he said, *What will ye give me, and I will betray him to you?* They did not say, *What is that to us?* But, now that his sin had put him into a fright, now they slighted him, had nothing to say to him, but turned him over to his own terrors; why did he come to trouble them with his melancholy fancies? They had something else to do than to heed him. But why so shy? First, Perhaps they were in some fear lest the sparks of his conviction, brought too near, should kindle a fire in their own consciences, and lest his moans, listened to, should give an alarm to their own convictions. Note, Obstinate sinners stand upon their guard

against convictions; and those that are resolutely impenitent, look with disdain upon the penitent. Secondly, However, they were in no concern to succour Judas; when they had brought him into the snare, they not only left him, but laughed at him. Note, Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters. It is usual for those that love the treason, to hate the traitor.

(3.) Here is the utter despair that Judas was hereby driven into. If the chief priests had promised him to stay the prosecution, it would have been some comfort to him; but, seeing no hopes of that, he grew desperate, *v. 5.*

[1.] *He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple.* The chief priests would not take the money, for fear of taking thereby the whole guilt to themselves, which they were willing that Judas should bear the load of; Judas would not keep it, it was too hot for him to hold, he therefore threw it down in the temple, that, whether they would or no, it might fall into the hands of the chief priests. See what a *drug* money was, when the guilt of *sin* was tacked to it, or was thought to be so.

[2.] *He went, and hanged himself.* First, *he retired*—*ἀνεχέσθαι*; he withdrew into some solitary place, like the possessed man that was drawn by the devil into the wilderness, Luke 8. 29. Woe to him that is in despair, and is alone. If Judas had gone to Christ, or to some of the disciples, perhaps he might have had relief, bad as the case was; but, missing of it with the chief priests, he abandoned himself to despair: and the same devil that, with the help of the priests, drew him to the sin, with their help drove him to despair. Secondly, *He became his own executioner; He hanged himself;* he was *suffocated* with grief, so Dr. Hammond; but Dr. Whitby is clear that our translation is right. Judas had a *sight* and *sense* of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so *he fined away in his iniquity.* His sin, we may suppose, was not, in its own nature, unpardonable, there were some of those saved, that had been Christ's betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil's mercy than God's. And some have said, that Judas sinned more in *despairing* of the mercy of God, than in *betraying* his Master's blood. Now, the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him. All the curses written in God's book now came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as was foretold concerning him, (Ps. 109. 18, 19.) and drove him to this desperate shift, for the escaping of a hell within him, to leap into that before him, which was but the perfection and perpetuity of this horror and despair. He throws himself into the fire, to avoid the flame; but miserable is the case when a man must go to hell for ease.

Now, in this story, 1. We have an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, and particularly those that are given up to the love of money. This is the destruction in which many are drowned by it, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. Remember what became of the swine into which, and of the traitor into whom, *the devil entered;* and *give not place to the devil.* 2. We have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18. As in the story of Peter we behold the goodness of God, and the triumphs of Christ's grace in the conversion of some sinners; so in the story of Judas we behold the severity of God, and the triumphs of Christ's power and justice in the confusion of other sinners. When Judas, into whom Satan entered, was thus *hung up,* Christ made an open shew of the principalities and powers he undertook the *spoiling of.* Col. 2. 15. 3. We have an instance of the direful

effects of despair; it often ends in self-murder. *Sorrow*, even that for sin, if not according to God, *worketh death*, (2 Cor. 7. 10.) the worst kind of death, for a wounded spirit who can bear? Let us think as bad as we can of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable; let us despair of help in ourselves, but not of help in God. He that thinks to ease his conscience by destroying his life, doth, in effect, dare God Almighty to do his worst. And self-murder, though prescribed by some of the heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, *lead us not into temptation*.

(4.) The disposal of the money which Judas brought back, v. 6—10. It was laid out in the purchase of a field, called the *potter's field*; because some potter had owned it, or occupied it, or lived near it, or because broken potter's vessels were thrown into it. And this field was to be a burying-place for strangers, that is, proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were of other nations, and, coming to Jerusalem to worship, happened to die there. [1.] It looks like an instance of their humanity, that they took care for the *burying of strangers*; and it intimates that they themselves allowed, (as St. Paul saith, Acts 24. 15.) *that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust*; for we therefore take care of the dead body, not only because it has been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again. But, [2.] It was no instance of their humility that they would bury strangers in a place by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their burying-places; strangers must keep their distance, alive and dead, and that principle must go down to the grave, *Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou*, Isa. 63. 5. The sons of Heth were better affected towards Abraham, though a stranger among them, when they offered him the choicest of their own sepulchres, Gen. 23. 6. But the sons of the stranger, that have joined themselves to the Lord, though buried by themselves, shall rise with all that are dead in Christ.

This buying of the potter's field did not take place on the day that Christ died; (they were then too busy to mind any thing else but hunting him down;) but it took place not long after; for Peter speaks of it soon after Christ's ascension; yet it is here recorded,

First, To shew the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, and now,

1. They scruple to put that money into the treasury, or *corban*, of the temple, with which they had hired the traitor. Though, perhaps, they had taken it out of the treasury, pretending it was for the public good, and though they were great sticklers for the *corban*, and laboured to draw all the wealth of the nation into it, yet they would not put that money into it, which was the price of blood. The hire of a traitor they thought parallel to the hire of a whore, and the price of a malefactor, (such a one they made Christ to be,) equivalent to the price of a dog, neither of which was to be brought into the house of the Lord, Deut. 23. 18. They would thus save their credit with the people, by possessing them with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple. Thus they that *swallowed a camel, strained at a gnat*.

2. They think to atone for what they had done, by this public good act of providing a burying-place for strangers, though not at their own charge. Thus, in times of ignorance, people were made to believe that building churches and endowing monasteries would make amends for immoralities.

Secondly, To signify the favour intended by the

blood of Christ to *strangers*, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting-place is provided for them after death. Thus many of the ancients apply this passage. The grave is the potter's field, where the bodies are thrown as despised broken vessels; but Christ, by his blood, purchased it for those who, by confessing themselves *strangers* on earth, seek the better country; he has altered the property of it, (as a purchaser doth,) so that now death is our's, the grave is our's, a bed of rest for us. The Germans, in their language, call burying-places *God's fields*; for in them God sows his people as a *corn of wheat*, John 12. 24. See Hos. 2. 23, Isa. 26. 19.

Thirdly, To perpetuate the infamy of those that bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called *Aeldama—the field of blood*; not by the chief priests, they hoped in this burying-place to bury the remembrance of their own crime; but by the people; who took notice of Judas's acknowledgment that he had betrayed the innocent blood, though the chief priests made nothing of it. They fastened this name upon the field in *perpetuam rei memoriam—for a perpetual memorial*. Note, Divine Providence has many ways of entailing disgrace upon the wicked practices even of great men, who, though they seek to cover their shame, are put to a perpetual reproach.

Fourthly, That we may see how the scripture was fulfilled; (v. 9, 10.) *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet*. The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, ch. 11. 12. How they are here said to be spoken by Jeremy is a difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine doth not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human as to small circumstances in the penmen of it. The Syriac version, which is ancient, reads only, *It was spoken by the prophet*, not naming any, whence some thought that Jeremy was added by some scribe; some think that the whole volume of the prophets, being in one book, and the prophecy of Jeremiah put first, it might not be improper, *currente calamo—for a transcriber* to quote any passage out of that volume, under his name. The Jews used to say, *The spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah*, and so they were as one prophet. Some suggest that it was spoken by Jeremiah, but written by Zechariah; or that Jeremiah wrote the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Zechariah. Now this passage, in the prophet, is a representation of the great contempt of God that was found among the Jews, and the poor returns they made to him for rich receivings from him. But here that is really acted, which was there but figuratively expressed. The sum of money is the same—*thirty pieces of silver*, this they weighed for his price, at this rate they valued him; a goodly price; and this was cast to the potter in the house of the Lord; which was here literally accomplished. Note, We should better understand the events of Providence so plainly, that *he who runs may read them*. What David spake figuratively, (Ps. 42. 7.) Jonah made a literal application of; *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*, Jon. 2. 3.

The giving of the price of him that was valued, not for him, but for the *potter's field*, bespeaks, 1. The high value that ought to be put upon Christ. The price was given, not for him; no, when it was given for him, it was soon brought back again with disdain, as infinitely below his worth; he cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, nor this unspeakable Gift bought with money. 2. The low value that was put upon him. *They of the children of Israel*

did strangely undervalue him, when his price did but reach to buy a potter's field, a pitiful sorry spot of ground, not worth looking upon. It added to the reproach of his being bought and sold, that it was at so low a rate. *Cast it to the potter*, so it is in Zechariah; a contemptible petty chapman, not the merchant that deals in things of value. And observe, *they of the children of Israel thus undervalued him*; they who were his own people, that should have known better what estimate to put upon him, they to whom he was first sent, whose Glory he was, and whom he had valued so highly, and bought so dear. He gave kings' ransoms for them, and the richest countries, (so *precious were they in his sight*, Isa. 43. 3, 4.) Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba; but they gave a slave's ransom for him, (see Exod. 21. 32.) and valued him but at the rate of a potter's field; so was that blood trodden under foot, which bought the kingdom of heaven for us. But all this was *as the Lord appointed*; so the prophetic vision was, which typified this event, and so the event itself, as the other instances of Christ's sufferings, was *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*.

11. And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. 12. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. 13. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? 14. And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. 15. Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. 16. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. 17. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ? 18. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. 19. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. 20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. 21. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said Barabbas. 22. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. 23. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. 24. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. 25.

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

We have here an account of what passed in Pilate's judgment-hall, when the blessed Jesus was brought thither betimes in the morning. Though it was no court-day, Pilate immediately took his case before him. We have here,

1. The trial Christ had before Pilate.

1. His arraignment; *Jesus stood before the governor*, as the prisoner before the judge. We could not stand before God because of our sins, nor lift up our face in his presence, if Christ had not been thus made sin for us. He was arraigned that we might be discharged. Some think that this bespeaks his courage and boldness; he stood *undaunted*, unmoved by all their rage. He thus stood in this judgment, that we might stand in God's judgment. He stood for a *Spectacle*, as Naboth, when he was arraigned, was *set on high among the people*.

2. His indictment; *Art thou the king of the Jews?* The Jews were now not only under the government, but under the very jealous inspection, of the Roman powers, which they were themselves to the highest degree disaffected to, and yet now pretend a concern for, to serve this turn; accusing Jesus as an enemy to Cæsar, (Luke 23. 2.) which they could produce no other proof of, than that he himself had newly owned he was *the Christ*. Now, they thought that whoever was the Christ must be the *king of the Jews*, and must deliver them from the Roman power, and restore to them a temporal dominion, and enable them to trample upon all their neighbours. According to this chimera of their own, they accused our Lord Jesus, as making himself king of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman yoke; whereas, though he said that he was the Christ, he meant not such a Christ as this. Note, Many oppose Christ's holy religion, upon a mistake of the nature of it; they dress it up in false colours, and then fight against it. They assuring the governor, that, if he made himself Christ, he made himself king of the Jews, the governor takes it for granted, that he goes about to pervert the nation and subvert the government. *Art thou a king?* It was plain that he was not so *de facto*—*actually*; "But dost thou lay any claim to the government, or pretend a right to rule the Jews? Note, It has often been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion, unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil powers, as if it were hurtful to kings and provinces, whereas it tends mightily to the benefit of both.

3. His plea; *Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest. It is as thou sayest, though not as thou meanest; I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect me to be."* Thus, before Pilate, he witnessed a good confession, and was not ashamed to own himself a King, though it looked ridiculous, nor afraid, though at this time it was dangerous.

4. The evidence; (v. 12.) He was *accused of the chief priests*. Pilate found *no fault in him*; what ever was said, nothing was proved, and therefore what was wanting in matter they made up in noise and violence, and followed him with repeated accusations, the same as they had given in before; but by the repetitions they thought to force a belief from the governor. They had learned, not only *calumniari*—*to calumniate*, but *fortiter calumniari*—*to calumniate stoutly*. The best men have often been accused of the worst crimes.

5. The prisoner's silence as to the prosecutors' accusations; *He answered nothing*, (1.) Because there was no occasion; nothing was alleged but what carried its own confutation along with it. (2.) He was now taken up with the great concern that lay between him and his Father, to whom he was offering up himself a sacrifice, to answer the demands of

his justice, which he was so intent upon, that he minded not what they said against him. 3. His hour was come, and he submitted to his Father's will: *Not as I will, but as thou wilt.* He knew what his Father's will was, and therefore silently committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He must not thus, by our silence, throw away our lives, because we are not lords of our lives, as Christ was of his; nor can we know, as he did, when our hour is come. But hence we must learn, *not to render railing for railing*, 1 Pet. 2. 23.

Now, [1.] Pilate pressed him to make some reply; (v. 13.) *Heardest thou not how many things they witness against thee?* What these things were, may be gathered from Luke 23. 3, 5, and John 19. 7. Pilate, having no malice at all against him, was desirous he should clear himself, urges him to it, and believes he could do it; *Heardest thou not?* Yes, he did hear; and still he hears all that is witnessed unjustly against his truths and ways; but he keeps silence, because it is the day of his patience, and doth not answer, as he will shortly, Ps. 50. 3. [2.] He wondered at his silence; which was not interpreted so much into contempt of the court, as a contempt of himself. And therefore Pilate is not said to be angry at it, but to have *marvelled greatly* at it, as a thing very unusual. He believed him to be innocent, and had heard, perhaps, that *never man spake like him*; and therefore he thought it strange that he had not one word to say for himself. We have,

II. The outrage and violence of the people, in pressing the governor to crucify Christ. The chief priests had a great interest in the people, they called them *Rabbi, Rabbi*, made idols of them, and oracles of all they said; and they made use of this, to incense them against him, and by the power of the mob gained the point which they could not otherwise carry. Now, here are two instances of their outrage.

1. Their preferring Barabbas before him, and choosing to have him released rather than Jesus.

(1.) It seems, it was grown into a custom with the Roman governors, for the humouring of the Jews, to grace the feast of the passover with the release of a prisoner, v. 15. This, they thought, did honour to the feast, and was agreeable to the commemoration of their deliverance; but it was an invention of their own, and no divine institution; though some think that it was ancient, and kept up by the Jewish princes, before they became a province of the empire. However, it was a bad custom, an obstruction to justice, and an encouragement to wickedness. But our gospel-passover is celebrated with the release of prisoners, by him who hath *power on earth to forgive sins*.

(2.) The prisoner put in competition with our Lord Jesus, was, Barabbas; he is here called a *notable prisoner*; (v. 16.) either because, by birth and breeding, he was of some note and quality, or because he had signalized himself by something remarkable in his crimes; whether he was so *notable* as to recommend himself the more to the favours of the people, and so the more likely to be interceded for, or whether so *notable* as to make himself more liable to their rage, is uncertain. Some think the latter, and therefore Pilate mentioned him, as taking it for granted that they would have desired any one's release rather than his. *Treason, murder, and felony*, are the three most enormous crimes that are usually punished by the sword of justice; and Barabbas was guilty of all three, Luke 23. 19. John 18. 40. A *notable prisoner* indeed, whose crimes were so complicated.

(3.) The proposal was made by Pilate the governor; (v. 17.) *Whom will ye that I release unto you?* It is probable that the judge had the nomina-

tion of two, one of which the people were to *choose*. Pilate proposed to them to have Jesus *released*; he was convinced of his innocency, and that the prosecution was malicious; yet had not the courage to acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own power, but would have him released by the people's election, and so he hoped to satisfy both his own conscience, and the *people* too; whereas, finding no fault in him, he ought not to have *put him upon the country*, or brought him into the *peril of his life*. But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim the matter, and to keep in with conscience and the world too, are the common practice of those that seek more to please men than God. *What shall I do*, said Pilate, *with Jesus, who is called Christ?* He puts the people in mind of this, that this Jesus, whose release he proposed, was looked upon by some among them as the Messiah, and had given pregnant proofs of his being so; "Do not reject one, of whom your nation has professed such an expectation."

The reason why Pilate laboured thus to get Jesus discharged, was, because he knew that *for envy the chief priests had delivered him up*; (v. 18.) that it was not his *guilt*, but his goodness, that they were provoked at; and for this reason he *hoped* to bring him off by the people's act, and that they would be for his release. When David was *envied* by Saul, he was the *darling of the people*; and any one that heard the *hosannas* with which Christ was but a few days ago brought into Jerusalem, would have thought that he had been so, and that Pilate might safely have referred this matter to the commonalty, especially when so notorious a rogue was set up as a rival with him for their favours. But it proved otherwise.

(4.) While Pilate was thus labouring the matter, he was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife, (v. 19.) by way of caution; *Have thou nothing to do with that just Man*, (together with the reason,) *for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him*. Probably, this message was delivered to Pilate publicly, in the hearing of all that were present, for it was intended to be a warning not to him only, but to the persecutors. Observe,

[1.] The special providence of God, in sending this dream to Pilate's wife; it is not likely that she had heard any thing, before, concerning Christ, at least, not so as to occasion her dreaming of him, but it was immediately from God: perhaps she was one of the *devout and honourable women*, and had some sense of religion; yet God revealed himself by dreams to some that had not, as to Nebuchadnezzar. She *suffered many things* in this dream; whether she dreamed of the cruel usage of an innocent person, or of the judgments that would fall upon those that had any hand in his death, or both, it seems that it was a frightful dream, and her thoughts *troubled her*, as Dan. 2. 1.—4. 5. Note, The Father of spirits has many ways of access to the spirits of men, and can *send their instruction in a dream, or vision of the night*, Job 33. 15. Yet, to those who have the written word, God more ordinarily speaks by conscience on a waking bed, than by dreams, when *deep sleep falls upon men*.

[2.] The tenderness and care of Pilate's wife, in sending this caution, thereupon, to her husband; *Have nothing to do with that just Man*. First, This was an honourable testimony to our Lord Jesus, witnessing for him that he was a *just Man*, even then when he was persecuted as the worst of malefactors: when his friends were afraid to appear in defence of him, God made even those that were strangers and enemies to speak in his favour; when Peter denied him, Judas confessed him; when the chief priests pronounced him guilty of death, Pilate

declared he *found no fault* in him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate's wife, who knew little of him, shewed a concern for him. Note, God will not leave himself without witnesses to the truth and equity of his cause, even then when it seems to be most spitefully run down by its enemies, and most shamefully deserted by his friends. *Secondly*, It was a fair warning to Pilate; *Have nothing to do with him*. Note, God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them. *Oh do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates*, is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Pilate's lady sent him this warning, out of the love she had to him; she feared not a rebuke from him for meddling with that which belonged not to her; but, let him take it how he would, she would give him the caution. Note, It is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin; and the nearer they are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more solicitous we should be not to suffer sin to come, or lie, upon them, Lev. 19. 17. The best friendship is friendship to the soul. We are not told how Pilate turned this off, probably with a jest; but, by his proceeding against this just man, it appears that he did not regard it. Thus faithful admonitions are made light of, when they are given as warnings against sin, but will not be so easily made light of, when they shall be reflected upon as aggravations of sin.

(5.) The chief priests and the elders were busy, all this while, to influence the people in favour of Barabbas, v. 20. They *persuaded the multitude*, both by themselves and their emissaries, whom they sent abroad among them, *that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus*; suggesting that this Jesus was a Deceiver, in league with Satan, an enemy to their church and temple; that, if he were let alone, the Romans would come, and take away their place and nation; that Barabbas, though a bad man, yet, having not the interest that Jesus had, could not do so much mischief. Thus they managed the mob, who otherwise were well affected to Jesus, and, if they had not been so much at the beck of their priests, would never have done such a preposterous thing as to prefer Barabbas before Jesus. Here, [1.] We cannot but look upon these wicked priests with indignation; by the law, in *matters of controversy between blood and blood*, the people were to be guided by the priests, and to do as they informed them, Deut. 17. 8. This great power put into their hands they wretchedly abused, and the leaders of the people caused them to err. [2.] We cannot but look upon the deluded people with pity; *I have compassion on the multitude*, to see them hurried thus violently to so great wickedness, to see them thus priest-ridden, and falling into the ditch with their blind leaders.

(6.) Being thus overruled by the priests, at length they made their choice, v. 21. *Whether of the twain* (saith Pilate) *will ye that I release unto you?* He hoped that he had gained his point, to have Jesus released. But, to his great surprise, they said *Barabbas*; as if his crimes were less, and therefore he less deserved to die; or as if his merits were greater, and therefore he better deserved to live. The cry for Barabbas was so universal, one and all, that there was no colour to demand a poll between the candidates. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and thou, earth, be horribly afraid!* Were ever men, that pretended to reason or religion, guilty of such prodigious madness, such horrid wickedness! This was it that Peter charged so home upon them;

(Acts 3. 14.) *Ye desired a murderer to be granted you; yet multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions.*

2. Their pressing earnestly to have Jesus crucified, v. 22, 23. Pilate, being amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope that it was rather from a fondness for him than from an enmity to Jesus; and therefore he puts it to them, *"What shall I do then with Jesus? Shall I release him likewise, for the greater honour of your feast, or will you leave it to me?"* No, *they all said, Let him be crucified*. That death they desired he might die, because it was looked upon as the most scandalous and ignominious; and they hoped thereby to make his followers ashamed to own him, and their relation to him. It was absurd for them to prescribe to the judge what sentence he should pass; but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a *riotous, tumultuous, and seditious assembly*. Now was truth fallen into the street, and equity could not enter; where one *looked for judgment, behold oppression*, the worst kind of oppression; for righteousness, behold, a cry, the worst cry that ever was, *Crucify, crucify the Lord of glory*. Though they that cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons that the other day had cried *Hosanna*, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time: when he *rode in triumph* into Jerusalem, so *general* were the *acclamations of praise*, that one would have thought he had *no enemies*; but now, when he was *led in triumph* to Pilate's judgment-seat, so *general* were the *outcries of enmity*, that one would think he had *no friends*. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, *by honour and dishonour, by evil report, and good report*, counterchanged; (2 Cor. 6. 8.) that we may not be lifted up by honour, as if, when we were applauded and caressed, we had *made our nest among the stars*, and should *die in that nest*; nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour, as if, when we were despised and trampled upon, we were trodden to the lowest hell, from which there is *no redemption*. *Vides tu istos qui te laudant; omnes aut sunt hostes, aut (quod in æquo est) esse possunt—You observe those who applaud you; either they are all your enemies, or, which is equivalent, they may become so.* Seneca, de Vita Beat.

Now, as to this demand, we are further told, (1.) How Pilate objected against it; *Why, what evil has he done?* A proper question to ask before we censure any in common discourse, much more for a judge to ask before he pass a sentence of death. Note, It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that, though he suffered as an evil-doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil. Had he done any evil against God? No, he *always did those things that pleased him*. Had he done any evil against the civil government? No, as he did himself, so he taught others, *to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's*. Had he done any evil against the public peace? No, he did not *strive or cry*, nor did his kingdom *come with observation*. Had he done any evil to particular persons? *Whose ox had he taken, or whom had he defrauded?* No, so far from that, that he *went about doing good*. This repeated assertion of his unspotted innocence, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others; for, if it had not been for our transgressions that he was thus wounded, and for our offences that he was delivered up, and that upon his own voluntary undertaking to atone for them, I see not how these extraordinary sufferings of a person that had never thought, said, or done, any thing amiss, could be reconciled with the

justice and equity of that Providence that governs the world, and at least *permitted* this to be done &c.

(2.) How they insisted upon it; *They cried out the more, Let him be crucified.* They do not go about to shew any evil he had done, but, right or wrong, he must be *crucified*. Quitting all pretensions to the proof of the premises, they resolve to hold the conclusion, and what was wanting in evidence to make up in clamour; this unjust judge was wearied by importunity into an unjust sentence, as he in the parable into a just one, (Luke 18. 4.) and the cause carried purely by noise.

III. Here is the *devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood upon the people and priests.*

1. Pilate endeavours to transfer it from himself, v. 24.

(1.) He sees it to *no purpose to contend.* What he said, [1.] Would do no good; *he could prevail nothing*; he could not convince them what an unjust unreasonable thing it was for him to condemn a man whom he believed innocent, and whom they could not prove guilty. See how strong the stream of lust and rage sometimes is; neither authority nor reason will prevail to give check to it. Nay, [2.] It was more likely to *do hurt*; he saw that rather a *tumult was made*. This rude and brutish people fell to high words, and began to threaten Pilate what they would do, if he did not gratify them; and how great a matter might this fire kindle, especially when the priests, those great incendiaries, blew the coals! Now this turbulent tumultuous temper of the Jews, by which Pilate was awed to condemn Christ against his conscience, contributed more than any thing to the ruin of that nation not long after; for their frequent insurrections provoked the Romans to destroy them, though they had reduced them, and their inveterate quarrels among themselves made them an easy prey to the common enemy. Thus their sin was their ruin.

Observe how easily we may be mistaken in the inclination of the common people; the priests were apprehensive that their endeavours to *seize* Christ would have caused an uproar, especially *on the feast day*; but it proved that Pilate's endeavour to *save* him caused an uproar, and that on the feast day; so uncertain are the sentiments of the crowd.

(2.) This puts him into a *great strait*, between the peace of his own mind, and the peace of the city; he is loath to condemn an innocent man, and yet loath to *disoblige* the people, and raise a devil that would not be soon laid. Had he steadily and resolutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity; the matter was plain and past dispute, that a man in whom was found *no fault*, ought not to be crucified upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an unjust thing be done, to gratify any man, or company of men, in the world; the cause is soon decided; *Let justice be done, though heaven and earth come together—Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* If *wickedness proceed from the wicked*, though they be priests, yet *my hand shall not be upon him*.

(3.) Pilate thinks to trim the matter, and to pacify both the people and his own conscience too, by *doing it*, and yet *disowning it*, *acting the thing*, and yet *acquitting* himself from it at the same time. Such absurdities and self-contradictions do *they* run upon, whose convictions are *strong*, but their corruptions *stronger*. *Happu is he* (saith the apostle, Rom. 14. 22.) *that condemneth not himself in that thing which he allows*; or, which is all one, that *allows* not himself in that thing which he *condemns*.

Now Pilate endeavours to clear himself from the guilt,

[1.] By a *sign*; He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude; not as if he thought

thereby to cleanse himself from any guilt contracted before God, but to acquit himself before the people, from so much as contracting any guilt in this matter; as if he had said, "If it be done, bear witness that it is none of my doing." He borrowed the ceremony from that law which appointed it to be used for the clearing of the country from the guilt of an undiscovered murder; (Deut. 21. 6, 7.) and he used it the more to affect the people with the conviction he was under of the prisoner's innocence; and, probably, such was the noise of the rabble, that, if he had not used some surprising sign, in the view of them all, he could not have been heard.

[2.] By a *saying*; in which, *First*, He clears himself; *I am innocent of the blood of this just person.* What nonsense was this, to condemn him, and yet protest that he is innocent of his blood! For men to protest against a thing, and yet to practise it, is only to proclaim that they sin against their consciences. Though Pilate professed his innocency, God charges him with guilt, Acts 4. 27. Some think to justify themselves, by pleading that their hands were not in the sin; but David kills by the sword of the children of Ammon, and Ahab by the elders of Jezreel. Pilate here thinks to justify himself, by pleading that his heart was not in the action; but this is an avowal which will never be admitted. *Protestatio non valet contra factum—In vain does he protest against the deed which at the same time he perpetrates.* Secondly, He cast it upon the priests and people; "*See ye to it*;" if it must be done, I cannot help it, do you answer it before God and the world." Note, Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; and many deceive themselves with this, that they shall bear no blame if they can but find any to lay the blame upon; but it is not so easy a thing to transfer the guilt of sin as many think it is. The condition of him that is infected with the plague is not the less dangerous, either for his catching of the infection from others, or his communicating of the infection to others; we may be *tempted* to sin, but cannot be *forced*. The priests threw it upon Judas; *See thou to it*; and now Pilate throws it upon them; *See ye to it*; *for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.*

2. The priests and people *consented* to take the guilt upon themselves; they all said, "*His blood be on us, and on our children*;" we are so well assured that there is neither sin nor danger in putting him to death, that we are willing to run the hazard of it;" as if the guilt would do no harm to them or their's. They saw that it was the dread of guilt, that made Pilate hesitate, and that he was getting over this difficulty by a fancy of transferring it; to prevent the return of his hesitation, and to confirm him in that fancy, they, in the heat of their rage, agreed to it, rather than lose the prey they had in their hands, and cried, *His blood be upon us.* Now,

(1.) By this they designed to indemnify Pilate, that is, to make him think himself indemnified, by becoming bound to divine justice to save him harmless. But those that are themselves bankrupts and beggars, will never be admitted security for others, nor taken as a bail for them. None could bear the sin of others, except him that had none of his own to answer for; it is a bold undertaking, and too big for any creature, to become bound for a sinner to Almighty God.

(2.) But they did really imprecate wrath and vengeance upon themselves and their posterity. What a desperate world was this, and how little did they think what was the direful import of it, or to what an abyss of misery it would bring them and their's! Christ had lately told them, that upon them would come *all the righteous blood shed upon the earth*, from that of the righteous Abel; but, as if that were too little, they here imprecate upon themselves the

guilt of that blood which was more precious than all the rest, and the guilt of which would lie heavier. Oh the daring presumption of wilful sinners, that *run upon God, upon his neck, and defy his justice!* John 15. 25, 26. Observe,

[1.] How *cruel* they were in their *imprecation*. They imprecated the punishment of this sin, not only upon themselves, but upon *their children* too, even those that were yet unborn, without so much as limiting the entail of the curse, as God himself had been pleased to limit it, to the *third and fourth generation*. It was madness to pull it upon themselves, but the height of barbarity to entail it on their posterity. Surely they were like the ostrich: they were *hardened against their young ones*, as though they were not *theirs*. What a dreadful conveyance was this of guilt and wrath to them and their heirs for ever, and this delivered by *joint consent, nemine contradicente—unanimously*, as their own *act and deed*; which certainly amounted to a forfeiture and defeasance of that ancient charter, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*. Their entailing the curse of the Messiah's blood upon their nation, cut off the entail of the blessings of that blood from their families, that, according to another promise made to Abraham, in him *all the families of the earth* might be blessed. See what enemies wicked men are to their own children and families; those that damn their own souls, care not how many they take to hell with them.

[2.] How righteous God was, in his retribution according to this imprecation; they said, *His blood be on us, and on our children*; and God said, *Amen* to it, so shall thy doom be; as they *loved cursing*, so it came upon them. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel it to this day; from the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were quite laid waste, and made an astonishment, a hissing, and a by-word; yet on some of them, and some of their's, this blood came, not to *condemn* them, but to *save* them; divine mercy, upon their repenting and believing, cut off this entail, and then the *promise* was again *to them, and to their children*. God is better to us and our's than we are.

26. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified. 27. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. 28. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews! 30. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. 31. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*. 32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

In these verses we have the *preparations* for, and *prefaces* to, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Here is,

I. The sentence passed, and the warrant signed

for his execution; and this *immediately*, the same hour.

1. Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal if he had not been put in competition with Christ for the favour of the people, it is probable that he had died for his crimes; but that proved the means of his escape; to intimate that Christ was condemned for this purpose, that sinners, even the chief of sinners, might be *released*; he was *delivered up*, that he might be delivered; whereas the *common instance* of Divine Providence, is, that the *wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright*, Prov. 21. 18.—11. 18. In this *unparalleled instance* of divine grace, the *upright* is a *ransom for the transgressors*, the just for the unjust.

2. Jesus was *scourged*; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as it was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die; the *rods* were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, *The ploughers ploughed on my back*, (Ps. 129. 3.) *I gave my back to the smiters*, (Isa. 50. 6.) and *By his stripes we are healed*, Isa. 53. 5. He was *chastised with whips*, that we might not be for ever *chastised with scorpions*.

3. He was then *delivered to be crucified*; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the *blood of his cross*; (Col. 1. 20.) therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be *crucified*; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is, such that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross; so Julius Cæsar did by some pirates, *Sueton. lib. 1*. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, by an edict abolished the use of that punishment among the Romans, *Sozomen, Hist. lib. 1. ch. 8*. *Næ salutare signum subserviret ad perniciem—That the symbol of salvation might not be subservient to the victim's destruction*.

II. The barbarous treatment which the soldiers gave him, while things were getting ready for his execution. When he was condemned, he ought to have had some time allowed him to prepare for death. There was a law made by the Roman senate, in Tiberius's time, perhaps upon complaint of this and the like precipitation, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least *ten days* after sentence. *Sueton. in Tiber. cap. 25*. But there were scarcely allowed so many minutes to our Lord Jesus; nor had he any breathing time during those minutes; it was a *crisis*, and there were no *lucid intervals* allowed him; *deep called unto deep*, and the storm continued without any intermission.

When he was *delivered to be crucified*, that was enough; they that *kill the body*, yield that there is no more that they *can do*, but Christ's enemies will *do more*, and, if it be possible, wrap up a thousand deaths in one. Though Pilate pronounced him innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, set themselves to abuse him, being swayed more by the fury of the people *against him*, than by their master's testimony *for him*; the Jewish *rabble* infected the Roman soldiery, or perhaps it was not so much in spite to him, as

to make sport for themselves, that they thus abused him. They understood that he *pretended to a crown*; to taunt him with that gave them some diversion, and an opportunity to make themselves and one another merry. Note, It is an argument of a base, servile, sordid spirit, to insult over those that are in misery, and to make the calamities of any, matter of sport and merriment.

Observe, 1. *Where this was done—in the common hall.* The governor's house, which should have been a shelter to the wronged and abused, is made the theatre of this barbarity. I wonder that the governor, who was so desirous to acquit himself from the blood of this just person, would suffer this to be done in his house. Perhaps he did not order it to be done, but he *connived at it*; and those in authority will be accountable, not only for the wickedness which they do or *approve*, but for that which they do not restrain, when it is in the power of their hands. Masters of families should not suffer their houses to be places of abuse to any, nor their servants to make sport with the sins, or miseries, or religion, of others.

2. *Who were concerned in it.* They gathered the whole band, the soldiers that were to attend the execution, would have the whole regiment (at least five hundred, some think twelve or thirteen hundred) to share in the diversion. If Christ was thus made a *Spectacle*, let none of his followers think it strange to be so used, 1. Cor. 4. 9. Heb. 10. 33.

3. What particular indignities were done him.

(1.) They *stripped him*, v. 28. The shame of nakedness came in with sin; (Gen. 3. 7.) and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was *made naked*, and submitted to that shame, that he might prepare for us *white raiment to cover us*, Rev. 3. 18.

(2.) They *put on him a scarlet robe*, some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the *scarlet robes* which kings and emperors wore; thus upbraiding him with his being called a King. This *sham* of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when nothing but meanness and misery appeared in his countenance, only to expose him to the spectators, as the more *ridiculous*; yet there was something of *mystery* in it: it was his that was *red in his apparel*, (Isa. 63. 1, 2.) that *washed his garments in wine*; (Gen. 49. 10.) therefore he was dressed in a *scarlet robe*. Our sins were as *scarlet and crimson*. Christ being clad in a *scarlet robe*, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree; that we might wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

(3.) They *platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head*, v. 29. This was to carry on the humour of making him a *mock king*; yet, had they intended it only for a *reproach*, they might have *platted a crown of straw, or rushes*, but they designed it to be painful to him, and to be *literally*, what crowns are said to be figuratively, lined with thorns; he that invented this abuse, it is likely, valued himself upon the wit of it; but there was a mystery in it. [1.] Thorns came in with sin, and were part of the curse that was the product of sin, Gen. 3. 18. Therefore Christ, being made a *Curse for us*, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and *binds them as a crown* to him; (Job 41. 36.) for his sufferings for us were his *glory*. [2.] Now he answered to the type of Abraham's ram that was *caught in the thicket*, and so offered up instead of Isaac, Gen. 22. 13. [3.] Thorns signify afflictions, 2 Chron. 33. 11. These Christ put into a *crown*: so much did he alter the property of them to them that are his, and give them cause to *glory in tribulation*, and made it to work for them a weight of glory. [4.] Christ was crowned with thorns, to shew that *his kingdom was not of this world*, nor the glory of it worldly glory, but is attend-

ed here with bonds and afflictions, while the glory of it is to be revealed. [5.] It was the custom of some heathen nations, to bring their sacrifices to the altars, crowned with garlands; these thorns were the garlands with which this great Sacrifice was crowned. [6.] These thorns, it is likely, fetched blood from his blessed head, which trickled down his face, like the *precious ointment* (typifying the blood of Christ, with which he consecrated himself) *upon the head*, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, Ps. 133. 2. Thus, when he came to espouse to himself his love, his dove, his undefiled church, his *head was filled with dew*, and his *locks with the drops of the night*, Cant. 5. 2.

(4.) They *put a reed in his right hand*; this was intended for a *mock sceptre*, another of the *insignia* of the majesty they jeered him with; as if this were a sceptre good enough for such a King, as was like a *reed shaken with the wind*; (ch. 11. 7.) like sceptre, like kingdom, both weak and wavering, and withering and worthless; but they were quite mistaken, for his throne is *for ever and ever*, and the *sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre*, Ps. 45. 6.

(5.) They *bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!* Having made him a sham King, they thus make a jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty, as Joseph's brethren; (Gen. 37. 8.) *Shalt thou indeed reign over us?* But as they were afterward compelled to do obedience to him, and enrich his dreams, so these here bowed the knee, in scorn to him, who was, soon after this, exalted to the right hand of God, that *at his name every knee might bow*, or break, before him; it is ill jesting with that which, sooner or later, will come in earnest.

(6.) They *spit upon him*; thus he had been abused in the high priest's hall, ch. 26. 27. In doing homage, the subject kissed the sovereign, in token of his allegiance; thus Samuel kissed Saul, and we are bid to *kiss the Son*; but they, in this mock-homage, instead of kissing him, spit in his face, that blessed face which outshines the sun, and before which the angels cover their eyes, was thus polluted. It is strange that the sons of men should ever do such a piece of *villany*, and that the Son of God should ever suffer such a piece of *ignominy*.

(7.) They *took the reed, and smote him on the head*. That which they had made the *mock-ensign* of his royalty, they now make the real instrument of their cruelty, and his pain. They smote him, it is probable, upon the *crown of thorns*, and so struck them into his head, that they might wound it the deeper, which made the more sport for them, to whom his pain was the greatest pleasure. Thus was he *despised and rejected of men*; a *man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

III. The conveying of him to the place of execution. After they had mocked and abused him, as long as they thought fit, they then *took the robe off from him*; to signify their divesting him of all the kingly authority they had invested him with, by putting it on him; and they put his own raiment on him, because that was to fall to the soldiers' share, that were employed in the execution. They took off the robe, but no mention is made of their taking off the *crown of thorns*, whence it is commonly supposed (though there is no certainty of it) that he was crucified with that on his head; for as he is a Priest upon his throne, so he was a King upon his cross. Christ was led to be crucified in *his own raiment*, because he himself was to *bear our sins in his own body upon the tree*. And here,

1. They *led him away to be crucified*; he was led *as a Lamb to the slaughter*, as a Sacrifice to the alt. v.

We may well imagine how they hurried him on, and dragged him along, with all the speed possible, lest any thing should intervene to prevent the glutting of their cruel rage with his precious blood. It is probable that they now loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and treated him as the off-scouring of all things. They led him away out of the city; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, *suffered without the gate*, (Heb. 13. 12.) as if he that was the Glory of them that waited for redemption in Jerusalem, were not worthy to live among them. To this he himself had an eye, when in the parable he speaks of his being *cast out of the vineyard*, ch. 21. 39.

2. They compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear his cross, v. 30. It seems, at first he carried the cross himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering which was to burn him. And this was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they took the cross off from him, either, (1.) In compassion to him, because they saw it was too great a load for him. We can hardly think that they had any consideration of that, yet it teaches us that God considers the frame of his people, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; he gives them some breathing-time, but they must expect that the cross will return, and the lucid intervals only give them space to prepare for the next fit. But, (2.) Perhaps it was because he could not, with the cross on his back, go forward so fast as they would have him. Or, (3.) They were afraid, lest he should faint away under the load of his cross, and die, and so prevent what their malice further intended to do against him: thus even the tender mercies of the wicked (which seem to be so) are really cruel. Taking the cross off from him, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene, pressing him to the service by the authority of the governor or the priests. It was a reproach, and none would do it but by compulsion. Some think that this Simon was a disciple of Christ, at least a well-wisher to him, and that they knew it, and therefore put this upon him. Note, All that will approve themselves disciples indeed, must follow Christ, bearing his cross, (ch. 16. 24.) bearing his reproach, Heb. 13. 13. We must know the fellowship of his sufferings for us, and patiently submit to all the sufferings for him we are called out to; for those only shall reign with him that suffer with him; shall sit with him in his kingdom, that drink of his cup, and are baptized with his baptism.

33. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, 34. They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. 35. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. 36. And sitting down they watched him there; 37. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38. Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. 39. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40. And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son

of God come down from the cross. 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42. He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. 44. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. 45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. 46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani! that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 47. Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.

I. The place where our Lord Jesus was put to death.

1. They came to a place called *Golgotha*, near adjoining to Jerusalem, probably the common place of execution. If he had had a house of his own in Jerusalem, probably, for his greater disgrace, they would have crucified him before his own door. But now, in the same place where criminals were sacrificed to the justice of the government, was our Lord Jesus sacrificed to the justice of God. Some think that it is called *the place of a skull*, because it was the common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of dead men were laid together out of the way, lest people should touch them, and be defiled thereby. Here lay the trophies of death's victory over multitudes of the children of men; and, when by dying Christ would destroy death, he added this circumstance of honour to his victory, that he triumphed over death upon his own dunghill.

2. There they crucified him, (v. 35.) nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up, and him hanging on it; for so the manner of the Romans was to crucify. Let our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and mourn. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And, when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with what manner of love he loved us.

II. The barbarous and abusive treatment they gave him, in which their wit and malice vied which should excel. As if death, so great a death, were not bad enough, they contrived to add to the bitterness and terror of it,

1. By the drink they provided for him before he was nailed to the cross, v. 34. It was usual to have a cup of spiced wine for those to drink of, that were to be put to death, according to Solomon's direction, (Prov. 31. 6, 7.) Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish; but with that cup which Christ was to drink of they mingled wormwood and gall, to make it sour and bitter. This signified, (1.) The sin of man, which is a root of bitterness, bearing gall and wormwood, Dent. 29. 18. The sinner perhaps rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but to God it

is *grapes of gall*, Deut. 32. 32. It was so to the Lord Jesus, when he bare our sins, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner himself, *bitterness at the latter end*, more bitter than death, Eccl. 7. 26. (2.) It signified the *wrath of God*, that cup which his Father put into his hand, a bitter cup indeed, like the *bitter water which caused the curse*, Numb. 5. 18. This drink they offered him, as was literally foretold, Ps. 69. 21. And, [1.] *He tasted thereof*, and so had the worst of it, took the bitter taste into his mouth; he let no bitter cup go by him untasted, when he was making atonement for all our sinful tasting of forbidden fruit; now he was *tasting death* in its full bitterness. [2.] *He would not drink it*, because he would not have the *best of it*; would have nothing like an opiate, to lessen his sense of pain, for he would die so as to *feel himself die*, because he had so much work to do, as our High Priest, in his suffering work.

2. By the dividing of his garments, v. 35. When they nailed him to the cross, they *stripped* him of his garments, at least his *upper garments*; for by sin we were made naked, to our shame, and thus he purchased for us white raiment to cover us. If we be at any time stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip us of our *clothes*, but cannot strip us of our *best comforts*; cannot take from us the *garments of praise*. The clothes of those that are executed are the executioner's fee: four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they must each of them have a share: his upper garment, if it were divided, would be of no use to any of them, and therefore they agreed to *cast lots* for it. (1.) Some think that the garment was so fine and rich, that it was worth contending for; but that agreed not with the poverty Christ appeared in. (2.) Perhaps they had heard of those that had been cured by touching the hem of his garment, and they thought it valuable for some magic virtue in it. Or, (3.) They hoped to get money of his friends for such a sacred relic. Or, (4.) Because, in derision, they would seem to put a value upon it, as a royal clothing. Or, (5.) It was for diversion; to pass away the time while they waited for his death, they would play a game at dice for the clothes; but, whatever they designed, the word of God is herein accomplished. In that famous *psalm*, the first words of which Christ made use of upon the cross, it was said, *they parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture*, Ps. 22. 18. This was never true of David, but looks *primarily* at Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spake. Then is the offence of this part of the cross ceased; for it appears to have been by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. Christ stripped himself of his glories, to divide them among us.

They now sat down and watched him, v. 36. The chief priests were careful, no doubt, in setting this guard, lest the people, whom they stood still in awe of, should rise, and rescue him. But providence so ordered it, that those who were appointed to watch him, thereby became unexceptionable witnesses for him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them that noble confession, (v. 54.) *Truly this was the Son of God*.

3. By the title set up over his head, v. 37. It was usual, for the vindicating of public justice, and putting the greater shame upon malefactors that were executed, not only by a crier to proclaim before them, but by a writing also over their heads to notify, what was the crime for which they suffered; so they set up over Christ's head his accusation written, to give public notice of the charge against him; *This is Jesus the King of the Jews*. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For, (1.) Here was no crime alleged against him. It is not said that

he was a pretended Saviour, or an usurping King though they would have it thought so; (John 19. 21. but, *This is Jesus, a Saviour*; surely that was no crime; and, *This is the King of the Jews*; nor was that a crime; for they expected that the Messiah should be so; so that, his enemies themselves being judges, he did no evil. Nay, (2.) Here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him—that he is *Jesus the King of the Jews*, that King whom the Jews expected, and ought to have submitted to; so that his accusation amounts to this, That he was the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as Balaam, when he was sent for to curse Israel, blessed them altogether, and that three times, (Numb. 24. 10.) so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a criminal, proclaimed him a *King*, and that *three times*, in three inscriptions. Thus God makes men to serve his purposes, quite beyond their own.

4. By his companions with him in suffering, v. 38. There were *two thieves crucified with him* at the same time, in the same place, under the same guard; two highwaymen, or robbers upon the road, as the word properly signifies. It is probable that this was appointed to be *execution-day*; and therefore they hurried the prosecution of Christ in the morning, that they might have him ready to be executed with the other criminals. Some think that Pilate ordered it thus, that this piece of necessary justice, in executing these thieves, might atone for his injustice in condemning Christ; others that the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however it was, the scripture was fulfilled in it, (Isa. 53. 12.) *He was numbered with the transgressors*.

(1.) It was a reproach to him, that he was *crucified with them*. Though, while he lived, he was *separate from sinners*, yet in their deaths they were not divided, but he was made to partake with the vilest malefactors in their plagues, as if he had been a Partaker with them in their sins; for he was made Sin for us, and took upon him the *likeness of sinful flesh*. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints, and have our lot among the chosen.

(2.) It was an additional reproach, that he was crucified in the *midst, between them*, as if he had been the worst of the three, the principal Malefactor; for among three the *middle* is the place for the chief. Every circumstance was contrived to his dishonour, as if the great Saviour were of all others the *greatest sinner*. It was also intended to ruffle and discompose him, in his last moments, with the shrieks, and groans, and blasphemies, of these malefactors, who, it is likely, made a hideous outcry when they were nailed to the cross; but thus would Christ affect himself with the miseries of sinners, when he was suffering for their salvation. Some of Christ's apostles were afterward crucified, as Peter, and Andrew, but none of them were crucified *with him*, lest it should have looked as if they had been joint-undertakers with him, in satisfying for man's sin, and joint-purchasers of life and glory; therefore he was crucified between two malefactors, who could not be supposed to contribute any thing to the merit of his death; for he himself bare our sins in his *own body*.

5. By the blasphemies and revilings with which they loaded him when he was hanging upon the cross; though we read not that they cast any reflections on the thieves that were crucified with him. One would have thought, that, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had done their worst, and malice itself had been exhausted; indeed, if a criminal be put into the pillory, or carted, because it is a punishment less than death, it is usually attended with such expressions of abuse; but a dying man,

though an infamous man, should he treated with compassion. It is an insatiable revenge indeed, which will not be satisfied with death, *so great a death*. But, to complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to shew that, when he was dying, he was *bearing iniquity*, he was then *loaded with reproach*, and, for aught that appears, not one of his friends, who the other day cried *Hosanna* to him, durst be seen to shew him any respect.

(1.) The common people, that passed by, reviled him. His extreme misery, and exemplary patience under it, did not mollify them, or make them to relent; but they who by their outcries brought him to this, now think to justify themselves in it by their reproaches, as if they *did well to condemn him*. They reviled him: *ἔβλασφημούν*—they blasphemed him; and blasphemy it was, in the strictest sense, speaking evil of him who *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*. Observe here,

[1.] The persons that reviled him; *they that passed by*, the travellers that went along the road, and it was a great road, leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon; they were possessed with prejudices against him by the reports and clamours of the high priest's creatures. It is a hard thing, and requires more application and resolution than is ordinarily met with, to keep up a good opinion of persons and things that are *every where* run down, and spoken against. Every one is apt to say as the most say, and to throw a stone at that which is put into an ill name. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam semper, et odit damnatos*—The Roman rabble fluctuate with a man's fluctuating fortunes, and fail not to depress those that are sinking. *Juv.*

[2.] The gesture they used, in contempt of him—*wagging their heads*; which signifies their triumph in his fall, and their insulting over him, *Isa. 37. 22. Jer. 18. 16. Lam. 2. 15.* The language of it, was, *Aha, so would we have it*, *Ps. 35. 25.* Thus they insulted over him that was the Saviour of their country, as the Philistines did over Samson the destroyer of their country. This very gesture was prophesied of; (*Ps. 22. 8.*) *They shake the head at me.* And *Ps. 109. 25.*

[3.] The taunts and jeers they uttered. These are here recorded.

First, They upbraided him with his *destroying of the temple*. Though the judges themselves were sensible that what he had said of that was misrepresented, (as appears, *Mark 14. 59.*) yet they industriously spread it among the people, to bring an *odium* upon him, that he had a design to destroy the temple; than which nothing would more *incense* the people against him. And this was not the only time that the enemies of Christ had laboured to *make others believe* that of religion, and the people of God, which they themselves have known to be *false*, and the charge *unjust*. "*Thou that destroyest the temple, that vast and strong fabric, try thy strength now in plucking up that cross, and drawing those nails, and so save thyself; if thou hast the power thou hast boasted of, this is a proper time to exert it, and give proof of it; for it is supposed that every man will do his utmost to save himself.*" This made the cross of Christ such a *stumbling-block* to the Jews, that they looked upon it to be inconsistent with the *power* of the Messiah; he was *crucified in weakness*, (*2 Cor. 13. 4.*) so it seemed to them; but indeed Christ crucified is the *Power of God*.

Secondly, They upbraided him with his saying that he was the *Son of God*; If thou be so, say they, *come down from the cross*. Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness, (*ch. 4. 3, 6.*) and renew the same assault; *If thou be the Son of God*. They think that now, or never, he must prove himself to be the *Son of God*; forgetting that he had proved it

by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising of the dead; and unwilling to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it, would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is *past*, and a patient expectation of *what may further be produced*.

(2.) The chief priests and scribes, the church-rulers, and the elders, the state-rulers, they mocked him, *v. 41.* They did not think it enough to invite the rabble to do it, but gave Christ the dishonour, and themselves the diversion, of reproaching him in their own proper persons. They should have been in the temple at their devotion, for it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a *holy convocation*; (*Lev. 23. 7.*) but they were here at the place of execution, spitting their venom at the Lord Jesus. How much below the grandeur and gravity of their character was this! Could any thing tend more to make them *contemptible and base before the people*? One would have thought, that, though they neither feared God nor regarded man, yet common prudence should have taught them, who had so great a hand in Christ's death, to keep as much as might be behind the curtain, and to play least in sight; but nothing is so mean as that malice may stick at it. Did they disparage themselves thus, to do despite to Christ, and shall we be afraid of disparaging ourselves, by joining with the multitude to *do him honour*, and not rather say, *If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile?*

Two things the priests and elders upbraided him with.

[1.] That he could not *save himself*, *v. 42.* He had been before abused in his prophetic and kingly office, and now in his priestly office as a Saviour. *First*, They take it for granted that he could not save himself, and therefore had not the power he pretended to, when really he *would not* save himself, because he would die to *save us*. They should have argued, "*He saved others, therefore he could save himself, and if he do not, it is for some good reason.*" But, *Secondly*, They would insinuate, that, because he did not now save himself, therefore all his pretence to save others was but sham and delusion, and was never really done; though the truth of his miracles was demonstrated beyond contradiction. *Thirdly*, They upbraided him with being the *King of Israel*. They dreamed of the external pomp and power of the Messiah, and therefore thought the cross altogether disagreeable to the King of Israel, and inconsistent with that character. Many people could like the *King of Israel* well enough, if he would but *come down from the cross*, if they could have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But the matter is settled; if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him must be willing to suffer with him, for Christ and his cross are *nailed together* in this world. *Fourthly*, They challenged him to *come down from the cross*. And what had become of us then, and the work of our redemption and salvation? If he had been provoked by these scoffs to *come down from the cross*, and so to have left his undertaking *unfinished*, we had been for ever *undone*. But his unchangeable love and resolution set him above, and fortified him against, this temptation, so that he did not *fail*, nor was *discouraged*. *Fifthly*, They promised, that, if he would *come down from the cross, they would believe him*. Let him give them that proof of his being the Messiah, and they will own him to be so. When they had formerly demanded a sign, he told them that the sign he would give them should be, not his *coming down from the cross*, but, which was a greater instance of his power, his *com-*

ing up from the grave, which they had not patience to wait two or three days for. If he had come down from the cross, they might with as much reason have said that the soldiers had juggled in nailing him to it, as they said, when he was raised from the dead, that the disciples came by night, and stole him away. But to promise ourselves that we would believe, if we had such and such means and motives of faith as we ourselves would prescribe, when we do not improve what God has appointed, is not only a gross instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but the sorry refuge, or subterfuge rather, of an obstinate destroying infidelity.

[2.] That God, *his Father*, would not save him; (v. 43.) *He trusted in God*, that is, he pretended to do so; for he said, *I am the Son of God*. Those who call God *Father*, and themselves *his children*, thereby profess to put a confidence in him, Ps. 9. 10. Now they suggest, that he did but deceive himself and others, when he made himself so much the *Darling of Heaven*; for, if he had been the Son of God, (as Job's friends argued concerning him,) he would not have been abandoned to all this misery, much less abandoned in it. This was a sword in his bones, as David complains of the like; (Ps. 42. 10.) and it was a two-edged sword, for it was intended, *First*, To vilify him, and to make the standers-by think him a Deceiver and an Impostor; as if his saying, that he was the *Son of God*, were now effectually disproved. *Secondly*, To terrify him, and drive him to distrust and despair of his Father's power and love; which, some think,* was the thing he feared, religiously feared, prayed against, and was delivered from, Heb. 5. 7. David complained more of the endeavours of his persecutors to shake his faith, and drive him from his hope in God, than of their attempts to shake his throne, and drive him from his kingdom: their saying, *There is no help for him in God*, (Ps. 3. 2.) and, *God has forsaken him*, Ps. 71. 11. In this, as in other things, he was a type of Christ. Nay, these very words David, in that famous prophecy of Christ, mentions, as spoken by his enemies; (Ps. 22. 11.) *He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him*. Surely these priests and scribes had forgotten their psalter, or they would not have used these same words, so exactly to answer the type and prophecy: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

(3.) To complete the reproach, the thieves also that were crucified with him, were not only not reviled as he was, as if they had been saints compared with him, but, though fellow-sufferers with him, joined in with his prosecutors, and cast the same in his teeth; that is, one of them did, who said, *If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us*, Luke 23. 39. One would think that of all people this thief had least cause, and should have had least mind, to banter Christ. Partners in suffering, though for different causes, usually commiserate one another; and few, whatever they have done before, will breathe their last in revilings. But, it seems, the greatest mortifications of the body, and the most humbling rebukes of Providence, will not of themselves mortify the corruptions of the soul, nor suppress the wickedness of the wicked, without the grace of God.

Well, thus our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God for the wrong done him in his honour by sin, he did it by suffering in his honour; not only by divesting himself of that which was due to him as the Son of God, but by submitting to the utmost indignity that could be done to the worst of men; because he was made Sin for us, he was thus made a Curse for us, to make reproach easy to us, if at any time we suffer it, and have all manner of evil said against us falsely, for righteousness' sake.

III. We have here the frowns of Heaven, which our Lord Jesus was under, in the midst of all these injuries and indignities from men. Concerning which, observe,

1. How this was signified—by an extraordinary and miraculous eclipse of the sun, which continued for three hours, v. 45. There was darkness *ἡ ὥρα ἡ ἡμέρα*—over all the earth; so most interpreters understand it, though our translation confines it to that land. Some of the ancients appealed to the annals of the nation concerning this extraordinary eclipse at the death of Christ, as a thing well known, and which gave notice to those parts of the world of something great then in doing; as the sun's going back in Hezekiah's time did. It is reported that Dionysius, at Heliopolis in Egypt, took notice of this darkness, and said, *Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur*—Either the God of nature is suffering, or the machine of the world is tumbling into ruin. An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ, (ch. 2. 2.) and therefore it was proper that an extraordinary darkness should notify his death, for he is the *Light of the world*. The indignities done to our Lord Jesus made the heavens astonished, and horribly afraid, and even put them into disorder and confusion; such wickedness as this the sun never saw before, and therefore withdrew, and would not see this. This surprising, amazing, darkness was designed to stop the mouths of these blasphemers who were reviling Christ as he hung on the cross; and it should seem that, for the present, it struck such a terror upon them, that though their hearts were not changed, yet they were silent, and stood doubting what this should mean, till after three hours the darkness scattered, and then, (as appears by v. 47.) like Pharaoh, when the plague was over, they hardened their hearts. But that which was principally intended in this darkness, was, (1.) Christ's present conflict with the powers of darkness. Now the prince of this world, and his forces, the rulers of the darkness of this world, were to be cast out, to be spoiled and vanquished; and to make his victory the more illustrious, he fights them on their own ground; gives them all the advantage they could have against him by this darkness, lets them take the wind and sun, and yet baffles them, and so becomes more than a conqueror. (2.) His present want of heavenly comforts. This darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust; but even the light of the sun was withheld from our Saviour, when he was made Sin for us. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but because now his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and the cup of divine displeasure was filled to him without mixture, even the light of the sun was suspended. When earth denied him a drop of cold water, heaven denied him a beam of light; being to deliver us from utter darkness, he did himself, in the depth of his sufferings, walk in darkness, and had no light, Isa. 50. 10. During the three hours that this darkness continued, we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

2. How he complained of it; (v. 46.) *About the ninth hour*, when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict, Jesus cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* The words are related in the Syriac

* But surely without the shadow of a reason.—ED.

tongue, in which they were spoken, because worthy of double remark, and for the sake of the perverse construction which his enemies put upon them, in putting *Elias* for *Eli*. Now observe here,

(1.) Whence he borrowed this complaint—from Ps. 22. 1. It is not probable (as some have thought) that he repeated the whole psalm; yet hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spake of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other word, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*, he fetched from David's psalms, (though he could have expressed himself in his own words,) to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct us in prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture expressions in prayer, which will *help our infirmities*.

(2.) How he uttered it—with a loud voice; which bespeaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, the strength of nature remaining in him, and the great earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Now the scripture was fulfilled; (Joel 3. 15, 16.) *The sun and the moon shall be darkened. The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.* David often speaks of his *crying aloud* in prayer, Ps. 55. 17.

(3.) What the complaint was—*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* A strange complaint to come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, who, we are sure, was *God's Elect, in whom his soul delighted*, (Isa. 42. 1.) and one in whom he was always *well pleased*. The Father now loved him, nay, he knew that *therefore he loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep*; what, and yet forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings too! Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a Terror to himself; but the heart knows its own bitterness. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the *ears of every one that hears it, to tingle*, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence.

Note, [1.] That our Lord Jesus was, in his sufferings, for a time, *forsaken by his Father*. So he saith himself, who, we are sure, was under no mistake concerning his own case. Not that the union between the divine and human nature was in the least weakened or shocked; no, he was *now by the eternal Spirit offering himself*: nor as if there were any abatement of his Father's love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure that there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell; but his Father forsook him; that is, *First*, He delivered him up into the hands of his enemies, and did not appear to deliver him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst, worse than against Job. Now was that scripture fulfilled, (Job 16. 9.) *God has turned me over into the hands of the wicked*; and no angel is sent from heaven to deliver him, no friend on earth raised up to appear for him. *Secondly*, He withdrew from him the present comfortable sense of his complacency in him. When his soul was first troubled, he had a *voice from heaven* to comfort him; (John 12. 27, 28.) when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him; but now he had neither the one nor the other. God hid his face from him, and for a while withdrew his rod and staff in the darksome valley. God *forsook* him, not as he forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as sometimes he forsook David, leaving him to a present despondency. *Thirdly*, He let out upon his soul an afflicting sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made *Sin* for us, a *Curse* for us; and therefore, though

God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as a Surety. These impressions he was pleased to *admit*, and to *waive* that *resistance* of them which he *could have made*; because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had done to all the rest, when it was in his power to have avoided it.

[2.] That Christ's being *forsaken* of his Father, was the most grievous of his sufferings, and that which he complained most of. Here he laid the most doleful accents; he did not say, "Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross?" Nor did he say to his disciples, when they turned their back upon him, *Why have ye forsaken me?* But when his Father stood at a distance, he cried out thus; for this was it that *put wormwood and gall* into the affliction and misery. This brought the *waters into the soul*, Ps. 69. 1—3.

[3.] That our Lord Jesus, even when he was thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding; *My God, my God*, though forsaking me, yet *mine*. Christ was God's *servant* in carrying on the work of redemption, to him he was to make satisfaction, and by him to be carried through and crowned, and upon that account he calls him *his God*; for he was now *doing his will*. See Isa. 49. 4, 9. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God, and this he resolves to keep fast hold of.

(4.) See how his enemies impiously bantered and ridiculed this complaint; (v. 47.) *They said, This man calleth for Elias*. Some think that this was the ignorant mistake of the Roman soldiers, who had heard talk of Elias, and of the Jews' expectation of the coming of Elias, but knew not the signification of *Eli, Eli*, and so made this blundering comment upon these words of Christ, perhaps not hearing the latter part of what he said, for the noise of the people. Note, Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God, and the people of God, take rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. Those that hear by the halves, pervert what they hear. But others think that it was the wilful mistake of some of the Jews, who knew very well what he said, but were disposed to abuse him, and make themselves and their companions merry, and to misrepresent him as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures; perhaps hinting also, that he who had pretended to be himself the Messiah, would now be glad to be beholden to Elias, who was expected to be only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah. Note, It is no new thing for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers; nor are we to think it strange, if what is well said in praying and preaching be misconstrued, and turned to our reproach; Christ's words were so, though he spake as never man spake.

IV. The cold comfort which his enemies ministered to him in this agony, which was like all the rest.

1. Some *gave him vinegar to drink*; (v. 48.) instead of some cordial-water to revive and refresh him under this heavy burthen, they tantalized him with that which did not only add to the reproach they were loading him with, but did too sensibly represent that cup of trembling which his Father had *put into his hand*. One of them ran to fetch it, seeming to be officious to him, but really glad of an opportunity to abuse and affront him, and afraid lest any one should take it out of his hands.

2. Others, with the same purpose of disturbing and abusing him, refer him to Elias; (v. 49.) "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him." Come, let him alone, his case is desperate, neither

heaven nor earth can help him; let us do nothing either to hasten his death, or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, and to *Elias let him go.*"

50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, 52. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53. And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. 54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. 55. And many women were there beholding afar off which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56. Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

We have here, at length, an account of the death of Christ, and several remarkable passages that attended it.

1. The manner how he breathed his last; (*v.* 50.) between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, he was nailed to the cross, and soon after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he died. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed, and Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was at that time of the day, that the angel Gabriel delivered to Daniel that glorious prediction of the Messiah, Dan. 9. 21, 24. And some think, that from that very time when the angel spake it, to this time when Christ died, was just seventy weeks, that is, four hundred and ninety years, to a day, to an hour; as the departure of *Israel* out of Egypt was at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even *the self-same day*, Exod. 12. 41.

Two things are here noted concerning the manner of Christ's dying.

1. That he *cried with a loud voice*, as before, *v.* 46. Now,

(1.) This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was *whole* in him, and nature *strong*. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and more hardly heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spake like a man in *his full strength*, to shew that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered by him into his Father's hands, as *his own act and deed*. He that had strength to cry thus when he died, could have got loose from the arrest he was under, and have bid defiance to the powers of death; but to shew that *by the eternal Spirit he offered himself*, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he *cried with a loud voice*.

(2.) It was significant. This *loud voice* shews that he attacked our spiritual enemies with an undaunted courage, and such a bravery of resolution as bespeaks him hearty in the cause, and daring in the encounter. He was now *spoiling principalities and*

powers, and in this loud voice he did, as it were, *shout for mastery*, as one *mighty to save*, Isa. 63. 1. Compare with this, Isa. 42. 13, 14. He now bowed himself with all his might, as Samson did, when he said, *Let me die with the Philistines*, Judg. 16. 30. *Animamque in vulnere ponit—And lays down his life.* His crying with a loud voice, when he died, signified that his death should be published and proclaimed to all the world; all mankind being concerned in it, and obliged to take notice of it. Christ's loud cry was like a trumpet blown over the sacrifices.

2. That then he yielded up the ghost. This is the usual periphrasis of dying; to shew that the Son of God, upon the cross, did truly and properly die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His *soul* was separated from his *body*, and so his body was left really and truly dead. It was certain that he *did die*, for it was requisite that he should die; *thus it was written*, both in the *close rolls* of the *divine counsels*, and in the *letters patent* of the *divine predictions*, and therefore thus it *behoves him to suffer*. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, (*Thou shalt surely die*,) the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement *by means of death*, otherwise no remission, Heb. 9. 15. He had undertaken to make his soul an *offering for sin*; and he did it, when he *yielded up the ghost*, and voluntarily resigned it.

II. The miracles that attended his death. So many miracles being wrought *by him* in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death, for his name was called *Wonderful*. Had he been fetched away as Elijah in a *fiery chariot*, that had itself been miracle enough; but, being sent for away by an ignominious cross, it was requisite that his humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the divine glory.

1. *Behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain.* This relation is ushered in with *Behold*; "Turn aside, and see this great sight, and be astonished at it." Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and might themselves be eye-witnesses of it, *the vail of the temple was rent* by an invisible power; that vail which parted between the *holy place* and the *most holy*. They had condemned him for saying, *I will destroy this temple*, understanding it literally; now, by this specimen of his power, he let them know that, if he had pleased, he could have made his words good. In this, as in others of Christ's miracles, there was a mystery.

(1.) It was in correspondence with the temple of Christ's body, which was now in the dissolving. This was the true temple, in which dwelt the *fulness of the Godhead*; when Christ *cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost*, and so dissolved that temple, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to that cry, and answer the stroke, by *rending its vail*. Note, Death is the rending of the vail of flesh which interposes between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true Christians is so.

(2.) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The vail of the temple was for concealment, as was that on the face of Moses, therefore it was called *the vail of the covering*; for it was highly penal for any person to see the furniture of the most holy place, except the high priest, and he but once a year, with great ceremony and through a cloud of smoke; all which signified the darkness of that dispensation, 2 Cor. 3. 15. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled, so that now he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see that the mercy-seat signified *Christ* the great *Propitia-*

tion; the pot of manna signified Christ the Bread of life. Thus we all with open face behold, as in a glass, (which helps the sight, as the vail hindered it,) the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation.

(3.) It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the partition-wall between them, which was the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people, (as a garden inclosed,) were brought near to God, while others were made to keep their distance. Christ, in his death, repealed the ceremonial law, cancelled that *hand writing of ordinances*, took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition; and, by abolishing those institutions, abolished the enmity, and made in himself of *twain one new man*, (as two rooms are made one, and that large and lightsome, by taking down the partition,) so making peace, Eph. 2. 14—16. Christ died, to rend all dividing vails, and to make all his one, John 17. 21.

(4.) It signified the consecrating and laying open of a new and living way to God. The vail kept people off from drawing near to the most holy place, where the *Shechinah* was. But the rending of it signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God, [1.] *For himself*. This was the great day of atonement, when our Lord Jesus, as the great High Priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place; in token of which the vail was rent, Heb. 9. 7, &c. Having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was now to be sprinkle I upon the mercy-seat within the vail; wherefore *lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; for the King of glory, the Priest of glory, shall come in*. Now was he caused to draw near, and made to approach, Jer. 30. 21. Though he did not personally ascend into the holy place not made with hands till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission. [2.] *For us in him*: so the apostle applies it, Heb. 10. 19, 20. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by that new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the vail. He died, to bring us to God, and, in order thereunto, to rend that vail of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him, to take away the cherubim and flaming sword, and to open the way to the tree of life. We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, Heb. 4. 16.—6. 16. The rending of the vail signified, (as that ancient hymn excellently expresseth it,) that, when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the vail is rent; a door is opened in heaven, Rev. 4. 1.

2. The earth did quake; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the whole land, and the adjacent countries. This earthquake signified two things.

(1.) The horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocence of him that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth quaked, as if it feared to open its mouth to receive the blood of Christ, so much more precious than that of Abel, which it had received, and was cursed for it; (Gen. 4. 11, 12.) and as if it *fain would open its mouth* to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against

the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, *Shall not the land tremble for this?* Amos 8. 8.

(2.) The glorious achievements of Christ's cross. This earthquake signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So vigorous was the assault Christ now made upon the infernal powers, that (as of old, when he went out of *Sier*, when he marched through the field of *Edom*) the earth trembled, Judg. 5. 4. Ps. 68. 7, 8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a yet once more, which perhaps refers to this shaking, Hag. 2. 7, 21.

3. The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cease to cry *Hosanna*, the stones would immediately cry out; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will shortly be glad to find a hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the ragged rocks, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. See Rev. 6. 16. Isa. 2. 21. But when God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him, Nah. 1. 6. Jesus Christ is the Rock; and the rending of these rocks, signified the rending of that Rock. (1.) That in the clefts of it we may be hid, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may behold the glory of the Lord, as he did, Exod. 33. 22. Christ's dove is said to be hid in the clefts of the rock, (Cant. 2. 14.) that is, as some make the allusion, sheltered in the wounds of our Lord Jesus, the Rock rent. (2.) That from the clefts of it rivers of living water may flow, and follow us in this wilderness, as from the rock which Moses smote, (Exod. 17. 6.) and which God clave; (Ps. 78. 15.) and that Rock was Christ, 1 Cor. 10. 4. When we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts must be rent—the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

4. The graves were opened. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, the same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. Death to the saints is but the sleep of the body, and the grave the bed it sleeps in; they awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (v. 53.) came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now here,

(1.) We may raise many inquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve; as, [1.] *Who* these saints were, that did arise. Some think, the ancient patriarchs, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs, (ch. 22. 32.) and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, these that arose were modern saints, such as had seen Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zecharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fittest to be witnesses to them in an apparition after. What if we should suppose that they were the martyrs, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus dignified and distinguished? Christ particularly points at them as his forerunners, ch. 23. 35. And we find, (Rev. 20. 4, 5.) that those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, rose before the rest of the dead. Sufferers with Christ shall first reign with him. [2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose

to life, now at the death of Christ, and disposed of themselves elsewhere, but did not *go into the city* till after his resurrection; or whether, (as others think,) though *their sepulchres* (which the *Pharisees* had *built and garnished*, (ch. 23. 29.) and so made remarkable) were shattered now by the earthquake, (so little did God matter that hypocritical respect,) yet they did not *revive* and *rise* till after the resurrection; only, for brevity's sake, it is mentioned here, upon the mention of the *opening of the graves*, which seems more probable. [3.] Some think that they arose, only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, and, having finished their testimony, retired to their graves again. But it is more agreeable both to Christ's honour and their's, to *suppose*, though we cannot *prove*, that they arose as Christ did, to *die no more*, and therefore ascended with him to glory. Surely on them who did partake of his first resurrection, a *second* death had no power. [4.] To whom they appeared, (not to all the people it is certain, but to many,) whether enemies or friends, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they said and did, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us: we must not covet to be *wise above what is written*. The relating of this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation to us, that we must not look that way for a confirmation of our faith: we have a more sure word of prophecy. See Luke 16. 31.

(2.) Yet we may learn many good lessons from it. [1.] That even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; for he *was* the same *yesterday* that he is *to-day*, and will be *for ever*. Heb. 13. 8. [2.] That Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled death. These saints that arose were the present trophies of the victory of Christ's cross over the powers of death, which he thus *made a shew of openly*. Having by death destroyed him that had the power of death, he thus *led captivity captive*, and gloried in these *re-taken prizes*, in them fulfilling that scripture, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave*. [3.] That, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, *rise again*. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when all that are in the graves, shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And perhaps Jerusalem is therefore called here the *holy city*, because the saints, at the general resurrection, shall enter into the *new Jerusalem*; which will be indeed what the other was in name and type only, the *holy city*. Rev. 21. 2. [4.] That all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. They are *raised up with him* to a divine and spiritual life; they *go into the holy city*, become citizens of it, have their conversation in it, and *appear to many*, as persons not of this world.

III. The conviction of his enemies that were employed in the execution, (v. 54.) which some make no less than another miracle, all things considered. Observe,

1. The persons convinced; *the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus*; a captain and his company, that were set on the guard on this occasion. (1.) They were *soldiers*, whose profession is commonly hardening, and whose breasts are commonly not so susceptible as some others, of the impressions either of fear or pity. But there is no spirit too big, too bold, for the power of Christ to break and humble. (2.) They were *Romans, Gentiles*, who knew not the scriptures which were now fulfilled; yet they only were convinced. A sad prelude of the *blindness* that should *happen to Israel*, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles, to

open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles *softened*, and the Jews *hardened*. (3.) They were the persecutors of Christ, and these that but just before had reviled him, as appears, Luke 23. 36. How soon can God, by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language, and fetch confessions of his truths, to his own glory, out of the mouths of those that have *breathed nothing but threatenings and slaughter*, and blasphemies!

2. The means of their conviction; they perceived *the earthquake*, which frightened them, and saw the other things that were done. These were designed to assert the honour of Christ in his sufferings, and had their end in these soldiers, whatever they had on others. Note, The dreadful appearances of God in his providence sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

3. The expressions of this conviction, in two things:

(1.) The terror that was *struck upon them*; they *feared greatly*; feared lest they should have been buried in the darkness, or swallowed up in the earthquake. Note, God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them know themselves to be but men. Guilt puts men into fear. He that, when iniquity abounds, doth not *fear always*, with a fear of caution, when judgments are abroad, cannot but *fear greatly*, with a fear of amazement; whereas there are those who will not fear, *though the earth be removed*, Ps. 46. 1, 2.

(2.) The testimony that was *extorted* from them; they said, *Truly this was the Son of God*; a noble confession; Peter was blessed for it, ch. 16. 16, 17. It was the great matter now in dispute, the point upon which he and his enemies had *joined issue*, ch. 26. 63, 64. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it; our Saviour himself was tempted to question it, when he said, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* The Jews, now that he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as plainly determined against him, that he was not the Son of God, because he did not come down from the cross. And yet now this centurion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, *Truly this was the Son of God*. The best of his disciples could not have said more at any time, and at this time they had not faith and courage enough to say thus much. Note, God can maintain and assert the honour of a truth then, when it seems to be crushed, and run down; for *great is the truth, and will prevail*.

IV. The attendance of his friends, that were witnesses of his death, v. 55, 56. Observe,

1. Who they were; *many women which followed him from Galilee*. Not his apostles, (only elsewhere we find John by the cross, John 19. 26.) their hearts failed them, they durst not appear, for fear of coming under the same condemnation. But here were a company of women, some would have called them *silly women*, that *boldly* stuck to Christ, when the rest of his disciples had basely deserted him. Note, Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. There have been women martyrs, famous for courage and resolution in Christ's cause. Now of these women it is said, (1.) That they had *followed Jesus from Galilee*, out of the great love they had to him, and a desire to hear him preach; otherwise, the males only were obliged to come up, to worship at the feast. Now having followed him such a long journey as from Galilee to Jerusalem, eighty or a hundred miles, they resolved not to forsake him now. Note, Our former services and sufferings for Christ should be an argument with us, faithfully to persevere to the end in our attendance on him. Have we followed him *so far* and so long, done so much, and laid out so much for him, and shall we forsake him now? Gal. 3. 3, 4. (2.) That they *ministered to him*

of their substance, for his necessary subsistence. How gladly would they have ministered to him now, if they might have been admitted ! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to *follow him*. Note, When we are restrained from doing what we *would*, we must do what we can, in the service of Christ. Now that he is *in heaven*, though he is out of the reach of our *ministration*, he is not out of the reach of our *believing views*. (3.) Some of them are particularly named ; for God will *honour* those that *honour* Christ. They were such as we have several times met with *before*, and it was their praise, that we meet with them *to the last*.

2. What they did ; they were *beholding afar off*.

(1.) They stood *afar off*. Whether their own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, is not certain ; however, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his *lovers and friends stood aloof from his sore*, Ps. 38. 11. Job 19. 13. Perhaps they might have come nearer, if they would ; but good people, when they are in sufferings, must not think it strange, if some of their best friends be shy of them. When Paul's danger was imminent, *no man stood by him*, 2 Tim. 4. 16. If we be thus looked strangely upon, remember, our Master was so before us.

(2.) They were there *beholding*, in which they snewed a concern and kindness for Christ ; when they were debarred from doing any other office of love to him, they looked a look of love toward him. [1.] It was a *sorrowful* look ; they looked unto him who was now pierced, and *mourned* ; and, no doubt, were in *bitterness* for him. We may well imagine how it cut them to the heart, to see him in this torment ; and what floods of tears it brought from their eyes. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But, [2.] It was no more than a look ; they beheld him, but they could not *help him*. Note, When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers on, even the *angelic guards stood trembling by*, saith Mr. Norris ; for he *trod the wine-press alone*, and of the people there was none with him ; so *his own arm wrought salvation*.

57. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple : 58. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock : and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. 61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. 62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63. Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse

than the first. 65. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch : go your way ; make it as sure as you can. 66. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

We have here an account of Christ's *burial*, and the manner and circumstances of it, concerning which observe, 1. The *kindness and good will* of his friends, that *laid him in the grave*. 2. The *malice and ill will* of his enemies, that were very solicitous to keep him there.

1. His friends gave him a *decent burial*. Observe,

1. In general, that Jesus Christ was *buried* ; when his precious soul was gone to paradise, his blessed body was deposited in the chambers of the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonas, and fulfil the prophecy of Isaiahs ; he *made his grave with the wicked*. Thus in all things he must be made *like unto his brethren*, sin only excepted, and, like us, unto dust he must return. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till he was well assured that he was really dead ; while the witnesses lay *unburied*, there were some hopes concerning them, Rev. 11. 8. But Christ, the great Witness, is as one *free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave*. He was *buried*, that he might take off the terror of the grave, and make it easy to us, might warm and perfume that cold noisome bed for us, and that we might be *buried with him*.

2. The particular circumstances of his burial here related.

(1.) The time *when* he was buried ; *when the even was come* ; the same evening that he died, before sun-set, as is usual in burying malefactors. It was not deferred till the next day, because it was *the sabbath* ; for, burying the dead is not proper work either for a day of rest, or for a day of rejoicing, as the sabbath is.

(2.) The person that took care of the funeral, was, Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles were all fled, and none of them appeared to shew this respect to their Master, which the disciples of John shewed to him after he was beheaded, who *took up his body, and buried it*, ch. 14. 12. The women that followed him, durst not move in it ; then did God stir up this good man to do it ; for Joseph was a fit man, for, [1.] He had wherewithal to do it, being a *rich man*. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, such were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel ; but here was one that was a *rich man*, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required a *man of estate*. Note, Worldly wealth, though it is to many an objection in religion's way, yet, in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God's glory. [2.] He was well affected to our Lord Jesus, for he was himself *his disciple*, believed in him, though he did not openly profess it. Note, Christ has more secret disciples than we are aware of ; seven thousand in Israel, Rom. 11. 4.

(3.) The grant of the dead body procured from Pilate, v. 58. Joseph *went to Pilate*, the proper person to be applied to on this occasion, who had the disposal of the body ; for in things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned, due regard must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it. What we do that is good, must be done peaceably, and not tumultuously. Pilate was willing to give the body to one that would inter it decently, that he might do something towards atoning for the guilt his conscience charged him with

in condemning an innocent person. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant of it, *honour* was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his integrity.

(4.) The dressing of the body in its grave-clothes; (*v.* 59.) though he was an honourable counsellor, yet he himself *took the body*, as it should seem, into his own arms, from the infamous and accursed tree; (*Acts* 13. 29.) for where there is true love to Christ, no service will be thought too mean to stoop to for him. Having taken it, he wrapped it in a *clean linen cloth*; for burying in linen was then the common usage, which Joseph complied with. Note, Care is to be taken of the dead bodies of good men, for there is a glory intended for them at the resurrection, which we must hereby testify our belief of, and wind up the dead body, as designed for a better place. This common act of humanity, if done after a *godly sort*, may be made an acceptable piece of Christianity.

(5.) The depositing of it in the sepulchre, *v.* 60. Here was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb, *Job* 21. 32. A private funeral did best befit him whose kingdom came not with observation.

[1.] He was laid in a *borrowed* tomb, in Joseph's burying place; as he had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body when he was dead, which was an instance of his poverty; yet in this there might be somewhat of a mystery. The grave is the peculiar heritage of a *sinner*, *Job* 24. 19. There is nothing we can truly call our own but our sins and our graves; he returneth to his earth, *Ps.* 146. 4. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a *borrowed* grave; the Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God overruled it, so as that he should make it *with the rich in his death*, *Isa.* 53. 9.

[2.] He was laid in a *new tomb*, which Joseph, it is likely, designed *for himself*; it would, however, be *never the worse* for his lying in it, who was to rise so quickly, but a *great deal the better* for his lying in it, who has altered the property of the grave, and made it *anew* indeed, by turning it into a *bed of rest*, nay, into a *bed of spices*, for all the saints.

[3.] In a tomb that was *hewn out in a rock*, the ground about Jerusalem was generally rocky. Shebna had his sepulchre hewn out thereabouts in a rock, *Isa.* 22. 16. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had access to it by some under-ground passage, or broke through the back wall of it, to steal the body; for there was no access to it but by the door, which was watched.

[4.] A *great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre*; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead, as appears by the description of the grave of Lazarus, (*John* 11. 38.) signifying that those who are dead are *separated and cut off from all the living*; if the grave were his prison, now was the prison door locked and bolted. The rolling of the stone to the grave's mouth, was, with them, as filling up the grave is with us, it completed the funeral. Having thus in silence and sorrow deposited the precious body of our Lord Jesus in the grave, the house appointed for all living, they departed without any further ceremony. It is the most melancholy circumstance in the funerals of our Christian friends, when we have laid their bodies in the dark and silent grave, to go home, and leave them behind; but, alas, it is not we that go home,

and leave them behind, no, it is they that are gone to the better home, and left us behind.

(6.) The company that attended the funeral; and that was very *small and mean*. There were none of the relations in mourning, to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners—*Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary*, *v.* 6. These, as they had attended him to the cross, so they followed him to the grave; as if they composed themselves to sorrow, they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. Note, True love to Christ will carry us through, to the utmost, in following him. Death itself cannot quench that divine fire, *Cant.* 8. 6, 7.

II. His enemies did what they could to prevent his resurrection; what they did herein was the next day that followed the day of the preparation, *v.* 62. That was the seventh day of the week, the Jewish sabbath, yet not expressly called so, but described by this periphrasis, because it was now shortly to give way to the Christian sabbath, which began the day after. Now, 1. All that day, Christ lay dead in the grave; having for six days laboured and done all his work, on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. 2. On that day, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, asking pardon for the sins of the week past, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and so adding rebellion to their sin. They that had so often quarrelled with Christ for works of the greatest mercy on that day, were themselves busied in a work of the greatest malice. Observe here,

(1.) Their address to Pilate; they were vexed that the body was given to one that would bury it decently; but, since it must be so, they desire a guard may be set on the sepulchre.

[1.] Their petition sets forth, that that Deceiver (so they call him who is Truth itself) had said, *After three days I will rise again*. He had said so, and his disciples remembered these very words for the confirmation of their faith, but his persecutors remember them for the provocation of their rage and malice. Thus the same word of Christ to the one was a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. See how they compliment Pilate with the title of *Sir*, while they reproach Christ with the title of *Deceiver*. Thus the most malicious slanderers of good men are commonly the most sordid flatterers of great men.

[2.] It further sets forth their jealousy; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say, *He is risen*.

First, That which really they were afraid of, was, his resurrection; that which is most Christ's honour, and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. That which exasperated Joseph's brethren against him, was the presages of his rise, and of his having dominion over them; (*Gen.* 37. 8.) and all they aimed at, in what they did against him, was, to prevent that. Come, say they, let us slay him, and see what will become of his dreams. So the chief priests and Pharisees laboured to defeat the predictions of Christ's resurrection, saying, as David's enemies of him, (*Ps.* 41. 8.) *Now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more*; if he should rise, that would break all their measures. Note, Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, are still in fear of losing it again. Perhaps the priests were surprised at the respect shewed to Christ's dead body by Joseph and Nicodemus, two honourable counsellors, and looked upon it as an ill presage; nor can they forget his raising of Lazarus from the dead, which so confounded them.

Secondly, That which they took on them to be afraid of, was, lest his disciples should come by night,

and steal him away, which was a very improbable thing; for, 1. They had not the courage to own him while he lived, when they might have done him and themselves real service; and it was not likely that his death should put courage into such cowards. 2. What could they promise themselves by stealing away his body, and making people believe he was risen; when, if he should not rise, and so prove himself a Deceiver, his disciples, who had left all for him in this world, in dependence upon a recompence in the other world, would of all others suffer most by the imposture, and would have had reason to throw the first stone at his name? What good would it do them, to carry on a cheat upon themselves, to steal away his body, and say, *He is risen*; when, if he were not risen, their faith was vain, and they were of *all men the most miserable*? The chief priests apprehend that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection be once preached and believed, the *last error will be worse than the first*; a proverbial expression, intimating no more than this, that we shall all be routed, all undone. They think that it was *their error*, that they had so long connived at his preaching and miracles, which *error* they thought they had *rectified* by putting him to death; but if people should be persuaded of his resurrection, that would *spoil all again*, his interest would revive with him, and their's must needs sink, who had so barbarously murdered him. Note, Those that oppose Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably *plunged and embarrassed*, their errors each worse than other, and the last worst of all, Ps. 2. 4, 5.

[3.] In consideration hereof, they humbly move to have a guard set upon the sepulchre till the third day; *Command that the sepulchre be made sure*. Pilate must still be their drudge, his civil and military power must both be engaged to serve their malice; one would think that death's prisoners needed no other guard, and that the grave were *security* enough to itself; but what will not those fear, who are conscious to themselves both of *guilt and impotency*, in opposing the Lord and his Anointed?

(2.) Pilate's answer to this address; (v. 65.) *Ye have a watch, make it sure, as sure as you can*. He was ready to gratify Christ's friends, in allowing them the body, and his enemies, in setting a guard upon it, being desirous to please all sides, while, perhaps, he laughed in his sleeve at both for making such ado, *pro* and *con*, about the dead body of a man, looking upon the hopes of one side and the fears of the other to be alike ridiculous. *Ye have a watch*; he means the constant guard that was kept in the tower of Antonia, out of which he allows them to detach as many as they pleased for that purpose, but, as if ashamed to be himself seen in such a thing, he leaves the management of it wholly to them. Methinks that word, *Make it as sure as you can*, looks like a banter, either, [1.] Of their fears; "Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man;" or rather, [2.] Of their hopes; "Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost; but, if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards." I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, of whom he would be apt to inquire how that *just Man* died, whom he had condemned with such reluctance; and that he gave him such an account of those things as made him conclude that *truly he was the Son of God*; and Pilate would give more credit to him than to a thousand of those spiteful priests that called him a *Deceiver*; and, if so, no marvel, that he tacitly derides their project, in thinking to secure their sepulchre upon him who had so lately rent the rocks, and made the earth to quake. Tertullian, in speaking of Pilate, saith, *ipse jam pro sua conscientia Christianus—In his conscience he was*

a Christian; and it was possible that he might be under such convictions at this time, upon the centurion's report, and yet never be thoroughly persuaded, any more than Agrippa or Felix was, to be a Christian.

(3.) The wonderful care they took, hereupon, to secure the sepulchre; (v. 66.) *They sealed the stone*; probably with the great seal of their *Sanhedrim*, whereby they interposed their authority, for who durst break the public seal? But not trusting too much to that, withal they set a *watch*, to keep his disciples from coming to steal him away, and, if possible, to hinder him from coming out of the grave. So they intended, but God brought this good out of it, that they who were set to *oppose* his resurrection, thereby had an opportunity to observe it, and did so, and told the chief priests what they observed, who were thereby rendered the more inexcusable. Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain, when his hour was come; death, and all these sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples was folly, because *needless*; but to think to guard it against the power of God was folly, because *fruitless*, and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had *dealt wisely*.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapters, we saw the Captain of our salvation engaged with the powers of darkness, attacked by them, and vigorously attacking them; victory seemed to hover between the combatants; nay, at length, it inclined to the enemies' side, and our Champion fell before them; behold, God has delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies' hand. Christ in the grave is like the ark in Dagon's temple; the powers of darkness seemed to ride masters, but then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, Ps. 78. 61, 65. The Prince of our peace is in this chapter rallying again, coming out of the grave, a Conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, leading captivity captive; though the ark be a prisoner, Dagon falls before it, and it proves that none is able to stand before the holy Lord God. Now the resurrection of Christ being one of the main foundations of our religion, it is requisite that we should have infallible proofs of it; four of which proofs we have in this chapter, which are but a few of many, for Luke and John give a larger account of the proofs of Christ's resurrection than Matthew and Mark do. Here is, I. 8. II. His appearance himself to the women, v. 9, 10. III. The confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard, v. 11. 15. IV. Christ's appearance to the disciples in Galilee, and the commission he gave them, v. 16. 20.

1. **I**N the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. 2. And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay: 7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from

the dead : and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you. 3. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy : and did run to bring his disciples word. 9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 40. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

For the proof of Christ's resurrection, we have here the testimony of the *angel*, and of *Christ* himself, concerning his resurrection. Now we may think that it would have been better, if the matter had been so ordered, that a competent number of witnesses should have been present, and have seen the stone rolled away by the angel, and the dead bodily reviving, as people saw Lazarus come out of the grave, and then the matter had been past dispute ; but let us not prescribe to Infinite Wisdom, which ordered that the witnesses of his resurrection should see him *risen*, but not see him *rise*. His incarnation was a mystery ; so was this *second incarnation*, (if we may so call it,) this *new making* of the body of Christ for his exalted state, it was therefore made in *secret*. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*. Christ gave such proofs of his resurrection as were *corroborated* by the scriptures, and by the *word* which he had *spoken* ; (Luke 24. 6, 7, 44. Mark 16. 7.) for here we must walk *by faith, not by sight*. We have here,

1. The *coming* of the *good women* to the *sepulchre*.

Observe, 1. *When they came ; in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, &c.* 1. This fixes the time of Christ's resurrection.

(1.) He rose the *third day* after his death ; that was the time which he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and arose in the morning of the first day of the following week, so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long, to shew that he was really and truly dead ; and no longer, that he might not *see corruption*. He rose the third day, to answer the type of the prophet Jonas, (*ch.* 12. 40.) and to accomplish that prediction, (Hos. 6. 2.) *The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*.

(2.) He arose *after the Jewish sabbath*, and it was the passover-sabbath ; all that day he lay in the grave, to signify the abolishing of the Jewish feasts and the other parts of the ceremonial law, and that his people must be dead to such observances, and take no more notice of them than he did when he *lay in the grave*. Christ on the *sixth day finished* his work, he said, *It is finished* ; on the seventh day he rested, and then on the first day of the next week did as it were begin a new world, and enter upon new work. Let no man therefore judge us now in respect of the *new moons*, or of the *Jewish sabbaths*, which were indeed a shadow of good things to come, but the *substance* is of *Christ*. We may further observe, that the time of the saints' living in the grave is a sabbath to them, (such as the Jewish sabbath was, which consisted chiefly in bodily rest,) for there they *rest from their labours* ; (Job 3. 17.) and it is owing to Christ.

(3.) He rose upon the *first day of the week* ; on the first day of the first week God commanded the *light to shine out of darkness* ; on this day therefore

did He, who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave ; and the seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it rose again in the first-day sabbath, called the *Lord's day*, (Rev. 1. 10.) and no other day of the week is from henceforward mentioned in all the New Testament than this, and this often, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ, John 20. 19, 26. Acts 20. 7. 1 Cor. 16. 2. If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt, (Jer. 23. 7, 8.) much more doth our redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God's former works. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the *perfecting* of the work of creation, Gen. 2. 1. Man by his revolt made a breach upon that *perfect* work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ rose from the dead, and the *heavens and the earth were again finished*, and the disordered *hosts of them modelled anew*, and the day on which this was done was justly *blessed and sanctified*, and the seventh day from that. He, who on that day rose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now anew created.

(4.) He rose *as it began to dawn* toward that day ; as soon as it could be said that the *third day* was come, the time prefixed for his resurrection, he *rose* ; after his withdrawals from his people, he returns *with all convenient speed, and cuts the work as short in righteousness* as may be. He had said to his disciples, that though within a little while they *should not see him*, yet again, *a little while*, and they *should see him*, and accordingly he made it as little a while as possible, Isa. 54. 7, 8. Christ rose *when the day began to dawn*, because then the day-spring from on high did again visit us, Luke 1. 78. His passion began in the night ; when he hung on the cross the sun was darkened ; he was laid in the grave in the dusk of the evening, but he rose from the grave when the sun was near rising, for he is the *bright and morning Star*, (Rev. 22. 16.) the *true Light*. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, *Early will I seek thee*.

2. Who they were that came to the sepulchre ; *Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary*, the same that attended the funeral, and *sat over against the sepulchre*, as before they *sat over against the cross* ; still they studied to express their love to Christ, still they were inquiring after him. Thee shall we *know*, if we thus *follow on to know*. No mention is made of the virgin Mary being with them ; it is probable that the *beloved disciple*, who had taken her to his own home, hindered her from *going to the grave to weep there*. Their attendance on Christ not only to the grave, but in the grave, represents his like care for those that are his, when they have *made their bed in the darkness*. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the *saints*, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ : for death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them.

3. What they came to do : the other evangelists say that they came to anoint the body ; Matthew saith that they came to *see the sepulchre*, whether it was as they left it : hearing perhaps, but not being sure, that the chief priests had set a guard upon it. They went, to shew their good-will in another visit to the dear remains of their beloved Master, and perhaps not without some thoughts of his resurrection, for they could not have quite forgotten all he had said of it. Note, Visits to the grave are of great use to Christians, and will help to make it familiar to them, and to take off the terror of it, es-

pecially visits to the grave of our Lord Jesus, where we may see sin buried out of sight, the pattern of our sanctification, and the great proof of redeeming love shining illustriously even in that *land of darkness*.

II. The appearance of an angel of the Lord to them, v. 2—4. We have here an account of the manner of the resurrection of Christ, as far as it was fit that we should know.

1. There was a *great earthquake*. When he died, the earth, that *received him*, shook for fear; now that he rose, the earth, that *resigned him*, leaped for joy in his exaltation. This earthquake did as it were *loose* the bond of death, and *shake off* the fetters of the grave, and introduced the *Desire of all nations*, Hag. 2. 6, 7. It was the *signal* of Christ's victory, notice was hereby given of it, that, when the *heavens rejoiced*, the earth also might be *glad*. It was a *specimen* of the *shake* that will be given to the earth at the general resurrection, when mountains and islands shall be removed, that the earth may no longer *cover her slain*. There was a *noise* and a *shaking* in the valley, when the *bones were to come together, bone to his bone*, Ezek. 37. 7. The kingdom of Christ, which was now to be set up, made the earth to quake, and *terribly shook it*. Those who are sanctified, and thereby raised to a spiritual life, while it is in the doing, find an earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who *trembled* and was *astonished*.

2. The *angel of the Lord descended from heaven*. The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus, at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony; but upon the cross we find no angel attending him; when his Father *forsook him*, the angels withdrew from him; but now that he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, now, behold, the *angels of God worship him*.

3. He came, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. Our Lord Jesus could have *rolled back the stone* himself by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel, to signify, that, having undertaken to make satisfaction for our sin, imputed to him, and being under arrest pursuant to that imputation, he did not *break prison*, but had a fair and *legal discharge*, obtained from Heaven; he did not break prison, but an officer was sent on purpose to *roll away the stone*, and so to open the prison door, which would never have been done, if he had not made a *full satisfaction*, but being delivered for our offences, to complete the deliverance, he was *raised again for our justification*; he died to pay our debt, and rose again to take out our acquittance. The stone of our sins was *rolled* to the door of the grave of our Lord Jesus; (and we find the rolling of a great stone to signify the *contracting of guilt*, 1 Sam. 14. 33.) but, to demonstrate that divine justice was satisfied, an angel was commissioned to roll back the stone; not that the angel *raised him from the dead*, any more than those that *took away the stone* from Lazarus's grave, raised him, but thus he intimated the consent of Heaven to his release, and the joy of Heaven in it. The enemies of Christ had sealed the stone, resolving, like Babylon, not to *open the house of his prisoners*; shall the *prey be taken from the mighty*? For this was *their hour*; but all the powers of death and darkness are under the control of the God of light and life. An angel from heaven has power to *break the seal*, though it were the *great seal of Israel*, and is able to *roll away the stone*, though ever so great. Thus the *captives of the mighty are taken away*. The angel's *sitting upon the stone*, when he had *rolled it away*, is very observable, and bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. There he sat, defying all the powers of hell to roll the stone to the grave again. Christ erects his seat of rest,

and seat of judgment, upon the opposition of his enemies; *the Lord sitteth upon the floods*. The angel sat as a guard to the grave, having frightened away the enemies' *black guard*; he sat, expecting the women, and ready to give them an account of his resurrection.

4. That his *countenance was like lightning*, and his *raiment white as snow*, v. 3. This was a visible representation, by that which we call *splendid and illustrious*, of the *glories* of the invisible world, which know no *difference of colours*. His look upon the keepers was like *flashes of lightning*, he *cast forth lightning*, and *scattered them*, Ps. 144. 6. The *whiteness* of his raiment was an emblem not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. When Christ died, the court of heaven *went into deep mourning*, signified by the *darkening of the sun*; but when he rose, they again put on the *garments of praise*. The glory of this angel represented the glory of Christ, to which he was now risen, for it is the same description that was given of him in his transfiguration; (ch. 17. 2.) but when he conversed with his disciples after his resurrection, he drew a veil over it, and it bespoke the glory of the saints in their resurrection, when they shall be *as the angels of God in heaven*.

5. That *for fear of him the keepers did shake*, and *became as dead men*, v. 4. They were *soldiers*, that thought themselves hardened against fear, yet the very sight of an angel struck them with terror. Thus *when the Son of God arose to judgment, the stout-hearted were spoiled*, Ps. 76. 5, 9. Note, The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. *They did shake*; the word *ἐκταθῆναι*, is the same with that which was used for the earthquake, v. 2. *ἐσπασε*. When the earth shook, these *children of the earth*, that had their portion in it, *shook too*; whereas, those that have their happiness in things above, *though the earth be removed, yet are without fear*. The keepers became as *dead men*, when he whom they kept guard upon became alive, and they whom they kept guard against revived with him. It struck a terror upon them, to see themselves baffled in that which was their business here. They were posted here, to *keep a dead man in his grave*—as easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned them, and yet it proves too hard for them. They were told that they must expect to be assaulted by a company of feeble faint-hearted disciples, who, for fear of them, would soon *shake*, and become as *dead men*, but are amazed when they find themselves attacked by a *mighty angel*, whom they dare not look in the face. Thus doth God *frustrate* his enemies by *frightening them*, Ps. 9. 20.

III. The message which this angel delivered to the women, v. 5—7.

1. *He encourages them against their fears*, v. 5. To come near to graves and tombs, especially in silence and solitude, has something in it *frightful*, much more was it so to those women, to find an angel at the sepulchre; but he soon makes them easy with the word, *Fear not ye*. The keepers shook, and became as dead men, but, *Fear not ye*. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, for there is cause for it; but, *Fear not, Abraham*, nor any of the faithful seed of Abraham; why should the daughters of Sarah, that *do well*, be afraid with any amazement? 1 Pet. 3. 6. "*Fear not ye*. Let not the news I have to tell you, be any surprise to you, for you were told before that your Master would rise; let it be no terror to you, for his resurrection will be your consolation; fear not any hurt that I will do you, nor any evil tidings I have to tell you. *Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus*. I know you are friends to the cause, I do not come to frighten you, but to encourage you." Note, Those that *seek Jesus*, have

no reason to be afraid; for, if they seek him diligently, they shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder. All our believing inquiries after the Lord Jesus are observed, and taken notice of, in heaven; *I know that ye seek Jesus*; and shall certainly be answered, as these were, *with good words, and comfortable words. Ye seek Jesus that was crucified.* He mentions his being crucified, the more to commend their love to him; "You seek him still, though *he was crucified*; you retain your kindness for him notwithstanding." Note, True believers love and seek Christ, not only though he was crucified, but because he was so.

2. He assures them of the resurrection of Christ; and there was enough in that to silence their fears; (v. 6.) *He is not here, for he is risen.* To be told, *He is not here*, would have been no welcome news to those who sought him, if it had not been added, *He is risen.* Note, It is matter of comfort to those who seek Christ, and miss of finding him where they expected, that *he is risen*; if we find him not in sensible comfort, yet *he is risen.* We must not hearken to those who say, *Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there*, for he is not here, he is not there, he is risen. In all our inquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is risen; and we must seek him as one risen. (1.) Not with any gross, carnal, thoughts of him. There were those that *knew Christ after the flesh*; but now henceforth know we him so no more, 2 Cor. 5. 16. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a glorified body. They that make pictures and images of Christ, forget that *he is not here, he is risen*; our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, Rom. 10. 6—8. (2.) We must seek him with great reverence and humility, and an awful regard to his glory, for *he is risen.* God has *highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him. (3.) We must seek him with a heavenly mind; when we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, *It is good to be here*, let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, *he is risen*, and therefore let not our hearts be here, but let them rise too, and seek the things that are above, Col. 3. 1—3. Phil. 3. 20.

Two things the angel refers these women to, for the confirmation of their faith, touching Christ's resurrection.

[1.] To this word now fulfilled, which they might remember; *He is risen, as he said.* This he vouches as the proper object of faith: "He said that he would rise, and you know that he is the Truth itself, and therefore have reason to expect that he should rise; why should you be backward to believe that which he told you would be?" Let us never think that strange, of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations, whether the sufferings of this present time, or the glory that is to be revealed. If we remember what Christ hath said to us, we shall be the less surprised at what he doth with us. This angel, when he said, *He is not here, he is risen*, makes it to appear that he preaches no other gospel than what they had already received, for he refers himself to the word of Christ as sufficient to bear him out; *He is risen, as he said.*

[2.] To his grave now empty, which they might look into; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Compare what you have heard, with what you see, and, putting both together, you will believe. You see that *he is not here*, and, remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that *he is risen*; come, see the place, and you will see that he is not there, you will see that he could not be stolen thence, and therefore must conclude that he is risen." Note, It may be of use to affect us, and may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he

has left there of his love in condescending so low for us; see how easy he has made that bed, and how lightsome, for us, by lying in it himself; when we look into the grave, where we expect we must lie, to take off the terror of it, let us look into the grave where the Lord lay; the place where our Lord lay, so the Syriac. The angels own him for their Lord, as well as we; for the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named from him.

3. He directs them to go carry the tidings of it to his disciples; (v. 7.) *Go quickly, and tell his disciples.* It is probable that they were for entertaining themselves with the sight of the sepulchre, and discourse with the angels. It was good to be here, but they have other work appointed them: *this is a day of good tidings*, and though they have the premier seisin of the comfort, the first taste of it, yet they must not have the monopoly of it, must not hold their peace, any more than those lepers, 2 Kings 7. 9. They must go tell the disciples. Note, Public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves; for it is more blessed to give than to receive. Observe,

(1.) The disciples of Christ must first be told the news; not, Go, tell the chief priests and the Pharisees, that they may be confounded; but, Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted. God anticipates the joy of his friends more than the shame of his enemies, though the perfection of both is reserved for hereafter. Tell his disciples; it may be they will believe your report, however, tell them, [1.] That they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions. It was a dismal time with them, between grief and fear; what a cordial would this be to them now, to hear their Master is risen! [2.] That they may inquire further into it themselves. This alarm was sent them, to awaken them from that strange stupidity which had seized them, and to raise their expectations. This was to set them on seeking him, and to prepare them for his appearance to them. General hints excite to closer searches. They shall now hear of him, but shall very shortly see him. Christ discovers himself gradually.

(2.) The women are sent to tell it them, and so are made, as it were, the apostles of the apostles. This was an honour put upon them, and a recompense for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him. Still God chooses the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and puts the treasure, not only into earthen vessels, but here into the weaker vessels; as, the woman, being deceived by the suggestions of an evil angel, was first in the transgression, (1 Tim. 2. 14.) so these women, being duly informed by the instructions of a good angel, were first in the belief of the redemption from transgression by Christ's resurrection, that that reproach of their sex might be rolled away, by putting this in the balance against it, which is their perpetual praise.

(3.) They were bid to go quickly upon this errand. Why, what haste was there? Would not the news keep cold, and be welcome to them at any time? Yes, but they were now overwhelmed with grief, and Christ would have this cordial hastened to them; when Daniel was humbling himself before God for sin, the angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly with a message of comfort, Dan. 9. 21. We must always be ready and forward; [1.] To obey the commands of God, Ps. 119. 60. [2.] To do good to our brethren, and to carry comfort to them, as those that felt from their afflictions; *Say not, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give*; but now quickly.

(4.) They were directed to appoint the disciples

to meet him in Galilee. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in Galilee, which were sudden and surprising; but he would have one to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Now this general rendezvous was appointed in Galilee, eighty or a hundred miles from Jerusalem; [1.] *In kindness* to those of his disciples that remained in Galilee, and *did not* (perhaps they *could not*) come up to Jerusalem; into that country therefore he would go, to manifest himself to his friends there. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest.* Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit there. Note, The exaltation of Christ doth not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to them that are at a distance from the plenty of the means of grace he will graciously *manifest himself*. [2.] In consideration of the weakness of his disciples that were now at Jerusalem, who as yet were *afraid of the Jews*, and durst not appear publicly, and therefore this meeting was adjourned to Galilee. Christ knows our fears, and considers our frame, and made his appointment where there was least danger of disturbance.

Lastly, The angel solemnly affirms upon his word the truth of what he had related to them; "*Lo, I have told you*, you may be assured of it, and depend upon it; *I have told you*, who dare not tell a lie." *The word spoken by angels was steadfast*, Heb. 2. 2. God had been wont formerly to make known his mind to his people, by the ministration of angels, as at the giving of the law; but as he intended in gospel-times to lay aside that way of communication, (for *unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come*, nor appointed them to be the preachers of the gospel,) this angel was *now* sent to certify the resurrection of Christ to the disciples, and so leave it in their hands to be published to the world, 2 Cor. 4. 7. In saying, *Lo, I have told you*, he doth, as it were, discharge himself from the blame of their unbelief, if they should not receive this record, and throw it upon them; "*I have done my errand*, I have faithfully delivered my message, now look you to it, believe it at your peril; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, *I have told you*." Note, Those messengers from God, that discharge their trust faithfully, may take the comfort of that, whatever the success be, Acts 20. 26, 27.

IV. The women's *departure from the sepulchre*, to bring notice to the disciples, v. 8. And observe,

1. What frame and temper of spirit they were in; They *departed with fear and great joy*; a strange mixture, fear and joy at the same time, in the same soul. To hear that Christ was risen, was matter of joy; but to be led into his grave, and to see an angel, and talk with him about it, could not but cause fear. It was good news, but they were *afraid* that it was too *good* to be true. But observe, it is said of their joy, it was *great joy*; it is not said so of their fear. Note, (1.) Holy fear has joy attending it. They that serve the Lord with *reverence*, serve him with *gladness*. (2.) Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling, Ps. 2. 11. It is only perfect love and joy that will cast out all fear.

2. What haste they made; *They did run*. The fear and joy together quickened their pace, and added wings to their motion; the angel bid them *go quickly*, and they *ran*. Those that are sent on God's errand must not loiter, or lose time; where the heart is enlarged with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will *run the way of God's commandments*.

3. What errand they went upon; They ran, to *bring his disciples word*. Not doubting but it would be joyful news to them, they ran, to comfort them with the same comforts wherewith they themselves

were comforted of God. Note, The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with Heaven; should tell others what God has *done for their souls*, and spoken to them. Joy in Christ Jesus, like the ointment of the right hand, will betray itself, and fill all places within the lines of its communication, with its odours. When Samson found honey, he brought it to his parents.

V. Christ's appearing to the women, to confirm the testimony of the angel, v. 9, 10. These zealous good women not only heard the first tidings of him, but had the first sight of him, after his resurrection. The angel directed those that would see him, to go to Galilee, but before that time came, even *here also*, they *looked after him* that lives, and sees them. Note, Jesus Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often anticipates, but never frustrates, the believing expectations of his people.

Here is, 1. Christ's surprising appearance to the women; *As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them*. Note, God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was *unexpected*, or *ever they were aware*, Cant. 6. 12. Note, Christ is nearer to his people than they imagine. They needed not *descend into the deep*, to fetch Christ hence; he *was not there, he was risen*; nor *go up to heaven*, for he *was not yet ascended*; but Christ was *nigh them*, and still in the word is *nigh us*.

2. The salutation wherewith he accented them; *All hail—χαίρετε*. We use the old English form of salutation, wishing *all health* to those we meet; for so *All hail* signifies, and is expressive of the Greek form of salutation here used, answering to that of the Hebrew, *Peace be unto you*. And it he speaks, (1.) The good will of Christ to us and our happiness, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. Though he is advanced, he wisheth us as well as ever, and is as much concerned for our comfort. (2.) The freedom and holy familiarity which he used in his fellowship with his disciples; for he called them *friends*. But the Greek word signifies, *Rejoice ye*. They were affected both with *fear and joy*; what he said to them tended to encourage their joy, (v. 9.) *Rejoice ye*, and to silence their fear; (v. 10.) *Be not afraid*. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes them with abundant matter for joy.

3. The affectionate respect they paid him; *They came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him*. Thus they expressed, (1.) The *reverence and honour* they had for him; they threw themselves at his feet, put themselves into a posture of adoration, and *worshipped him* with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted. (2.) The *love and affection* they had to him; they *held him*, and *would not let him go*, Cant. 3. 4. *How beautiful were the feet of the Lord Jesus to them!* Isa. 52. 7. (3.) The *transport of joy* they were in, now that they had this further assurance of his resurrection; they welcomed it with both arms. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel, with *reverence* cast ourselves at his feet, by faith *take hold* of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

4. The encouraging words Christ said to them, v. 10. We do not find that they said any thing to him, their affectionate embraces and adorations spake plainly enough; and what he said to them was no more than what the angel had said: (v. 5, 7.) for he will *confirm the word of his messengers*; (Isa. 44. 26.) and his way of *comforting* his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts the same that they had heard before from *his angels*, the ministers. Now observe, here,

(1.) How he rebukes their fear; *Be not afraid.* They must not fear being imposed upon by these repeated notices of his resurrection, nor fear any hurt from the appearance of one from the dead; for the news, though strange, was both *true* and *good*. Note, Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them.

(2.) How he repeats their message; "*Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there they shall see me.*" If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that *appoints the meeting*, and he will observe the appointment. Jerusalem had forfeited the honour of Christ's presence, it was a *tumultuous* city, therefore he adjourns the meeting to Galilee. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth*, Cant. 7. 11. But that which is especially observable here, is, that he calls his disciples *his brethren*. Go, tell *my brethren*, not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren, (ch. 12. 50.) but he never called them so till after his resurrection, here, and John 20. 17. Being by the resurrection himself declared to be the *Son of God with power*, all the children of God were thereby declared to be *his brethren*. Being the *First-begotten from the dead*, he is become the *First-born among many brethren*, even of all that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title, *Go to my brethren*, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which, speaking of his entrance upon his exalted state, saith, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren.* They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to shew that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to *meet* them, but calls them *brethren*. Being all *his brethren*, they were *brethren* one to another, and must love as brethren. His owning them for his brethren put a great honour upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honour.

11. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers. 13. Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

For the further proof of the resurrection of Christ, we have here the confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard; and there are two things which strengthen this testimony—that they were *eye-witnesses*, and did themselves see the glory of the resurrection, which none else did—and that they were *enemies*, set there to oppose and obstruct his resurrection. Now observe here,

I. How this testimony was *given in* to the chief priests; (v. 11.) *when the women were going to bring that news to the disciples, which would fill their hearts with joy*, the soldiers went to bring the same news to the chief priests, which would fill *their faces with shame*. Some of the watch, probably

those of them that commanded in chief, *came into the city*, and brought to those who employed them, the report of their disappointment. *They shewed to the chief priests all the things that were done*; I told them of the earthquake, the descent of the angel, the rolling of the stone away, and the coming of the body of Jesus alive out of the grave. Thus the *sign* of the prophet Jonas was brought to the chief priests with the most clear and incontestible evidence that could be; and so the utmost means of conviction were afforded them; we may well imagine what a mortification it was to them, and that, like the enemies of the Jews, they were *much cast down in their own eyes*, Neh. 6. 16. It might justly have been expected that they should now have believed in Christ, and repented their putting him to death; but they were obstinate in their infidelity, and therefore sealed up under it.

II. How it was baffled and stifled by them. They called an assembly, and considered what was to be done. For their own parts, they were resolved not to believe that Jesus was risen; but their care was, to keep others from believing, and themselves from being quite ashamed from their disbelief of it. They had put him to death, and there was no way of standing to what they had done, but by confronting the evidence of his resurrection. Thus they who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of *adding iniquity to iniquity*, which is part of the curse of Christ's persecutors, Ps. 69. 27.

The result of their debate was, that those soldiers must by all means be bribed off, and hired not to tell tales.

1. They *put money into their hands*; and what wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money? They *gave large money*, probably a great deal more than they gave to Judas, *unto the soldiers*. These chief priests loved their money as well as most people did, and were as loath to part with it; and yet, to carry on a malicious design against the gospel of Christ, they were very prodigal of it; they gave the soldiers, it is likely, as much as they asked, and they knew how to improve their advantages. Here was *large money* given for the advancing of that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see a bad one so liberally supported.

2. They *put a lie into their mouths*; (v. 13.) *Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept*; a sorry shift is better than none, but this is a sorry one indeed. (1.) The sham was *ridiculous*, and carried along with it its own confutation. If *they slept*, how could they know any thing of the matter, or say who came? If *any one* of them were awake to observe it, no doubt, he would awake them all to *oppose it*; for that was the only thing they had in charge. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dispirited men should expose themselves for so inconsiderable an achievement as the rescue of the dead body. Why were not the houses where they lodged diligently searched, and other means used to discover the dead body? but this was so thin a lie as one might easily see through. But, had it been ever so plausible, (2.) It was a wicked thing for these priests and elders to hire these soldiers to tell a deliberate lie, (if it had been in a matter of ever so small importance,) against their consciences. These know not what they do, who draw others to commit one wilful sin; for that may debauch conscience, and be an inlet to many. But, (3.) Considering this as intended to

overthrow the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, this was a sin against the last remedy, and was, in effect, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, imputing that to the rogues of the disciples, which was done by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But, lest the soldiers should object the penalty they incurred by the Roman law for sleeping upon the guard, which was very severe, (Acts 12. 19.) they promised to interpose with the governor; "*We will persuade him, and secure you.* We will use our own interest in him, to get him not to take notice of it;" and they had lately found how easily they could manage him. If really these soldiers had slept, and so suffered the disciples to steal him away, as they would have the world believe, the priests and elders would certainly have been the forwardest to solicit the governor to punish them for their treachery; so that their care for the soldiers' safety plainly gives the lie to the story. They undertook to secure the sword of Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. They promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

Well, thus was the plot laid; now, what success had it?

[1.] Those that were willing to deceive, took the money, and did as they were taught. They cared as little for Christ and his religion as the chief priests and elders did; and men that have no religion at all, can be very well pleased to see Christianity run down, and lend a hand to it, if need be, to serve a turn. They took the money; that was it they aimed at, and nothing else. Note, Money is a bait for the blackest temptation; mercenary tongues will sell the truth for it.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is, his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers had; they saw the angel descend from heaven, saw the stone rolled away, saw the body of Christ come out of the grave, unless the consternation they felt hindered them; and yet they were so far from being convinced by it themselves, that they were hired to belie him, and to hinder others from believing in him. Note, The most sensible evidence will not convince men, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Those that were willing to be deceived, not only credited, but propagated, the story; *This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.* The sham took well enough, and answered the end. The Jews, who persisted in their infidelity, when they were pressed with the argument of Christ's resurrection, had this still ready to reply, *His disciples came, and stole him away.* To this purport was the solemn narrative, which (as Justin Martyr relates in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew) the great Sanhedrim sent to all the Jews of the dispersion concerning this affair, exciting them to a vigorous resistance of Christianity—that, *when thou had crucified, and buried him, the disciples came by night, and stole him out of the sepulchre*, designing thereby not only to overthrow the truth of Christ's resurrection, but to render his disciples odious to the world, as the greatest villains in nature. When once a lie is raised, none knows how far it will spread, nor how long it will last, nor what mischief it will do. Some give another sense of this passage, *This saying is commonly reported*, that is, "Notwithstanding the artifice of the chief priests, thus to impose upon the people, the collusion that was between them and the soldiers, and the money that was given to support the cheat, were commonly reported and whispered among the Jews;" for one way or other truth will out.

16. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

This evangelist passes over several other appearances of Christ recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to this, which was of all other the most solemn, as being promised and appointed again and again before his death, and after his resurrection. Observe,

I. How the disciples attended his appearance, according to the appointment; (v. 16.) *They went into Galilee*, a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, but it was worth while. They had seen him several times at Jerusalem, and yet they went into Galilee, to see him there.

1. Because he appointed them to do so. Though it seemed a needless thing to go into Galilee, to see him whom they might see at Jerusalem, especially when they must so soon come back again to Jerusalem, before his ascension, yet they had learned to obey Christ's commands, and not object against them. Note, Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee.

2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note, Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for *God loves the gates of Zion*, and so must we. The place was a mountain in Galilee, probably the same mountain on which he was transfigured. There they met for privacy, and, perhaps, to signify the exalted state into which he was entered, and his advances toward the upper world.

II. How they were affected with the appearance of Christ to them, v. 17. Now was the time that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, 1 Cor. 15. 6. Some think that they saw him, at first, at some distance, above in the air, ὡς ἐν ἑραρίᾳ—*He was seen above, of five hundred brethren*; (so they read it;) which gave occasion to some to doubt, till he came nearer; (v. 18.) and then they were satisfied. We are told,

1. That they worshipped him; many of them did so, nay, it should seem, they all did that, they gave divine honour to him, which was signified by some outward expressions of adoration. Note, All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith, are obliged to worship him.

2. But some doubted, some of those that were then present. Note, Even among those that worship there are some that doubt. The faith of those that are sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. They doubted, δίστασις—*they hung in suspense*, as the scales of the balance, when it is hard to say which preponderates. These doubts were after-

were removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples *doubted* before they *believed*; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to be imposed upon; for they first *questioned*, and *proved all things*, and then *held fast* that which was *true*, and they found to be so.

III. What Jesus Christ said to them; (v. 18—20.) *Jesus came, and shake unto them.* Though there were those that doubted, yet he did not therefore reject them; for he will not *break the bruised reed*. He did not stand at a distance, but *came near*, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts. *He came, and shake* familiarly to them, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them. He that *drew near* to God, to speak for us to him, *draws near* to us, to speak from him to us. Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

In opening this great charter, we may observe two things.

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received himself from the Father. Being about to *authorize* his apostles, if any ask by what authority he doeth it, and who gave him that authority? here he tells us, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*; a very great word, and which none but he could say. Hereby he asserts his universal dominion as Mediator, which is the great foundation of the Christian religion. He has *all power*. Observe, (1.) *Whence* he hath this power. He did not assume it, or usurp it, but it was *given* him, he was legally entitled to it, and invested in it, by a grant from him who is the Fountain of all being, and consequently of all power. *God set him King*, (Ps. 2. 6.) inaugurated and enthroned him, Luke 1. 32. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially *his*; but as Mediator, as God-man, *all power was given him*; partly in *recompense* of his work, (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus *exalted* him,) and partly in *furtherance* of his design; he had this *power* given him *over all flesh*, that he might *give eternal life* to as many as were given him, (John 17. 2.) for the more effectual carrying on and completing our salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, Acts 13. 33. He had power before, *power to forgive sins*; (ch. 9. 6.) but now *all power* is given him. He is now going to *receive for himself a kingdom*, (Luke 19. 12.) to sit down at the right hand, Ps. 110. 1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is *his own* for ever. (2.) *Where* he has this power: in *heaven and earth*, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is *Lord of all*, Acts 10. 36. He has *all power in heaven*. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, Eph. 1. 20, 21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a suppliant, but as a demandant; *Father, I will*. He has *all power on earth* too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. *By him Kings reign*. All souls are his, and to him *every heart and knee must bow*, and *every tongue confess* him to be the *Lord*. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no

reason to be ashamed of *Christ crucified*, when they saw him *thus glorified*.

2. The commission he gives to those whom he sent forth; *Go ye therefore*. This commission is given, (1.) To the *apostles* primarily, the chief ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, the architects that laid the foundation of the church. Now these that had followed Christ in the regeneration, were *set on thrones*; (Luke 22. 30.) *Go ye*. It is not only a word of command, like that, *Son, go work*, but a word of encouragement, *Go*, and *fear not*, *have not I sent you?* *Go*, and make a business of this work. They must not *take state*, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must *go*, and bring the *gospel* to their doors. *Go ye*. They had doted on Christ's *bodily presence*, and hung upon *that*, and built all their joys and hopes upon *that*; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. *As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young*, to excite them to fly, (Deut. 32. 11.) so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves into all the world. (2.) It is given to their successors, the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to transmit the gospel from age to age, to the end of the world in time, as it was their's to transmit it from nation to nation, to the end of the world in place, and no less necessary. The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession; (Isa. 59. 21.) and this must be so understood, otherwise how could Christ be with them always to the *consummation of the world*? Christ, at his ascension, gave not only apostles and prophets, but *pastors and teachers*, Eph. 4. 11. Now observe,

[1.] How far his commission is extended; to *all nations*. *Go, and disciple all nations*. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best *diffuse* the light of the gospel. Now this plainly signifies it to be the will of Christ, *First*, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word brake down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to *all nations*. *Secondly*, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a *common salvation*; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the *act of indemnity*; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. *Thirdly*, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and their kings the church's nursing fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to *disciple* all nations. *Make ye*—*“Admit them disciples; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;”* not, *“Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets,”* (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness,) but, *“Go, and disciple them.”* Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was, to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them

miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

[3.] Their instructions for executing this commission:

First, They must admit disciples by the sacred rite of baptism; "Go into all nations, preach the gospel to them, work miracles among them, and persuade them to come in themselves, and bring their children with them, into the church of Christ, and then admit them and their's into the church, by washing them with water;" either dipping them in the water, or by pouring or sprinkling water upon them, which seems the more proper, because the thing is most frequently expressed so. As, Isa. 44. 3. *I will pour my Spirit on thy seed.* And, Tit. 3. 5, 6. *Which he shed on us abundantly.* And, Ezek. 36. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you.* And, Isa. 52. 15. *So shall he sprinkle many nations;* which seems a prophecy of this commission to baptize the nations.

Secondly, This baptism must be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That is, 1. *By authority from heaven*, and not of man; for his ministers act by authority from the three Persons in the Godhead, who all concur, as to our creation, so to our redemption; they have their commission under the great seal of heaven, which puts an honour upon the ordinance, though to a carnal eye, like him that instituted it, it has no form or comeliness. 2. *Calling upon the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* Every thing is sanctified by prayer, and particularly the waters of baptism. The prayer of faith obtains the presence of God with the ordinance, which is its lustre and beauty, its life and efficacy. But, 3. *It is into the name* (*ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι*) of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; this was intended as the summary of the first principles of the Christian religion, and of the new covenant, and according to it the ancient creeds were drawn up. By our being baptized, we solemnly profess, (1.) Our assent to the scripture revelation concerning God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We confess our belief that there is a God, that there is but one God, that in the Godhead there is a Father that begets, a Son that is begotten, and a Holy Spirit of both. We are baptized not into the names, but into the name, of Father, Son, and Spirit, which plainly intimates that these Three are One, and their name One. The distinct mentioning of the Three Persons in the Trinity, both in the Christian baptism here, and in the Christian blessing, (2 Cor. 13. 14.) as it is a full proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, so it has done much toward the preserving of it pure and entire through all ages of the church; for nothing is more great and awful in Christian assemblies than these two. (2.) Our consent to a covenant relation to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Baptism is a sacrament, that is, it is an oath; *super sacramentum dicere*, is to say upon oath. It is an oath of abjuration, by which we renounce the world and the flesh, as rivals with God for the throne in our hearts; and an oath of allegiance, by which we resign and give up ourselves to God, to be his, our own selves, our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to be governed by his will, and made happy in his favour; we become his men, so the form of homage in our law runs. Therefore baptism is applied to the person, as livery and seisin is given of the premises, because it is the person that is dedicated to God. [1.] It is into the name of the Father, believing him to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (for that is principally intended here,) by eternal generation, and our Father, as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, to whom therefore we resign ourselves, as our absolute Owner and Proprietor, to act us, and dispose of us; as our supreme Rector and Governor, to rule us, as free

agents by his law; and as our chief Good, and highest End. [2.] It is into the name of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and correlate to the Father. Baptism was in a particular manner administered in the name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 8. 16.—19. 5. In baptism we assent, as Peter did, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*, (ch. 16. 16,) and consent, as Thomas did, *My Lord, and my God*, John 20. 28. We take Christ to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, and give up ourselves to be taught, and saved, and ruled, by him. [3.] It is into the name of the Holy Ghost. Believing the Godhead of the Holy Spirit, and his agency in carrying on our redemption, we give up ourselves to his conduct and operation, as our Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter.

Thirdly, Those that are thus baptized, and enrolled among the disciples of Christ, must be taught; (v. 20.) *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* This denotes two things;

1. The duty of disciples, of all baptized Christians; they must observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, and, in order to that, must submit to the teaching of those whom he sends. Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath disciplined us, he hath not done with us, he enlists soldiers, that he may train them up for his service.

All that are baptized, are thereby obliged, (1.) To make the command of Christ their rule. There is a law of faith, and we are said to be under the law to Christ; we are by baptism bound, and must obey. (2.) To observe what Christ has commanded. Due obedience to the commands of Christ requires a diligent observation; we are in danger of missing, if we take not good heed; and, in all our obedience, we must have an eye to the command, and do what we do as unto the Lord. (3.) To observe all things that he hath commanded, without exception; all the moral duties, and all the instituted ordinances. Our obedience to the laws of Christ is not sincere, if it be not universal; we must stand complete in his whole will. (4.) To confine themselves to the commands of Christ, and as not to diminish from them, so not to add to them. (5.) To learn their duty according to the law of Christ, from those whom he has appointed to be teachers in his school, for therefore we were entered into his school.

2. The duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers; and that is, to teach the commands of Christ, to expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach them, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of them Christians must be trained up. A standing ministry is hereby settled in the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the perfect man, Eph. 4. 11—13. The heirs of heaven, till they come to age, must be under tutors and governors.

3. Here is the assurance he gives them of his spiritual presence with them in the execution of this commission; And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. This exceeding great and precious promise is ushered in with a behold, to strengthen their faith, and engage their observation of it. "Take notice of this; it is what you may assure yourselves of, and venture upon." Observe here,

(1.) The favour promised them; *I am with you*. Not, *I will be* with you, but *I am*—*ἐγώ εἰμι*. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, *I am*; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same; see Rev. 1. 8. He was

now about to leave them, his bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assures them of his *spiritual* presence, which was more expedient for them than his bodily presence could be; *I am with you*; that is, "My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall *abide with you*," John 16. 7. *I am with you*, and not *against you*; with you to take your part, to be on your side, and to *hold with you*, as Michael our prince is said to do, Dan. 10. 21. *I am with you*, and not *absent from you*, not at a distance; *I am a very present help*," Ps. 46. 1. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, which was a great undertaking. And then doth he seasonably promise them his presence with them, [1.] *To carry them on through the difficulties they were likely to meet with.* "I am with you, to *bear you up*, to plead your cause; with you in all your services, in all your sufferings, to bring you through them with comfort and honour. *When you go through the fire or water, I will be with you.*" In the pulpit, in the prison, *lo, I am with you.*" [2.] *To succeed this great undertaking;* "Lo, *I am with you*, to make your ministry effectual for the disciplining of the nations, for the *pulling down* of the strong-holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus." It was an unlikely thing that they should unthine national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should *establish* a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a crucified Jesus; but, *lo, I am with you*, and therefore you shall *gain your point*.

(2.) The continuance of the favour, *always, even unto the end of the world.*

[1.] They shall have his *constant* presence, *always, πάντες τὰς ἡμέρας—all days*, every day. "I will be with you on sabbath days, on week days, fair days and foul days, winter days and summer days." There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were that day, that hour, they were undone. Since his resurrection he had appeared to them *now* and *then*, once a week, it may be, and scarcely that. But he assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are, the word of Christ is nigh us, even *in our mouth*, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even *in our hearts*. The *God of Israel*, the *Saviour*, is sometimes a *God that hideth himself*, (Isa. 45. 15.) but never a *God that absenteth himself*; sometimes *in the dark*, but never *at a distance*.

[2.] They shall have his perpetual presence, *even to the end of the world*. There is a world before us, that will never have an end, but this is hastening towards its period; and even till then the

Christian religion shall, in one part of the world or other, be *kept up*, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. *I am with you to the end of the world*, not with your persons, they died quickly, but, *First, With you and your writings*. There is a divine power going along with the scriptures of the New Testament, not only preserving them in being, but producing strange effects by them, which will continue to the end of time. *Secondly, With you and your successors*; with you and all the ministers of the gospel in the several ages of the church; with all to whom this commission extends, with all who, being duly called and sent, thus *baptize* and thus *teach*. When the *end of the world* is come, and the kingdom delivered up to God, even the Father, there will then be no further need of ministers and their ministration; but till then they shall continue, and the great intentions of the institution shall be answered. This is an encouraging word to all the faithful ministers of Christ, that what was said to the apostles, was said to them all, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*.

Two solemn farewells we find our Lord Jesus giving to his church, and his parting word at both of them is very encouraging; one was here, when he closed up his personal converse with them, and then his parting word was, "*Lo, I am with you always*;" I leave you, and yet still I am with you;" the other was, when he closed up the canon of the scripture by the pen of his beloved disciple, and then his parting word was, "*Surely, I come quickly*." I leave you for a while, but I will be with you again shortly," Rev. 22. 20. By this it appears that he did not part in anger, but in love, and that it is his will we should keep up both our communion with him and our expectation of him.

There is one word more remaining, which must not be overlooked, and that is *Amen*; which is not a cipher, intended only for a concluding word, like *finis* at the end of a book, but it has its significance.

1. It speaks Christ's confirmation of this promise, *Lo, I am with you*. It is his *Amen*, in whom all the promises are *Yea and Amen*. "*Verily I am, and will be, with you*;" I the *Amen*, the faithful Witness, do assure you of it." Or, 2. It speaks the church's concurrence with it, in their desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist's *Amen*, *So be it*, blessed Lord. Our *Amen* to Christ's promises turns them into prayers. Hath Christ promised to be present with his ministers, present in his word, present in the assemblies of his people, though but two or three are gathered together in his name, and this *always, even to the end of the world*? Let us heartily say *Amen* to it; believe that it shall be so, and pray that it may be so; Lord, *Remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope*.