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

ST. LUKE, I.

CHAP. I.
The narrative which this evangelist gives us (or rather God by him) of the life of Christ, begins earlier than either Matthew or Mark; we have reason to thank God for them all, as we have for all the gifts and graces of Christ's ministers, which in one make up what is wanting in the other, while all put together make a harmony. In this chapter, we have, I. Luke's preface to his gospel, or his epistle dedicatory to his friend, Theophilus, v. 1. II. The prophecy and history of the conception of John Baptist, who was Christ's forerunner, v. 5. 6. III. The annunciation of the Virgin Mary, or the notice given to her that she should be the mother of the Messiah, v. 26. 35. IV. The interview between Mary the mother of Jesus and Elisabeth the mother of John, when they were both with child of those pregnant births, and the prophesies they both uttered upon that occasion, v. 39. 56. V. The birth and circumcision of John Baptist, six months before the birth of Christ, v. 57. 66. VI. Zacharias's song of praise, in thankfulness for the birth of John, and in prospect of the birth of Jesus, v. 67. 79. VII. A short account of John Baptist's infancy, v. 80. And these do more than give us an entertaining narrative; they will lead us into the understanding of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.
1. Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word: 3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

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

Now observe here, 1. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel; it is certain the inspiration was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine; and he was made to consider, 1. That the things he wrote of, were things that were most surely believed among all Christians, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe; and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity, (who are as much concerned in them as we are,) and, in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the agete to come. He will not write about things of doubtful disputation, things about which Christians may differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be, most surely believed, &quott;—the things which were done, (so some,) which Christ wrought, and did, and did with such circumstances as gave a full assurance that they were really done, so that they have gained an established, lasting credit. Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long most surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

2. That it was requisite there should be a declaration made in order of those things; that the history of the life of Christ should be methodized, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of the conveyance. When things are set in order, we know the better where to find them for our own use, and how to keep them for the benefit of others.

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

4. That the truth of the things he had to write, was confirmed by the confirming testimony of those who were competent and unexceptionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was now about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word, v. 2. Note, (1.) The apostles were ministers of the word of Christ, who is the Word, (so some understand it,) or of the doctrine of Christ; they, having received it, and communicated it, were the expediter, the ministers of the word from the beginning of Christ's ministry, v. 2. He had his disciples with him, when he wrought his first miracle, John 2. 11. They companied with him all the time that he went in and out among them, (Acts 1. 21.) so that they not only heard and saw all that was sufficient to confirm their faith, but, if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it. (2.) The written gospel, which we have to this day, expresses the same sentiments as the gospel which was preached in the first days of the church. (3.) That he himself had a perfect understanding of the things he wrote of, from the first, v. 3. Some think that here is a tacit reflection upon those who had written before him, that they had not a perfect understanding of what they wrote, and therefore, Here am I, send me; (from indignatio versus—my wrath inflicts my pen:) or rather without reflecting on them, he speaks his own ability for this undertaking: "It seemed good to me, having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, from above; so I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same from the beginning, (v. 2.) as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word. [1.] He had diligently searched into these things, had followed after them; (so the word is,) as the Old-Testament prophets are said to have improved and things so easily and superficially as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars. [2.] He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it from above, (so much; such; all,) as the ancients say. [3.] He did not neglect, like Elihu, to fetch his knowledge from afar. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, of things reported by tradition, but ratified by inspiration. [4.] He could therefore say, that he had a perfect understanding of these things. He knew them.
5. **THERE** was, in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answered, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. 20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

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

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

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

1. That they were a very religious couple; (v. 6.) They were both righteous before God; they were so in his sight, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed, that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, Gen. 7. 1. They affiliated the family of Aaron, in the Lord, graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy thing when those that are joined to each other in marriage, are both joined to the Lord: and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (1.) Their course, and the rigour of their course, to the course and tenor of their conversation; they showed it, not by their talk, but by their works; by the way they walked in, and the rule they walked by. (2.) They were of a peace with themselves; for their devotions and their conversations agreed. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord, which have reference to all the instances of a good conversation, and must be regarded. (3.) They were universal in their observance; not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavour to come up to it. (4.) Herein, though they were not sinless, yet they were blameless; nobody could charge them with any open, scandalous sin; they lived honesty and insensitiveness, as ministers and families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame. 2. That they had been long childless, v. 7. Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable, desirable, blessings; yet many there are, who are righteous before God, and, if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, who yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are full of children, (Ps. 17. 14.) and send forth their little ones like a flock, John 21. 11. Elisabeth was barren, and they began to despair of ever having children, for they were both now well stricken in years, when the women that have been most fruitful, leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that were long childless, which Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and here John Baptist—to make their birth the more remarkable, and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents; and to show that when God keeps his people long waiting for mercy, he sometimes is pleased to recom pense them for their patience, by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

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

1. How Zacharias was employed in the service of God; (v. 8.) He executed the priest's office, before God, in the order of his course; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercy, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now it fell to Zacharias's lot to burn incense morning and evening for that week of his waiting, as other services did to other priests of his family.

The services were directed by lot, that some might not decline them, and others engross them; and that, the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the High Priest's burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, who have thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour's birth; but it was the burning of the daily incense at the altar of incense, (v. 11.) which was in the temple, (v. 9.) not in the most holy place, into which the High Priest entered. The Jews say that one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days, (there were such a multitude of them,) at least never more than one week. It is very probable that this was upon the sabbath-day, because there was a multitude of people attending, (v. 9.) including the whole week day, and thus God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then Dr. Lightfoot reckons, with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of Abia fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month Sivan, answering to part of May and part of June, it is worth observing, that the portions of the law and the prophets, which were read this day in the synagogues, were very agreeable to that which was doing in the temple: namely, the law of the Nazarites, (Num. 6.) and the conception of Samuel, Judg. 13.

While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, v. 10. Dr. Lightfoot says that there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of that course that then served, and if it were the sabbath-day, those of other course also that had men in wait for the temple, and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbins call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion left their employments, for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast-days; now these addressed themselves to their devotions, (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard,) when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was
gone in to burn incense. Now observe here, (1.) That the true Israel of God always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of that intercession, by which God is entreated, and in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him. (2.) That then, when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of burning incense, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar, his prayer might be heard without, by reason of the greater fervency of heart, and might be as good as it would be if he had been at the altar, as incense, Ps. 141. 2. But when he was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer, any more than the shell without the kern. (3.) That it is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister, in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well in the most pertinent, judicious, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us? (4.) All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts, are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple-service there seems to be an allusion, (Rev. 8. 1, 3, 4.) where we find that there was always a burning incense, and as many, if not all, as can an hour, while the people were silently lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an angel, the angel of the covenant, who offered up much incense with the prayers of all saints before the throne. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession, if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayer should gain acceptance in an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, wher eever lives, making intercession.

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

3. What impression this made upon Zacharias; (v. 12.) When Zacharias saw him, it was a surprise upon him, even to a degree of terror; for he was troubled, and fear fell upon him, v. 12. Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre bespoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations, and his conscience afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, Dan. 10. 8. And for this reason God chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, who have no terror not to make us afraid. No, saith the angel, "Fear not; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. Fear not, but composure thyself, that thou mayst with a sedate and even spirit receive the message I have to deliver to thee." Let us see what that is.

1. The prayer he has often made, shall now receive an answer of peace; Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. (1.) If he means his particular prayer for a son to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children; but we may suppose, now that he and his wife were both well-striken in years, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it; like Moses, it sufficed them, and they speak no more to God of that matter, Deut. 30. 12. But, (2.) If he means the prayers he has often made, that he might be bold in his incense, we may suppose that those were according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah and the coming of his kingdom; "This prayer of thine is now heard; for thy wife shall now shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's forerunner." Some of the Jewish writers themselves say that the priest, when he burnt incense, prayed for the salvation of the whole world; and now that prayer shall be heard. Or, (3.) In general, "The prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him;" (as the angel said to Corinæus, when he visited him at prayer, Acts 10. 30, 31.) and this shall be the sign that thou art accepted of God, Elisabeth shall bring forth thee a son." Note, It is very comfortable to praying people, to know that their prayers are heard; and those mercies are doubly sweet, that are given in answer to prayer.

2. He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by his birth, which was next to miraculous, people might be prepared for the event. He was conceived in Elisabeth's barren womb, which was perfectly miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son; Call him John; in Hebrew Johanan, a name we often meet with in the Old Testament; it signifies, gracious. The priests must beseech God that he will be gracious (Mal. 1. 9.) and must so bless the people, Num. 6. 25. Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him that his prayer is heard, and he shall not need to doubt that his prayer shall be granted; he shall call, Gracious, or, The Lord will be gracious, Isr. 30. 18, 19.

3. This son shall be the joy of his family and of all his relations; (v. 14.) He shall be another Isaac, thy laughter; and some think that is partly intended in his name, John; He shall be a welcome child. Thou for thy part shalt have joy and gladness
Note, Mercies that have been long waited for, when they come at last, are the more acceptable. "He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of rejoicing at their birth, would wish they had never been; but I will tell thee what thy son will he; and then wilt not need to rejoice with trembling at his birth, as the best must do, but mayst rejoice with triumph at it. Nay, and many shall rejoice at his birth; all the enlargers of the public weal will wish the son of Joab well-wishers, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family," v. 38. All good people will rejoice that so great a son as Zachariah and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as, it may be hoped, will make him a public blessing to his generation. Yea, and perhaps many more shall rejoice by an unaccountable instinct, as a presage of the glorious day the gospel will introduce. This son shall be a distinguished favourite of Heaven, and a distinguished blessing to the earth. The honour of having a son is nothing to the honour of having such a son.

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

(2.) He shall be a Nazarite apart from God, from every thought that is polluting; in token of that, according to the law of Nazaritiship, he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, or rather, neither old wine nor new; for most think that the word here translated strong drink, signifies some sort of wine; perhaps those that we call made wines, or any thing that is intoxicating. He shall be, as Samson was by the divine precept, (Judg. 16, 17.) and Samuel by his mother's wish, (1 Sam. 1, 11.) a Nazarite, a Nazarite, a Nazarite, (Is. 10, 20.) speaking by the mouth of God's favour to his people, that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, (Amos 2, 11.) as if those that were designed for prophets, were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that would be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must learn to live a life of self denial and mortification, must be dead to the pleasures of sense, and frame their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

(3.) He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services to which in due time he shall be called; He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and as soon as it is possible he shall appear to have been so. Obad. 1, 2. Those that would be filled with the Holy Ghost, must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that it is that fits him for this. Be not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit, with which that is not consistent, Eph. 5, 18. [2.] It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb; for John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Ghost, who took possession of his heart betimes, and imprecated his soul was given of it, when he leapt in his mother's womb for joy, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was sanctified. God has promised to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of believers, (Isa. 44, 3.) and their first springing up, in a dedication of themselves betimes to God is the fruit of it, v. 4, 5. Who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized, who for ought we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we; and have the seeds of grace sown in their hearts? Acts 10, 47. (4.) He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, v. 16, 17.

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

[2.] He shall go before the Lord their God, that is, before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be, not their King, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a temporal prince to their nation, but their Lord and their God, to rule and defend, and serve them in a spiritual way by his influence on their hearts. Thus knowledge, which he said to Christ, my Lord and my God, better than Nathan did. But he has not been in Christ's room, John shall go before him, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

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

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

[5.] Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed, and was begun to be done by John Baptist, who came for a witness,
that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews who gloated in their having Abraham to their father, and told them that God would out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, (Matt. 3. 9.) which tended to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, it is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children, and the other church as fathers. 60. 4. 9. — 62. 5. — 66. 12. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ, were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that is, he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles, who are now disobedient, shall be turned, not so much to their fathers the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young; shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion and worship of their fathers, unto a substantial serious godliness: and the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain, and discord made to cease; and they that are at variance, being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. This agrees with the account Josephus gives of John Baptist, Antig. lib. 18. cap. 7. "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety toward God, and righteousness towards one another, and that they should convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God and one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, First, True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of this world. It is both our wisdom and our duty to be religious, there is both equity and prudence in it. Secondly, It is not impossible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient, may be turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorance and prejudice. Thirdly, The great design of the gospel is to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and this is done of John in sending him as a messenger that the twice made of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which, some think, does not denote the country or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore they render it Elijah the converter; one that was much employed, and very successful, in conversation. The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to be sent to the Lord and to prepare his ways before him. 62. (1.) Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord; shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that hereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, First, All that are to be devoted to the Lord and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace, prepared to the marked, prepared to the altar; by the terrors of the law for the comforts of the gospel; by the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of adoption. Secondly, Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted to. When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious. IV. Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief. He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken; but it was not so. We are here told,

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

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

(1.) The angel stops his mouth by asserting his authority. Dost he ask, Whereby shall I know this? Let him know it by this, I am Gabriel, v. 19. He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, testis melipos—the word for it. Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manna and his wife, but this angel readily saith, I am Gabriel, which signifies the power of God, or, the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bid him say this, was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name, to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming, sent to Daniel by the man Gabriel, and by the word, Eze. 28. 16.; 32. 27.; 36. 25. (2.) He saith, I am sent to thee, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which are so well worthy of all acceptance, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully."

(2.) The angel stops his mouth indeed, by exerting his power; That thou mayest object no more, behold, thou shalt be dumb, v. 20. If thou wilt have a sign for this, behold, I am to speak to thee, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which are so well worthy of all acceptance, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully. "

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

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

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

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

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

5. He then returned to his family, and his wife conceited, v. 23, 24. She conceived by virtue of the promise, and, being sensible of it, she hid herself for six months. No person, any person, and did not go abroad so much as she used to do. (1.) Lest she should do herself any prejudice, so as might occasion her miscarrying, or any hurt to the conception. (2.) Lest she should contract any ceremonial pollution which might intertrune upon the Nazariteship of her child, remembering the command given to Samuel’s mother in a like case, and applying it to herself; she must not touch any unclean thing while she is with child, 13, 14. And though five months are mentioned, because of what follows in the sixth month, yet we may suppose that she did in like manner take care of her self during the whole time of her being with child. (3.) Some think it was in an excess of modesty that she hid herself, ashamed it should be said that one of her age should be with child. Shall she have pleasure, being old, her lord being old also? Gen. 18. 12. Or, it was in token of her humility, that she might not seem to boast of the honour God had put upon her. (4.) She hid herself for devotion, that she might spend her time in prayer and praise. The saints are God’s hidden ones; she enjoyed the retirement, “For thus hath the Lord dealt with me; not only thus graciously in giving me a child, but thus honourably in giving me such a child as is to be a Nazarene;” (for so her husband might by writing signify to her;) “he hath taken away my reproach among men.” Fruitfulness was looked upon to be so great a blessing among the Jews, because of the promises that were made by the mouth of the Messiah among them, that it was a great reproach to be barren; and those who were so, though ever so blameless, were concluded to be guilty of some great sin unknown, for which they were so punished. Now Elisabeth triumphs, that not only this reproach is taken away, but great glory is put upon her instead of it; Thus hath the Lord dealt with me, beyond any thought or expectation of mine in the days wherein he looked on us. In God’s gracious dealings with us we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has looked on us with compassion and favour, and therefore has thus dealt with us.

26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36. And, behold, thy cousin Eli-
sabeth, she hath also conceived a Son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

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

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

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

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

3. She was a virgin, a pure, unsorded one, but espoused to one of the same royal stock, like her however, of low estate; so that upon both accounts there was (as it was fit there should be) an equality between them; his name was Joseph; he also was of the house of David, Matt. 1: 20. Christ's mother was a virgin, because he was not to be born by ordinary generation, but miraculously; it was necessary that he should be so, that, though he must partake of the nature of man, yet not of the corruption of that nature; but he was born of a virgin espoused, made up to be married, and contracted, to put honour upon the married state, that might not be brought into contempt (for the Gentile world and Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Jonah was by birth a Galilean, and Eliah and Elisha very much conversant in Galilee, who were all famous prophets of the Gentiles. The angel was sent to her from Nazareth. Note, No distance or disadvantage of place shall be a prejudice to those whom God has favours in store for. The angel Gabriel carries his message as changeless at Nazareth as at Zacharias in the temple at Jerusalem.

II. The address of the angel to her, v. 28. We are not told what she was doing, or how employed, when the angel came unto her; but he surprised her with this salutation, Hail, thou that art highly favoured. This was intended to raise in her, 1. A value for herself; and though it is very rare that any need to have any sparks struck into their breast with such design, yet in some, who, like Mary, pore only on their low estate, there is occasion for it. 2. An expectation of great news, not from abroad, but from above. Heaven's design in a visitation for whom an angel makes court to with such respect. Hail thou, saith he; it was the usual form of salutation; it expresses an esteem of her, and good-will to her and her prosperity. (1.) She is dignified; Thou art highly favoured. God, in his choice of thee to be the mother of the Messiah, has put an honour upon thee peculiar to itself, above that of Eve, this was no part of all living. The vulgar Latin translates this gratia plena—full of grace, and thence gathers, that she had more of the inherent graces of the Spirit than ever any had, whereas it is certain that this bespeaks no other than the singular favour done her, in preferring her to conceive and bear our blessed Lord; an honour, which, since he was to be the seed of the woman, some woman might be capable of, but surely for the sake of free grace, and she is pitchted upon; even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. (2.) She has the presence of God with her; "The Lord is with thee," though poor and mean, and perhaps now forecasting how to get a livelihood, and maintain a family in the married state. The angel with this word raised the faith of Gideon; (Judg. 6.) The Lord is with thee. Nothing is to be desired of, not the performance of any service, not the obtaining of any favour, though ever so great, if we have God with us. This word might put her in mind of the Immanuel, God with us, which a virgin shall conceive and bear; (Isa. 7. 14.) and why not she? (3.) She has the blessing of God upon her; "Blessed art thou among women; not only thou shalt be accounted so by men, but thou shalt be so. Then that art so highly favoured in this instance, mayst expect in other things to be blessed." She explains this herself, (v. 48.) All generations shall call me blessed. Compare it with that which Deborah saith of Jael, another that was the glory of her sex; (Judg. 5. 24.) Blessed shall she be above the women in the tent of David.

III. The consternation she was in, upon this address, (v. 29.) When she saw him, and the glories with which he was surrounded, she was troubled at the sight of him, and much more at his saying. Had she been a proud, ambitious young woman, that aimed high, and flattered herself with the expectation of great things in the world, she would have been puffed up with it, and (as we have reason to think she was a young woman of very good sense) would have had an answer ready, signifying so much: but, instead of that, she is confounded at it, as not conscious to herself of any thing that either merited or promised such great things; and she cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be: Was it from heaven, or from heaven's messengers, or was it to the mother of the Messiah? Was it to whom she bore, was it to banter her, or was there something substantial and weighty in it? But of all the thoughts she had as to what manner of salutation it should be, I believe she had not the least idea of its being ever intended or used for a prayer, as it is, and has been, for many ages, by the corrupt, degenerate, and anti-Christian ages of the church, and to be employed in requests for what is not proper, because it is in the church of Rome. But her thoughtfulness upon this occasion gives a very useful intimation to young people of her sex, when addresses are made
to them, to consider and cast in their minds what manner of salutations they are, whence they come, and what their tendency is, that they may receive them accordingly, and may always stand on their guard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. It is a satisfactory answer that is given to it, v. 35. (1.) She shall conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost; and therefore to sanctify the virgin for this purpose, the Holy Ghost is called the power of the Highest. DOTH she ask how this shall be? This is enough to help her over all the difficulty there appears in it: a divine power will undertake it, not the power of an angel employed in it, as in other works of wonder, but the power of the Holy Ghost himself be concerned in it. (2.) She must ask no questions concerning the way and manner how it shall be wrought; for the Holy Ghost, as the power of the Highest, shall overshadow her, as the cloud covered the tabernacle when the glory of God took possession of it, to conceal it from those that would too curiously observe the motions of it, and pry into the mystery of it. The formation of every babe in the womb, and the administration of the spirit of life into it, is a mystery in nature; none knows the way of the spirit, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child, 1 Cor. 15. 5. We were made in secret, Ps. 139. 13, 16. Much more was the formation of the child Jesus a mystery; without controversy, great was the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16. It is a new thing created in the earth, (Jer. 31. 22,) concerning which we must not expect to be made above what is written.

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

3. It was a further encouragement to her faith, to be told that her cousin Elizabeth, though stricken in years, was with child, v. 36. Here is an age of wonders beginning, and therefore be not surprised; here is one among thy own relations truly great, though not intrinsically so great as this, it is usual with God to advance in working wonders. Greater works than these shall he do. Though Elizabeth was, on the father's side, of the daughters of Aaron, (v. 5.) yet on the mother's side she might be the house of David, for these two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty and the priesthood in the Messiah. This is the sixth month with her that was called barren. This incredible thing, as David's exceeding righteousness, as all the instances in the Old Testament, of those having children that had been long barren, which was above nature, were designed to prepare the world for the belief of a virgin's bearing a son, which was against nature. And therefore, even in the birth of Isaac, Abraham saw Christ's day, foresaw such a miracle in the birth of Christ. The angel assures Mary of
this, to encourage her faith, and concludes with that great truth, of undoubted certainty and universal use. For with God nothing shall be impossible; (v. 37.) and if nothing, then not this. Abraham therefore staggered not at the belief of the divine promise, because he was strong in his belief of the divine power, Rom. 4. 20, 21. No word of God must be incredible to us, as long as no work of God is impossible to him.

VI. Her acquiescence in the will of God concerning her, v. 38. She owns herself, 1. A believing subject to the divine authority; "Behold, the Lord hath spoken, and I am but thy servant, at thy disposal, to do what thou commandest me." She objects not the danger of spoiling her marriage, and entertaining her reputation, but leaves the issue with God, and submits entirely to his will. 2. A believing expectant of the divine favour. She is not only content that it should be so, but humbly desires that it may be so; it be unto me according to thy word. Such a favour as this, it was not for her to slight, or be indifferent to; and for what God has promised he will be sought unto; by prayer we must put our amen, or so be it, to the promise. Remember, and perform thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. We must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the word of God, and ground our hopes upon it. Be it unto me according to thy word; just so, and no other way. The angel departed from her; having completed the errand he was sent upon, he returned, to give account of it, and receive new instructions. Converse with angels was always a transient thing, and soon over; it will be constant and permanent in the future state. It is generally supposed that just at this instant the virgin conceived, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost; but the conception being distinctly set forth, it does not become us to be inquisitive, much less positive.

39. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda, 40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth, 41. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 32. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. 51. He hath shewn strength with his arm, he hath scatteréd the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. 56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

We have here an interview between the two happy mothers, Elisabeth and Mary: the angel, by intimating to Mary the favour bestowed on her cousin Elisabeth, (v. 36.) gave occasion for it: and sometimes it may prove a better piece of service than we think, to bring good people together, to compare notes. Here is, 1. The visit which Mary made to Elisabeth. Mary was the younger, and younger with child; and therefore, if they must come together, it was fittest that Mary should take the journey, not insisting on the preference which the greater dignity of her conception gave her, v. 38. She arose, and left her affairs to attend this her great matter; in those days at that time, (as it is commonly explained, Jer. 35. 15. 40.) in a day or two after the angel had visited her, taking some time first as it is supposed, for her devotion, or rather hastening away to her cousin's, where she would have more leisure, and better help, in the family of a priest. She went, μετὰ τῆς εὐαγγέλιας— with care, diligence, and expedition; not as young people, too naturally abroad and visit their friends to divert herself, but to inform herself; she went to a city of Juda in the hill-country; it is not named, but by comparing the description of it here with Josh. 21. 10, 11, it appears to be Hebron, for that is there said to be in the hill-country of Juda, and to belong to the priests the sons of Aaron; thither Mary hastened, though it was a long journey, some scores of miles.

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

2. It is generally supposed that she went thither for the confirming of her faith by the sign which the angel had given her, her cousin's being with child, and to rejoice with her sister-favourite. And besides, she went thither, perhaps, that she might be more retired from company, or else might have more agreeable company than she could have in Nazareth. We may suppose that she did not ac-
quant any of her neighbours in Nazareth with the message she had received from heaven, yet longed to talk over a thing she had a thousand times thought over, and knew no person in the world with whom she could freely converse concerning it but her cousin Elisabeth, and therefore she hastened to her. Note, It is very beneficial and comfortable for those that are persons of much spiritual knowledge, and Christ, in the forming there, to consult those who are in the same case, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of christian to christian.

II. The meeting between Mary and Elisabeth. Mary entered into the house of Zacharias; but he, being a Nazarite, and his wife, Elisabeth, were in their seclusion, and not conversant with any. And therefore she saluted Elisabeth, and blessed her, and said (v. 28.) for thus this will of God, concerning honouring the Son, should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. But Elisabeth adds a reason, Therefore blessed art thou, because blessed is the fruit of thy womb; thence it was that she derived this excelling dignity. Elisabeth was the wife of a priest, and in years, yet she grudges not, that her kinswoman, who was less than she in age, and had not had her name known, and Christ, in the forming there, to consult those who are in the same case, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of christian to christian.

1. The babe leaped in her womb. It is very probable that she had been several weeks quick, (for she was six months gone,) and that she had often felt the child stir; but this was a more than usual motion of the child, and which alarmed her to expect something very extraordinary, unusual. It is the same word that is used by the LXX (Gen. 25. 22.) for the struggling of Jacob and Esam in Rebecca's womb, and the mountains skiffing, Ps. 114. 4. The babe leaped as it were to give a signal to his mother that he was now at hand, whose forerunner he was to be, about six months in ministry, as he was in being; or, it was the effect of some strong impression made upon the mother. Now began to be fulfilled what the angel said to his father, (v. 15.) that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb; and perhaps he himself had some reference to this, when he said, (John 3. 29.) The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice, heard, though not by him, yet by his mother's and his own, filled with the Holy Ghost, or a Spirit of prophecy; by which, as well as by the particular suggestions of the Holy Ghost she was filled with, she was given to understand that the Messiah was at hand, in whom prophecy should revive, and by whom the Holy Ghost should be more plentifully poured out than ever, according to the expectations of those who waited for the consolation of Israel. The uncommon motion of the babe in her womb, was the evidence of the extraordinary motion of her spirit under a divine impulse. Note, Those whom Christ graciously visits, may know it by their being filled with the Holy Ghost; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

II. The welcome which Elisabeth, by the Spirit of prophecy, gave to Mary, the mother of our Lord; not as to a common friend making a common visit, but as to a holy messenger coming from heaven, to declare the mysteries of the kingdom of glory. Note, 1. She greets her on her honour, and though perhaps she knew not of it till just now, she acknowledges it with the greatest assurance and satisfaction. She spake with a loud voice; this does not at all intimate (as some think) that there was a floor or a wall between them, but that she was in a transport or exaltation of joy, and said what she cared not who knew. She said, Blessed art thou among women, the same word that the angel had said; (v. 28.) for thus this will of God, concerning honouring the Son, should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. But Elisabeth adds a reason, Therefore blessed art thou, because blessed is the fruit of thy womb; thence it was that she derived this excelling dignity. Elisabeth was the wife of a priest, and in years, yet she grudges not, that her kinswoman, who was less than she in age, and had not had her name known, and Christ, in the forming there, to consult those who are in the same case, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of christian to christian.

2. She acknowledges her condescension, in making her this visit; (v. 43.) Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Observe, (1.) She calls the Virgin Mary the mother of her Lord, (as David, in spirit, called the Messiah, Lord, his Lord,) for she knew he was to be Lord of all. (2.) She not only bids her welcome to her home, but bids her to have no scruple to wait at her house, in any case, be case, because now, she reckons this visit a great favour, which she thought herself unworthy of; Whence is this to me? It is in reality, and not in compliment, that she saith, "This was a greater favour than I could have expected." Note, Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost, have low thoughts of their own merits, and high thoughts of God's favours. Her son the Baptist spake to the same purport with this, when he said, Comest thou to me? Matt. 3. 14.

3. She accquaints her with the concurrence of the babe in her womb, in this welcome to her; (v. 44.) "Then certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessing, with thee, for as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, not only my heart leaped for joy, though I knew not immediately why or wherefore, but that babe in my womb, who was not capable of knowing it, did so too." He leaped as it were for joy that the Messiah, whose harbinger he was to be, would himself come so soon after him. This would serve very much to strengthen the faith of the virgin, that there were such assurances as these given to others; and it would be in part the accomplishment of what had been so often foretold, that there should be universal joy before the Lord, Jer. 31. 12. and now it was.

4. She commends her faith, and encourages it; (v. 45.) Blessed is she that believed. Believing souls are blessed souls, and will be found so at last; this blessedness cometh through faith, even the blessedness of being related to Christ, and having him formed in the soul. They are blessed, who believe the word of God, for that word will not fail them; there shall, without doubt, be a performance of those things spoken by the Holy Ghost by the commandment of Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. The inviolable certainty of the promise is the undoubted felicity of those that build upon it, and expect their all from it. The faithfulness of God is the blessedness of the faith of the saints. Those that have experienced the performance of God's promises themselves, should encourage others to hope that he will be as good as his word to them also; (Isa. 55. 11.) for that is his sure word. Mary's song of praise, upon this occasion, Elisabeth's prophecy was an echo to the virgin Mary's salutation, and this song is yet a stronger echo to that prophecy, and shows her to be no less filled with the Holy Ghost than Elisabeth was. We may suppose the blessed Virgin to come in, very much fatigued with her journey; yet she forgets that, and is inspired with new life, and vigour, and joy, upon the confirmation she here meets with of her
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faith; and since, by this sudden inspiration and transport, she finds that this was designed to be her end, hither, weary as she is, like Abraham’s servant, she would neither eat nor drink till she had told her errand.

1. Here are the expressions of joy and praise, and God along the Object of the praise and Centre of the joy. Some compare this song with that which her name woke in the sister of Moses, sung, upon the triumphant departure of Israel out of Egypt, and their triumphant passage through the Red sea; others think it better compared with the song of Hannah, upon the birth of Samuel, which, like this, passes from a family-mercy to a public and general one. This begins, like that, My heart rejoiced in the Lord; [1 Sam. 2. 1.] Observe how Mary’s case. And if God regard her low estate, he not only thereby gives a specimen of his favour to the whole race of mankind, whom he remembers in their low estate, as the psalmist speaks, (Ps. 136. 23.) but secures a lasting honour to her; (for such the honour is that God bestows, honour that fades not away:) “From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, shall think me a happy woman, and highly advanced.” All that embrace Christ and God’s Spirit, as say, God has done a work beyond bowe him, and the Laubs which he suckend. Luke 11. 27. Elisabeth had once and again called her blessed: “But that is not all,” said she, “all generations of Gentiles as well as Jews shall call me so.” [2.] Her soul magnifies the Lord, because of the wonderful things he has done for her; (v. 49.) He that is mighty, has done to me great things. A great thing indeed, that a virgin should conceive: “This was a thing indeed, that Messiah, who had been so long ago promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born. It is the power of the Highest that appears in this. She adds, and holy is his name; for so Hannah saith in her song, There is none holy as the Lord, which she explains in these words, for there is none beside him, 1 Sam. 2. 3. God is a being above self, and he magnifies himself to the end of magnifying his name. This is the power of the Highest that appears. The Holy One is come to seek and to save those who are weary and laden with sin; and this is the power of the Highest. He that is mighty, has done to me great things.”

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

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

1.) Upon her own account, v. 48, 49. [1.] Her spirit rejoiced in the Lord, because of the kind things he had done for her; her conception and compassion to her; He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; he has looked upon her with pity, for so the word is commonly used. “He has chosen me to this honour, notwithstanding my great meanness, poverty, and obscurity.” Nay, the expression seems to imply that God had raised her up higher than she was, in the encomium of God’s providence. (Cf. Deuteronomy 6. 15.) that her family was poor in Judah, but that she was least in her father’s house, as if she were under some particular contempt and disgrace among her relations, was unjustly neglected, and the outcast of the family, and God put this honour upon her, to balance abundantly that contempt. I rather suggest this, for we find something of this sort of honour as this put upon others, on the like consideration. God, says this Leah was hated, he opened her womb, Gen. 29. 31. Because Hannah was provoked, and made to fret, and insulted over, by Peninnah, therefore God gave her a son, 1 Sam. 1. 19. Whom men wrongfully depress and despise, God sometimes, in compassion to them, especially if they have borne it patiently, doth prefer and advance; see Judges 11. 7. So in

Mary’s case. And if God regard her low estate, he not only thereby gives a specimen of his favour to the whole race of mankind, whom he remembers in their low estate, as the psalmist speaks, (Ps. 136. 23.) but secures a lasting honour to her; (for such the honour is that God bestows, honour that fades not away:) “From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, shall think me a happy woman, and highly advanced.” All that embrace Christ and God’s Spirit, as say, God has done a work beyond bowe him, and the Laubs which he suckend. Luke 11. 27. Elisabeth had once and again called her blessed: “But that is not all,” said she, “all generations of Gentiles as well as Jews shall call me so.” [2.] Her soul magnifies the Lord, because of the wonderful things he has done for her; (v. 49.) He that is mighty, has done to me great things. A great thing indeed, that a virgin should conceive: “This was a thing indeed, that Messiah, who had been so long ago promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born. It is the power of the Highest that appears in this. She adds, and holy is his name; for so Hannah saith in her song, There is none holy as the Lord, which she explains in these words, for there is none beside him, 1 Sam. 2. 3. God is a being above self, and he magnifies himself to the end of magnifying his name. This is the power of the Highest that appears. The Holy One is come to seek and to save those who are weary and laden with sin; and this is the power of the Highest. He that is mighty, has done to me great things.”
their will: but he scattereth them in the imagination of their hearts, breaks their measures, blasteth their projects, may, and brings them low, and brings them down, by those very counsels with which they thought to advance and establish themselves. The mighty think to secure themselves by might in their seats, but he putteth them down, and overturns their seats; while, on the other hand, these of low degree, who despised of ever advancing themselves, and thought of no other than of being ever low, were diligently exalted. This observation concerning honour, holds likewise concerning riches; many who were so poor, that they had not bread for themselves and their families, by some surprising turn of Providence in favour of them, come to be filled with good things; while, on the other hand, those who were rich, and thought no other than that to-morrow should be as this day, that their mountain stood strong, and their houses were strangled, and men as strange disappointed, and sent away empty. Now this is the same observation that Hannah had made, and enlarged upon, in her song, with application to the case of herself and her adversary, (1 Sam. ii. 4—7.) which very much illustrates this here. And compare also Ps. 107. 33—41. Ps. 113. 7—9. and Eccl. 9. 11. God takes a pleasure in disappointington their expectations, who promised them, and in destroying the expectations of those who promise themselves but a little; as a righteous God, it is his glory to abase those who exalt themselves, and strike terror on the secure; and as a good God, it is his glory to exalt those humble themselves, and to speak comfort to those who fear before him. Secondly, This doth especially appear in the methods of gospel-grace. 1. In the kingdom of heaven. When the proud Pharisees were rejected, and Publicans and sinners went into the kingdom of heaven before them; when the Jews, who followed after the law of righteousness, did not attain it, and the Gentiles, who never thought of it, attained to righteousness; (Rom. ix. 30. 31.) when God chose not the wise men after the flesh, the mighty, or the noble, to preach the gospel, and plant Christianity in the world, but the foolish and meaner things of the world, and things that are despised; (1 Cor. i. 26. 27.) then he scatters the proud, and putteth down the mighty, but exalts them of low degree. When the tyranny of the chief priests and elders was brought down, who had long lorded it over God's heritage, and hoped always to do so; and Christ's disciples, a company of poor despised fishermen, by the power they were clothed with, were made to sit in thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; when the power of the monarchical was broken, and the kingdom of the Messiah, that Stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is made to fill the earth; then are the proud scattered, and those of low degree exalted.

2. In the spiritual riches it dispenseth. v. 53. (1.) Those who see their need of Christ, and are importantly desirous of righteousness and like in him, he fills with good things, with the best things; he gives liberally to them, and they are abundantly satisfied with the blessings he gives. Those who are weary and heavy-laden, shall find rest with Christ, and those who thirst, are called to come to him, and drink; for they only know how to value his gifts, to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet, manna is angels' food; and to the thirsty fair water is honey out of the rock. (2.) Those who are rich, who are not hungry, who, like Laodicea, think they have essence of all righteousness, and think they have a sufficiency in themselves, those he sends away from his door, they are not welcome to him, he sends them empty away, they come full of self, and are sent away empty of Christ. He sends them to the gods whom they served, to their own righteousness and strength which they trusted to.

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

First, That it is in remembrance of his mercy; the mercifulness of his nature, the mercy he has in his name for his servant Israel. Whereon, on her, and has deferred, his people, who waited for it, were often ready to ask, Has God forgotten to be gracious? But now he made it appear that he had not forgotten, but remembered, his mercy. He remembered his former mercy, and repeated that to them in spiritual blessings, which he had done formerly to them in temporal favours. He remembered the days of old; Where is he that brought us through the Red Sea? (Ex. pass. 15. 11.) He will do the like again; which that was a type of.

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

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

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered: and she brought forth a son. 58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60. And his
mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvell'd all. 64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea: 66. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

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

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

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

So much is the custom, when they circumcised their children, to name them, because, when Abram was circumcised, God gave him a new name, and called him Abraham; and it is not unfit that they should be left nameless till they are by name given up to God. Now,
1. Some proposed that he should be called by his father's name, Zacharias; we have not any instance in scripture, that the child should bear the father's name; but perhaps it was of late come into use among the Jews, as it is with us, and they intended hereby to do honour to the father, who was not likely to have another child.
2. The mother opposed it, and would have him called John; having learned, either by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, (as is most probable,) or by information in writing from her husband, that God appointed this to be his name; (v. 60.) He shall be called John, because he shall introduce the gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines more bright than ever.

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

4. They appealed to the father, and would try if they could possibly get to know his mind, for it was his office to name the child, v. 62. They made signs to him, by writing with the pencil he wrote these words, His name is John, v. 63. Not, "It shall be so," or, "I would have it so," but, "It is so." The matter is determined already; the angel had given him that name. Observe, When Zacharias could not speak, he wrote. When ministers have their mouths stopped, that they cannot preach, yet they may be doing their duty, as they have not their hands tied, that they cannot write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use; blessed Paul himself did so. Zacharias's pitching upon the same name that Elisabeth had chosen, was a great surprise to the company; They marveld all; for they knew not that, though by reason of his deafness and dumbness they could not converse together, yet they were both guided by one and the same Spirit; or, perhaps they marvelled that he wrote so distinctly and intelligently, which (the stroke he was under, being somewhat like that of a palsy) he had not done before.

5. He thenceupon recovered the use of his speech; (v. 64.) His mouth was opened immediately. The time prefixed for his being silenced, was, till the day that these things should be fulfilled, (v. 26.) not the time of Zacharias's death. The posthumous rewards of those who have done good work for God, are not those things which relate to his birth and name; (v. 13.) that time was now expired, whereupon the restraint was taken off, and God gave him the opening of the mouth again, as he did to Ezekiel, ch. 3. 27. Dr. Lightfoot compares this case of Zacharias with that of Moses. Exod. 4. 24, 26. Moses, for dis:trust, is in danger of his life, as Zacharias, for the first time, but he is not only exculpated from the charge of the circumcision of his child, and recovery of his faith, there, as here, the danger is removed. Infidelity closed his mouth, and now believing opens it again; he believes, therefore he speaks. David lay under guilt from the conception of his child till a few days after its birth; then the Lord takes away his sin; upon his
expiance, he shall not die, so here he shall be no longer dumb: his mouth was opened, and he spake, and praised God. Note, When God opens our lips, our mouths must show forth his praise; as good be without our speech as not use it in praising God; for then our tongue is most our glory, when it is employed for God's glory.

6. These things were told all the country over, to the great amazement of all that heard them, ver. 65, 66. The sentiments of the people are not to be slighted, but taken notice of. We are here told,

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

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

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people. 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, 73. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76. And thou, child, shalt be called The Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways: 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

We have here the song wherewith Zacharias praised God when his mouth was opened; in it he is said to prophesy, (ver. 67.) and so he did in the strictest sense of prophesying, for he foretold things to come concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, to which all the prophets bear witness. Observe how he was qualified for this: He was filled with the Holy Ghost, was endued with more than ordinary measures and degrees of it, for this purpose; he was divinely inspired. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust, (which was signified by discharging of him from the punishment of it,) but as a specimen of the abundance of grace toward believers, he filled him with the Holy Ghost, and put this honour upon him, to employ him for his honour.

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

New Zacharias here begins his God,

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

(1.) In sending the Messiah, God has made a gracious visit to his people, who for many ages he had seemed to neglect, and to be estranged from; he
hath visited them as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have visited his people in bondage when he delivered them, (Exod. 3. 16—4. 31.) to have visited his people in famine, when he gave them bread, Ruth 1. 6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them; but now he himself made them a visit.

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

(3.) He has fulfilled the covenant of royalty made with the most famous Old-Testament prince, that is, David. Glorious things had been said of his family, that on him, as a mighty one, help should be laid, that his horn should be exalted, and his seed perpetuated, Ps. 89. 19, 20, 24, 25. But that family had been long in a manner cast off and abhorred, Ps. 69. 38. 39. Glorified God's servant, Ps. 110. 1, 2. After the promise, the horn of David should again be made to bud, for, (Ps. 132. 17.) He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, (v. 69.) there, where it was promised and expected to arise. David is called God's servant, not only as a good man, but as a king that ruled for God; and he was an instrument of the salvation of Israel, by being employed in the government of Israel, so Christ is the Author of eternal redemption to those only that obey him. There is in Christ, and in him only, salvation for us, and it is a horn of salvation; for, [1.] It is an honoured salvation, it is raised up above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it; in it the glory both of the Redeemer and of the redeemed are advanced, and their horn exalted with honour. [2.] It is a plentiful salvation; it is a cornucopia—a horn of plenty, a salvation in which we are blessed with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, abundantly. [3.] It is a powerful salvation; the strength of the beast is in his horn; he has raised up such a salvation as shall fall down our spiritual enemies, and protect us from them. In the chariots of this salvation the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on, conquering and to conquer.

(4.) He has fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous Old-Testament prophets; (v. 76.) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets. His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that salvation thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same that they spake of, which therefore ought to be believed. He is exalted, (v. 11.) and set up, (v. 9.) and searched diligently after, (1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.) which therefore ought not to be slighted, or thought meanly of. God is now doing that which he has long ago spoken of; and therefore be silent, O all flesh, before him, and attend to him. See, [1.] How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were: the prophets who delivered them, were holy prophets; they were holy men of God, holy men of the Lord, holding holy offices among men; and it was the holy God himself that spake by them. [2.] How ancient they were; even since the world began. God has in good time, when the world began, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, that promise was echoed to, when Adam called his wife's name Eve—Life, for the sake of that Seed of hers; when Eve called her first son Cain, saying, I have gotten a man from the Lord, and another son Seth, settled; when Noah was called rest, and foretold that God should rest in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world begin in Noah, that the promise was made to Abraham, that in his seed the nations of the earth should be blessed. [3.] What a wonderful harmony and concert we perceive among them; God spake the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be in prophecies, not by the mouths, but by the mouth, of the prophets, for the Holy Spirit spake by them.

(5.) What is prophetically foretold, is hereby fulfilled, that he should be called, and be known of his people, of whom he should be spoken, until the time should come that he should be put to death, for the sins of his people, and that they should have redemption through his blood, (v. 19.) Peter, I. Pet. 1. 2—7. The Redeemer shall not only break the serpent's head, that was the author of our sin, but he shall reestablish us in the mercy of God, and reestablish us in his covenant; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the promises made to the patriarchs, and the holy covenant made with them, the oath which he swears to our father Abraham, v. 73. Observe, 1. That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to the Saviour. [1.] That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to the Saviour. 2. Pure mercy; nothing in it is owing to our merit, (we deserve wrath and the curse,) but all to the mercy of God, which designed us grace and life: ex nullo medie —of his own good pleasure he loved us, because he would love us. 2. God's inner ear had an eye to his covenant, his holy covenant, that covenant with Abraham: I will be a God to thee and thy seed. This his seed had really forfeited by their transgressions, this he seemed to have forgotten in the calamities brought upon them; but he will now remember it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that are grounded all his returns of mercy: (Lev. 26. 42.) Then will I remember my covenant.

Thirdly, It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. Thus was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, (v. 73.) that he would keep and grace to serve him, in an acceptable manner to him, and a comfortable manner to ourselves, v. 74, 75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which, God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham, (Exod. 3. 6—8.) and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, that they might serve God upon this mountain, (Exod. 19. 6.) and the end, that he would not be disloyal to his people, but to disperse them, but to engage us in, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion Christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us to it, and to quicken us in it. We are therefore delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the yoke of the Lord. They are the bonds which he has loosed, to bind us faster unto him, Ps. 116. 16. We are hereby enabled, 1. To serve God without fear—scares. We are therefore put into a state of holy safety, that we might serve God with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are quiet from the fears of evil. God must be served with a filial fear, a reverent, obedient fear, an awakening, quickening fear, but not with a servile fear, like that of the slothful servant, who
II. heavenly.

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

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

2. Of his obscurity as to the outward man: He was in the deserts; not that he lived a hermit, cut off from the society of men; no, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zaph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbins. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are long so buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness it last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert, not to the day of his appearing to Israel, when he was in the midst of his ministry, nor to his death. He was fixed for the showing of those favours to Israel, which are reserved; the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not be.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have an account of the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus; having had notice of his conception, and the birth of John Baptist in the former chapter. The first-beginning is here brought into the world: let us go meet him with our hosannas, blessed is he that cometh. Here is, I. The place and other circumstances of his birth. II. The notice of his birth in the报章, and the spreading of the report of it by the shepherds, v. 8., 20. III. The circumcision of Christ, and the naming of him, v. 21. IV. The presenting of him in the temple, v. 22., 24. V. The testimonies of Simeon, and Anna the

represented him to himself as a hard Master, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has torment and amazement in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit, a spirit of bondage, but with the boldness of an honest and upright spirit, a spirit of salvation. 2. To serve him in holiness and righteousness, which includes the whole duty of man toward God and our neighbour. It is both the intention, and the direct tendency, of the gospel, to renew upon us that image of God, in which man was at first made, which consisted in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4. 8. Christ redeemed us, that we might serve God, not in the legal services of sacrifice and offerings, but in the service of holiness and righteousness, Ps. 50. 14. 3. To serve him, before him, in the duties of his immediate worship, wherein we present ourselves before the Lord, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, our inward man; that is serving him before him. 4. To serve him all the days of our life. The design of the gospel is to engage us to constant and persevering in the service of God, by showing us how much he depends upon us, that we do not draw back; and by showing us how Christ loved us to the end, and thereby engaged us to love him to the end.

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

1. (1.) To prepare people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation as great gospel duties; Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, and a little before him, to prepare his ways, to call his people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to him, be taken away; see Isa. 40. 3. 2. To give people an engaging respect for the salvation, that they might know, not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There are two things in which you must know that this salvation consists.

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

[2.] Direction to do better, for the time to come. The gospel-salvation not only encourages us to humble hearts the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it the day-spring hath visited us from on high; (v. 78.) and this also is owing to the tender mercy of our God. Christ is the Morning Light, the rising Sun, Mal. 4. 2. The gospel brings light with it, (John 3. 19.) leaves us not to wander in the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the Old Testament types, or figures, but in it the day dawns; in John Baptist it began to break, but increased space, and shone more and more to the perfect day. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel-day, who enjoy it, as those have to welcome the morning, who had long waited for it. First, The gospel is discovering; it shows us that which before we were utterly in the dark about; (v. 78.) it is to give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the day-spring visited this dark world, to lighten the Gentiles, Acts 28. 18. Secondly, It is reviving; it brings light to them that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon; to bring them the tidings of a pardon, at least of a reprieve, and opportunity of procuring a pardon; it proclaims the opening of the prison, (Isa. 61. 1.) brings the light of life. How pleasant is that light! Thirdly, It is directing; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet; (Ps. 119. 105.) it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion: that way of peace, which as sinners we have wandered from, and have not known, (Rom. 5. 7.) nor could ever have known of ourselves.

III. In the morning of our Lord's life, the old accounts are taken up, which we have before.

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

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

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

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

2. He was born when Judæa became a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that, when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the land, Gen. 49. 10. This is the first thing that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now universally sal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut; which never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of Peace to be born, in whose days swords should be beaten into plough-shares.

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

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

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

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

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brings his mother to Beth
Iehem now, but because she was of the stock and lineage of David? This was a matter of some importance to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the most early advocates for the christian religion, appeal to these rolls or records of the Roman empire, for the proof of Christ’s being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was made under the law; for he became a subject of the Roman empire. As he was born, a Servant of rulers, Isa. 49.

7. Many suppose that being born at Bethlehem, and of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; instead of having kings tributaries to him; when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

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

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

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself:

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

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

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

20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

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

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

1. See here how the shepherds were employed, they were abiding in the fields adjoining to Bethlehem, and keeping watch over their flocks by night. v. 8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders, (they were not prepared to receive these tidings,) but to a company of poor shepherds, who were, like Jacob, plain men dwelling in tents, not
like Esau, cunning hunters. The patriarchs were shepherds, Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would show that he had still a favored place for that innocent occupation. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of the Lord out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout, pious men, the tidings were brought of a greater salvation. Observe, 1. They were not sleeping in their beds, when this news was brought them, (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in keeping the bed,) but abiding in the fields and watching. Those that would hear from God, must stir up themselves. They were broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so that those may be, who are half asleep. 2. They were employed now, not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were keeping watch over their flock, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it, probably, being in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not nouse them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits, when we are sensibly employed in a honest calling, and abide with God in it.

II. How they were surprised with the appearance of an angel; (v. 9.) Behold, an angel of the Lord came upon them, of a sudden terror—stood over them; and they were afraid, as men are overthrown. That there might be sure it was an angel from heaven, they saw and heard the glory of the Lord round about them; such as made the night as bright as day, such a glory as used to attend God's appearance, a heavenly glory, or an exceeding great glory, such as they could not bear the dazzling lustre of. This made them sore afraid, put them into a consternation, as fearing some evil tidings: while we are conscious to furnish our graces, we have reason to fear, lest every express from heaven be a messenger of wrath.

III. What the message was, which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, v. 10—12. 1. He gives a suprisedaeas to their fears; "Fear not, for we have nothing to say to you, that needs be a terror to you; you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear your friends." 2. He furnished them with abundant matter for joy; "Behold, I evangelize to you great joy! I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring joy to all people, and to the people of the Jews only; that says you are born this day, at this time, a Saviour, the Saviour that has been so long expected, which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David," v. 11. Jesus is the Christ, the Lord, the city of David, the Saviour, is in express answer to the question by the shepherds, (v. 9.) What shall we give? The Lord himself is a sovereign Prince; nay, he is God, for the Lord, in the Old Testament, answers to Jehovah. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those that only accept of him for their Lord. "The Saviour is born, he is born this day; and since it is matter of great joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born not on this place, where it was expected; I would have he born, in the city of David; and he is born to you, said the angel, of Jews he is sent in the first place, to bless you, to you shepherds, though poor and mean in the world." This refers to Isa. 9. 6. Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. To you men, not to us angels, he took not to him our nature. This is matter of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Long looked for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, for he cometh. 3. He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. "You will find him by this token; he is living in a manger, where surely never any new-born infant was laid before." They expected to be told, "You shall find him, though a Babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich livery.

Note, you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. When Christ was here upon earth, he distinguished himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his humiliation.

IV. The angel's doxology to God, and congratulation of men, upon this solemn occasion, v. 13, 14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel, (that was sufficient to go express,) than suddenly there was with that angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts; sufficient, we may be sure, to make a chorus, that were heard by the shepherds, praising God; and certainly their song was not like that (Rev. 14. 3.) which no man could learn, for it was designed that we should all learn it. 1. Let God have the honour of this work; Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resubmitted a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from thence; peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between man and man. God's good-will is God's good-will, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. All the good we have, or hope, is owing to God's good-will; and if we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any peace, any good, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a Mediator. Here was the peace proclaimed with great solemnity; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. It is on earth peace, to men of good-will, (so some copies read it,) in the city of David; to men who have a good-will to God, and are willing to be reconciled; or to men whom God has a good-will to, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they are with it. The incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well worthy of all acceptation—That the good-will of God toward men, is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth.

V. The visit which the shepherds made to the newly-born Saviour, with the assurance of the angel before given about it, v. 15. While the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only; but when they were gone away from them into heaven, (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had dispatched their business,) the shepherds said one to another, Let us go
to Beth-lehem. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, no nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. These things are not spurious, Doubtless, to see whether it be so or no; but with assurance, Let us go see this thing which is come to pass; for what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? The word spoken by angels was steadfast and unquestionably true. 2. They immediately made the visit, v. 16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to; ("Go to the stable of such an inn!") and there they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. The poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord, were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angel, and of what they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

VII. The care which the shepherd took to spread the report of this; (v. 17.) When they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and so, by communicating their testimony to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

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

Our Lord Jesus, being made of a woman, and made under the law, Gal. 4. 4. He was not only the Son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but, as the Son of a daughter of Abraham, he was made under the law of Moses; he puts his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a shadow of good things to come. And though its institutions were beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us. Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it. 1. He was circumcised on the very day that he was appointed the Son of God, v. 17. The eight days were accomplished, that day seven-might that he was born, they circumcised him. 1. Though it was a painful operation, (Surely a bloody husband thou hast been, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Exod. 4. 25.) yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterward he poured out in purple streams. 2. Thereupon he proposed him a Stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son; nay, though it supposed him a Stranger, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he sub-
mitted to; not, therefore, he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of flesh, but of sinful flesh, Rom. 8. 3. through thereby he made himself a debtor to the whole law, (Gal. 5. 8.) yet he submitted to it; not, therefore, he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the name of a servant, though he was free: for Christ was circumcised, (1.) That he might own himself the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and who was to take upon the seed of Abraham, (Heb. 2. 16.) (2.) That he might own himself a Surety for our sins, and an Undertaker for our safety. Circumcision, (saying, by the word) was our bond, whereby we acknowledged ourselves debtors to God. Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being made Sin for us. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before, could oblige themselves to. (3.) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church of God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was, (Rom. 4. 11.) and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old, doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy, than his being baptized at thirty years old, for the dedication of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him; he was called Jesus or Joshua, for he was so named of the angel to his mother Mary, before he was conceived in the womb, (Luke 1. 31.) and to his supposed father Joseph after, Mat. 1. 21. (1.) It was a common name among the Jews, as John was; (Col. 4. 10.) and in this he would be made like unto his brethren. (2.) It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament; Joshua, the successor of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua, the High Priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might preside as a Priest upon his throne, Zech. 6. 11, 12. (3.) It was very significant of his undertaking. Jesus signifies a Saviour. He was not nominated from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as a Mediator: he brings salvation. II. He was presented in the temple. This was done with an eye to the law, and at the time appointed by the law, when he was forty days old, when the days of her purification were accomplished, v. 22. Many copies, and authentic ones, read σαρώμενον, the days of their purification, the purification both of the mother and of the child, for so it was intended to be by the law; and our Lord Jesus, though he had no impurity to be cleansed from, yet submitted to it, as he did to circumcision, because he was made Sin for us; and that, as by the circumcision of Christ we might be circumcised, in the virtue of our union and communion with him, with a spiritual circumcision made without hands, (Col. 2. 11.) so in the purification of Christ we might be spiritually purified from the filthiness and corruption which we brought into the world with us. Now, according to the law,

1. The Child Jesus, being a First-born Son, was presented to the Lord, in one of the courts of the temple. The law is here recited, (v. 23.) Every man that hath a First-born among his Brethren, shall holiness unto the Lord, because by a special writ of protection the First-born of Israel were preserved, when the First-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel; so that Christ, as First-born, was a Priest by a title surer than that of Aaron's house. Christ was the First-born among many brethren, and was called holy to the Lord, as so never any other was; yet he was presented to the Lord, as other first-born were, and no otherwise. Though he was newly come out of the bosom of the Father, yet he was presented to him by the hands of a priest, as if he had been a stranger, that needed one to introduce him. His being presented to the Lord, now signified his presenting himself to the Lord as Mediator, when he was caused to draw near and approach unto him, Jer. 30. 31. But, according to the law, he was redeemed, Num. 18. 15. The first-born of man shall thou redeem, and five shekels was the value, Lev. 27. 6. Num. 18. 16. But probably in case of power, and in the case of a First-born, no money was laid on him, nothing, for no mention is made of it here. Christ was presented to the Lord, not to be brought back; for his ear was bored to God's door-post to serve him for ever; and though he is not left in the temple as Samuel was, to minister there, yet like him he is given to the Lord as long as he lives, and ministers to him in the true temple not made with hands. The mother brought her offering up. v. 24. When she had presented that son of hers unto the Lord, who was to be the great Sacrifice, she might have been excused from offering any other; but so it is said in the law of the Lord, that law which was yet in force, and therefore so it must be done, she must offer a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; had she been of ability, she must have brought a lamb. Different in the type from the signification; but, being poor, and not able to reach the price of a lamb, she brings two doves, one for a burnt-offering, and the other for a sin-offering; (see Lev. 12. 7, 8.) to teach us in every address to God, and particularly in those upon special occasions, both to give thanks to God for his mercies to us, and to acknowledge with sorrow and shame our sins against him; in both we must give glory to him, not doing that ever want matter for both. Christ was not conceived and born in sin, as others are, so that there was not that occasion in his case, that is in others; yet, because he was made under the law, he complied with it; Thus it became him to fulfill all righteousness. Much more doth it become the best of men to join in confession of sin; for who can say, I have made my heart clean? 25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and
The account given of him here, is, (1.) That he was \textit{just and devout}, \textit{just} toward men, \textit{and devout} toward God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other. Yet neither will always be for the benefit of him, who is \textit{accused for the consolation of Israel}, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find consolation. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the Matter and Ground of it, the \textit{Consolation of Israel}. He was a coming, and they who believed he would come, continued waiting, desiring his coming, and looking for it with patience. I had almost said, with a some degree of impatience, till it came. He understood by books, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, \textit{As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel}, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be welcome to those who have waited for it, and continue waiting. (5.) The \textit{Holy Ghost} was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was \textit{filled with the Holy Ghost}, and enabled to speak things above himself. (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, p. 26. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament foretold it did signify, and whether it was at hand; and he received this oracle, (for so the word signifies,) that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage see death, and look in the face without terror, that have by faith a sight of Christ.

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

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

4. The solemn declaration he made hereupon: \textit{He blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thy servant depart,} intimates that he was willing to die now, but doth not conclude that therefore, he did die quickly. St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as near, Acts 20. 25. Another thing objected is, that the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to Christianity; but as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ to have a son a bigoted Pharisee.  

The account given of him here, is, (1.) That he was \textit{just and devout}, \textit{just} toward men, \textit{and devout} toward God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other. Yet neither will always be for the benefit of him, who is \textit{accused for the consolation of Israel}, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find consolation. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the Matter and Ground of it, the \textit{Consolation of Israel}. He was a coming, and they who believed he would come, continued waiting, desiring his coming, and looking for it with patience. I had almost said, with some degree of impatience, till it came. He understood by books, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, \textit{As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel}, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be welcome to those who have waited for it, and continue waiting. (5.) The \textit{Holy Ghost} was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was \textit{filled with the Holy Ghost}, and enabled to speak things above himself. (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, p. 26. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament foretold it did signify, and whether it was at hand; and he received this oracle, (for so the word signifies,) that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage see death, and look in the face without terror, that have by faith a sight of Christ.
The world; there has not failed one title of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1 Kings 8. 56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word, were made ashamed.

[2.] A thanksgiving for it; He blessed God that he saw that Salvation in his arms, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. [3.] A confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the Saviour, the Salvation itself: thy Salvation, the Salvation of thine appointing, the Salvation which thou hast purposed with a great deal of other work; and it has been thus, in the coming, it hath still been in the performing.

[4.] It is a farewell to this world; “Now let thy servant depart; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world.” The eye is not satisfied with seeing, (Ecc. 1. 8.) till it hath seen Christ, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to that hath Christ in his arms, and salvation in his eye! Now open to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself. [5.] It is a welcome to death; Now let thy servant depart. Note, Death is a departure, the soul’s departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God gives us his discharge, for we are his servants, and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our employment. Moses was a prophet, and had that he should see Canaan, and then die; but he promised that that word might be altered, Deut. 3. 24. 25.

Simeon is promised that he should not see death, till he had seen Christ; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die: Lord, be it so, with he, now let me depart. See here, First, How comfortable the death of a good man is; he departs according to God’s will, and is willing to come to that of his rest. He departs in peace, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in peace with death, well reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs according to God’s word, as Moses at the mouth of the Lord; (Deut. 34. 5.) the word of precept, Go up, and die; the word of promise, I will come again, and receive you to myself. Secondly, What is the ground of this comfort? For mine eyes have seen the Salvation. This bespeaks more than a great commendacy in the sight, like that of Jacob, (Gen. 46. 30.) Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it gain, Phil. 1. 21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death.

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

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

[2.] A Blessing to the church; the Glory of thy people Israel. It was an honour to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah spurned out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed, of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed the Glory, and will be so to eternity, Isa. 60. 19. They shall glory in him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, Isa. 45. 23. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a Light to lighten the Gentiles; and when he added, beginning at Jerusalem, he made himself the Glory of his people Israel. [3.] The prediction concerning the Messiah, as he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They marvelled at these things which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this Child, n. 33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

[1.] Simeon shews what reason they had to rejoice; and that he was the Messiah, and so distressed them blessed, who had the honour to be related to this Child, and were intrusted with the bringing him up. He prayed for them, that God would bless them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this Child should be not only a Comfort and Honour to them, but a public Blessing. He is set for the rising again of many in Israel; for the conversion of many to God, that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God, that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he set for the fall of may be the same with those whom he set for the rising again of. He is set as a Stone of Stumbling— for their fall, in order to their rising again; to humble and abusing them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on his goodness, good words and then heals. Fail falls, and rises again.

[2.] He shows them likewise what reason they had to rejoice with trembling, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah’s kingdom, Ps. 2. 11. Lest Joseph, and Mary especially, should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, here is a thorn in the flesh for them, an evil spirit to vex them, and a temptation to exalt them to themselves. But, [1.] It is true, Christ shall be a Blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel, whom he is set for the fall of, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of Salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a stone of stumbling. This refers to that prophecy, (Isa. 8. 14. 15.) He shall be for a Sanctuary to some, and yet for a Snare to others, 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are, to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are, to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is a Stone, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many eyes upon him, during the time of his public ministry, he was a Sigh, but he had many tongues against him, the contradiction and reproach of sinners; he was continually cavilled at and abused; and the effects of this will be, that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, (v. 33.) that is, upon this occasion, men will discover their thoughts upon us, and distinguish themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing of Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ, and their rage against him. Men will be judged of the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they for him, or are they for his adversaries? The word of God is a dissembler of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

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

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

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

1. The account here given of this Anna, who she was; she was, (1.) A prophetess; the spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the younger women in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witnesses. (2.) She was the daughter of Phanuel; her father's name (with Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's Phanuel, or Peniel, (Gen. 32. 50.) that no the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies gracious. (3.) She was of the tribe of Asher, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of, to relate those who said, Out of Galilee arose no prophet, when no sooner did prophecy revive but it appeared from Galilee. (4.) She was of a great age, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow; and then she must be considerably above one hundred and thirty years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman in so very old age should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow, to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise. (5.) She was a constant and a diligent attendant on the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an alms-house, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not departing from the temple means no more, but that she was constantly there at the time of divine service; when any sacrifice was offered in the temple, she used to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she served God with fastings and prayers night and day; having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only fasted twice in the week, but always kept a fast on the Lord's day. There were religious exercises, which others spent in eating and drinking and sleeping; she not only observed the hours of prayer, but prayed night and day; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in those she served God; that was it that put a value upon them, and an excellency into them. The Pharisees fasted often, and made long

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

2. The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus; (c. 38.) She came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him; she, who was so constant to the temple, could not miss the opportunity. Now, (1.) She gave thanks likewise to the Lord, just as Simeon; perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, These to whom Christ is made known, have reason enough to give thanks to the Lord for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should Christ be praised, as well as others? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She confessed unto the Lord; (so it may be read;) she made an open profession of her faith concerning this Child. (2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him; she spoke of him to all them that believed the Messiah would come, and with him looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemption in Jerusalem, for in thence the word of the Lord was to go forth, Is. 2. 3. Some there were in Jerusalem, that looked for redemption; yet but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with them all that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterward that of his resurrection. Anna had no acquaintance with Christ himself, should do all they can, to bring others acquainted with him. Lastly, Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus.

1. Where he spent it, v. 59. When the ceremony of presenting the Child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they returned into Galilee. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were twelve years old, and he speaks of the time of hisresurrection, that they were there. He is here called those that were of Nazareth, which seems to be intended to show that the family of Joseph was near, and their relations were there. He was ordered farther from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no alliance with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself, and make himself of no reputation.

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

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

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

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are conceived to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. His parents went the first day's journey, without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, v. 44. On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, that were upon the road, going down; Pray did you see our Son? or Did you see him? Like the spouse's inquiry, Say ye him whom my soul loveth? This was a jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolk and acquaintance; but among them they found him not, v. 43. There are many, too many, who are so engaged in kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Joh 23, 8, 9.

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

5. The third day, they found him in the temple, in a certain house distant from the temple, where the doctors of the law kept not, their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him sitting in the midst of them, (v. 46.) not standing as a catechumen to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom, that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom and learning, but that he had both a desire to increase it, and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an Example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ, to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to sit in the midst of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to inquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presence in youth, to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now, would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple. (1.) He heard them. Those that would learn, must be swift to hear. (2.) He asked them questions whether, as a Teacher, he had authority so to ask; or as a Learner, he had humility to do it, John 1, 43, as a Joint-searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions. (3.) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, v. 47. And his wisdom and understanding appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him were astonished; they never heard one so young, nor indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients. Ps. 119, 99, 100. Now Christ showed forth some rays of his glory which were presently drawn in again. He gave them an exhibition of his wisdom and knowledge. Methinks, this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a Teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood, by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Acts 7, 24, 25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they were made to have Christ (for they took him not) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understand not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

6. His mother talked with him privately about it; when the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, v. 48. Joseph and Mary had been used to this process, and had been taught that he should have much respect showed him as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But, (1.) His mother told him how ill they took it; "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?" They were ready to say, as Jacob to Joseph, "A wild beast has devoured him;" or, he is gone into the fields to find pasture for himself, and no one knows where. (2.) He continued to say, he that was at length found out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago. A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another.

"Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, and bring thee up among our most rigid laws. We have leave to complain of their losses, that think they have lost Christ; but their weeping did not hinder sorrowing; they did not sorrow, and sit down in despair, but sorrowed, and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow, shall find him, at length, with so much the greater comfort.

(2.) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him; (v. 49.) "How is it that ye sought me? Ye might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I have to do here, I could not be lest in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be in the Temple of my Father's house?" (so some read it) where else should the son be, who abideth in the house, as a servant to his Father? Note, That our Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it. Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa. 49, 2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let us not ever despair of its safety.

[2.] "At my Father's work." (so we take it) "I must be about my Father's business, and therefore could not go home so soon as you would have me, as you supposed I had already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it." Herein he hath left us an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend
their heavenly Father’s business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done, and said: it was his errand into the world and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father’s will, and finish his work; and yet at that time his parents understood not this. Ver. 4. 50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple of his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They understood not his prophetic office; and he was to do much of his work in that last. Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short; it was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle himself there, (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom,) but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was unknown. Though altogether, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, was a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told: it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told, 1. That he was subject to his parents; though once, to show that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father’s business; yet not, as is often thought, on his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was subject to them, observed their orders, and went and came as they directed; and, as it should seem, worked with his father, at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was under the law of the first manhood, to teach the seed of the faith, thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his supposed father, yet he was subject to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom, nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to the parents? 2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her Son’s savings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men’s savings, because they are obscure, (Si non vos intelligite, deseteget:—If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable) yet we must not think so of God’s sayings. These must be his first and last, and so much as we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy, we should therefore lay it up for hereafter; see John 2. 22. We may find use for that, another time, which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar-rules in memory, which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be useful to him. It may be so; he that sweats up to be a vinedresser, may be destined to be a king. 3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration; (v. 52.) He increased in wisdom and stature. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in stature and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the Divinity that dwelt in him, manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, ad modum recipientis—in proportion to his capacity; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an Infant, a Child, a Youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him. And he increased in wisdom, in grace, in knowledge, in understanding, in growth, in stature, in age, in years. He grew, as the apostle saith, from a Youth, than it did, or could, while he was an Infant and a Child. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man.

CHAP. III.

Nothing is related concerning our Lord Jesus from his twelfth year to his entrance on his thirtieth year; we often think it would have been a pleasure and advantage to us, if we had journals, or at least annals, of occurrences concerning him; but we have as much as infinite Wisdom thought fit to communicate to us, and if we improve not that, neither should we have improved more, if we had it. The great intention of the evangelists, was to give us an account of the gospel of Christ, for which end, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, was a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told: it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told, 1. That he was subject to his parents; though once, to show that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father’s business; yet not, as is often thought, on his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was subject to them, observed their orders, and went and came as they directed; and, as it should seem, worked with his father, at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was under the law of the first manhood, to teach the seed of the faith, thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his supposed father, yet he was subject to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom, nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to the parents? 2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her Son’s savings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men’s savings, because they are obscure, (Si non vos intelligite, deseteget:—If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable) yet we must not think so of God’s sayings. These must be his first and last, and so much as we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy, we should therefore lay it up for hereafter; see John 2. 22. We may find use for that, another time, which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar-rules in memory, which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be useful to him. It may be so; he that sweats up to be a vinedresser, may be destined to be a king. 3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration; (v. 52.) He increased in wisdom and stature. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in stature and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the Divinity that dwelt in him, manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, ad modum recipientis—in proportion to his capacity; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an Infant, a Child, a Youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him. And he increased in wisdom, in grace, in knowledge, in understanding, in growth, in stature, in age, in years. He grew, as the apostle saith, from a Youth, than it did, or could, while he was an Infant and a Child. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man.
Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11. He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him give to him that hath none likewise. 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely: and be content with your wages.

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

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

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

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

En quo discordia civis

Perdutus miseror,

What dire effects from civil discord flow! The haveven was before parted from between Judah's feet; and as an evidence of that, their public acts are dated by the reign of the Roman emperor, and therefore now Shiloh must come.

2. It is dated by the governments of the vice-royal in the several parts of the Holy Land under the Roman emperor, which was another badge of their servitude, for they were all foreigners, which beareth a sad change with that people whose governors used to be of themselves, (Jer. 30, 21.) and
places of concourse. He came out of the wilderness into all the country, with some marks of distinction, preaching a new baptism; not a sect, or party, but a profession, or distinguishing badge; the sign or ceremony, such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, mingling water, by which proselytes who had become so-called, or to disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, repentance for the remission of sins; that is, all that submitted to his baptism.

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

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

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esias, ch. 40. 5. It is written in the book of the words of Esias the prophet, which he heard from God, which he spake for God, those words of which were written for the generations to come. Among them it is found, that there should be the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. John's business is to make way for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper, as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry, (v. 5. 6.) Every valley shall be filled. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity; the land should be made plain by the preparers for the Roman arms, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side, and the receivers of the gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the immediate tendency of John's ministry, and of the gospel of Christ, which that was the introduction of. 1. The humble shall by it be enriched with grace, for every valley shall be exalted; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked straightened; and the rough places made smooth. 2. The crooked shall be made straight; for though none can make that straight which God hath made crooked, (Eccl. 7. 3.) Yet was it by his grace that he made that straight which sin hath made crooked. 4. Difficulties that were hindering and encouraging in the way to heaven, shall be removed; The rough ways shall be made smooth; and they that love God's law, shall have great peace, and nothing shall offend them.

The gospel has made the way to heaven plain, and easy to be found, smooth, and easy to be walked in. 5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further: (v. 6.) All flesh shall see the salvation of God; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it, they shall have it set before them, and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel by repentance, prepare the doing of it, thoughts, and bringing of them into obedience to Christ, by the levelling of the soul, and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion
because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely: children to Abraham even out of enemies. 7. The greater promises and encouragements for repentance, the greater assistance and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sooner will our destruction be, if we do not bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, now that the axe is laid to the root of the tree, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragement to repentance are now more comfortable. "Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves."

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

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

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

(2.) He tells the publicans their duty, the collectors of the publicans' revenue; (v. 13.) Except no more than that which is appointed you. They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levy the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince, they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power, are apt to abuse it; No, keep to your book of rates, and reckon it enough that you collect for Caesar the things that are his. And in word, and in action, and in all things, do not enrich yourselves by taking more. The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of customs; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

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

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not, 16. John answered, saying unto them all. I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I come, the latchet of
whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. 17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. 18. And many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people. 19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

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

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

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

2. Their next thought was, "Is not this he that should come?" All thinking men mused, or reasoned, in their hearts, concerning John whether he were the Christ or no. He had indeed nothing of the external pomp and grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear; but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority, and therefore why may we not think him to be the Messiah, and that he will shortly throw off this disguise, and appear in more glory? Note, That which puts people upon considering, reasoning with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

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

1. He declares that the utmost he could do, was, to baptize them with water; he had no access to the Spirit, nor could command it, as he had command over his own body to refrain, and assure them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, or confer remission on them.

2. He consigns them, and turns them over, as it were, to Jesus Christ, for whom he was sent to prepare the way, and to whom he was ready to transfer all the interest he had in the affections of the people, and would have them no longer to doubt whether John was the Messiah or no, but to look to him that was in the midst of the people. (1.) John owns the Messiah to have a greater excellency than he had, and that he was in all things preferable to him; he is one the latchet of whose shoe he does not think himself worthy to unloose; he does not think himself worthy to be the meanest of his servants, to help him on and off with his shoes. John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, more so than any of the old prophets, Joel—Matt. 3. 11; but Christ was a prophet more than John, for it was both by the spirit of Christ, and of the grace of Christ, that all the prophets prophesied, and John among the rest, 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. This was a great truth which John came to preach; but the manner of his expressing it bespeaks his humility, and in it he not only does justice to the Lord Jesus, but does him honour too; "He is one whom I am not worthy to approach, or draw nigh to, no, not as a servant." Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

(2.) He owns him to have a greater energy than he had; "He is mightier than I, and does that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful, and for the terror of hypocrites and dissemblers." They thought that a wonderful power went along with John; but he was only as a prophet, but with the power which Jesus would come clothed with? (1.) John can do no more than baptize with water, in token of this, that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will, baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire purges out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal that may be cast into a new mould. (2.) John can only preach a distinguishing doctrine, and by word and sign separate between the precious and the vile; but Christ hath his fan in his hand, with which he can, and will, perfectly part between the wheat and the chaff; he will thoroughly purge his floor, it is his own, and therefore he will purge it, and will cast out of his church the unbelieving impatient Jews, and confound in their own church all their opponents, following what John never did. (3.) John can only speak comfort to those that receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, say to the righteous that it shall be well with them; but Jesus Christ will give them comfort. John can only promise them that they shall be safe; but Christ will make them so, he will gather the wheat into his garner; good, serious, solid people he will gather now into his church on earth, which shall be made up of such, and he will shortly gather them into his church in heaven, where they shall be for ever sheltered. (4.) John can only threaten hypocrites, and tell the barren trees that they shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire; but Christ can execute that threatening; those that are as chaff, light, and vain, and worthless, he will burn with fire unquenchable. John refers his glory to Moses; Christ says, "I am the true Prophet;" when he is charged, he shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, for the day comes, that shall burn as an oven.

The evangelist concludes his account of John's preaching, with an exhortation: (v. 18.) Many other things in his exhortation he preached he put into the people, which are not recorded. First, John was an affectionate preacher; he was a tender heart, as well as one of great compassion, when he pressed things upon his hearers, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. Secondly, He was a practical preacher; much of his preaching was exhortation, quickening them to their duty, directing them in it, and not amusing them with matters of nice speculation. Thirdly, He was
a popular preacher; though he had Scribes and Pharisees, men of polite learning, attending his ministry, and Sadducees, men of fine thoughts, as they pretended, yet he addressed himself to the people, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He was an evangelical preacher, for so the word here used signifies; \( \text{ἐπιφάνες} \).—\( \text{προφέω} \) he preached the gospel to the people; in all his exhortations, he directed people to Christ, and excited and encouraged their expectations of him. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for righteousness and strength. 

Fifthly. He was a zealous preacher; many other things he did not rehearse, they were many and different. He preached a great deal, shamefully not to declare the whole counsel of God; and he varied in his preaching, that those who were not reached, touched, and wrought upon, by one truth, might be by another. 

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

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heavens were opened. 22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him: and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. 23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, 21. Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Jannan, which was the son of Joseph. 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esai, which was the son of Nagge, 26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattaniah, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah, 27. Which was the son of Johanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri. 28. Which was the son of Melchizedek, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Emohad, which was the son of Jeremiaiah, which was the son of Jose, 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Elhezer, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Mattathia, which was the son of Levi. 30. Which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Judea, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim. 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattathia, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obad, which was the son of Booz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Axasson. 33. Which was the son of Amminadab, which was the son of Aram, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Judah, 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nahor, 35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala, 36. Which was the son of Canaan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech, 37. Which was the son of Mathusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Maleled, which was the son of Cainan. 33. Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

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

1. A short account of Christ's baptism, which had been more fully related by St. Matthew. Jesus came, to be baptized of John, and he was so, v. 21, 22. 1. It is here said, that when all the people were baptized, then Jesus was baptized; all that were then present. Christ would be baptized last, among the common people, and in the rear of them; thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, as one of the least, nay, as less than the least. He saw what multitudes were hereby prepared to receive him, and then he appeared.

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

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

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

There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory; (so it is expressed, 2 Pet. 1. 17.) Thou art my beloved Son, Here, and in Mark, it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew, as spoken of him: This is my beloved Son; It comes all to one, it was intended to be a notification to John, and as such was properly expressed by, This is my beloved Son; and likewise an answer to his prayer, and so it is most fitly expressed by, Thou art. It was foretold concerning the Messiah, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, 2 Sam. 7. 14. I will make him my first-born, Ps. 89. 27. It was also foretold that he should be God's Elect in whom his soul delighted; (Isa. 42. 1.) and, accordingly, it is here declared, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Thus begins the Son's Dispensation, which had been more briefly related by St. Matthew. Here is, 1. His age; He now began to be about thirty years of age. So old Joseph was, when he stood before Pharaoh, (Gen. 41. 46.) David, when he began to reign; (2 Sam. 5. 4.) and at this age the priests were to enter upon the full execution of their office, Numb. 4. 3. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that it is plain, by the foregoing expression, that he was not a twofold nine years old, complete, and entering upon his thirtieth year, in the month Tisri; that, after this, he lived three years and a half, and died when he was thirty-two years old and a half. Three years and a half, the time of Christ's ministry, is a period of time very remarkable in scripture; three years and six months the heavens were shut up in Elijah's time, Luke 4. 25. Jam. 5. 17. This was the half week in which the Messiah was to confirm the covenant.

The period is expressed in the prophetical writings, by two times and a half; and this period of time was a time, (Dan. 12. 7. Rev. 12. 14.) and by forty-two months, and a thousand two hundred and three-score days, Rev. 11. 2. It is in the time fixed for the witnesses' prophesying in sackcloth, in conformity to Christ's preaching in his humiliation just so long.

His pedigree, v. 23, &c. Matthew had given us somewhat of this, (he goes no higher than Abra-

ham,) but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Christ was the Son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and that he was Heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, an heir-taile of the house of David; but he commencing to show that Christ was the Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Eli, or Heli, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the Virgin Mary. And some suggest, that the supply which our translators all along insert here, is not right, and that it should not be read which, that is, which Joseph was the son of Heli, who was the father of Jesus; but instead of Joseph, of Eli, of Matthat, &c. and he, that is, Jesus, was the son of Seth, of Adam, of God, v. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ, has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word; but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the Church, and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from the house of David, in which Joseph lineal was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of Da-

vid, which line Luke here pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us, that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write these genealogies, either of their own knowledge, or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds' books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedig-}

re of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down here; and this is the meaning of nunciation, (v. 23.) not, as it was supposed, referring only to Joseph, but uti sancitum est lex— as it is entered into the books, as we find it upon record; by which it appeared, that Jesus was both by father and mother's side the Son of David; witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time have liberty to compare with the original, and further the evangelist need not to go to the authorities, as though they had not gained their point. Its not being contradicted at that time, is satisfaction enough to us now, that it is a true copy, as it is further worthy of our observing, that, when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all lost and destroyed; whereas they stand still to this day; he states and marks; for now there was no more occasion for them.

One difficulty occurs between Abraham and Noah, which gives us some perplexity, v. 35, 36. Sala is said to be the son of Cainen, and he the son of Arphaxad, whereas Sala was the son of Arphaxad, (Gen. 10. 24.—11. 12.) and there is no such man as Cainen found there. But as to that, it is sufficient.
to say that the Seventy interpreters, who, before our Saviour's time, translated the Old Testament into Greek, for reasons best known to themselves inserted that Caiman; and St. Luke, writing among the Hellenist Jews, was obliged to make use of that translation, and therefore to take it as he found it.

The genealogy concludes with this, who was the son of Adam, the son of God. (1.) Some refer it to Adam; he was in a peculiar manner, the son of God, being immediately 10. more immediately than any of his offspring, the offspring of God by creation. (2.) Others refer it to Christ, and so make the last words of this genealogy to speak his divine and human nature. He was both the Son of Adam and the Son of God, that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, the sons of God.

CHAP. IV.

We left Christ newly baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. Now, in this chapter, we have 1. A further preparation of him for his public ministry, by his being tempted in the wilderness, of which we had the same account before in Matthew as we have here. 2. His entrance upon his public work in Galilee, (v. 14, 15.) particularly, 1. At Nazareth, the city where he had been bred up, (x. 16., 30.) which we had no account of before in Matthew. 2. At Capernaum, where, having preached to admiration, (v. 31, 32.) he cast the devil out of a man that was possessed, (v. 33, 34.) and healed Peter's mother-in-law; (v. 35, 36.) and many others that were sick and possessed; (v. 38, 39.) and then went, and did the same in other cities of Galilee, v. 42, 44.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. How he was assaulted by one temptation after another, and how he defended the design of the tempter in every assault, and became more than a conqueror. During the forty days, he was tempted of the devil; (v. 2,) not by any inward suggestions, for the prince of this world had nothing in Christ,
by which to inject any such, but by outward solicitations, perhaps in the likeness of a serpent, as he tempted our first parents. But at the end of the forty days he came nearer him, and did as it were close with him, when he perceived that he was an hungered, v. 3. Probably, our Lord Jesus then began to look about among the trees, to see if he could find any thing that was edible, where the devil took occasion to make the following proposal to him. 

1. He tempted him to distrust his Father's care of him, and to set up for himself, and shift for provision for himself in such a way as his Father had not appointed for him; (v. 5.) *If thou be the Son of God,* as the voice from heaven declared, *command this stone to be made bread.* (1.) *I counsel thee to do it;* for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long enough ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee.* If we begin to think of being our own carvers, and of living by our own forecast, without depending upon Divine Providence, of getting wealth by our might and the power of our hands, we must look upon it as a temptation, and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to the very end. *If thou be the Son of God,* (2.) *I challenge thee to do it, if thou canst;* if thou dost not it, I will say thou art not the Son of God; for John Baptist said lately, *God is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham,* which is the greater; thou therefore hast not the power of the Son of God, if thou dost not of stones make bread for thyself, when thou needest it, which is the lesser power of the God he tempted in the wilderness; Can he furnish a table? Can he give bread?* Ps. 78. 19, 20.

Now, [1.] Christ yielded not to the temptation: he would not turn that stone into bread; no, though he was hungry; *First,* because he would not do what Satan bid him do, for that would have looked as if there had been indeed a compact between him and the prince of the power of the air; *Note,* We must not do any thing that looks like giving place to the devil. Miracles were wrought for the confirming of faith, and the devil had no faith to be confirmed, and therefore he would not do it for him. He did his signs in the presence of his disciples, (John 20. 50.) and particularly the beginning of his miracles, turning water into wine, which he did, that his disciples might believe on him; (John 2. 11.) but here in the wilderness he was not accompanied with them. *Secondly,* he wrought miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and therefore till he began to preach he would not begin to work miracles. *Thirdly,* He would not work miracles for himself and his own supply, lest he should seem impatient of hunger, whereas he came not to please himself, but to suffer grief, and that grief among others; and because he would show how he pleased not himself; he would rather hunger than to yield to this temptation, and by the convenience of his friends, than stones into bread, for his own necessary supply. *Fourthly,* He would reserve the proof of his being the Son of God for hereafter, and would rather be upbraided by Satan with being weak, and not able to do it, than be persuaded by Satan to do that which it was not fit for him to do; thus he was upbraided by his enemies as if he pleased not himself, and came down from his exaltation, when he could have come down gloriously, but would not, because it was not fit that he should. *Fifthly,* He would not do any thing that looked like distrust of his Father, or acting separately from him, or any thing disagreeable to his present state. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, he would, like the other children of God, live in a dependence upon the Divine Providence and promise, and trust him either to send him a supply into the wilderness, or to lead him to a city of habitation where there was a supply, as he used to do, (P. 107. 5—7.) and in the mean time would support him, though he was hungry, as he had done, these forty days past.

[2.] He returned a scripture-answer to it; (v. 4.) *It is written.* This is the first word recorded as spoken by Christ after his instatement in his prophetic office; and it is a quotation out of the Old Testament, to show he maintained the authority of the scripture as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself. And though he had the Spirit without measure, and had a doctrine of his own to preach, and a religion to found, yet it agreed with Moses and the prophets, whose writings he therefore lays down as a rule to himself, and recommends to us as a reply to Satan and his temptations. The word of God is our sword, and we have the authority that word is our shield; we should therefore be mighty in the scriptures, and go in that might, go forth, and go on, in our spiritual warfare, know what is written, for it is for our learning, for our use. The text of scripture he made use of, is quoted from Dent. 8. 3. *Man shall not live by bread alone,* I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send manna for my nourishment, (Ex. 16. 4.) and himself of the fruit of the earth, of whatever God will appoint that he shall live by. *How had Christ lived, lived comfortably, these last forty days? Not by bread, but by the word of God, by meditation upon that word, and communion with it, and with God in and by it: and in like manner he could live yet, though now he began to be an hungered. God has many ways of providing for his people, not by any ordinary means on the earth; and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon, in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience as will enable a man even to laugh at destruction and famine, (Job 5. 22.) or make juice and water more nourishing than all the portion of the king's meat, (Dan. 1. 12, 13.) and enable his people to rejoice in the Lord, when the fig-tree doth not blossom, Hab. 1. 12, 13. She was an active believer, who said that she had made many a meal's meat of the promises when she wanted bread.

2. He tempted him to accept from him the kingdom, which, as the Son of God, he expected to receive from his Father, and to do him homage for, v. 5—8. This evangelist put this temptation second, which which Matthew had placed first in the devil's address to Our Lord, and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon, in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience as will enable a man even to laugh at destruction and famine, (Job 5. 22.) or make juice and water more nourishing than all the portion of the king's meat, (Dan. 1. 12, 13.) and enable his people to rejoice in the Lord, when the fig-tree doth not blossom, Hab. 1. 12, 13. She was an active believer, who said that she had made many a meal's meat of the promises when she wanted bread.

[3.] How Satan managed this temptation, to prevail with Christ to become a Tributary to him, and to receive his kingdom by delegation from him; (v. 9.) He took him a prospect of all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, an airy representation of them, such as he thought most likely to strike the fancy, and seem a real prospect; to succeed the better, he took him up for this purpose into a high mountain; and because we next after the temptation find Christ on the other side Jordan, some think it probable that it was to the top of Pisgah that the devil took him, whence Moses had a sight of Canaan; that it was but a phantasm that the devil here presented our Saviour with, as the prince
of the power of the air, is confirmed by that circumstance which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done in a moment of time; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must turn himself round, and take a view first of one part and then of another. Thus the devil thought to impose upon our Saviour with a fallacy, a deceptive view; and by making him believe that he could show him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, draws him to an opinion that he could give him all those kingdoms.

[2.] He boldly alleged, that these kingdoms were all delivered to him, that he had power to dispose of them, and all their glory, and to give it to whomsoever he would. v. 6. Some think that herein he pretended to be an angel of light, and that, as one of the angels that was set over the kingdoms, he had out-bought, or out-bought, all the rest, and so was intrusted with the disposal of them and their glory. Others think he meant that all the names of these kingdoms, who gave their power and honour to the devil, Eph. 2. 2. Hence he is called the god of this world, and the prince of this world. It was promised to the Son of God, that he should have the heathen for his inheritance, Ps. 2. 8. "Why," saith the devil, "the heathen are mine, are my subjects and vassals; but, however, they shall be thine, I will give them thee, upon condition that thou wor- ship me for them, and say that they are mine, which I have given thee, as others have done before thee, (Hos. 2. 12.) and consent to have and hold them by, from, and under me."

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

(2.) How our Lord Jesus triumphed over this temptation. He gave it a peremptory repulse, rejected it with abhorrence; (v. 8.) "Get thee behind me, Satan." I cannot bear the sight of it. What! worship the enemy of God, whom I came to serve, and of whom, whom I came to save? No, I will never do it." Such a temptation as this, was not to be reasoned with, but immediately refused; it was presently knocked on the head with one word, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and not only so, but him only, him, and no other. And therefore Christ will not worship Satan, nor, when he has procured them, deliver them to be worshiped by his Father, as he expects shortly to have, will he suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. No, it shall be perfectly rooted out and abolished, wherever his gospel comes. He will make no composition with him. Polytheism and idolatry must go down, as Christ's kingdom gets up. Men must be turned from the power of Satan unto God, from the worship of devils to the worship of the only living and true God; this is the great divine law that Christ will re-establish among men, and by his holy religion reduce men to the obedience of, That God only is to be served and worshipped; and therefore whoever sets up any creature as the object of worship, or gives the empty name of God to any angel, or the Virgin Mary herself, they directly thwart Christ's design, and relapse into heathenism.

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

(1.) What he designed in this temptation; If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, v. 9. [1.] He would have him seek for a new proof of his being the Son of God, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient, which would have been a dishonour to God, as if he had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it; and it would have argued a distrust of the Spirit's dwelling in him, which was the great and most convincing proof to himself of his being the Son of God, Heb. 1. 8. 9. [2.] He would have him seek a new proof of his appointment and calling, and publish his sins to the world. The devil, in effect, suggests, that it was in an obscure corner that he was attested to be the Son of God, among a company of ordinary people who attended John's baptism, that his honours were proclaimed; but if he would now declare from the pinnacle of the temple, among all the great people who attend the temple-service, that he was the Son of God, and then, for proof of it, throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and perish (Luke 19. 39.) and so draw everybody as a Messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have him seek honours of his devising, (in contempt of those which God had put on him,) and manifest himself in the temple at Jerusalem; whereas, as God designed he should be more manifest among ordinary people, as John's penitents, to whom his doctrine would be more welcome than to the priests. [3.] It is probable, that he had some hopes, that, though he could not throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, he would butt himself down, the fall might be his death, and then he should have got him finely out of the way.

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

(3.) How he was baffled and defeated in the temptation; v. 12. Christ quoted Deut. 6. 16, when it is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, by desiring a sign for the proof of divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient; for so Israel did, when they tempted God in the wil-
derness, saying, He gave us water out of the rock; but can he give flesh also? 'This Christ would be guilty of, if he should say, "He did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the greater; but can he also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the lesser?"

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

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

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

3. Yet he continued his malice against him, and departed with a resolution to attack him again; he departed but for a season, 

30. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Saraipta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eileseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian.

28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

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

1. What is here said, in general, of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with in Galilee, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem: it was as it were Christ's first experiment of the fruits of his ministry there. But, 1. Thither he came in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetic office, strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself. 2. There he taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the spiritual acts of devotion to read, expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequented since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring. 3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation; A fame of him went through all that region; (v. 14.) and it was a good fame; for (v. 13.) he was glorified of all. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all glorified him, and there were none as yet that vitiated him.

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

1. They preached there. Observe, (1.) The opportunity he had for it; He came to Nazareth when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him, might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach. (2.) In the synagogue, the proper place, where it had been his custom to attend when he was a private person, v. 16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But now that he was entered upon his public ministry, he there preached. Where
the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisher- 
man would call his net. [2.] On the sabbath-day, 
the sabbath-time, which the priests spent, not in 
a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in 
the duties of God’s worship, as of old they frequented 
the schools of the prophets, on the new moons, 
and the sabbaths. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths 
in solemn assemblies.

(2.) The call he had to it. [1.] He stood up to 
read. They had in their synagogues seven readers 
each year, the first a Levite, the second a Levite, 
and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. 
We often find Christ preaching in other synagogues, 
but never reading, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, 
of which he had been many years a member; now he 
offered his service as he had perhaps often done; 
he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, Acts 
15. 15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very 
useful work to the devout, it we condescendingly 
think Christ himself did not think it any disparagement 
to him to be employed in it. [2.] The book of the 
prophet Esias was delivered to him, either by the ruler 
of the synagogue, or by the minister mentioned, (v. 
29.) so that he was not intruder, but duly authorized 
pro hac vice—on this occasion. The second lesson 
for that day being in the prophecy of Esias, they 
gave him that volume to read in public upon it; He stood up to 
read, to teach us reverence in reading and hearing 
of the word of God. When Ezra opened the book 
of the law all the people stood up; (Neh. 8. 5.) so 
did Christ here, when he read in the book of the 
prophets. Now the book being delivered to him, 
[1.] He opened it. The books of the Old Testament 
were in a manner shut up till Christ opened them, 
Isa. 34. 14; so this was the Lamb that was slain, to 
take the book and open the seals. 
[2.] He found the place which was appointed to be read that 
day in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his 
text; now his text was taken out of Isa. 61. 1, 2, 
which is here quoted at large, v. 18, 19. There 
was a providence in it, that that portion of scripture 
should be read that day, which speaks so very plainly 
of the Messiah, that they might not be left inexcusable, 
who knew him not, though they heard the voices of 
the prophets read every sabbath-day, which bare 
wisdom of him, Acts 13. 27. This text gives a full 
account of Christ’s undertaking, and the work he 
came into the world to do. Observe, 
First, How he was qualified for the work; The 
Spirit of the Lord is upon me. All the gifts and 
graces work to the advantage of the man of God, 
by measure, as upon other prophets, but without 
measure, John 3. 34. He now came in the power 

Secondly, How he was commissioned; Because he 
has anointed me, and sent me. His extraordinary 
qualification amounted to a commission; his being 
anointed, signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking, 
and called to it. Those whom God appoints 
to any service he appoints for it. "Because he hath 
sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me." 
Thirdly, What his work was; he was qualified 
and commissioned, 
1. To be a great Prophet. He was anointed 
to preach; that is three times mentioned here, for that 
was the work he was now entering upon. Observe, 
(1.) To whom he was to preach; to the poor; to 
those that were poor in the world, whom the Jewish 
docttors disdained to take notice of, and spake of with 
contempt; to those that were poor in 
spirit, to the meek and humble, and to those that are 
truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the 
grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, 
Matth. 11. 5. (2) What he was to preach; in 
general, he must preach the gospel. He is sent 
unto wo to preach,—to evangelize them; not only 
to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; 
to bring it, not only to their ears, but to their 
hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it.

Three things he is to preach; 
[1.] Deliverance to the captives. The gospel is 
a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt 
and in Babylon, for the captives in the bonds of guilt, 
and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is 
a deliverance from the worst of thraldoms, which all 
those shall have the benefit of, that are willing to 
make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled 
by him.

[2.] Recovering of sight to the blind. He came, 
not only by the word of his gospel to bring light to 
them that sat in darkness, and on thequoted 
seals of his power to give sight to them that were blind; not only 
the Gentile world, but every unregenerate soul, that 
is not only in bondage, but in blindness, like Samson 
and Zedekiah. Christ came, to tell us that he has 
yes-salve for us, which we may have for the asking; 
that, if our prayer be, Lord, that our eyes may be 
opened, his answer shall be, Receive your sight. 
[3.] The acceptable year of the Lord. v. 19. He 
came to bring the year of the Lord’s favour; he knew 
that they had offended was willing to be reconciled 
to them, and to accept of them upon new terms; that 
there was yet a way of making their services acceptable 
to him, that there is now a time of good will 
toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or 
that of jubilee, which was an acceptable year to 
servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, 
against whom all actions were dropped; and to those 
who had the Jewish teachers; but these things 
were then to be turned to them again. Christ came, to sound 
the jubilee-trumpet; and blessed are they that heard 
the joyful sound, Ps. 89. 15. It was an acceptable 
time, for it was a day of salvation.

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

3. To be a great Redeemer. He not only 
proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the 
Jews in Babylon; (Whoever will, may go up;) but he 
set at liberty them that are bruised; he doth by 
his Spirit incline and enable them to make use of 
the liberty granted, as the man did but those of 
the Gentiles he stirred up, Ezra 1. 5. He came, in God’s 
name, to discharge poor sinners that were debtors 
and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could 
but proclaim liberty, but Christ, as one having 
authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive 
sins, came to set at liberty; and therefore this clause 
is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according 
to a liberty the Jews allowed their readers, to 
compare scripture with scripture in their reading, 
by the exposition of the text, Christ added it from 
Isa. 38. 6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable 
year, to let the oppressed go free, where the 
phrase the LXX use, is the same with this here.

(4.) Here is Christ’s application of this text to 
himself; (v. 21.) When he had read it, he rolled 
up the book, and gave it again to the minister, or 
clerk, that attended, and sat down, according to the 
custom of the teachers, for teaching, Matt. 26. 54. 
Now he began his discourse thus, "This day is this scripture fulfilled 
in your ears. This which Isaiah wrote by way of 
prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history. 
It now began to be fulfilled in Christ’s entrance 
upon his public ministry: now, in the report they
heard of his preaching and miracles in other places; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the kingdom of heaven at hand; that that was preaching liberty, and sight to the blind, and all the wonderful works of God. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which were not the beginning of; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal; This day is this scripture fulfilled. Note, [1.] All the scriptures of the Old Testament, that were to be fulfilled, Christ preached, whether before his accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was he that should come. [2.] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the fulfilling of the scriptures. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God, to compare them one with another:

[1.] There is the attention and admiration of the auditors.

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

2. Their admiration; (v. 22.) They all bare him witness, that he spake admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching, may yet be themselves no true christians. Observe, First, What it was they admired; the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. The words of grace; good words, and spoken in a wonderful manner. Note, Christ's words are words of grace, for, grace being poured into his lips. (Ps. 45. 2.) words of grace poured from them, and these words of grace are to be wondered at; Christ's name was, Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with these words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace, to so graceless wretches as we are.

6. Const. What it was that increased their wonder; and that was, the consideration of his original; They said, Is not this Joseph's Son, and therefore his extraction mean, and his education mean? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his gracious words, concluding he must needs be taught of God, for they knew no one else that taught him; whilst others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing really admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the Son of Joseph. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

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

1. What the objection was; (v. 23.) Ye will surely say to us, Physician, heal thyself. Because ye know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neighbour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity. Most of Christ's miracles were cures; "Now why should the sick in thine own city be healed as well as those in other cities? They were pleased to do the poor and infirm, not the rich and well-to-do. "Now why should not the diseased of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others? Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, that has been so much talked of, do here also in thine own country." They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, in bringing them to the faith; for they hoped they were but the introduction to more wonderful works of his; they wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other: and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other? And why should not his neighbours as much as his admirers be the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other?

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

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

Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners rather than among their own countrymen, and that, not only, by divine direction. 1. Elijah maintained a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a famine in the land, v. 25. 26. The story we have, 1 Kings 17. 9, &c. It is said there, that the heaven was shut up three years and six months, whereas it is said, 1 Kings 18. 1. that in the third year Elijah showed himself to Ahab, and there was rain. Here, that seems to be right, but the third year of Elijah's sojournning with the widow at Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a forebearer, but an enemy to Israel; (v. 27.) Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha, four particularly, that brought the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the
plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elias
sha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the
accomplishment of his prophecy too; see 2 Kings 7, 1, 3, &c. And we yet do not find that Elias
sha cleansed them, no, not for a reward of their
service, and the good tidings they brought, but only
this Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply him-
sell to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often
met with greater faith among Gentiles than in his
race. And here lie both arguments and examples, to
show that he did not dispense the favour of his
miracles by private respect, but according to God’s
wise appointment. And the people of Israel might
as justly have said to Elias, or Elisha, as the Nazare-
tes to Christ, Physitian, heal thyself. Nay, Christ
rought his miracles, though not among his towns-
men, yet among Israelites, whereas these great
prophets wrought their among the Gentiles. The ex-
ample of not saints, though they will not make a
bad action good, yet will help to free a good action
from the blame of exceptions.
2. How he was persecuted at Nazareth.
(1.) That which provoked them was, his taking
notice of the favour which God by Elias and Eli-
sha showed to the Gentiles; When they heard these
things they were filled with wrath. (v. 28.) they were all
enraged at once with the new saying, at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and
affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If
they had mixed faith with those gracious words of
Christ, which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his, to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but these
only pleased the ear, and went no further, and there-
fore they were enraged, and indulged their cor-
ruptions. They were angry that he should com-
pare himself, whom they knew to be the Son of
Joseph, with these great prophets, and compare them
with the men of that corrupt age, when all had
bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially
exasperated them was, that he intimated some kind-
ness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the
Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Acts
22. They were enraged at his anticipating the hopes
with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church;
(witness many of David’s psalms and Isaiah’s prophe-
cies) but this degenerate race, when they had
forfeited the covendant themselves, hated to think
that any others should be taken in.
(3.) They were provoked to that degree, that they
made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe
trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the
unhappy state of his being, and though many were
there, they did not stay until their synagogue-worship
was over. [5.] They thrust him out of the city, as
one not worthy to have a residence among them,
though there he had had a settlement so long. They
thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as
if he had been the Offender of all things. How
justly might he have called for fire from heaven
upon them! But this was the day of his patience.
[2.] They let him to the brow of the hill, with a
purpose to throw him down headlong, as one not fit
to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he
had for so many years lived among them, how shun-
ing his conversation had been, though they had
heard such a fame of him, and had but just now
heard such words from his lips, he was accused and
judged to the uttermost of guilt, he ought to have been allowed a fair hear-
ing, and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried
him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put
him to death in a most barbarous manner. Some-
times they were ready to stone him for the good
works he did; (John 10, 32.) here, for not doing the
good works they expected from him. To such a
height of wickedness was violence sprung up.
(3.) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet
come; He passed through the midst of them, un-
hurt; either he blinded their eyes, as the Sodom-
itans and Syriens were, or he bound their hands,
or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do
what they designed; for his work was not done, it was
but just begun, his hour was not yet come; when
it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They
drove him from them, and he went his way. He
would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not,
and therefore their house is left to them desolate.
This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of
Nazareth, that not only it was a place where no
good thing was expected, but that it was such a
wretched, rude place, and so unkind to him. Yet there
was a providence in it, that he should not be much
respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would
have looked like a collusion between him and his old
acquaintance: but now, though they received him
not, there were those that did.
31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabb-
bath-days. 32. And they were astonished at his
discourse; for his word was with power. 33. And in the synagogue there
was a man which had a spirit of an un-
clean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we
to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee
whom thou art; the Holy One of God. 35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy
peace, and come out of him. And when the
devil had thrown him in the midst, he came
out of him, and hurt him not. 36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word
is this! For with authority and power he
commandeth the unclean spirits, and they
come out. 37. And the fame of him went
out into every place of the country round
about. 38. And he arose out of the syna-
gogue, and entered into Simon’s house:
and Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with
a great fever; and they besought him for
her. 39. And he stood over her, and
rebuked the fever; and it left her: and imme-
diately she arose and ministered unto them.
40. Now when the sun was setting, all they
that had any sick with divers diseases,
brought them unto him: and he laid his
hands on every one of them, and healed
them. 41. And devils also came out of
many, crying out, and saying, Thou art
Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking
them, suffered them not to speak: for they
knew that he was Christ. 42. And when it
was day, he departed, and went into a
desert place; and the people sought him,
and came unto him, and stayed him, that
he should not depart from them.
he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. 44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

When Christ was expelled Nazarene, he came to Capernaum, another city of Galilee; the account we have in them varies his preaching and marvellous deeds; he had before, Mark 1. 21, &c. Observe, I. His preaching; \textit{He taught them on the sabbath-days, v. 51.} In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we worship God, and it is a proper work for sabbath days. Christ's preaching much affected the people; (v. 32.) they were astonished at his doctrine, there was weight in every word he said, and admirable discoveries were made to them by it. The doctrine itself was astonishing, and not only as it came from one that had not had a liberal education. His word was with power; there was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the consciences of men. The doctrine Paul preached, hereby proved itself to be of God, that it came in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. II. His miracles. Of these we have here, 1. Two particularly specified, showing Christ to be, (1.) A Controller and Conqueror of Satan, in the world of mankind, and in the souls of people, by his power to cast them out of the bodies of those he had taken possession of; for for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. [2.\textsuperscript{1}] This is the idea of the word Spirit, to be understood as an abstraction, as a nature directly contrary to that of the pure and holy God, and degenerated from what it was at first. [2.\textsuperscript{2}] This unclean spirit works in the children of men; in the souls of many, as they are men's bodies. [3.] It is possible that those who are very much under the power and working of Satan, may yet be found in the synagogue, among the worshippers of God. [4.\textsuperscript{1}] Even the devils knew and believe that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God, is sent of God, and is a Holy One. [5.\textsuperscript{2}] They believe and tremble. This unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, under a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights. [6.\textsuperscript{1}] The devils have nothing to do with Jesus Christ, nor desire to have anything to do with him; for he has no power over them. He has the devil under check; He rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace; and this word he spake with power; quo\textsuperscript{4}\textsuperscript{1}que—He muzzled; Christ did not only enjoin him silence, but stopped his mouth, and forced him to be silent against his will. [8.] In the breaking of Satan's power, both the enemy that is conquered, shows his malice, and Christ, the Conqueror, shows his power. Here Satan had nothing, he was muzzled, he had done what he would have done, when he threw the man in the midst, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. But, Secondly, Christ showed what a power he had over him, in that he not only forced him to leave him, but to leave him without so much as hurting him, without giving him a parting blow, a parting gibe. Whom Satan cannot destroy, he will do all the hurt he can to; but the power is in Christ; he is further than Christ permits: nay, he shall not do them any real harm. He came out, and hurt him not; that is, the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage, that all that were present thought he had torn him to pieces. [9.] Christ's power over devils was universally acknowledged and adored, v. 36. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle, it was evident beyond tradition, nor was any thing suggested to diminish the glory of it, for they were all amazed, saying, What a word is this? They that pretended to cast out devils, did it with abundance of charms and spells, to pacify the devil, and hush him asleep, as it were; but Christ commanded them with authority and power, which they could not gainsay or resist. Even the prince of the power of the air is his vassal, and trembles before him. [10.] This, as much as any thing, gained Christ a reputation, and spread his fame. This was the more remarkable, since now-a-days make light of, was then, by them that were eye-witnesses of it, (and those no fools neither, but men of penetration,) magnified, and was looked upon as greatly magnifying him; (v. 37.) upon the account of this, the fame of him went out, more than ever, into every place of the country round about. Our Lord Jesus, when he set out at first in his public ministry, was greatly talked of; men then showed it forward, when people's admiration wore off with the novelty of the thing. (2.) Christ showed himself to be a \textit{Healer of diseases.} In the former, he struck at the root of man's misery, which was Satan's enmity, the origin of all the mischief; in this, he strikes at one of the most spreading branches of it, one of the most common and distressing in the human life, and that, bodily diseases; which came in with sin, are the most common and sensible corrections for it in this life, and contribute as much as any thing toward making of our few days full of trouble. These our Lord Jesus came to take away the sting of, and, as an indication of that intention, when he was on earth, chose to confirm his doctrine by such miracles, mostly, as took away certain calamities, and made oneself and others well. Of all bodily diseases none are more common or fatal to grown people than fevers; these come suddenly, and suddenly cut off the number of men's months in the midst; are sometimes epidemical, and slay their thousands in a little time. Now here we have Christ's curing of a fever with a word's speaking; the place was in Simon's house, his patient was Simon's wife's mother, v. 38, 39. Observe, [1.] Christ is a Guest that will pay well for his entertainment; those that bid him welcome into their hearts and houses, shall be no losers by him; he comes with healing. [2.] Even families that Christ visits, may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his distinguishing favours, are liable to the common calamities of this life. Simon's wife's mother was ill of a fever. Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. [5.] Christ was terrified by the malady, the house was filled with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others; She was taken with a great fever, very acute, and high, and threatening; perhaps it seized her head, and made her delirious. The most gentle fevers may by degrees prove dangerous; but this was at first a great fever. [4.] No age can exempt from diseases. It is probable that Peter's mother-in-law, who was fast dying, when Christ's power had begun to work, and the devil had witnessed what he would have done, when he threw the man in the midst, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. Now she was in a fever, that was a sickness between, a visitation of the disordered relations are sick, we ought to apply ourselves to Christ, by faith and prayer, on their account; They besought him for her; and there is a particular promise, that the prayer of faith shall benefit the sick. [6.] Christ has a tender concern for his people when they are in sickness and distress; He stood over her, as one concerned for her, and compassionateing her case. [7.] Christ had an extraordinary concern to cure diseases; He rebuked the fever, and with a word's speaking commanded it away, and it left her. He saith to diseases, Go, and they go; Come, and they come; and can still rebuke fevers, even great fevers. [8.] This proves Christ's cures to be miraculous, that they were done in an instant; Immediately she arose. [9.] Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery from sickness, he designs and expects that it should be a new life indeed, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. If dis-
tempers be rebuked, and we arise from a bed of sickness, we must set ourselves to minister to Jesus Christ.

10. Those that minister to Christ, must be ready to minister to all that are his for his sake; She ministered to them, not only to him that had cured her, but to them that had besought her for. We must study to be grateful to them that have prayed for us.

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

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

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

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

1. He retired for a while into a place of solitude; it was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; not only because a little served him, but because he was content with a little, and never indulged himself in ease; but when it was day, he went into a desert place, that he might appear, beyond all contradiction, that he had obtained the victory over them, and not a compact with them.

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

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

2. He chose rather to diffuse the light of his gospel to many places than to fix it to one, that no one might pretend to be a mother-church to the rest. Though he was welcome at Capernaum, and had done abundance of good there, yet he is sent to preach the gospel to other cities also; and Capernaum must not insist upon his stay there. They that enjoy the benefit of the gospel, must be willing that others also should share in that benefit, and not covet the monopoly of it. And these ministers who are not driven from one place, may yet be drawn to another by a prospect of greater usefulness. Christ, though he preached not in vain in the synagogue at Capernaum, yet would not be tied to that, but preached in the synagogues of Galilee. v. 44. Beatus est qui diffusa est—What is good is self diffusive. It is well for us, that our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them; and even in Galilee of the Gentiles, his special presence is in the christian synagogues.

CHAP. V.

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

1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret. 2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. 4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them: and they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.
This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be "fishers of men," Matth. 4: 18, and Mark 1: 16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at this time, having only one event belonging to the calling. In what follows, we see that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books. John 20: 30, 31. Observe here,

1. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching; The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, (v. 1.) insomuch that no house would contain them, but they were pressed into the streets. Some would not be satisfied with his presence, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees; and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God; and it was foretold concerning him, that, to him shall the gathering of the people be. Christ was a popular preacher, more available, at twelve, to displease with the doctors, yet he chose, at thirty, to preach to the capacity of the vulgar. See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages; they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it. What a poor convenience Christ had for preaching; He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, (v. 1.) upon the level with the crowd, so that they could not see him, or hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water; what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships, or fisher-boats, belonging to his disciples, who or were, and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, v. 2. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance; (so Matthew tells us, ch. 4. 18.) but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is, the servants, were gone out of them, having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time; so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend him for a pulpit; and though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would be the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up, that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places; (Pro. 8.) and the favorite of our blessed Saviour was a strong voice, strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it, and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

IIl. What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism, (John 1. 36.) and in Judas; (John 2. 2.) and in Capernaum, (John 2. 22.) but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore he here we have them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

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

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

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

We may observe here,

1. That chiefly by their business had now been; "Master, we have toiled all the night, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that that should have excited them from hearing the sermon; and such a love had they to the word of God, that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumberers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again. Note, [1.] Some callings are much more tolerable than others are, and more perilous; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good, that there is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who are obliged to employ theirselves in the most menial, low, and fatiguing service, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep. [2.] Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were of to be his referred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who had thus learned to endure hardness. [3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business, often meet with disappointments; they who toiled all night, yet caught nothing; for the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command, and depend upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of good success, or that every day's toil and trouble shall bring us nearer to our goal, and then leave the event to God. [4.] When we are tired with our worldly business, and cursed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

2. How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ; Nevertheless, at thy word, I will put down the net. [1.] Though they had toiled all night, yet, if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who wait on him, shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their
hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient. [2.] Though they have taken nothing, yea, if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not abruptly quit the callings whereby we are called, because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they have taken nothing, and this is thankfully, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them. [3.] In this, they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that: "If thy word, I will let down the net, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are then likely to succeed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

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

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

5. The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter, was very remarkable. (1.) All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned. All the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes they had taken, (v. 8.) and were also astonished at the draught of fishes, they were they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder-struck. I had almost said thunder-struck, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon, (v. 10.) and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it, [1.] Because they understood it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with the sea, and, it is probable, had plied upon it many years, had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that the miracle was not so great as it was pretended to be; or what might still have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles, that those who were best acquainted with them, most admired them. [2.] Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes, it was a rich booty for them; and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a higher than that of others, who considered it a wonder in particular works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(2.) Peter, above all the rest, was so astonished, to such a degree, that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was, or what he said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, v. 8. Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready on all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves? [2.] His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so; If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "Come to me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone." But considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God, and to dread his wrath, Peter may be well excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cries out, Depart from me. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us; but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for we unto us, if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from us, The occasion which Christ took from hence to intimate to Peter, (v. 10.) and soon after to James and John, (Matt. 4. 21.) his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of his planting religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them, at this preceding draught of fishes, "Then shall both see and do greater things than these; fear not, let not this discourage thee, though thou shouldst meet with no more, and none, from henceforth thou shalt catch men, by inclosing them in the gospel-net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more astonishing miracle, and infinitely more advantageous than this." When by Peter's preaching
three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

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

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

Here is,

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

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

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

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

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

(1.) Though never any had so much pleasure in his retirements, as Christ had, yet he was much in a crowd, to do good, v. 15. Though the leper should along with him his peace, yet the thing could not be hid, so much the more went there a fame abroad of him; the more he sought to conceal himself under a veil of humility, the more notice did people take of him; for honour is like a shadow, which flies from those that pursue it, (for a man to seek his own glory, is not glory,) but follows those that decline it, and draw from it. The less good men say of themselves, the more will others say of them. But Christ revealed it, he made himself publicly manifest; this was his fame abroad; it was much more so, that hereby multitudes were brought to receive benefit by him. (1.) By his preaching; they came together, to hear him, and to receive instruction from him concerning the kingdom of God. (2.) By his miracles; they came, to be healed by him of their infirmities; that invited them to come to hear him, confirmed his doctrine, and manifested it, that his fame abroad was good; he did so much good in public, yet he found time for pious and devout retirements; (v. 16.) He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed; not that he needed to avoid either distraction or ostentation, but he would set us an example, who need to order the circumstances
of our devotion so as to guard against both. It is likewise our wisdom so to order our affairs, as that our public worship and our clerical work may not to

prefix, or interfere with, one another. Note, Secret prayer must be performed secretly; and those that have so much to do of the best business in this world, must keep up constant and sta-

ted times for it.

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

Here is,

I. A general account of Christ's preaching and miracles, v. 17. 1. He was teaching on a certain day, not on the sabbath-day, then he would have said so, but on a week-day; six days shall thou labour, not only for the world, but for thy soul, and the welfare of that. Preaching and hearing the word of God are good works, if they be done well, any day in the week; as well as on sabbath-days. It was not in the synagogue, but in a private house; for even there where we ordinarily converse with our friends, it is not improper to give and receive good instruction. 2. There he taught, he healed; as before (v. 15.) and the power of the Lord was to heal them—και ἕξασκηται ὁ Θεός. It was mighty to heal them, it was exerted and put forth, to heal them, to heal whom he taught; we may understand it so; to heal their souls to clear them of their spiritual diseases, and to give them a new life, a new nature. Note, Those who receive the word of Christ in faith, will find a divine power going along with that word, to heal them—και ἐκ τῆς Βίβλου. For Christ came with his comforts to heal the broken hearted, ch. 4. 18. The power of the Lord is present with the word, present to those who pray for it, and commit it, τον ἄγνωστον, v. 19, to heal them. Or it may be meant (as some), that he went immediately before; (the power of the Lord was present to heal them;) and why might not the word of Christ reach their hearts? But by what follows, (v. 21.) it appears that they were not healed, but cavilled at Christ, which forces us to make that to refer to others, not to them; for they sat by as being uneascertained, as if the word of Christ were nothing to them. They sat by as spectators, as men of the world, and spies, to pick up something on which to ground a reproach or accusation. How many are there in the midst of our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, that do not sit under the word, but sit by! It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent them; they are willing that we should preach before them, not that we should preach to them. The Pharisees and scribes (or the doctors of the law) came out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, they came from all parts of the nation; it is likely, they appointed to meet at this time and place, to see what remarks they could make upon Christ, and what he said and did. They were in a confederacy, as those that said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and agree to smite him with the tongue, Jer. 18. 18. Report, and say, We will devise our devices against the earth, that they may be cover'd with the report of it. Notice, at the beginning, how Christ went on with his work of preaching, and healing, for he saw these Pharisees, and doctors of the Jewish church, sitting by, who, he knew, despised him, and watched to insure him.

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

The diseases that are taught us, and confirmed to us by the story of this cure. (1.) That sin is the fountain of all sickness, and the forgiveness of sin is the only foundation upon which a recovery from sickness can comfortably be built. They presented the sick man to Christ, and he said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee; (v. 20.) that is the blessing thou art most to prize and seek; for if thy sins be forgiven thee, though the sickness be continued, it is in mercy; if they be not, though the sickness be removed, it is in wrath." The causes of our affliction are the bands of our affliction. (2.) That Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and his healing of diseases was an incontestable proof of it. This was the thing intended to be proved, (v. 24.) That we may know and believe, that the Son of man, though now upon earth in his state of humiliation, hath power to forgive sins, and to release sinners, upon gospel-terms, from the eternal punishment of sin, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, and walk; and he is cured immediately. Christ claims one of the prerogatives of the King of kings, when he undertakes to forgive sin, and it is justly expected that he should produce a good proof of it. "Well," saith he, "I will put it upon this issue; here is a man struck with a palsy, and for his sin; if I do not with a word's speaking cure his disease in an instant, which cannot be done by magus or art, but by virtue of the divine power and efficacy of the God of nature, then say that I am not entitled to the prerogative of forgiving sin, am not the Messiah, am not the Son of
God, and King of Israel: but if I do, you must own that I have power to forgive sins." Thus it was put upon a fair trial, and one word of Christ determined it. He did but say, "Arise, take up thy couch," and that chronic evil disease was an instantaneous cure; immediate was said before them. They must at once own that there could be no cheat or fancy in it; they that brought him, could attest how perfectly lame he was before; they that saw him, could attest how perfectly well he was now; insomuch that he had strength enough to take up and carry away the bed he lay upon. "How well is it for us, that this most comfortable doctrine of the gospel, that Jesus Christ and the power to forgive sin, has such a full attestation. (3.) That Jesus Christ is God. He appears to be so, [1] By knowing the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees, (v. 22.) which it is God's prerogative to do; though these scribes and Pharisees knew as well how to conceal their thoughts, and keep their countenances, as most men, and probably were industrious to do it at this time, for they lay in wait secretly. [2] By doing that which their thoughts owned none could do but God only; (v. 21.) Who can forgive sins, say they, but only God? "I will prove," saith Christ, "that I can forgive sins," and what follows then, but that he is God? What horrid wickedness then were they guilty of, who charged him with speaking the words of blasphemers, then when he spake the words of God's power? Then they were confounded. 2. The duties that are taught us, and recommended to us, by this story. (1.) In our applications to Christ, we must be very pressing and urgent; that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. They that were the friends of this sick man, sought means to bring him in before Christ; (v. 18.) and when they were baffled in their endeavours, they did not give up their cause; but when they could not get in by the door, (it was so crowded,) they enticed the house, and let the poor patient down, through the roof, into the midst before Jesus, v. 19. In this Jesus Christ saw their faith, v. 20. Now here he has taught us (and it were well if we could learn the lesson) to put the best construction upon words and actions that they will bear. We must try, and the way we will try, the Canaanitish woman, in all care to bring the patients they interceded for, into Christ's presence, but believed that he could cure them at a distance, he commanded their faith. But though in these there seemed to be a different notion of the thing, and an apprehension that it was requisite the patient should be brought into his presence, yet he did not censure and condemn their weakness, did not ask them, "Why do you give this disturbance to the assembly? Are you under such a degree of infidelity, as to think I could not have cured him, though he had been out of doors?" But he made the best of it, and even in this he saw their faith. It is a comfort to us, that we serve a Master that is willing to make the best of us. (2.) When we are sick, we should be more in care to get our sins put from us than to get our sick. We said before Christ, in what a little moment, we were taught, when we seek to God for health, to begin with seeking to him for pardon. (3.) The mercies which we have the comfort of, God must have the praise of. The man departed to his own house, glorifying God, v. 25. To him belong the escapes from death, and in them therefore he must be glorified. (4.) The miracles which Christ wrought, were amazing to them that saw them, and were ought to glorify God in the man. 26. They said, "We have seen strange things today, such as we never saw before, nor our fathers before us; they are altogether new." But they glorified God, who had sent into their country such a Benefactor to it; and were filled with fear, with a reverence of God, with a jealous persuasion that this was the Messiah, and that he was not treated by their nation as he ought to be, which might prove in the end the ruin of their state; perhaps they were some such thoughts as these that filled them with fear, and a concern likewise for themselves. 27. And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30. But his scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. 33. And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36. And he spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. 37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. 39. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

All this, except the last verse, we had before in Matthew and Mark; it is not the story of any miracle in nature wrought by our Lord Jesus, but it is an account of some of the wonders of his grace, which, to those who understand things aright, are no less evident proofs of Christ's being sent of God than the other. I. It was a wonder of his grace, that he would call a publican from the receipt of custom, to be his disciple and follower, v. 27. It was wonderful condescension that he would admit poor fishermen to that honour, men of the lowest rank; but much more wonderful, that he would admit publicans, men of the worst reputation, men of ill fame; in this, Christ humbled himself, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh; by this he exalted himself, and got the invincible character of a Friend of publicans and sinners.

II. It was a wonder of his grace, that that call was made effectual, became immediately so, v. 28. This publican, though these of that employment commonly had little inclination to religion, for his reli-
If). their 16. When It which vet save 35. he This ranin that 30. He poor the He 9. a 3. IVe and A. It this, upon taking of the worst of the Physician; that he came, to call sinners, the worst of sinners, to repentance, and to assure them of pardon, upon repentance, v. 32. This is glad tidings of great joy indeed.

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

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

VI. It was a wonder of his grace, that Christ reserved the trials of his disciples for their latter times, when by his grace they were in some good measure better prepared and fitted for them than they were at first. As he was the children of the bride-chamber, when the Bride-groom is with them, when they have plenty and joy, and every day is a festival, Christ was welcomed, wherever he came, and they for his sake, and as yet they met with little or no opposition; but this will not last always: The dawn will come when the Bride-groom shall be taken away from them, v. 33. When Christ shall leave them with their hearts, hands, and feet full of work, and the world full of enmity against them, then shall they fast, shall not be so well fed as they are now. We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, 1 Cor. 4. 11. Then shall they keep many more religious fasts than they do now, for Providence will call them to it, they will then serve the Lord with fastings, Acts 13. 2.

VII. It was a wonder of his grace, that he prepared two of them to this strange duty. He would not put new wine into old bottles; (v. 37, 38.) he could not, as soon as ever he had called them out of the world, put them upon the strictness and austerity of discipline, lest they should be tempted to fly off. When G'd brought Israel out of Egypt, he would not bring them by the way of the Philistines, lest they should return, when they saw war, and return into Egypt. Exod. 13. 17. So Christ would train up his followers gradually to the discipline of his family; for no man, having drunk old wine, will of a sudden straightly desire new, or relish it, but will say, The old is better; for he has been used to it, v. 39. The disciples were not tempted to think their old way of living better, till they are by degrees trained up to this way, whereunto they are called. Or, turn it the other way; Let them be accustomed a while to religious exercises, and then will they abound in them as much as you do; but we must not be too hasty with them. Calvin takes it as an admonition to the Pharisees, not to hasten of their fasting, and the wise, and show they made with it, nor to desire his disciples, because they did not in like manner sacrificethemselves; for the profession the Pharisees made, was indeed pious and gay, like new wine that is brisk and sparkling, whereas all wise men say, The old is better; which, though it doth not give its colour so well in the cup, yet is more warming in the stomach, and more wholesome. Christ's disciples, though they had not much of the form of godliness, had more of the power of it.

CHAP. VI.

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

1. And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-days? 3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was a hungered, and they which were with him: 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone; 5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. 6. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him. 8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?
10. And making round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11. And they were filled with madness; and commended one with another what they might do to Jesus.

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

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

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

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

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

4. Ceremonial appointments may be dispensed with, in cases of necessity; as the appropriating of the shew-bread to the priests was dispensed with, when David was by Providence brought into such straitness he was either without provision, v. 3.

4. And if God's own appointments might be thus set aside for a greater good, much more may the traditions of men.

5. Works of necessity are particularly allowable on the sabbath-day; but we must take heed that we turn not this liberty into licentiousness, and abuse God's favourable concessions and condescensions to the prejudice of the work of Christ, though he allowed works of necessity on the sabbath-day, will have us to know and remember that it is his day, and therefore is to be spent in his service, and to his honour; (v. 5.) The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. In the kingdom of the Redeemer, the sabbath-day is to be turned into a Lord's day; the property of it is, in some respects, to be altered, and it is to be observed chiefly in honour of the Redeemer, as it had been before in honour of the Creator; (Jer. 16, 14, 15.) in token of this, it shall not only have a new name, the Lord's day, (yet not forgetting the old, for it is a sabbath of rest still,) but shall be transferred to a new day, the first day of the week.

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

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

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

3. Christ's patient was one of his hearers: A man whose right hand was withered, came to learn from Christ; whether he had any expectation to be healed by him, does not appear. But those that would be cured by the grace of Christ, must be willing to learn the doctrine of Christ. Among those who were the hearers of Christ's excellent doctrine, and the eye-witnesses of his glorious miracles, there were some who came with no other design than to pick quarrels with him, v. 7. The scribes and Pharisees would not, as became generous adversaries, give him fair warning, that, if he did heal on the sabbath-day, they would construe it into a violation of the fourth commandment, which Christ was bound to observe, and to judge others to be bound to observe, because it was a case without precedent, (none having ever cured as he did,) and therefore could not be an adjudged case; but they basely watched him, as the lion does his prey, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him, and surprise him with a prosecution.

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

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

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

8. His adversaries were hereby enraged so much the more against him, v. 11. Instead of being convinced by this miracle, as they ought to have been, that he was a Teacher and come from God; instead of being brought into love with him as a Benefactor to mankind, they were filled with madness, vexed that they could not fret him from doing good, or hinder the growth of his interest in the affections of the people. They were mad at Christ, mad at the people, mad at themselves. Anger is a short madness, malice is a long one; impotent malice, especially disappointed malice; such was theirs. We could not prevent his working of this miracle, they commended one with another what they might do in
Jesus, what other way they might take to run him down. We may well stand amazed at it, that the sons of men should be so wicked as to do thus, and that the son of God should be so patient as to suffer it.

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

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

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

1. In secret, he has him praying to God, v. 12. This evangelist takes frequent notice of Christ's retirements, to give us an example of secret prayer, by which we must keep up our communion with God daily, and without which it is impossible that the soul should prosper. In those days, when his enemies were filled with madness against him, and were contriving what to do to him, he went out to pray; that he might answer the type of David, (Ps. 109. 4.) For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer. Observe, 1. He was alone with God; he went out into a mountain to pray, where he might have no disturbance or interruption given him; we are never less alone than when we are thus alone. Whether there was any convenient place built upon this mountain, for devout people to retire to for their private devotions, as some think, and that that oratory, or place of prayer, is meant here by a την μορφήν, to me seems very uncertain. He went into a mountain, for prayer, and therefore, probably, would not go to a place frequented by others. 2. He was long alone with God: He continued all night in prayer. We think one half hour a great deal to spend in the duties of the closet; but Christ continued a whole night in meditation and secret prayer. We have a great deal of business at the throne of grace, and we should take a great delight in communion with God, and by both these may be kept sometimes long at prayer. In his family, we have him nominating his immediate attendants, that should be the constant auditors of his doctrine, and eye-witnesses of his miracles, that hereafter they might be sent forth as apostles, his messengers to the world, to preach his gospel to it, and plant his church in it, v. 13. After he had continued all night in prayer, one would have thought, that when it was day, he should have resumed himself, and got some sleep. No, as soon as any body was stirring, he called unto him his disciples. In serving God, our great care should be, not to lose time, but to make the end of one good duty the beginning of another. Ministers are to be ordained with prayer more than ordinarily solemn. The number of the apostles was twelve; their names were recorded, that they might never be forgotten; the number they have met with, and in each of the three places, the order of them differs, to teach both ministers and Christians not to be nice in precedence, not in giving it, much less in taking it, but looking upon it as a thing not worth taking notice of; but be as it lights.

He that in Mark was called Thaddeus, in Matthew, Lebannus, whose surname was Thaddaeus, is here called Judas the brother of James; the son that the Epistle of Jude. Simon, who in Matthew and Mark was called the Canaanite, is here called Simon Zelotes, perhaps for his great zeal in religion. Concerning these twelve here named, we have reason to say, as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants, Happy are thy servants, and happy are thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom: never were men so privileged, and yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor; (v. 16.) v. 17. Christ when he chose him, was not deceived in him.

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

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

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

20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye who weep now; for.
ye shall laugh. 22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24. But wo unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25. Wo unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Here begins a practical discourse of Christ, which is continued to the end of the chapter, most of which is found in the sermon upon the mount, Matth. 5. 6 and 7. Some think that this was preached at some other time and place, and there are other instances of Christ's preaching the same things, or to the same purport, at different times; but it is probable that this is only the evangelist's abridgment of that discourse, the same, that in Matthew, too, but an abridgment; the beginning and conclusion are much the same; and the story of the cure of the centurion's servant follows presently upon it, both there and here, but it is not material.

In these verses, we have,
1. Blessings pronounced upon suffering saints, as halcyon people, though the world falters them; (v. 20.) He lifted up his eyes upon him, not on the twelve, but the whole company of them, (v. 17.) and directed his discourse to them; for when he had healed the sick in the plain, he went up again to the mountain, to preach; there he sat, as one having authority, thither they came to him, (Matth. 5. 1.) and to them he directed his discourse, to them he applied it, and taught them to apply it to themselves. When he had laid down a truth, Blessed are the poor in spirit, Blessed are the meek, etc. he added, Blessed are ye poor. All believers, that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. And the application as it is here, seems especially designed to encourage the disciples, with reference to the hardships and difficulties they were likely to meet with, in following Christ.
2. You are poor, you have left all to follow me, are content to live upon alms with me, are never to expect any worldly preferment in my service; you must work hard, and fare hard, as poor people do; but you are blessed in your poverty, it shall be no prejudice at all to your happiness; nay, you are blessed for it, all your losses shall be abundantly made up to you, for yours is the kingdom of God, all the comforts and graces of his kingdom here, and all the glories and joys of his kingdom hereafter, yours it shall be, nay, yours it is. Christ's poor are rich in faith, Jam. 2. 5.

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

3. "You weep now, are often in tears, tears of repentance, tears of sympathy; you are of them that mourn in Zion. But blessed are you; your present sorrows have no prejedices to, but prefiguratories for, your future joy: you shall laugh. You have triumphs in reserve; you are but a-sowing in tears, and shall shortly reap in joy," Ps. 126. 5, 6. They that now sorrow after a godly sort, and are ashamed of their comforts for themselves, or, rather, God is preparing up comforts for them; and the day is coming, when their mouth shall be filled with laughing, and their lips with rejoicing, Job 8. 21.

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

"Such usage as this seems hard; but blessed are you when you are so used; it is so far from depriving you of your happiness, that it will greatly add to it; it is an honour to you, it is as a hero brave to be employed in the wars, in the service of his prince; and therefore rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy, v. 23. Do not only bear it, but triumph in it. For," (1.) "You are hereby highly dignified in the kingdom of heaven, and raised to a higher station in the church; therefore, though the world should reproach you, yet you shall be reproached rather than they. (2.) You will for this be abundantly recompensed in the kingdom of glory; not only your service for Christ, but your sufferings will come into the account. Your reward is great in heaven. Venture upon your sufferings, in a full belief that the glory of heaven will abundantly counteract all these hardships; so that, though you may be losers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him in the end."
portion, v. 24. They in their life-time received their good things, which, in their account were the best things, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. "You that are rich, are in temptation to set your hearts upon a smiling world, and to say, Soul, take thee ease, in the embraces of it. This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and the desire of thy heart shall be fulfilled." (1.) They are to the folly of carnal workings, that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were intended only for their convenience, they please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the consolations of God are small, and of no account. (2.) It is their misery, that they are put off with them as their consolation; let them know it, to their terror, when they are parted from them. There is a certain sense in all these, comfort, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a woe to them that are full, (v. 25.) that are fed to the full, and have more than heart could wish. (Ps. 73. 7.) that have their bellies filled with the hill treasures of this world, (Ps. 17. 14.) that, when they have abundance of these, are full, and when they have enough, they need no more, they desire nothing better. Now ye are rich, these are ye rich, 1 Cor. 4. 8. They are full of themselves, without God and Christ; woe to such, for they shall hunger, they shall shortly be stripped and emptied of all the things they are so proud of; and when they shall have left behind them in the world all those things which are their fulness, they shall carry away with them such appetites and desires as the world they require to will afford them. For all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be denied, and in heaven superseded.

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

4. Here is a woe to them whom all men speak well of, that shall make it their great and only care, to get the praise and applause of men, who value the selves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance; (v. 26.)" woe unto you; it seems to intimate that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that nobody would be disgusted; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and if you do that as you ought, you will get that ill will which will make others to traduce your professions. Indeed that flattered your fathers in their wicked ways, preposterous smooth things to them, were censured and spoken well of; and if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did." We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises, of the fools in Israel.

27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you; 28. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. 30. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. 33. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same. 34. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

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

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

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

III. That we must be generous in forgiving those that have been any way injurious to us. We must not in demanding our right, when it is denied us: "I am that taketh away thy cloak, either forcibly or fraudulently, forbid him not by any violent means to take thy coat also, v. 29. Let him have that too, rather than fight for it. (And v. 30.) of him that taketh thy goods," (so Dr. Hammond thinks it should be read,) "that borroweth them, or that takes them up from thee upon trust, of such do not exact them; it Providence have made such insolvent, do not receive the advantage of the law against them, but rather lose it than take them by the throat, Matth. 18. 28. If a man run away in thy debt, and take away thy goods with him, do not perplex thyself, nor he incensed against him." 2. We must not be rigorous in revenging a wrong, when it is done us; "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, instead of bringing an action against
shall be great, v. 35. What is given, or laid out, or lent and lost on earth, from a true principle of charity, will be made up to us in the other world, unspeakably to our advantage. “You shall not only be repaid, but rewarded, greatly rewarded; it will be said to you, Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom.”

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

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. 39. And he spake a parable unto them: Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? 40. The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. 41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye. 43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. 46. And why
call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say! 47. Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew to whom he is like: 48. He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and did not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth: against which the stream beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the run of that house was great.

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

1. We ought to be very candid in our censures of others, because we need grains of allowance ourselves. Let not then our hearts condemn you yourselves shall not be judged; therefore condemn not others, because then you yourselves shall not be condemned, v. 57. Exercise towards others the charity which thinks no evil, which bears all things, believes and hopes all things; and then others will exercise that charity toward you. God will not judge and condemn you, men will not. They that are merciful to other people's names, shall find others merciful to theirs.

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

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

4. Those who put themselves under the guidance of the ignorant and erroneous, are likely to perish with them; (v. 59.) Can the blind lead the blind? Can the Pharisees who are blinded with pride, prejudice, and bigotry, lead the blind people into the right way, or does the blind lead in the ditch? How can they expect any other? Those that are led by the common opinion, course, and custom, of this world, are themselves blind, and are led by the blind, and will perish with the world that sits in darkness. Those that ignorantly, and at a venture, follow the multitude to do evil, follow the blind in the broad way that leads the many to destruction.

Christ's followers cannot expect better treatment in this world than their Master had, v. 45. Let them not promise themselves more honour or pleasure in the world than Christ had, nor aim at the worldly pomp and grandeur which he never was ambitious of, but always declined; nor affect that power in secular things, which he would not assume: but every one that would show himself perfect, an established disciple, let him be as his Master, dead to the world, and every thing in it, as his Master is; let him live a life of labour and self-denial, as his Master doth, and make himself a servant of all; let him stoop, and let him toil, and do all the good he can, and then he will be a complete disciple.

6. Those who take upon them to rebuke and reform others, are concerned to look to it, that they be themselves blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke, v. 44, 45. (1.) Those with a very ill grace and personal interest to the other, rebuke others, and make them feel their own faults. It is very absurd for any to pretend to be so quick-sighted, as to spy small faults in others, like a mote in the eye, when they are themselves so perfectly past feeling, as not to perceive a beam in their own eye. (2.) Those are altogether unfit to help to reform others, whose reforming charity doth not begin at home. How canst thou offer thy service to thy brother, to cut out the mote from his eye, which requires a good eye, as a good hand, when thou thyself hast a beam in thine own eye, and makest no complaint of it? (3.) Those therefore who would be serviceable to the souls of others, must first make it appear that they are solicitors about their own souls. To help to pull the mote out of our brother's eye, is a good work, but then we must qualify ourselves for it by beginning with ourselves; and our reforming of our own lives, marks us of example, contribute to others reforming theirs.

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

(1.) The heart is the tree, and the words and actions are fruit according to the nature of the tree, v. 43, 44. If a man be really a good man, if he have a principle of grace in his heart, and the prevailing bent and bias of his soul; he will act accordingly, and though perhaps he may not abound in fruit, though some of his fruits be blasted, and though he may be sometimes like a tree in winter, yet he doth not bring forth corrupt fruit; though he may not do all you the good he should, yet he will not in any material instance do you hurt. If he cannot reform ill manners, he will not corrupt good manners. If the fruit that a man brings forth be corrupt, if a man's devotion to the world be too great, if a man's conversation be vicious, if he be a drunkard, or fornicator, if he be a swearer or liar, if he be in any instance unjust or unnatural, his fruit is corrupt, and you may be sure that he is not a good tree. On the other hand, a corrupt tree doth not bring forth good fruit, though it may bring forth green leaves; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble do they gather grapes. You may, if you please, stick figs upon thorns, and hang a bunch of grapes upon a bramble, but they neither are, nor can be, ST. LUKE, VI. 503
the natural product of the trees; so neither can you expect any good conduct from them who have justly or unjustly raised the fruit, for the fruit be good, you must conclude that the tree is good: if the conversation be holy, heavenly, and regular, though you cannot infallibly know the heart, yet you may charitably hope that that is upright with God; for every tree is known by its own fruit. But the vile person will speak villany; (Isa. 3. 26. 6.) and the experience of the moderns herein agrees with the proverbs of the ancients, that rashness proceedeth from the wicked, 1 Sam. 24. 13.

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

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

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

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

[1.] Those only make sure work for their souls and eternity, and are those that will get by the said in trying time, who do not only come to Christ as his scholars, and hear his sayings, but do them; who think, and speak, and act, in every thing, according to the established rules of his holy religion. They are like a house built on a rock; these are they that take pains in religion, as they do, that build on a rock; that begin low, as they do, that dig deep; that found their hope upon Christ, who is the Rock. This thereof (and other foundations can lay) these are they who prepare for hereafter, who get ready for the worst, who lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come, for the eternity to come, 1 Tim. 6. 19. They who do thus, do well for themselves; for, First, They shall keep their integrity, in times of temptation and persecution; when others fall from their own steadfastness, as the seed on the stony ground, they shall stand fast in the Lord. Secondly, They shall keep their comfort, and peace, and hope, and joy, in the midst of the greatest distresses. The storms and streams of affliction shall not knock them, for their feet are set upon a rock, a rock higher than they. Thirdly, Their everlasting welfare is secured. In death and judgment they are safe. Obdient believers are kept by the power of Christ, through faith, unto salvation, and shall never perish.

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

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ confirming the doctrine he had preached in the former chapter, with two glorious miracles—the curing of one at a distance, and that was the centurion's servant, (v. 1. 10.) and the raising of one to life, that was dead, the widow's son at Nain, v. 11. 18. 2. Christ confirming the faith of Jesus who was in prison, and of some of his disciples, by sending him a short account of the miracles he wrought, in answer to a question he received from him; (v. 19. 23.) to which he adds an honourable testimony concerning John, and a just reproof to the men of that generation, for the contempt they put upon him and his doctrine, v. 24. 42. 3. Christ comfort-
ing a poor penitent that applied herself to him, all in tears of guilty sorrow for sin; assuring her that her sins were pardoned, and justifying himself in the favour he showed her, against the caviols of a proud Pharisee, v. 36. 50.

1. NOW when he had ended all his say-
ings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. 2. And a cer-
tain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. 3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. 4. And when they came to Jesus, he besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: 5. For he loved his nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. 6. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: 7. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto
the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Some difference there is between this story of the cure of the centurion's servant, as it is related here, and as we had it, Matth. 8. 5, &c. For there it was said, that the centurion came to Christ; here it is said, that he sent to him first some of the elders of the Jews. (v. 2.) and afterward some other friends, v. 3. In the latter part of this story, which we do by another—Quod facimus pro alium, id quum facere judicauerimus. The centurion might be said to do that which he did by his proxies; as a man takes possession by his attorney. But it is probable that the centurion himself came at last, when Christ said to him, (Matth. 8. 13.) As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

This miracle is here said to have been wrought by our Lord Jesus, when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, v. 1. What Christ said, he said publicly; whoever would, might come, and hear him; In secret have I said nothing, John 18. 20. Now to give an undeniable proof of the authority of his preaching word, he here gives an incontestable proof of the power and efficacy of his healing word. He that had such a commanding empire in the kingdom of grace, as to enjoin duties displeasing to flesh and blood, and bind, under the highest penalties, to the observance of them. This miracle was wrought in Capernaum, where most of Christ's mighty works were done, Matth. 11. 23. Now observe,

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

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

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

4. The elders of the Jews were hearty intercessors for the centurion; they besought him instantly, (v. 4.) very urgent with him, pleading for the centurion, that which he would never have pleaded for himself. That he was worthy for whom he stood. If any Gentile was so humbled to receive such a favour, surely he was. The centurion said, I know not, v. 5. This was a mark of a man's humility; though he had sought to make a good reply, he would not take it on himself to determine, whether he was a centurion, and an officer of the army, and therefore mention this; (1.) That he was well affected to the people of the Jews; He loveth our nation; which few of the Gentiles did. Probably, he had read the Old Testament, whence it was easy to advance to a very high esteem of the Jewish nation, as favoured by Heaven above all people. Note, Even conquerors, and those in power, ought to keep up an affection for the conquered, and those they have power over. (2.) That he was well affected to their worship: He built them a new synagogue at Capernaum, finding that what they had was either gone to decay, or not large enough to contain the people; and that the inhabitants were not of ability to build one for themselves. Herein he testified his veneration for the God of Israel, his belief of his being the one only living and true God, and his desire, like the centurion, to be regarded as a people of God's Israel, Ex. 6. 10. This centurion built a synagogue at his own proper costs and charges, and, probably, employed his soldiers that were in garrison there, in the building, to keep them from idleness. Note, Building places of meeting for religious worship, is a very good work, is an instance of love to God and his people; and those who do good works of that kind, are worthy of double honour.

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

6. The centurion, when he heard that Christ was doing him the honour to come to his house, gave further proofs both of his humility and of his faith. Thus the graces of the saints are quickened by Christ's approaches toward them; When he was not far from the house, and the centurion had notice of it, instead of setting his house in order for his reception, he made friends, and met him with expressions, (1.) Of his humility, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am unworthy of such an honour, because I am a Gentile. This bespeaks not only his low thoughts of himself, notwithstanding the greatness of his figure, but his high thoughts of Christ, notwithstanding the meanness of his figure in the world. He knew how to honour a Prophet of God, though he was despised and rejected of men. (2.) Of his faith; Lord, trouble not thyselh, for I know there is no occasion, then canst cure my servant without coming under my roof, by that almighty power from which no thought can be witheld. Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. So far was this centurion from Naaman's fancy, that he should come to him, and stand, and strike his hand over the patient, and so recover him, 2 Kings 5. 11. He illustrates this faith of his by a comparison taken from his own profession, and is confident that he can as easily command away the distemper as he can command any of his soldiers; can as easily send an angel with commission to cure this servant of his
as he can send a soldier on an errand, v. 8. Christ has a sovereign power over all the creatures and all their actions, and can change the course of nature as he pleases, can rectify its disorders, and repair its decay in human bodies, for all power is given to him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. See how tender his compassions are toward the afflicted; (v. 13.) When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. Here was no application made to him, for not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, or hear her moans purely from the goodness of his nature, he was troubled for her. The case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. His eye affected his heart; and he said unto her, Weep not. Note, Christ has a concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often prevents them with the blessings of his goodness. He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, in his love and in his pity, Isa. 66. 9. We are told Christ's promising idea does this give us of the compassion of the Lord Jesus, and the multitude of his tender mercies, which may be very comfortable to us when at any time we are in sorrow! Let poor widows comfort themselves in their sorrows with this, that Christ pites them, and knows their souls and adversity; and if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ saw her, he pities her, and he could give her what she could not have in the world; she might have comfort from the world, but she never could have the comfort of Christ; "Weep not for a dead son, for he shall presently become a living one." This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against inordinate and excessive grief for their death—that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory; and therefore we must not sorrow, as those that have no hope, 1 Thess. 4. 13. In anguish, the promise of the resurrection will comfort them, and the Lord will direct their way. If there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border. Jer. 31. 17. And let our passion at such a time be checked and calmed by the consideration of Christ's compassion.

II. See how triumphant his commands are, even even death itself; (v. 14.) He came and touched the
ier, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay: for to him it would be no pollution. Hereby he intimated to the bearers, that they should not proceed; he had something to say to the dead young man: Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job 33. 24. Hereupon, they bare him staid still, and, probably, laid him at the threshold, where the coffin stood, and opened the coffin, if it were closed up; and then with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues of death, he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own; (no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins:) yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him arise, when a power went along with that word, to raise life into him. The gospel-calling to all people, to young people particularly, is, Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life. Christ's dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word; (v. 13.) He that was dead, sat up, without any help. When Christ put life into him, he made it to appear by his sitting up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. And then he began to speak; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he opens the lips in prayer and praise. And, lastly, he would not oblige this young man to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him, either as his disciple to minister to him, (though he owed him even his own self,) much less as a trophy or show to get honour by him, but delivered him to his mother, to attend her as became a dutiful son; for Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy: and a great act of mercy this was to this widow; now she was comforted, according to the time in which she had been afflicted, and much more; for she could now look upon this son as a particular favourite of heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

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

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

All this discourse concerning John Baptist, occasioned by his sending to ask whether he was the Messiah or no, we had, much as it is here related, Matth. 11. 2—19. 1. We have here the message John Baptist sent to Christ, and the return he made to it. Observe, 2. The great thing we are to inquire concerning is, whether he be he that should come to redeem and save sinners, or whether we are to look for another,
v. 19, 20. We are sure that God has promised that a Saviour shall come, an anointed Saviour; we are as sure as that he has promised he will perform it, and if we will receive him, and will look for no other; but if not, we will continue our expectations, and though he tarry, will wait for him.

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

3. Christ left it to his own works to praise him in the gates, to tell what he was, and to prove it. While John's messengers were with him, he wrought many miraculous cures, in that same hour; which perhaps intimates, that they said but an hour with him; and what a deal of work did Christ do in a little time! He had cured many of those diseases and plagues in body, and of evil spirits that affected the mind, either with frenzy or melancholy; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. He multiplied the cures, that there might be no ground left to suspect a fraud. And then, (v. 22.) he bid them go tell John what they had seen. And he said, that they might easily argue, or even the common people did (v. 27.) whether he were greater than John. Christ must, therefore, proved more miracles than these which this man has done? These cures which they saw him work, were not only confirmations of his commission, but explications of it. The Messiah must come to cure a diseased world, to give light and sight to them that sit in darkness, and to restrain and conquer evil spirits; you see that Jesus does this to the bodies of people, and therefore must conclude, This is he that should come to do it to the souls of people; and you are to look for no other. To his miracles in the kingdom of nature he adds this in the kingdom of grace, (v. 22.) To the poor the gospel is preached; which, they knew, was to be done by the Messiah, for he was anointed to preach the gospel to the meek, (Isa. 61. 1.) and to save the souls of the poor and needy, Ps. 72. 15. Judge, therefore, whether you can look for any other that will more fully answer the characters of the Messiah, and the great intentions of his coming.

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

11. We have here the high encomium which Christ gave of John Baptist; not while his messengers were present, lest he should seem to flatter his father, but when they were departed, (v. 34.) to make the people sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed in John's ministry, and were deprived of by his imprisonment. Let them now consider, what they went out into the wilderness to see; who that was, about whom there had been so much talk, and such a great and general amazement. "Come," said Christ, "I will tell you.

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

3. He was a prophet, had his commission and instructions immediately from God, and not of man; the prophet was not one that had been shut up in a corner, but that had never taken notice of; for his glory, as a prophet, eclipsed the honour of his priesthood; nay, he was more, he was much more than a prophet, (v. 26.) than any of the prophets of the Old Testament, for they spoke of Christ as at a distance, he spoke of him as at the door.

4. He was the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah, and he was himself prophesied of in the Old Testament; (v. 37.) This is he of whom it is written, (Mal. 3. 1.) Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Before he sent the Master himself, he sent a messenger, to give notice of his coming, and prepare people to receive him. Had the Messiah been to appear as a temporal Prince, under which character the carnal Jews expected him, his messenger would have appeared, either in the figure of a general, or the glory of a herald at arms; but it was a forewarning indication, plain enough, of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him to prepare his way, did it by preaching repentance, and reformation of men's hearts and lives; certainly that kingdom was not of this world, which was thus ushered in.

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

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

1. Christ here shows what contempt was put upon John Baptist, while he was preaching and baptizing. (1.) Those who did show him any respect, were but
the common, ordinary sort of people; who, in the eye of the gay part of mankind, were rather a disgrace to him than any credit; (v. 39.) the people indeed, the vulgar herd, of whom it was said, This foolishness knows not the law, are cursed; (John 7. 49.) and the publicans and publicans, and publicans of all time, as general men of bad morals, or taken to be so, these were baptized with his baptism, and became his disciples; and these, though glorious monuments of divine grace, yet did not magnify John in the eye of the world; but by their repentance and reformation they justified God, justified his conduct, and the wisdom of it in appointing such a one as John Baptist to be the forerunner of the Messiah; then here was made it to appear that it was the best method that could be taken, for it was not in vain to them, whatever it was to others. (2.) The great men of their church and nation, the priests and the politicians, that would have done him some credit in the eye of the world, did him all the discomfiture they could: they heard him indeed, but they were not baptized of him; (v. 30.) the Pharisees, who were most in reputation for religion and devotion, and the lawyers, who were celebrated for their learning, especially their knowledge of the scriptures, they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, they frustrated it, they received the grace of God, by the baptism of John, in vain. God sending that messenger among them, had a kind purpose of good to them, designed their salvation by it, and if they had closed with the counsel of God, it had been for themselves, they had benefited greatly by it; but they rejected it, would not comply with it, and it was against themselves, it was to their own ruin; they came short of the benefit intended them, and not only so, but forfeited the grace of God, put a bar in their own door, and by refusing that discipline which was to fit them for the kingdom of the Messiah, shut themselves out of it, and they not only excluded themselves, but hindered others as well, as were in their way.

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

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

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

[2.] Our Lord Jesus was of a more free and open conversation; he came eating and drinking; (v. 54.) he would go and dine with Pharisees, though he knew they did not care for him; and with publicans, though he knew they were no credit to him; yet, in honor of God, as good, both to the one and the other, he conversed familiarly with them. By this it appears that the ministers of Christ may be of very different tempers and dispositions, very different ways of preaching and living, and yet all good and useful; diversity of gifts, but each given to profit others; therefore none must make themselves a standard to all others, nor judge harshly of those that do not do as they do. John Baptist bore witness to Christ, and Christ applauded John Baptist, though they were the reverse of each other in their way of living. But the common enemies of them both reproached them both. The very same men that had represented John as crazed in his intellects, because he came neither eating nor drinking, represented our Lord Jesus as corrupt in his morals, because he came eating and drinking: he is a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber. It will never speak well, see the multitude of wicked people, and how they put the worst construction upon every thing they meet with in the gospel, and in the preachers and professors of it; and hereby they think to diminish them, but really destroy themselves.

Lastly, He shows that, notwithstanding this, God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant; (v. 35.) Wisdom is justified of all her children. There are those who are given to wash in their children, and they shall be brought, by the grace of God, to submit to wisdom's conduct and government, and thereby to justify wisdom in the ways she takes for bringing them to that submission; for to them they are effectual, and thereby appear well chosen. Wisdom's children are herein unanimous, one and all, they have all a complacency in the methods of grace which divine wisdom takes, and think never the worse of them for their being ridiculed by some; 36. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. 38. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. 40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? 43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most,
And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

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

Now observe here,

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

II. The great respect which a poor penitent sinner showed him, when he was at meat in the Pharisee's house. It was a woman in the city, that was a sinner, a Gentile, a harlot, I doubt, known to be so, and infamous; she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, and, having been converted from her wicked course of life by his preaching, she came to acknowledge her obligations to him, having no opportunity of doing it any other way, than by washing his feet, and anointing them with some sweet ointment that she brought with her for that purpose. The way of sitting at table then was such, that their feet were partly behind them. Now this woman did not look Christ in the face, but came behind him, and did the part of a maid-servant, whose office it was to wash the feet of the guests, 1 Sam. 25. 41. and to prepare the ointments.

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

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

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

Note, All true penitents have a dear love to the Lord Jesus.

III. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, for admitting the sinner, whose poor penitent

should be as haughty and censorious as themselves. Simon, if she had touched him, would have said, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou; (Isa. 65. 5.) and he thought Christ should say so too.

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

Now Christ has a further reach in this; the Pharisee being moved, as he was before, by his 

No, in his answer, 

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

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

2. That some are deeper in debt to God, by reason of sin, than others are; One owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. The Pharisee was the less debtor, yet he a debtor too, which was more than he thought himself, but rather that God was his Debtor, Luke 18. 10, 11. This woman, that has not one sin, not one, not one, notorious sinner, was the greater debtor. Some sinners are greater sinners than others, and some sinners, by reason of divers aggravating circumstances, greater debtors; as those that have sinned most openly and scandalously, that have sinned against greater light and knowledge, more convictions and warnings, and more mercies and means. 

3. That, whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay; They had nothing to pay, nothing at all to make a composition with; for the debt is great, and we have nothing at all to pay it with; silver and gold will not pay our debt, nor will sacrifice and offering, nay, no thousands of rams. It is a weighty matter, not our repentance and obedience for the future; for it is what we are already bound to, and it is God that works it in us. 

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

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

2. He applies this parable to the different temper and conduct of the Pharisee and the sinner toward Christ. Though the Pharisee would not allow Christ to be his debtor, Christ would be debtor to him, which it is not to be in a justified state, and that he was one forgiven, though to him less was forgiven. He did indeed show some love to Christ, in inviting him to his house, but nothing to what this poor woman showed. "Observe," saith Christ to him, "she is one that has much forgiven her, and therefore, according to thine own judgment, it might be expected that she should love much more than thou dost, and so it appears; (v. 44.) Yet great things are spoken; Thou hast poured oil upon my head, though I have not kissed his feet, though I have not anointing ointment; she was the nearest to him and the one that had shown her love and kindness to him most. When the woman was anointed, Christ washed her feet and printed the homage of his hand in token of her great love to me." 

(2.) "Thou didst not so much as order a basin of water to be brought, to wash my feet in, when I came in, wereed and dired in my walk, which would have been some refreshment to me; but she has done much more, she has washed my feet with tears, tears of affection to me, tears of affection for me, and an affection for me so much as to anoint me with the smell of her head, in token of her great love to me." 

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

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

3. He silenced the Pharisee's cavil; (v. 47.) I say unto thee, Simon, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. He owns that she had been guilty of many sins; but that wert not sin, but that wert not sin, for so it is no way unbecoming me to accept her kindness. They are forgiven, for she loved much." It should be rendered, therefore she loved much; for it is plain, by the tenor of Christ's discourse, that her loving much was not the cause but the effect of her pardon, and of her comfortable sense of it; for we love God because he first loved us; he did not forgive us because we first loved him. But to whom little is forgiven, as is to thee, the same so much. As thou dost." Hereby he intimates to the Pharisci
sex, that his love to Christ was so little, that he had reason to question whether he loved him at all in sincerity; and, consequently, such a one as this, though comparatively little, were forgiven him. Instead of grudging greater sinners the mercy they find with Christ, upon their repentance, we should be stirred up by their example to examine ourselves, whether we be indeed forgiven, and do love Christ.

4. He silenced her fears, who, probably, was discouraged by the Pharisees’ offence, and yet would not hear his preaching on his first appearance. He answered her question, or rather her charge, by telling her, that if she had known Christ, and his preaching perhaps most acceptable where it was new. He went about through every city, that none might plead ignorance. Hereby he set an example to his disciples; they must traverse the nations of the earth, as he did the cities of Israel. Nor did he confine himself to the cities, but went into the villages, among the plain country-people, to preach to the inhabitants of the villages, Luke 5:19.

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

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

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

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

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

We are here told,

1. What Christ made the constant business of his life—It was preaching; in that work he was indefatigable, and went about doing good; (v. 44.) afterward—He was an itinerant Preacher, did not confine himself to one place, but diffused the beams of his light. Circumstances—He went his circuit, as a sparrow finds his food, and his preaching perhaps most acceptable where it was.
who was a woman of a sorrowful spirit: who might have been originally of Magdala, but removed to Bethany. This Mary Magdalene was attending on Christ's cross and his sepulchre, and if she was not Mary the sister of Lazarus, either that particular friend and favourite of Christ's did not ascend the hill, or the evangelists did not take notice of her, neither of which we can suppose; thus Dr. Lightfoot argues. Yet there is this to be objected against it, that Mary Magdalene is reckoned among the women that followed Jesus from Galilee; (Matth. 27. 55,) whereas Mary the sister of Lazarus had her residence in Bethany.

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

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

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

11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

6. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17. For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad. 18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemed to have. 19. Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

20. And it was told him by certain, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

The former paragraph began with an account of Christ's industry in preaching; (v. 1.) this begins with an account of the people's industry in hearing; v. 4. He went into every city, to preach; so they, one would think, should have contended themselves to hear him when he came to their own city; (we know those that would;) but there were those here, that came to him out of every city, would not stay till he came to them, nor think that they had had enough when he left them, but met him when he was coming toward them, and followed him when he was going from them. Nor did he excuse himself from going to the cities with this, that there were some from the cities, that came to him; for though there were, yet the most had not zeal enough to bring them to him, and therefore such is his wonderful condescension, that he will go to them; for he is found of those that sought him not, Isa. 61. 1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

III. Great encouragement given to those that prove themselves faithful hearers of the word, by being doers of the work, in a particular instance of Christ's respect to his disciples, in preferring them even before his nearest relations; (v. 19—21.) which passage of story we had twice before. Observe, 1. What crowding there was after Christ; there
was no coming near for the throng of people that attended him, who, though they were crowded ever so much, would not be crowded out from his congregation. 2. Some of his nearest kindred were least solicitous to hear him preach. Instead of getting within, as they might easily have done, if they had come in time, desiring to hear him, they stood without, desiring to see him: and, probably, out of a foolish fear, lest he should spend himself with too much speaking, designing nothing but to interrupt him, and oblige him to break off. 3. Jesus Christ would rather be busy at his work than conversing with his friends. He would not leave his preaching, to speak with his mother and brethren, for it was his meat and drink to be so employed. 4. Christ is pleased to own as his nearest and dearest relations, that hear the word of God, and do it; they are to him more than his mother and brethren.

22. Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23. But as they sailed he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish! Then he rose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. 26. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them: and he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarines round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

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

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

1. Christ ordered his disciples to put to sea, that he might show his glory upon the water, in stilling the waves, and might do an act of kindness to a poor possessed man on the other side the water; (v. 22.) He went into a ship with his disciples. They that observe Christ's orders, may assure themselves of his presence. If Christ sends his disciples, he goes with them. And we may send them to any person, to call upon him, or to bring him some thing, to where that have Christ accompanying them. He said, Let us go over unto the other side, for he had a piece of good work to do there. He might have gone by land, a little way about; but he chose to go by water, that he might show his wonders in the deep. 2. Those that put to sea in a calm, yea, and at Christ's word, must yet prepare for a storm, and for the utmost peril in that storm; (v. 23.) There came down a storm of wind on the lake, as if it were there, and no where else; and presently their ship was so tossed, that it was filled with water, and they were in jeopardy of their lives. Perhaps the devil, who is the prince of the power of the air, and who raiseth winds by the permission of God, had some suspicion, from some words which Christ might let fall, that he was coming over the lake now on purpose to cast that legion of devils out of the poor man, on the other side, and therefore poured this storm upon the ship he was in, designing, if possible, to have sunk him, and prevented that victory. 3. Christ was asleep in the storm, v. 23. Some bodily refreshment he must have, and he chose to take it then when it would be least a hinderance to him in his work. The disciples of Christ may really have his gracious presence with them at sea, and in a storm, and yet he may seem as if he were asleep; he may not immediately appear for their relief, no, not when things seem to be brought even to the last extremity. Thus he will try their faith
and patience, and quicken them by prayer to awake, and make their deliverance the more welcome when it comes at last.

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

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

6. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take this for a relief of our own fears, and to give to Christ the glory of his power. When Christ had turned the storm into a calm, then were they glad because they were quiet, Ps. 107. 50. And then, (1.) Christ gives them a rebus for their inordinate fear; (v. 25.) Where is your faith? Note, Many that have true faith, have it to seek when they have occasion to use it; they tremble and are discouraged, if second causes crown upon them; a little thing disheartens them; and where is their faith then? (2.) They give him the glory of his power; They, being afraid, wondered. Those that had feared the storm, now that the danger was over, with good reason feared him that had stilled it; and said one to another, What manner of man is this? They might as well have said, Who is a God like unto thee? For it is God's prerogative, to still the noise of the sea, the waves of the sea, Ps. 65. 7.

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

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

1. These malignant spirits are very numerous. They that had taken possession of this man, could cast out none, even (v. 26.) because many devils were entered into him; he had had devils a long time, v. 27. But perhaps those that had been long in possession of him, upon some foresight of our Saviour's coming to make an attack upon them, and finding they could not prevent it by the storm they had raised, sent for recruits, intending this to be a decisive battle, and hoping now to be too hard for them that had cast out so many unclean spirits, and to give him a defeat; and either were, or at least would be thought to be, a legion of them, formidable as an army with banners; and now, at least, to be, what the twentieth legion of the Roman army, which was long quartered at Chester, was styled, legio victoria—a victorious legion.

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

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

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

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

6. They delight in doing mischief. When they found there was no remedy, but they must quit their hold of this poor man, they begged they might have leave to enter into the herd of swine. (v. 28.) When the devil at first brought man into a miserable state, he brought a curse likewise upon the whole creation, and that became subject to enmity. And here, as an instance of that extensive enmity of his, when he could not destroy the man, he would destroy the swine. If he could not hurt them in their bodies, he would hurt them in their goods, which sometimes proves a great temptation to draw upon the name of Christ. Here Christ suffered them to enter into the swine; and no sooner had they entered into them, than the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. For it is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan pos-
sessed, are not brought to destruction and perdition. This, and other instances, show that that roaring liued red dragon seeks what and whom he may devour.

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

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

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

(2.) What effect it had upon the poor man who had recovered himself by it. He desired Christ’s company as much as others dared it; he besought Christ that he might be with him, as others were, that had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities; (v. 3.) that Christ might be to him a Protector and Teacher, and that he might be in Christ for a name and a praise. He was but old to stay among those rude and brutish Galadrenses, that desired Christ to depart from them. Gather not my soul with these sinners! But Christ would not take him along with him, but sent him home; to publish among those that knew him, the great things God had done for him, that so he might be a blessing to his country, as he had been a burden to it. We must sometimes deny ourselves the satisfaction even of spiritual benefits and comforts, to gain an opportunity of being serviceable to the souls of others. Perhaps the loss of his swine was a little ever, they would be better disposed to consider the miracle, and therefore left the man among them to be a standing monument, and a monitor to them of it.

40. And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. 41. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus’ feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the people thronged him. 43. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any. 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment; and immediately her issue of blood stanched.

15. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee; and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me: 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately, 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace. 49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden, 52. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

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

We have here two miracles interwoven, as they
were in Matthew and Mark—the raising of Jairus’s daughter to life, and the cure of the woman that had an issue of blood, as he was going in a crowd to Jairus’s house. We have here, 1. The public address made to Christ, by a ruler of the synagogue, whose name was Jairus, on the behalf of a little daughter of his, that was very ill, and, in the apprehension of all about her, lay a dying. This address was very humble and reverent; Jairus, though a ruler, fell down at Jesus’ feet, as owning him to be a Ruler above him. It was very important; he besought him that he would come into his house, for his daughter was at the point of death. This was the thought, of the centurion, who desired Christ only to speak the healing word at a distance. But Christ complied with his request; he went along with him; strong faith shall be applauded, and yet weak faith shall not be rejected. In the houses where sickness and death are, it is very desirable to have the presence of Christ. When Christ was going, the people thronged him; some out of curiosity to see him, others out of an affection to him. Let us not complain of a crowd, and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and doing good; but otherwise it is what every wise man will keep himself out of as much as he can.

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

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

1. Christ takes notice that there is a cure wrought: Virtue is gone out of me. v. 46. Those that have been healed by virtue derived from Christ, must own it, for he knows it. He speaks of it here, not in a way of complaint, as if he were hereby either weakened or wronged, but in a way of complacency; it was his delight, that virtue was gone out of him to do any good, and he did not grudge it to the member, for he was as welcome to it as to the light and heat of the sun. He did not refuse it to his own use, for the going out of virtue from him, for he is an overflowing Fountain.

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

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

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

V. The preparatives for the raising of her to life again. 1. The choice Christ made of witnesses, that should be employed to bear witness. And he took Peter and James, and John, that were called the Tresveneres, or three, Diabolicus. He took none with him but Peter, and James, and John, to whom he had given a particular commission. That he was most intimate with, designing these three, with the parents, to be the only spectators of the miracle, they being a competent number to attest the truth of it. 2. The check he gave to the mourners; They all wept, and bewailed her; for, it seems, she was a very agreeable, hopeful child, and dear not only to the parents, but to all the neighbours. But Christ bid them not weep; For she is not dead, but is fast asleep. For she was dead, and is asleep: but the event was very different, that she was not dead for good and all, but that she should shortly be raised to life, so that it would be to her friends, as if she had been but a few hours asleep. But it is applicable to all that die in the Lord; therefore we should not sorrow for them, as those that have no hope, because death is but a sleep to them, not only as it is a rest from all the toils of the days of time, but as there will be a resurrection, a waking and rising again to all the glories of the days of eternity. This was a comfortable word which Christ said to these mourners, yet they wickedly ridiculed it, and laughed him to scorn for it; here was a pearl cast before swine. They were ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament, who bantered it as an absurd thing to call death a sleep; yet this good came out of that evil, that they were the witnesses of a wonderful miracle. For they knew who was dead, they were certain of it, and therefore nothing less than a divine power could restore her to life. We find not any answer that he made them; but he soon explained himself, I hope to their conviction, so that they would never again laugh at any word of his. But he put them all out; (v. 54.) they were unworthy to be the witnesses of this wonderful wonder; they who in the midst of their mourning were so miserably disposed, as to laugh at him for what he said, would, it may be, have found something to laugh at in what he did, and therefore are justly shut out.

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

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The commission Christ gave his twelve apostles to go, for some time, and preach the gospel, and to verify it by miracles. (v. 1-6.) Herod's terror at the growing greatness of our Lord Jesus. (v. 7-9.) III. The apostles' return to Christ, his retirement with them into a place of solitude; the great resort of people to them, notwithstanding, and his ending of five thousand and more with five loaves and two fishes. (v. 10-17.) IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning himself, and his own sufferings for them, and theirs for him, v. 18-21. V. Christ's transfiguration, v. 22-28. VI. The cure of a leper child, v. 37-42. VII. The repeated notice Christ gave his disciples of his approaching sufferings, v. 43-45. VIII. His account to his disciples of his of his transfiguration, v. 46-48; and to their reproving of John the Baptist. (v. 49-50.) IX. The rebuke he gave them for an over-due resentment of an allusion given by him of a village of the Samaritans, v. 51-56. X. The answers he gave to several that were inclined to follow him, but not considerately, or not zealously and heartily so inclined, v. 57-62.

1. THEN he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. 3. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, nor bread, neither money: neither have two coats apiece. 4. And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. 5. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet, for a testimony against them. 6. And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. 7. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some that John was risen from the dead; 8. And of some, That Elias had appeared; and of others, That one of the old prophets was risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

We have here,

1. The method Christ took to spread his gospel; to diffuse and enforce the light of it. He had travelled about himself, preaching and healing; but he could be only in one place at a time, and therefore now he sent his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were pretty well instructed in the nature of the dispensation, and able to instruct others, and to deliver to them what they had received from the Lord. Let them disperse themselves, some one way, and some another, to preach the kingdom of God, as it was now about to be set up by the Messiah; to bring people acquainted with the spiritual nature and tendency of it, and to persuade them to come into the interests and measures of it. For, without the confirming of their doctrine, because it was new and surprising, and to many of them it had been taught by the scribes and Pharisees, and because so much depended upon men's receiving or not receiving it, he empowered them to confirm it by miracles; (v. 1, 2.) He gave them authority over all devils, to possess them, and cast them out, though ever so numerous, so subtle, so fierce, so obstinate. Christ designed a total rout and ruin to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore gave them power over all devils. He authorized and appointed them likewise to cure diseases, and to heal the sick, which would make them welcome wherever they came, and not only convince people's judgments, but gain their affections.

This was their commission. Now observe,

1. What Christ directed them to do, in prosecution of this commission at this time, when they were not to go far or be out long. (1.) They must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to people's esteem by their outward appearance. Now that they begin to set up for themselves, they must have no dress, nor study to make any other figure than what they made while they followed him; they must go as they were, and not change their clothes, or so much as put on a pair of new shoes. (2.) They must depend upon Providence, and the kindness of their friends, to furnish them with what was convenient for them. They must not take with them either bread or money, and yet believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples aby of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to expect them. Yet St. Paul saw cause not to go by this rule, when he laboured with his hands rather than be burdensome. (3.) They must not change their lodgings, as suspecting that God had provided for them better, and therefore were weary of them; they have no reason to be so, for the ark is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment; (v. 4.) "Wherever house we enter into, there abide, that people may know where to find you; that your friends may know you are not backward to serve them, and your enemies may know you are not ashamed or afraid to face them: there abide, till you depart out of that city; stay with those you are used to." (4.) They must put on authority, and speak warning to those who refused them, as well as comfort to those that received them; (v. 5.) "If there be any place that will not entertain you, if the magistrates deny you admission, and threaten to treat you as vagrants, leave them, do not force yourselves
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upon them, nor run yourselves into danger among them, but at the same time bind them over to the judgment of God for it; shake off the dust of your feet for a testimony against them, that will, as it were, be produced in evidence against them, that the messengers of the gospel had been among them, to make them a fair offer of grace and peace, for this dust they left behind there; so that when they perish at last in their infidelity, this will lay and bend the heads of their own heads. Shake off the dust of your feet, as much as to say, you abandon their city, and will have no more to do with them."

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

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

1. The various speculations it raised among the people, who, though they thought not rightly, yet could not but think honourably of our Lord Jesus, and that he was an extraordinary Person, one come from the other world; that either John Baptist, who was lately prosecuted and slain for the cause of God, or one of the old prophets, that had been prosecuted and slain long since in that cause, was risen again, to be recompensed for their sufferings by this honour put upon them; or that Elias, who was taken alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, had appeared as an exception in the midst of the age; Acts 1. 8. 10. 11. What shall I do now? saith Herod. "John have I beheaded, but who is this? Is he carving on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not: John did no miracle, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John." Note, Those who oppose God, will find their eyes opened to the work of the Lamb, and the eye of the Lord their God, shall never leave him without witness. "What shall I do now?" saith Herod. "John have I beheaded, but who is this? Is he carving on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not: John did no miracle, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John." Note, Those who oppose God, will find their eyes opened to the work of the Lamb, and the eye of the Lord their God, shall never leave him without witness.

2. The great perplexity it created in the mind of Herod: When he had heard of all that was done by Christ, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he was ready to conclude with them that John was risen from the dead. He thought he had got clear of John, and should be never more troubled with him, but, it seems, he is mistaken; either John is come to life again, or there is another in his spirit and power, for God will never leave himself without witness. What shall I do now? saith Herod. "John have I beheaded, but who is this? Is he carving on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not: John did no miracle, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John." Note, Those who oppose God, will find their eyes opened to the work of the Lamb, and the eye of the Lord their God, shall never leave him without witness.

3. The aversion it excited in the hearts of the people: "How should I do?" say they. "Is the Messiah come? Is he in the city? Is he here? Is he near us?" Note, When God appears, he brings out all his enemies, to cast a thing in the way and in the face of him that is despised; and this is the work of the Lamb, to lay the people's sins on Jesus, and to deliver him out of the hand of his enemies. Note, When Christ is come, all his enemies are come against him; and it is as if the Lord Jesus had said to the Lord God, "Behold the reproach of them that reproached thee, which despised thee, and said, Where is the word of his prophecy? Where is the sign of him that the Lord sent in our days?" And in answer to it, the Lord said, "It is done." Note, When God appears, he brings out all his enemies, to cast a thing in the way and in the face of him that is despised; and this is the work of the Lamb, to lay the people's sins on Jesus, and to deliver him out of the hand of his enemies. Note, When Christ is come, all his enemies are come against him; and it is as if the Lord Jesus had said to the Lord God, "Behold the reproach of them that reproached thee, which despised thee, and said, Where is the word of his prophecy? Where is the sign of him that the Lord sent in our days?"

4. The rage it excited in the minds of the people: "Let him be destroyed!" say they. "Let him go and tell him. Probably because he thought it below him, either to go to him, or to send for him; he had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for having to do with any more such reprovers of sin. He desired to see him, but we do not find that ever he did, till he was by him as a county, and then he and his men of war set him at saught, Luke 23. 11. Had he prosecuted his convictions now, and gone to see him, who knows but a happy change might have been wrought in him? But, delaying it now, his heart was hardened, and when he did see him, he was as much prejudiced against him as any other.

10. And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place. 13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes: except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14. (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes; and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of the fragments that remained to them twelve baskets. We have here,

1. The account which the twelve gave their Master of the success of their ministry. They were not sent with meat, but sent to gather meat. But they returned, and told him all that they had done, as became servants who were sent on an errand. They told him what they had done, that, if they had done any thing amiss, they might mend it next time.

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

III. The result of the people to him, and the kind reception he gave them. They followed him, though it was in a desert place; for that is no desert where Christ is. And though they hereby disturbed the repose he designed here for himself and his disciples, yet he welcomed them, v. 11. Note, Pious zeal may excuse a little rudeness; it did with Christ, and should with us. Though they came unseasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for. He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, the laws of that kingdom with which they must be bound,
and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed. 2. He healed them that had need of healing, and made them application to him. Though the disease was ever so inveterate, and incurable by the physicians, though the patients were ever so poor and mean, yet Christ healed them. There is healing in Christ for all that need it, whether for soul or body. Christ hath still a power over bodily diseases, and heals his people that need healing. Sometimes he sees that we need the ark, he is the good of our souls, more than the hand that feeds, or the cure of our bodies; and then we must be willing for a season, because there is need to be in heaven, but when he sees that we need healing, we shall have it. He was his servant, to heal the saints of all diseases. He heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and for each what their case calls for; a relief for every exigence.

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

Let us only observe out of it,
1. Those who diligently attend upon Christ in the way of duty, and therein deny, or expose themselves, or are made to forget themselves, and their outward condition; they are fed by Christ, for his house, they are taken under his particular care, and may depend upon Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing.

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

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

4. All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular, orderly manner; Make them sit down by fifties in a company; With the five loaves and two fishes, Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat, and the easier computation of the number of the guests.

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

6. The blessing of Christ will make a little to go a great way, and the little that the righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for all, so there is enough for each. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken, to assure us that in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to spare. We are not straitened, or stinted, in him.

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

In these verses, we have Christ discoursing with his disciples about the great things that pertained to the kingdom of God; and one circumstance of this discourse is taken notice of here, which we had not in the other evangelists—that Christ was alone praying, and his disciples with him, when he entered into this discourse. 18, 19. Observe, 1. Though Christ had much public work to do, yet he found some time to be alone in private, for converse with himself, with his Father, and with his disciples. 2. When Christ was alone, he was praying. It is good for us to improve our solitude for devotion, that, when we are alone, we may not be alone, but may have the Father with us. 3. When Christ was alone praying, his disciples were with him, to join with him in his prayer; so that this was a family-prayer. Housekeepers ought to pray with their households, parents with their children, masters with their servants, teachers and tutors with their scholars and pupils. 4. Christ prayed with them before he examined them, that they might be directed and encouraged to answer him by his prayers for them. Those we give instructions to, we should put up prayers for, and with. He discourses with them, 1. Concerning himself; and enquires, 1. What the people said of him? Who say the people that I am? Christ knew better than they did, but would have his disciples made sensible by the mistakes of others concerning him, how happy they were, that were led into the knowledge of him, and of the truth concerning him. We should take notice of the ignorance and errors of others, that we may be the more thankful to him who has manifested
himself to us, and not unto the world, and may pity them, and do what we can to help them, and to teach them better.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. We must prepare ourselves for the salvation and happiness of our souls before any secular concern whatsoever. Reckon upon it, (1.) That he, who, to preserve his liberty or estate, his power of preference, nay, or to save his life, denies Christ and his truths, wilfully wrongs his conscience, and sins against God, will be, not only not a saver, but an unspacious loser, in the issue, when profit and loss come to be balanced; (2.) that will save his life upon these terms, will lose v, will lose that which is of infinitely more value, his precious soul. (2.) We must firmly believe also, that if we lose our lives for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall save them to our unspacious advantage; for it shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have it again a new and eternal life. (3.) That the gain of all the world, if we should forsake Christ and fail in with the interest of the world, would be so far from countervailing the eternal loss of the soul, that it would be proportioned to it, v. 25. If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in the world, by denying Christ, yet, when by so doing, we lose ourselves to all eternity, and are cast away at last, what good will our worldly gain do us? Observe, In Matthew and Mark the dreadful issue is a man's losing his own soul, here it is losing himself; which plainly intimates that our souls are ourselves. Animum eumque est quisque—The soul is the man; and it is well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain that we are undone; the body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed. (4.) The end of these things was to show Peter his value, who had been called by the voice of the loud and the strong; he was so precious, that he was worth more than ten thousand pieces of silver; for he was damaged; or if he be punished; si mulctetur—If he have a mulct put upon his soul by the righteous sentence of Christ, whose cause and interest he has treacherously deserted; if it be adjudged a forfeiture of all his blessedness, and the forfeiture be taken, where is his gain? What is his hope?

3. We must therefore never be ashamed of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for our faithful adherence to him and it. For, (v. 26.) Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed and justly. When the service and honour of Christ called for his testimony and agency, he denied them, because the interest of Christ was a despised interest, and every where spoken against; and therefore he can expect nothing but contempt from the world. The tree that falls for Christ's appearance on his behalf, Christ will be ashamed to own such a cowardly, worldly, sneaking spirit, and will say, "He is none of mine, he belongs not to me." As Christ had, so his cause has, a state of humiliation and exaltation. They, and they only, that are willing to suffer with it, when it suffers, shall reign with it, when it reigns; but those that cannot find in their hearts to share with it in its disgrace, and to say, If this be to vile, I will be yet more yile, shall certainly have no share with it in its triumphs. Observe here, how Christ, to support himself and his followers under present disgraces, speaks magnificently of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he endured the cross, despising the shame. (1.) He shall come in his own glory. This was not mentioned in the former account of the glory of the Mediator, all that glory which the Father restored to him, which he had with God he fore the worlds were, which he had deposited and put in pledge, as it were, for the accomplishing of his undertaking, and demanded up again, when he had gone through it: Now, O Father, glorify thou me, John 17. 4. 5. He shall come in all that glory which the Father conferred upon him when he himself set him at his own right hand, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church; in all the glory that is due to him, as the Assister of the glory of God, and the Author of the glory of all the saints. This is his own glory. (2.) He shall come in his Father's glory. The Father will judge the world by him, having
committed all judgment to him; and therefore will publicly own him in the judgment, as the Brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person.

3. He shall come in the glory of the holy angels. They shall all attend him, and minister to him, and add every thing they can to the lustre of his appearance. What a figure will the blessed Jesus make in that day! Do not believe that we should never be ashamed of his name or words now.

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

28. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was made white and glistening.

30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias:

34. While he spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

36. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

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

1. Here is one circumstance of the narrative that seems to differ from the other two evangelists that related it. They said that it was six days after the foregoing sayings, Luke saith that it was about eight days after, that is, it was that day seven might; six whole days passing, and it was the eighth day.

Some think that it was the same night that Christ was transfigured, because the disciples were sleeping, as in his agony, and in the night his appearance in splendour would be the more illustrious; in the night, the computation of the time would be the more doubtful and uncertain; probably, in the night, between the seventh and eighth day, and so about eight days.

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

1. We are here told that Christ had this honour put upon him when he was praying; He went up into the mountain to pray, as he frequently did; (v. 28.) and as he prayed he was transfigured; when Christ humbled himself to pray, he was thus exalted. He knew before, that this was designed for him at this time; and therefore seeks it by prayer. Christ engaged himself in the favours that were purposed for him, and prepared himself to receive them.

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

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

4. We are here told what was the subject of the discourse between Christ and the two great prophets of the Old Testament; They spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, (ζητηθήτω γὰρ—his exodus, his departure; that is, his death. 1.) The death of Christ is here called his exit, his going out, his leaving of the world. Moses and Elias spake of it to him under that notion, to reconcile him to it, and to make the foretold death of the Son of God more easy to his human nature. The death of the saints is their exodus, their departure out of the Egypt of this world, their release out of a house of bondage. Some think that the ascension of Christ is included here in his departure, for the departure of Israel out of Egypt was a departure in triumph, so was his when he went from earth to heaven. (2.) This departure of his he must accomplish, for thus it was designed in the counsel of God, and could not be altered. (3.) He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, though his residence was mostly in Galilee; for his most, sinful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the sanhedrim sat, that took upon them to judge of prophets. (4.) Moses and Elias spake of this, to intimate that the
sufferings of Christ, and his entrance into his glory, were what Moses and the prophets had spoken of; see Luke 24. 26, 27. 1 Pet. 1. 11. (5.) Our Lord Jesus, even in his transfiguration, was willing to enter into a discourse concerning his death and sufferings; to teach us, that meditations on death, as it is our departure from this world, are never unmournful, but in a special manner sensible when at any time we are advanced, lest we should be lifted up above measure. In our greatest glories on earth, let us remember that here we have no continuing city.

3. We are here told, which we were not before, that the disciples were heavy with sleep; (v. 32.) which is not mentioned before. James and John were drowsy, and inclined to sleep; either it was late, or they were weary, or had been disturbed in their rest the night before; or perhaps a charming composing air, or some sweet and melodious sounds, which disposed them to soft and gentle slumbers, were a preface to the vision; or perhaps it was owing to a sinful carelessness; when Christ was at prayer with them, they did not regard his prayer as they should have done, and to purpose that they were to be left to sleep on now, when he began to be transfigured, and so slipt an opportunity of seeing how that work of wonder was wrought. These three were now asleep, when Christ was in his glory, as afterwards they were, when he was in his agony; see the weakness and frailty of human nature, even in the best, and what need they have of the grace of God to perfect their work. Christ only knew, and not the disciples, one would think, than the glories and the agonies of their Master, and both in the highest degree; and yet neither the one nor the other would serve to keep them awake. What need have we to pray to God for quickening grace, to make us not only alive but lively? Yet that they might be competent witnesses of this sign from heaven, to those that demanded one, after a while they recovered themselves, and became perfectly awake; and then they took an exact view of all those glories, so that they were able to give a particular account, as we find one of them doth, of all that passed when they were with Christ in the holy mount, 2 Pet. 1. 17.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In this narrative here, observe,

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

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

3. How deplorable the case of the child was, v. 39. He was under the power of an evil spirit, that took him; and diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes; when the fit seized him, without any warning given, he suddenly cried out, and many a time his shrieks had pierced the heart of his tender father. This
malicious spirit took him, and bruised him, and departed not from him, but with great difficulty, and at a deadly glance at parting. O the afflicting of the afflicted in this world! And what mischief doth Satan do, where he gets possession! But happy they that have access to Christ!

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

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

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

We may observe here,

1. The impression which Christ's miracles made upon them: they beheld them; (v. 43.) They were all amazed at the mighty power of God, which they could not but see in all the miracles Christ wrought. Note, The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that are wrought by the hand of the Lord Jesus: for he is the power of God, and his name is, Wonderful. Their wonder was universal; they wondered every one; the causes of it were universal; they wondered at all things which Jesus did; all his actions had something uncommon and surprising in them.

11. The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his approaching sufferings; The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men, wicked men, men of the lowest character; they shall be permitted to abuse him, and thrust him out of his place, which is expressed by the other evangelists; They shall kill him. But that which is peculiar here, is, 1. The connexion of this with what goes next before, of the admiration with which the people were struck at beholding of Christ's miracles; (v. 43.) While they all wondered at all things which Jesus did, he said this to his disciples. They had heard of Christ's temporal kingdom, and he should reign, and they with him, in secular pomp and power, and how they thought that this mighty power of his would easily effect the thing, and his interest gained by his miracles in the people would contribute to it; and therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, takes this occasion to tell them again what he had told them before, that he was so far from having men delivered into his hands, that he must be delivered into the hands of men; so far from making in heaven, that they must die in disgrace; that his miracles, and the interest he has by them gained in the hearts of the people, will not be able to prevent it. 2. The solemn preface with which it is introduced; "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; take special notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; let not the notions you have of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, stop your ears against it, nor make you unwilling to believe it. Admit what I say, and submit to it." Let it sink down into your hearts: so the Syriac and Arabic read it. The word of Christ does us no good, unless we let it sink down into our heads and hearts. 3. The unaccountable stupidity of the disciples, with reference to this prediction of Christ's sufferings. It was said in Mark, They understood not that saying, it was plain enough; but they would not understand it in the literal sense, because it agreed not with their notions; and they did not consider the fitness of the case, to ask him if not, through the weakness of faith and the power of prejudice. We cannot think that it was in mercy hid from them, lest they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow at the prospect of it; but that it was a paradox, because they made it against themselves. 33 Then the disciples came to him and said, Lord, art thou here to reign, to establish our power and authority in the world? 46 The expectation to be grasped in this world, commonly aim high, and nothing will serve them short of being greatest; this expresses them to a great deal of temptation and trouble, which they are safe from, that are content to be little, to be least, to be less than the least. 2. Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts; (v. 47.) He perceived their thoughts; they are words to him, and whisperings are loud cries. It is a good reason why we should keep up a strict government of our thoughts, because Christ takes a strict cognizance of them.
3. Christ will have his disciples to aim at that honour which is to be obtained by a quiet and condescending humility, and not at that which is to be obtained by a restless and aspiring ambition. Christ took a child, and set him by him, (v. 47. for he always expressed a tenderness and kindness for little children;) and he proposed this child to them for an example. (1.) Let them be of the tenderest of this child, humble and quiet, and not advance themselves nor daily walk, nor grandeur, or high titles, but as he dead to them as this child; let them bear no more malice to their rivals and competitors than this child did. Let them be willing to be the least, if that would contribute anything to their usefulness, to stoop to the meanest office whereby they might do good. (2.) Let them assure themselves that this was the way to preeminent; for this would recommend them to the esteem of their brethren: they that loved Christ, would therefore receive them in his name, because they did most resemble him; and they would likewise recommend themselves to his favour, for Christ would take the kindnesses done to them as done to himself; Whosoever shall receive one such child, a preacher of the gospel that is of such a disposition as this, he placed his respect among, and he receiveth me, and whatsoever receiveth me in such a minister receiveth him that sent me: and what greater honour can any man attain to in this world than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him? This honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great, that are least among them.

IV. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for discouraging one that honoured him and served, but was not of their communion, not only not one of the twelve, or one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associated with them, or attended on them, but upon occasional hearing of Christ, believed in him, and made use of his name with faith and prayer in a serious manner, for the casting out of devils. Now, 1. This man they rebuked and restrained; they would not let him pray and preach, though it was to the honour of Christ, though it did good to men and weakened Satan's kingdom, because he did not follow Christ with them: he separated from their church, was not ordained as they were, paid them no respect, nor gave them the right hand of fellowship. Now if ever any society of Christians in this world, that are not silenced and restrained by their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; and yet, 2. Jesus Christ chid them for what they did, and warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be the successors of the apostles; * Forbid him not, (v. 50.)* but rather encourage him, for he is carrying on the same design that you are, though, for reasons best known to himself, he doth not follow with you; and he will meet you in the same end, though he do not accompany you in the same way. You do well, to do as you do, but it doth not therefore follow, that he doth ill, to do as he doth, and that you do well to put him under an interdict, for he that is not against us, is for us, and therefore ought to be countenanced by us. We need not lose any of our friends, while we have so fine, so many enemies: and if a man be in faithful followers of Christ, and, as such, may be accepted of him, though they do not follow with us, See Mark 9. 33, 39. * What a great deal of mischief to the church, even from those that boast of relation to Christ, and pretend to envy for his sake, would be prevented, if this passage of story were but duly considered!*

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

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

I. The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, v.

51. When the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. Observe, 1. There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foretaste of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way, that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short. 2. When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them, and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be received up into glory, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spake of his death as his departure out of this world, which was to be the commencement of his further service, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very desirable. All good Christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being received up, to be with Christ where he is; and when the time of their being received up is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh. 3. On this prospect of the joy set before them, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went directly to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and con- raptly, though he knew the things which should befall him there. He did not fail, nor was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should he not only justified, but glorified, (Isa. 50. 7.) not only not run down, but received up. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ; we draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service, who steadfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.
II. The rudeness of the Samaritans in a certain village, (not named, nor deserving to be so,) who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bate in their town, though his way lay through it. Observe here, 1. How civil he was to them; He sent messengers before his face, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his followers. 2. How he commanded, that he would not give offence, or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some, to make ready for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise. 3. How uncivil they were to him; (v. 53.) They did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have paid for the services they had done him; and if they had done them good, he would have done them bad, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, John 4. 41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the reason was, because his face was as though he would do them some observances, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship—whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sechar; see John 4. 20. And so hot was the controversy between them, that the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor they with them, John 4. 4. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no, not when they went up to the feasts, for if that had been their constant practice, Christ would not have attempted it; and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem, any other way than through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated Teacher, for owning and adorning to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, they hoped, would have driven him to come and worship at their temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility, which, probably, they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

III. The resentment which James and John expressed of this affront, v. 54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village; *Lord,* say they, *give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to frighten them only, but to consume them.* Here indeed they showed, 1. A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned to them, yet they, even from a word's speaking, fetch fire from heaven; 6:22, &c.—Wilt thou that we speak the word, and the thing will be done. 2. A great zeal for the honour of their Master; they took it very ill, that he who did good wherever he came, and found hearty welcome, should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of palsy Samaritans; they could not think of it without indignation, that their Master should be left without lodging, notwithstanding to their Master's good-will and purpose, they would not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave; Wilt thou that we do it? 4. A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them; it is doing as Elias did; they would not have thought of such a thing, if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2 Kings 1. 10, 12. They thought that this precedent would be their warrant; so apt are we to misuse the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel. But though there was something right in what they said, yet there was much amiss. (1.) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been in the like manner affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury. (2.) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and it was perhaps a more tender hand that he should have used; and forbidden his disciples to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans, (Matt. 10. 5.) and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others, who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him. (3.) Perhaps it was only some few of the town, that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had heard of Christ's intention, had come to him, and perhaps had gone to meet him, and wished to know him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked? (4.) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for fire from heaven, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any sign from heaven when they demanded it; (Matt. 16. 1, 2.) and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called Boanerges—Sons of thunder; (Mark 3. 17.) and will not that serve them, but they must be sons of lightning too? (5.) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprobation against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved: but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests, that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but though the place was the same, the times were altered.

The reproof he gave to James and John for their fierce, furious zeal; (v. 55.) He turned with a just displeasure, and rebuked them; for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shows them in particular their mistake; Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; that is, (1.) *Ye are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition ye are of; you have been so much under the influence of their spirit of passion and revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master.* Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it. (2.) *Ye do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, ye should be of.* Surely ye are yet to learn, though ye have been so long learning, what the spirit of Christ and Christianity is. Ye have been taught not to love unreasonably, and to bless them that curse you, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? Ye know not how contrary your disposition herein is, to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. Ye are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in
with a proclamation of peace on earth, and good-will toward men, to whom you ought to accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose yourselves."

2. He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion; (v. 56.) The Son of man is not himself come, and therefore doth not send you abroad, to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He designeth not the destruction of sin by law and severity, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues, and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to stay all enmities, not to foster them. These are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel, that are for unchristianizing and revenging men and perishing all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came not only to save men's souls, but to save their lives too; witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been mortal; by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples do good too, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none; to draw men into his church with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, but not think to drive men into it with a rod of violence, or the scourge of the tongue.

V. His retreat from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road, (which was as free to him as to others his neighbours,) would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably went to another village, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If so be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

57. And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

We have here an account of three several persons that offered themselves to follow Christ, and the answers that Christ gave to each of them. The two former we had an account of, Matt. 19. 21.

I. Here is one that is extremely forward to follow Christ immediately, but seems to have been too rash, hasty, and inconsiderate, and not to have sitten down, and counted the cost.

4. He makes Christ a very large promise; (v. 57.) As they went in the way, going up to Jerusalem, where Christ would first appear in his glory, one said to him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. This must be the resolution of all that will be found Christ's disciples indeed; they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, (Rev. 14. 4.) though it be through fire and water, to prisons and deaths.

2. Christ gives him a necessary caution, not to promise himself great things in the world, in following him, but, on the contrary, to count upon poverty and persecution; for the Son of man has not where to lay his head.

We may look upon this, (1.) As setting forth the very low condition that our Lord Jesus was in, in this world. He not only wanted the delights and ornaments that great princes have, but even such accommodations for mere necessity as the fowls have, and the birds of the air. See what a depth of poverty Christ was in, and how far he was from the pleasures of this world. He gave in his conversation towards us, not only to the meanest of our nature, but to the meanest condition in that nature, to testify his love to us, and to teach us a holy contempt of the world, and of the great things in it, and a continual regard to another world. Christ was thus poor, to sanctify and sweeten poverty to his people; the apostles had no certain dwelling-place, (2 Cor. 4. 11.) which they might the better bear, when they knew their Master had no where to lay his head. 2 Sam. 11. 11. We may well be content to fare as Christ did. (2.) As proposing this to the consideration of those who intend to be his disciples. If we mean to follow Christ, we must lay aside the thoughts of great things in the world, and not reckon upon making any thing more than heaven by our religion, as we must resolve not to take up with any thing less. Let us not go about to compound the profession of christianity with secular advantages; Christ has put them asunder, let us not think of joining them together; on the contrary, we must expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, must deny ourselves, and take up our cross. Christ tells this man what he must count upon if he followed him, to be cold and uneasy, to fast hard, be in conflict; and if he could not submit to that, let him not pretend to follow Christ. This word sent him back, for ought that appears, but it will be no discouragement to any that know what there is in Christ and heaven to set in the scale against this.

II. Here is another, that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he bears a day, v. 59. To this man Christ made the case very plain to him, Follow me. He that proposed the thing of himself, fled off when he heard of the difficulties that attended it; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, yet, as it should seem, afterward yielded; so true was that of Christ, You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, John 15. 16. It is not of him that will doth, and of him that runneth, (as the Jews and papists said,) but of him that believeth, (as the apostles and church of Christ.) If God that showeth mercy, then givest the call, and maketh it effectual, as to this man here. Observe,

1. The excuse he made; "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." I have an aged father at home, who cannot live long, and will need me while he does live; let me go, and attend to him, until he is dead, and I shall follow thee. Let me do what I can for him, and then I will do any thing. We may here see three temptations, by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ,
which therefore we should guard against. (1.) We are	
tempted to rest in a discipleship at large, 
in which we may be at ease, and may take 
upon ourselves to be steady and constant. 
(2.) We are tempted to defer the doing of 
that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off 
to some other time. When we have not clear of such 
a care and difficulty, when we have despatched 
such a business, raised an estate to such a pitch, 
then we will begin to think of being religious; 
and so we are counseled of all our time, by being counseled of 
the devil, who is our adversary. (3.) We are tempted 
that our duty to our relations will excuse us from 
our duty to Christ: it is a plausible excuse indeed, 
"Let me go, and bury my father; let me take care 
of my family, and provide for my children, and then 
I will think of serving Christ," whereas the kingdom 
of God and the righteousness thereof must be sought 
and minded in the first place.

2. Christ’s answer to it; (v. 60.) "Let the dead 
bury their dead." Suppose (which is not likely) that 
there were none but the dead to bury their dead, 
or none but those who are themselves aged and dying, 
who are as good as dead, and fit for no other service, 
yet thou hast other work to do; go thou, and preach 
the kingdom of God." Not that Christ would have 
his followers or his ministers to be unnatural, 
our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every 
relation of life and to regard our parents. 
But we must not make these offices an excuse from 
our duty to God. If the nearest and dearest relation 
we have in the world, stand in our way to keep us from 
Christ, it is necessary that we have a zeal that 
will make us forget father and mother, as Levi did, 
Matt. 19. 9. This disciple was called to be a minister, 
and therefore must not entangle himself with the 
affairs of the world; 2 Tim. 2. 4. And it is a rule, 
Then, farewell or no farewell, we must not, 
consult with flesh and blood, Gal. 1. 15. 16. 
No excuses must be admitted against a present 
obedience to the call of Christ.

III. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, 
but he must have a little time to talk with his friends 
about it.

Observe, 
A frequent request for a dispensation; (v. 61.) He 
said, "Lord, I will follow thee; I design no other. 
I am determined to do it; but let me first go bid 
them farewell, that are at home." This seemed 
reasonable; it was what Elisha desired when Elijah 
called him, "Let me kiss my father and my mother; 
and it was allowed him: but the ministry of the 
gospel is preferable, and the service of it more 
urgent than that of the prophets; and therefore here 
it would not be allowed. Suffer me, saith he, 
Matt. 4: 19. Let me go, and set in order 
my household affairs, and give direction concerning 
them; so some understand it. Now that which 
was amiss in this, is, (1.) That he looked upon his 
following of Christ as a melancholy, troublesome, 
dangerous thing; it was to him as if he were going to 
die; and therefore he must take leave of all his 
friends, never to see them again, or never with any 
comfort. But being Christ’s followers, he must be 
more a comfort and blessing to them than if he 
had continued with them. (2.) That he seemed 
to have his worldly concerns more upon his heart 
than he ought to have, and than would consist with 
a close attendance to his duty as a follower of Christ. 
He seemed to hanker after his relations and family- 
concerns, and he could not part easily from them, 
but they stuck to him. It may be, he had hiddes 
them, for it was death to lose them, and he could not 
stand till farewell, and therefore he must bid them farewell 
more once. For they are at home at my house. (3.) 
That he was willing to enter into a temptation from 
his purpose of following Christ. To go bid them 
farewell that were at home at his hour, would be 
to expose himself to the strongest solicitations ima 
...
and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city which receiveth us, we wipe it off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for Sodom than for that city. 13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples, two and two, into divers parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his entertainment. This is not taken notice of by the other evangelists; but the instructions here given them are much the same with those given to the twelve. Observe,

I. Their number; they were seventy. As in the choice of twelve apostles Christ had an eye to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve princes of those tribes, so here he seems to have an eye to the seventy elders of Israel. So many went up with Moses and Aaron to the mount, and saw the glory of the God of Israel; (Exod. 24. 1, 9) and so many were afterward chosen to be assisting to Moses in the government, in order to which the Spirit of prophecy came unto them, Numb. 11. 24, 25. The twelve wells of water, and the seven palm-trees that were at Elim, were a figure of the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples. (Exod. 15. 27.) They were seven elders of the Jews, that they were chosen by lot, and by lot, and seven priests, and by lot, and seven priests, and seven kings of Israel, and seven consecrated persons in the Old Testament into Greece, whose translation is thence called the Septuagint. The great Sanhedrim consisted of this number. Now,

1. We are glad to find that Christ had so many followers fit to be sent forth; his labour was not altogether in vain, though he met with much opposition. Note, Christ's interest is a growing interest, and his followers, like Israel in Egypt, though afflicted, shall multiply. These seventy, though they did not attend him so closely and constantly as the twelve did, yet they were the constant hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and believed in him. Those three mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, might have been of these seventy, if they would have applied themselves in good earnest to their business. These seventy were those whom Peter speaks of as the men which carried forward the truth that the Lord was about to spread in and out among us, and were part of the one hundred and twenty there spoken of, Acts 1. 15, 21. Many of those that were the companions of the apostles, whom we read of in the Acts and the Epistles, we may suppose, were of these seventy disciples.

2. We are glad to find there was a work for so many ministers, hearers for so many preachers; thus the ground was level, the soil was turned to fruitful ground, and the savour of the leaven to diffuse itself in the meal, in order to the leavening of the whole.

III. Their work and business: He sent them two and two, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. If one fall, the other will help to raise him up. He sent them, not to all the cities of Israel, as he did the twelve, but only to every city and place where he himself would come, (v. 1.) to his labourers: and we must suppose, though it be not recorded, that Christ did soon after come to all those places whither he now sent them, though he could stay but a little while in a place. Two things they were ordered to do, the same that Christ did wherever he came; 1. They must heal the sick, (v. 9.) heal them in the name of Jesus, which would make people to long to see that Jesus, and ready to entertain him as a prophet and miracle-worker, and to establish the approach of the kingdom of God, its approach to them; "Tell them this, The kingdom of God is come nigh to you, and you now stand fair for an admission into it, if you will but look about you. Now is the day of your visitation, know and understand it." It is good to be made sensible of our advantages and opportunities, that we may lay hold on them. When the kingdom of God comes nigh us, it concerns us to go forth to meet it.

III. The instructions he gives them.

1. They must set out with prayer; (v. 2.) and in prayer.

1. They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must look about, and see how great the harvest was, what abundance of people there were, that wanted the help of the gospel preached to them, and were willing to receive it; nay, that had at this time their expectations raised of the coming of the Messiah and of his kingdom. There was corn ready to shed, and be lost, for want of hands to gather it in. Note, Ministers should apply themselves to their work, under a deep concern for precious souls, looking upon them as the riches of this world, which ought to be secured for Christ. They must be much concerned that the labourers were so few. The Jewish teachers were indeed many, but they were not labourers; they did not gather in souls to God's kingdom, but to their own interest and party. Note, Those that are good ministers themselves, wish that there were more good ministers, for there is work for more. It is common for tradesmen not to care how few there are of their own trade; but Christ would have the labourers in his vineyard to be much concerned that the labourers are few.

2. They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God; that he would send them forth as labourers into his harvest, who is the Lord of the harvest, and that he would send others forth; for if God send them forth, they may hope he will go along with them and give them the success due to their calling. Let them therefore say, as the prophet, (Isa. 6.) "We are the Lord's, and we will do his pleasure." It is desirable to receive our commission from God, and then we may go on boldly.

2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution: "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves; go your ways, and resolve to make the best of it. Your enemies shall be as wolves, bloody and cruel, and ready to pull you to
pieces; in their threatenings and revilings, they will be as hurling wolves to terrify you, in their persecutions of you, they will be as ravening wolves to tear you. But you must be as lambs, peaceable and patient, though made an easy prey of. It would have been very hard thus to be sent forth as sleep among wolves, if he had not enabled them with his spirit and courage.

3. They must not incumber themselves with a load of superfluous在一个 variety of things if they were going a long journey, but depend upon God and their friends to provide what was convenient for them; "Carry neither a horse for money, nor scrip nor knapsack for clothes or victuals, nor new shoes," (as before to the twelve, ch. 9. 3.) and salute no man by the way. This command Elisha gave to his servant, when he sent him to see the Shunamite’s dead child, 2 Kings 4. 29. Not that Christ would have his ministers to be rude, more to the manner of men; but, (1.) They must go as men in haste, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message, and in their way directly to those places must not hinder or retard themselves with needless ceremonials or compliments. (2.) They must go as men of business, business that relates to another world, which they must be intent in, and intent upon, and therefore must not entangle the most serious business of the Lord, with some about secular affairs. Minister verbi reg. hoc age—You are a minister of the word; attend to your office.

(3.) They must go as serious men, and men in sorrow; it was the custom of mourners, in the first seven days of their mourning, not to salute any, Job 2. 13. Christ was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and it was fit that by this and other signs his messengers should resemble him, and like wise to be respected by the calamities of mankind, which they came to relieve, and touchèd with a feeling of them.

4. They must show, not only their good-will, but God’s good-will, to all whom they came, and leave the issue and success to him that knows the heart, v. 5, 6.

(1.) The charge given them, was, Whatev­ever house they entered into, they must say, Peace be to this house. Her. [1.] They are supposed to enter into private houses; for, being not admitted into the synagogues, they were forced to preach where they could have liberty. And as their public preaching was driven into houses, so thither they carried it. Like their Master, wherever they visited, they preached from house to house, Acts 5. 42.—20. 20. Christ’s church was at first very much a church in the house. [2.] They are instructed to say, "Peace unto this house, to all under this roof, to this family, and to all that belong to it." Peace be to you, was the common form of salutation among the Jews; they must not use it in formality, according to custom, to those they meet on the way, because they must use it with solemnity, to those whose houses they entered into; "Salute no man by the way in compliment, but those into whose house ye enter, say to them, Peace be to you." (v. 13.)—(1.) They are instructed to be more than a compliment. Christ’s ministers go into all the world, to say, in Christ’s name, Peace be to you. First, We are to propose peace to all; to preach peace by Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel of peace, the covenant of peace, peace on earth, and to invite the children of men to come and take the benefit of it. Secondly, We are to pray for peace to all. We must earnestly desire the salvation of all; of all we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer; and it may be well to let them know that we do thus pray for them, and bless them in the name of the Lord.

(2.) The success was different, according to the different disposition of those they preached and prayed for. According as the inhabitants are sons of peace or not, accordingly our peace will, or will not, rest upon the house. "Receive all modum recipients.—The quality of the receiver determines the nature of the reception." (1.) You will meet with some that are the sons of peace, that by the operations of the divine grace, pursuant to the designations of the divine counsel, are ready to admit the gospel. The gospel gives them light, and they have their hearts made as it were to receive the impressions of it. Those are qualified to receive the comforts of the gospel, in whom there is a good work of grace wrought. And as to those, your peace shall find them out, and rest upon them, your prayers for them shall be heard, the promises of the gospel shall be confirmed to them, the privileges of it conferred upon them, and the fruit of both shall remain with them. "And if thine hand or thy foot shall make thee stumble, cut it off, and it shall be better for thee to go into hell, than that one foot or hand should enter into hell." (3.) You will meet with others that are no ways disposed to hear or heed your message; whole houses that have not one son of peace in them.

Now it is certain that our peace shall not come upon them, they have no part nor lot in the matter; the blessing that rests upon the sons of peace, shall never come upon the sons of Belial, nor can any expect the blessings of the gospel, if they are not fitted for them. But it shall return to us again; that is, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God, and discharged our trust. Our prayers, like David’s, shall return into our own bosom; (Ps. 55. 13.) and we shall have commission to go on in the work. Our peace shall return to us again, not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be communicated to others, to the next we meet with, that are sons of peace.

3. They must receive the kindnesses of those that did entertain them, and bid them welcome; (v. 7, 8.) Those that receive the gospel, will receive you that preach it, and give you entertainment; you must not think to raise estates, but you may depend upon a subsistence; and, (1.) Be not shu; do not suspect your welcome, not be afraid of being troublesome, but eat and drink heartily such things as they give; for whatever kindness they show you, it is but a small return for the kindness you do them in bringing the glad tidings of peace; you will deserve it, for the labourer is worthy of his hire, the labourer in the work of the ministry is so, if he be indeed a labourer; and it is not an act of charity, but of justice, in them who are taught in the word, to communicate to them that teach them. (2.) Be not afe and curious in your diet; eat and drink such things as they give, (v. 7.) such things as are not before you, v. 8. Be thankful for plain food, and do not find fault, though it be not dressed according to art. It ill becomes Christ’s disciples to be dross of dainties. As he has not tied them up to the Pharisees’ superstitions fasts, so he has not allowed them the luxurious feasts of the Epicureans. Probably, Christ here refers to the traditions of the elders about their meat, which were very severe, that none who observed them were extremely hungry. You could hardly set a dish of meat before them, but there was some scruple or other concerning it; but Christ would not have them to regard those things; but eat what was given them, asking no question for conscience-sake.

6. They must denounce the judgments of God against those who rejected them and their message; \("If you enter into a city, and they do not receive you, if there be none there declare, to the house to hearken to your doctrine, leave them, v. 10. If they will not give you welcome into their houses, do you give them warning in their streets." He orders them to do as (ch. 9. 5.) he had ordered the apostles to do; "Say to them, not with rage, or scorn, or recrimination, but with compassion to their poor, perishing souls, and
a holy dread of the ruin which they are bringing upon themselves. Even the dust of your city, which cannot be blown away, do smite off against you, v. 11.

From them do not receive any kindnesses at all, be not beholden to them; it cost that prophet of the Lord dear, who accepted a man's meat with a prophet in Bethel, 1 Kings 13. 21, 22. Tell them that you will not carry away with you the dust of their city, let them take it to themselves, for dust they are. It may be, however, for Christ's message, that they had been there according to their Master's order; tender and refusals were a discharge of their trust. But it shall be a witness against the recipients, that they would not give Christ's messengers any entertainment, no, not so much as water to wash their feet with, but they were forced to wipe off the dust. But tell them plainly, and bid them beware of it, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. He shall not offer mercy to you, if you have not the benefit of it, it is your own fault. The gospel is brought to your doors; if you shut your doors against it, your blood is upon your own head. Now that the kingdom of God is come nigh to you, if you will not come up to it, and come into it, your sin will be irresistible, and your condemnation intolerable. "

Note, The fairer offers we have of grace and life by Christ, will not be made when there is noExpanded view with a readers' perspective to see the text. A particular dream of the city wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done, which we had, Matth. 11. 20, &c. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all bordering upon the sea of Galilee, where Christ was most conversant, are the places here mentioned. [1.] They enjoyed greater privileges; Christ's mighty works were done in them, and they were all gracious works, works of mercy. They were hereby exalted to heaven, not only dignified and honoured, but put into a fair way of being happy; they were brought as near heaven as external means could bring them. [2.] God's design in favouring them was, not to bring them to repentance, but to bring them into the kingdom of heaven; for he marks and asshes, both in humiliation for the sins they had committed, and in humility, and a meek submission to God's government. [3.] Their frustrating of this design, and their receiving of the grace of God therein in vain; it is implied, that they repented not; they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ, to think the better of him, or the worse of sin. And yet all these things were infinitely more acceptable to the advantages they enjoyed. [4.] There was reason to think, morally speaking, that, if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them, and wrought the same miracles among them, that he did in these cities of Israel, they would have repented long ago, so speedily would their repentance have been, and the influence of their good works, doings, and blessings, long before the Lord had been. Now, to understand the wisdom of God, in giving of the means of grace to those who would not improve them, and denying of them to these that would, we must wait for the great day of discovery. [5.] The doom of those who thus receive the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful: they that were thus exalted, not making use of their elevation, will be thrust down to hell; thrust down with disgrace and dishonour; they will thrust in, to get into heaven, in the crowd of profilers but in vain; they shall be thrust down, to their everlasting grief and disappointment, into the lowest hell, and hell will be hell indeed to them. [6.] In the day of judgment Tyre and Sidon will fare better, and it will be more tolerable for them than for these cities.

(2.) The general rule which Christ would go by; as to those to whom he sent his ministers; he will reckon himself treacherous according as they treated his minister. Note, What is the case of the Christian religion, do in effect put a slight upon natural religion, which it is perfect of. And they who despise the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they do not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, look scornfully upon them, and turn their backs upon their ministry, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Christ sent forth the seventy disciples as he was going up to Jerusalem, to the feast of tabernacles, when he went up, not openly, but as were in secret, (John 7. 10.) having sent abroad so great a part of his strength, and had so many as he thought, where was before his return from that feast, and while he was yet at Jerusalem or Bethany, which was hard by, for there he was. (v. 38.) that they, or at least some of them, returned to him. Now here we are told,

1. What account they gave him of the success of their expedition: (v. 17.) They returned again with joy; not complaining of the fatigue of their journey, or of the opposition and discouragement.
They now understand the words, and, whatever advantages we gain, he must have all the praise; if the work be done in his name, the honour is due to his name. 2. They entertain themselves with the comfort of it, that they have not disturbed you, and that they have given no offence against you but what is given them from above; they may lose, but they cannot hurt. You may play upon the hole of the asp, for death itself shall not hurt or destroy. Is. 11. 8, 19—23, 8.

3. He directed them to return their joy into the right channel; (v. 20) Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; that they have been so, and shall be still, do not rejoice in this, only, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this only, or in this chaff, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith. Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them, that their names were written in heaven, for it is the Lamb's book of life that they are written in. All believers are, through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance, and so are enrolled among his family: now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God, is to be valued more than a power to work miracles: for we read of those who did in Christ's name cast out devils, were rejected like Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day; but they whose names are written in heaven, shall never perish; they are Christ's sheep, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a more excellent way than speaking with tongues.

4. He offered up a solemn thanksgiving to his Father, for employing such mean people as his disciples were in such humble services; (v. 21, 22) this we had before, (Matt. 11. 25—27) only here it is prefixed, that in that hour Jesus rejoiced; it was fit that particular notice should be taken of that hour, because there were so few such, for he was a Man of sorrows; in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. Note, Nothing rejoices the heart of the Lord more than the progress they have made of his kingdom, and his getting ground of Satan, by the conversions of souls to Christ. Christ's joy was a solid, substantial joy, an inward joy, he rejoiced in spirit; but his joy, like deep waters, made no noise; it was joy that a stranger did not intermeddle with; before he applied himself to thank his Father, he stirred up himself to rejoice; for as thankful praise is the genuine language of holy joy, so holy joy is the root and spring of thankful praise.

Psalms.

(1.) For what was revealed by the Father through the Son; (v. 21) I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. In all our adorations of God, we must have an eye to him, both as the Maker of heaven and earth, and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Now that which he gives thanks for is, [1.] That the counsels of God concerning mankind, the distinguishing and distinguishing of the children of men, who might be fit also to teach others, it is God that by his Son has spoken these things to us, and by his Spirit has revealed them in us; he has revealed that which had been kept secret from the beginning of the world. [2.] That they were revealed to babes, to those who were of mean parts and capacities, whose extraction and education had nothing in them noble, who were but children in understanding, of God by his Spirit elevated their faculties, and mu
ished them with this knowledge, and an ability to communicate it. We have reason to thank God, not so much for the honour he has hereby put upon the babes, as for the honour he has hereby done himself in perfecting strength out of weakness. [3.] That at the same time when he revealed them unto the babes, he hid them from the wise and prudent, the Gentile philosophers, the Jewish rabbins. He did not reveal the things of the gospel to them, nor employ them in preaching up his kingdom; thanks be to God that the apostles were not fetched from their schools. For, First, They would have been apt to mingle their notions with the doctrine of Christ, which would have corrupted it, as afterward it did the primitive church much corrupted by the Platonists' philosophy in the times of 4., 5., and 6., the Peripatetic in its latter ages, and by the Judaizing teachers at the first planting of it. Secondly, If rabbins and philosophers had been made apostles, the success of the gospel would have been ascrib'd to their learning and wit, and the force of their reasonings and eloquence; and therefore they must not be employed, lest they should have taken too much to themselves and others, who are not capable of bearing much to them: they were passed by for the same reason that Gideon's army was reduced; The head are yet too many, Judges 7. 4. Paul indeed was bred a scholar among the wise and prudent; but he became a babe when he became an apostle, and laid aside the enticing words of man's wisdom, forget the things which had been made neither new nor use of any other knowledge but that of Christ and his redemption, 1 Cor. 2. 4. [4.] That God herein acted in it by way of sovereignty; Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. If God gives his grace and the knowledge of his Son to some that are less likely, and doth not give it to others, whom we should think better able to deliver it with advantage; this must satisfy, so it pleases God, whose thoughts are infinitely above ours. He chooses to dispense the dispensing of his gospel in the hands of those who, with a divine energy will give it the setting on, rather than in theirs who with human art will give it the setting off. [2.] For what was secret between the Father and the Son, v. 22. [1.] The vast confidence that the Father puts in the Son; All things are delivered to me, and wisdom and knowledge, all power and authority; all the grace and comfort, which are intended for the chosen remnant; it is all delivered into the hand of the Lord Jesus; in him all fulness must dwell, and from him it must be derived; he is the great Trustee that manages all the concerns of God's kingdom. [2.] The good understanding that there is between the Father and the Son, and their mutual consubstantiality, such as no creature can be admitted to; Vz man knows who the Son is, nor what his mind is, but the Father, who possessed him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old; (Prov. 8. 22.) nor who the Father is, and what his counsels are, but the Son, who lay in his bosom from eternity, was by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his Delight, (Psal. 45. 7.) and he to whom the Son by the Spirit will reveal him, to and from him we all have a discovery made us of the will of God for our salvation; he here speaks of it as that which was a great pleasure to himself, and for being intrusted with which he was very thankful to his Father. 5. He told his disciples how well it was for them, that they had these things revealed to them, v. 23. 24. He himself, in the name of his Father, he turned him to his disciples, designing to make the more sensible how much it was for their happiness, as well as for the glory and honour of God, that they knew the mysteries of the kingdom, and were employed to lead others into the knowledge of them; considering, (1.) What a step it is toward something better; though the bare knowledge of these things is not saving, yet it puts us in the way of salvation; Blessed are the eyes which see the things we see. God therein blesseth them, and if it be not their own fault, it will be an eternal blessing to them. (2.) What a step it is above those that went before them, even the greatest saints, and those that were most the favourites of Heaven; Many prophets and righteous men (so it is, Matth. 13. 17. Many prophets and kings, so it is here) have desired to see and hear those things which you are daily and intimately conversant with, and have not seen and heard them. The honour and happiness of the New-Testament saints far exceed that of the prophets and kings of the Old Testament, though they also were highly favoured. The general ideas which the Old-Testament saints had, according to the intimations given them, of the graces and glories of the Messiah's kingdom, made them wish a thousand times that their lot had been reserved for these blessed days, and that they might see the substance of those things which they had but faint shadows of. Note, The consideration of the great advantages which we have in the New-Testament light, above what they had, who lived in Old-Testament times, should awaken our diligence in the improvement of it: for if it do not, it will aggravate our condemnation for the non-improvement of it.

25. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? 27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he, willing to justify himself, said, unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, Thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell
among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in, and are so here, from Christ, though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

1. We are concerned to know what that good is, which we should do in this life, in order to our attaining of eternal life. A question to this purport was proposed to the Scribes and Pharisees, or scribes, only with a design to try him; nor with a design to be instructed by him, v. 25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the Scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church, to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question. What shall I do to inherit eternal life? But it lost all its goodness, when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note. It is not enough that we would have laws from God, and to enquire into them, but we must do it with an agreeable concern. If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as a matter of discourse, especially as a matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did.

Now, this question being started, observe,

1. How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and let him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he doth not answer him according to the folly of that, but according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question, What is written in the law? How readest thou? v. 26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in points of law, and will not answer him, but will inform him; let him practice according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of eternal life.

Note. It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider what is written in the law, and what we read there. We must have recourse to our Bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ, and walk in the way that is shown us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law written, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the farther, and lasting the longer. Having it written, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that, when there is occasion, we may be able to tell what is written in the law, and how we read. To this he made appeal, by this we must try doctrines, and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our touchstone, our rule, our guide. We must have our hearts set upon it, and let there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

2. What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, which we must bind ourselves to the observance of, if we would inherit eternal life. He did not, like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but, like a good textuary, fastened upon the two first had greatest commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most stringently observed in order to the obtaining of eternal life, and which included all the rest, v. 27. (1.) We must love God with all our hearts, must look upon him as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our most love him; must pleasure ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an entire love; he must have our whole souls, and must be served with all that is in us, or thing beside him, but what we love for him, and in subjection to him.

(2.) We must love our neighbours as ourselves, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God better than ourselves. We must wish well to all, and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world, and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves, to do others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

3. Christ's approbation of what he said, v. 28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good, Christ commended; Thou hast answered right. Christ himself fastened upon those as the two great commandments of the law; (Matth. 22. 37.) both sides agreed in this. Those who do well, shall have praise of the same, and so should have a prize, and shall have a prize, for they have performed the hardest part of this work yet remains; This do, and thou shalt live; thou shalt inherit eternal life.

4. His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, This do, and thou shalt live, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he had not done this, and therefore to inquire what he should do, which way he should look, to get such a thing. This was contrary to the unanswerable argument also that he could not do this perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it; but he was willing to justify himself, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but sat, in effect, as another did, (Matth. 19. 20.) All these things have I kept from my youth.

Note. Many ask good questions with a design rather to prove that there is no such thing as a divine commandment, or that there is no such thing as the misery of sinners, rather to prove that is that which is good in them, than humbly to see what is bad in them.

11. We are concerned to know who is our neighbour; whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love. This is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might drop the former, lest Christ should have forced him, in the prosecution of it, to condemn himself, when he was resolved to justify himself. As no man said, He was willing to say nothing of it, but as to his neighbour, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule; for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words on this purport, where he saith, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles, they are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion. They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his neighbour: indeed they say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but that if they saw a Gentile in danger of death, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to save his life. Such wicked inference! did they draw from the book of laws? Are they so ignorant of a point which God had distinguished them by, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it? God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-favours to the
Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and showed the contrary by parable, that whenever we have need to receive kindness from, and find ready to show us the kindness we need, we cannot but look upon as our neighbour; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such, who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

(1.) The parable itself, which represents to us a parable that was drawn unto death: Yet he took not only his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition, (for otherwise what profit was there in his blood?) they wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at highmenmen, that have devastated themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be taken and destroyed; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

(2.) How the Levite, men of a public character and station; many, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion, (Heb. 5. 2.) who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to do good to them that were in need of it, would not do it themselves, and would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and from thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of passing and repassing of priests that way, and Levites their attendants; they came this way, and saw the dead man, and could not but see that he was dead, if he were not helped, he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but came, and looked on him; (v. 52.) but they passed by on the other side; when they saw his case, they got as far off as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, Behold, we knew not it. It is sad when those who are the best examples of charity, are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who are to display the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

(3.) How he was succeeded and relieved by a stranger, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with; this man had some humanity in him, v. 35. The priest had his heart hardened against one of his own people, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of another people; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and never took notice of the country he was of; though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man in misery, and he has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That so great love should be found in a Samaritan, was perhaps thought as great as that which Christ showed to the poor woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace.

The compassion of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, he helped." (Jam. 2. 16.) but when he drew out his soul, he reached forth his hand also to this poor needy creature, Isa. 58, 7, 10. Prov. 31. 20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was, First, He went to the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he inquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condescended with him. Secondly, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better; he bound up his wounds, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that was nearer at hand, and it was the Levite's character to have had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up; he did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as he whose heart bled with them. Thirdly, He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hinderance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste, to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose this Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. Fourthly, He took care of him in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay, Fifthly, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to defray all his expenses, and bid him that he should spend more. Two twelfths of their money was about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of content, to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and forelow, and with no pretence. Now this parable is applicable to another purpose, than that for which it was intended; and doth excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour, toward sinful, miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin hath done to us; we are by nature more than half dead, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly and completely dead without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, looks upon us, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, it passes by on the other side, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan, (and they said of him by way of reproach, He is a Samaritan,) he has com-
His and doubtless, that Tib 42, needful seems, and (2.) The Bid. She was forward was was his shew and ls;i. is o. procated. cannot of tliv notinary's, that is, leam ment, are, or Samaritan are, and not the great and populous cities of, for, as he chose heresy, so he contemnously poverty.

2. His reception at Martha's house; 1 certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, and bid him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor, that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Zos's King, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it. (2.) There were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visitcd most frequently. He loved this family, (John 11. 5.) and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the token of his love, John 14. 25. (3.) There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses when he was here upon earth. It is called Marthas house, (John 11. 8.) which was a low, and was the housekeeper. Though it was chargeable to entertain Christ, for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the expense of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service?) Nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him, especially so near Jerusalem, yet she could not at that hazard she ran for his name's sake; though there were many more, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that bid him welcome. Though Christ is everywhere spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

II. The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, v. 20. She heard his word. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he had taken his seat, and his ears before entertainment was get for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel: he presently took the chair with solemnity, for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this prize put into her hands, set herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be swift to hear. 2. She sat to hear, which denotes a close attention; her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it; not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She sat at his feet, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures: hence Paul is said to be brought up at the feet of the law. But she was sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive his word, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet, or he made his footstool; but if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

III. The care of Martha about her domestic affairs. But Mary was cumbered about much serving, (v. 40.) and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was—sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment of others, and not attentive to her own business.
of Christ and those that come with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome upon this occasion; she had not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be, when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here, an commendable, which must not be overlooked, (1) Here was a commendable respect to our Lord Jesus; for we have reason to think that it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her good will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note. Those who truly love Christ, will think that well bestowed, that is laid out for his honour. (2) Here was a commendable care of her household. The respect showed to this family among the Jews, (John 11. 19.) that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her, to lay her hand even to the service of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note. It is the duty of those who have the charge of families, to look well to the ways of their household. The affectation of state and the love of ease make many families negligent. 1. Here was something culpable; which we must take notice of too. (1.) She was for much serving; her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, φιλοκοιμητα, concerning much he dissected and perplexed by them. Care is good, and duty: but chimerical sin, and folly. (2.) She was chumbered about it; συναγομένα—she was just distracted with it. Note. Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be chumbered with them, much less dissected and perplexed by them. Care is good, and duty: but chimerical sin, and folly. (3.) She was then chumbered about much serving, when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. Note. Worldly business is then a snare to us, when it hinderers us from serving God, and getting good to our souls. 1. The complaint which Martha made to Christ against her sister Mary, for not waiting her, upon this occasion, in the business of the house, (v. 40.) “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone? Therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come help me.” New. 1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a discovery of her worldliness; it was the language of her inordinate care and tumber. She sneaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note. The irordiliny of worldly cares and pursuits is often the occasion of disturbance in families, and of strife and contention among relations. Moreover, those that are eagier upon the world themselves, are apt to blame and censure those that are not so; and while they castigate themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others by their servile dependance to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the main chance, as they call it. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him to say that she did well to be angry. Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected that he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary and Christ, and all, to care too, or else she is not pleased. Note. These are not always in the right, that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest we at any time expect that Christ would expunge, or least groundless quarrels. The cares which he casts upon his servants, he may cheerfully cast upon him, but not these which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious. 2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have been as ready to obey Christ, to hold her that she was in the right; but, instead of that, Jesus condemns her as wanting in her duty. Note. It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion, to meet with hinderances and discouragements from those that are about them; not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's fasting, and his dancing before the ark, were turned to his reproach. V. The reproach of which Christ gave to Martha for her inordinate care, v. 41. She appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful. 1. He reproved her; though he was at this time her Guest, and her fault was her over-solicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify himself in it. But in public he publicly reproved her. Note. As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and corrects. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it. Nevertheless I have something against thee. 2. When he reproved her, he called her by her name, Martha; for reproves are then most likely to do good, when they are particular, applied to particular persons, and exact, as Nathan's to David. Thou art the man. He repeated her name, Martha, Martha; he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are entangled in the cares of this life, are not easily disentangled. To them we must call again and again, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. 3. That which he reproved her for, was, her being careful and troubled about many things. He was not pleased that she should think to please him with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be sensual in using such things, so not to be selfish in being willing that others should be troubled, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the interneusess of her care, thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed by the care; and for the extensiveness of it, “about many things; thou dost groan at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and that puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve.” Note. Inordinate care and trouble about many things in this world are a common fault among Christ's disciples; they are very dispensing to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order something to fret at. 4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was, that but one thing is needful. It is a low construction which some put upon this, that, whereas as Martha was in care to provide many dishes of entertainment, Christ should reproach her with that, and say it would be enough. There is need but of one thing—his of man Jesus. If we take it so, it furnisheth us with a select temperateness, not to affect varieties and doubts, but to be content to sit down to one dish of meat, or hall
of one, Prov. 23. 1. 3. It is a forced construction which some of the ancients put upon it. But oneness is needful, in opposition to distractions. There is need of one heart, to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. The one thing needful is certainly meant of that which Mary made her choice—sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was troubled and disturbed when she should have applied herself to one; goodliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about, were needless, while the one thing she neglected, was needful. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspokably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to come; and when she should see him, she would rise up and serve him. But he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. The day will come, when Martha will wish she had sitten where Mary did.

VI. Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety; Mary hath chosen the good part. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but she, seeing Martha was appointed to the Master, she was willing to retire, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; For one thing is needful; this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ, and receive the law from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without will do this will do any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself; Christ justified Mary against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part; But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Let not us then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ against us; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all these who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he applauded her for her wisdom; She hath chosen the good part; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took the better way of honouring Christ and of pleasing him, by receiving his word into his heart, than Mary's did, but with providing for his entertainment in her house. Note, (1.) A part with Christ is a good part; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites, (John 13. 8.) who are partakers of Christ, (Heb. 3. 14.) and partakers with Christ, Rom. 8. 17. (2.) It is a part that shall never be taken away from those that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the farthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but not of that which separate us from the love of Christ, and our part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not. (3.) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this good part, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must not choose that which has a tendency to ruin, nor lend our feet to the wickedness of our souls. Mary was at her choice, whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and yet the reputation of a fine housekeeper, or sit at the feet of Christ, and approve herself a zealous disciple; and by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice. (4.) Those who choose this good part, shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, 1. Christ teaches his disciples to pray, and quickens and encourages them to be frequent, instant, and importunate in prayer, v. 1. 13. He fully assures the blasphemous imputation of the Pharisees, who charged him with casting out devils by virtue of a compact and confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and shows the absurdity and wickedness of it, v. 14. 26. He shows the honour of obedient disciples to be greater than that of his own mother, v. 27, 28. W. He apprehends the men of that generation for their invidious and obstinate, notwithstanding the sureness of conviction offered to them, v. 29, 30, 36. V. He severely reproves the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy, their pride, and their oppressing the consciences of those that submitted to them, and their hate and aversion of those that witnessed against their wickedness, v. 37, 38, 44.

1. And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread: 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us; And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. 5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a brute, is a monster, that never prays; that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feeds his favour, nor owns his dependence upon him. One great design therefore of Christianity, is, to impart us in prayer; to enforce the duty upon us, to instruct us
in it, and encourage us to expect advantage by it.

1. We find Christ himself praying in a certain place, probably where he used to pray, v. 1. As God, he was prayed to; as Man, he prayed; and though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience. This evangelist has taken particular notice of Christ's praying often, more than any other of the evangelists: whether vocalized (ch. 9. 38.) or alone (ch. 5. 16.) he went into a mountain to pray; and continued all night in prayer; he was alone praying; (ch. 9. 18.) soon after, he went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed, he was transfigured; (ch. 9. 28, 29.) and here he was praying in a certain place. Thus, like a genuine Son of David, he gave himself up to prayer. Ps. 109. 4. Whether Christ was now alone praying, and the disciples only knew that he was so, or whether he prayed with them, is uncertain; it is most probable that they were joining with him.

11. His disciples applied themselves to him for direction in prayer; when he was praying, they asked, Lord, teach us to pray. Note, The gifts and graces of prayer are so closely connected that we cannot pretend to one without the other, and that, indeed, they should proceed exactly as the same. Their zeal should provoke us to prayer by imitation and emulation; why should not we do as well as they? Observe, they came to him with this request, when he ceased; for they would not disturb him when he was at prayer, no, not with this good motion. Every thing is beautiful in its season. One of his disciples, in the name of the rest; and perhaps by their appointment, said, Lord teach us, Note, Though Christ is not apt to teach, yet he will for the inquired of, and his disciples must attend him for instruction.

Now, 1. Their request is, “Lord teach us to pray; give us a rule or model by which to go in praying, and put words into our mouths.” Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to apply themselves to him for instruction in prayer. Lord, teach us to pray, is itself a good prayer; and a very needful one, for it is a hard thing to pray well; and it is Jesus Christ only that can teach us, by his word and Spirit, how to pray. “Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; Lord, give me praying graces, that I may serve God acceptably in prayer; Lord, teach me to pray in proper words; give me a mouth and a heart to say them; Lord, teach me what I shall say.”

2. Their plea is, “As John also taught his disciples. He took care to instruct his disciples in this necessary duty, and we would be taught as they were, for we have a better Master than they had.” Dr. Lightfoot's notion of this, is, That, whereas the Jews prayed generally adorations, and praises of God, and doxologies, John taught his disciples such prayers as were more filled with petitions and requests; for it is said of them that they did Jesus: εἰρθα — make prayers, Luke 5. 33. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary. "Now, Lord, teach us those, to be added to those benedictions of the name of God, which we have been accustomed to from our childhood." According to the apostles, and doxologies, John taught his disciples consisting wholly of petitions, and even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the Amen, which was usually said in the giving of thanks, (1 Cor. 14. 16.) and in the Psalms, is added to doxologies only. This disciple needed not to have urged John Baptist's example; Christ was more ready to teach than ever John Baptist was, and particularly taught us to pray better than John did, or could, teach his disciples.

III. Christ gave them direction; much the same that he had given them before in his sermon upon the mount. Matth. 6. 9, &c. We cannot think that they had forgotten it, but they thought to have had further and fuller instructions, and he did not, as yet, think fit to give them any; when the Spirit should be poured out upon them from on high, they would find all their requests couched in these few words, and would be able, in words of their own, to expiate and enlarge upon them. In Matthew he had directed them to pray after this manner; here, to this manner, intimates that the Lord's prayer was intended to be used both as a form of prayer and a directory.

1. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, by which it appears that it was not the design of Christ that we should be tied up to these very words, but there would have been no variation. Here is one difference in the translation only, which might not to be particularly observed when there is none in the original, and that is in the third petition; as in heaven, so in earth; whereas the words are the very same, and in the same order as in Matthew; but there is a difference in the fourth petition; in Matthew we pray, “Give us daily bread this day;” here “Give it us day by day.” Luke 11. 3. Doxology. A very religious manner of the brede, while our bodies require, as they call for it; not, “Give us this day bread for many days to come;” but as the Israelites had manna, “Let us have bread to-day for to-day, and to-morrow for to-morrow;” for thus we may be kept in a most continual dependence upon God, as children upon their parents, and may have our mercies fresh from his hand daily, and may find ourselves under fresh obligations to the work of his hands, according as the duty of the day requires, because we have from God the supplies of every day in the day, according as the necessity of the day requires.

Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition. In Matthew it is, “Forgive our debts, as we forgive: here it is, “Forgive us our sins,” which proves that those sins are our debts; for, ”we forgive, not that our forgiving of those that have offended us, can merit pardon from God, or be an inducement to him to forgive us; (he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake;) but this is a very necessary qualification for forgiveness; and if God have wrought it in us, we may plead that work of his grace, for the enforcing of our petitions for the pardon of our sins: “Lord, forgive us, for thou hast not so oft as I, and we have not so often forgiven others.” Here is another addition here; we plead not only in general, We forgive our debtors, but in particular, “We profess to forgive every one that is indebted to us, without exception. We so forgive our debtors, as not to hear malice or ill-will to any, but true love to all, without any exception whatever.”

Here also the doxology in this place is wholly omitted, and the Amen; for Christ would have left them at liberty to use that, or any other doxology fetched out of David's psalms; or rather, he left a vacuum here, to be filled up by a doxology more peculiar to the Christian institutes, ascribing glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. Yet it is, for substance, the same; and we shall therefore here only gather up some general lessons from it. (1) That in prayer we ought to come to God as children to a Father, a common Father to us and all mankind, but in a peculiar manner a Father to all the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to him with a humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

(2) That the same time, and in the same petitions wherein we address to God for ourselves, we should take in with us all the children of men, as God's creatures and our fellow-creatures. A rooted
principle of catholic charity, and of christian sanctified humanity, should go along with us, and dictate to us throughout this prayer, which is so worded as to be accommodated to that noble principle.

(5.) That in order to rx confirming the habit of frequent-mindedness in us, which ought to act and govern us in the whole course of our conversation, we should, in all our devotions, with an eye of faith look heavenward, and view the God we pray to as our Father in heaven, that we may make the upper world more familiar to us, and may ourselves become better prepared for the future state.

(4.) That in prayer, as well as in the tenor of our lives, we must seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, by ascribing honour to his name, his holy name, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world, and that of his grace in the church. O that both the one and the other may be more manifested, and we and others more manifestly brought into subjection to both!

(5.) That the principles and practices of the upper world, the present world, (which therefore by faith only we are apprized of,) are the great original—the actuates, to which we should desire the principles and practices of this lower world, both in others and in ourselves, may be more conformable. These words, ‘As in heaven, so on earth, refer to all the three first petitions: ‘That, let this name be sanctified and glorified, and the kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth that is now alienated from thee, and the kingdom of heaven is entirely devoted to the service.’

(6.) That those who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that all other things, as far as to Infinite Wisdom seems good, shall be added to them, and they may in faith pray for them. If our first chief desire and care be, that God’s name may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done, we may then boldly to the throne of grace for our daily bread, which will then be sanctified to us, when we are sanctified to God, and God is sanctified by us.

(7.) That in our prayers for temporal blessings we must moderate our desires, and confine them to a competency. The expression here used of day by day, is the very same with our daily bread; and therefore some think that we must look for another supposition of the word ‘bread,’ than that of daily, which we give it, and that it means our necessary bread; that bread that is suited to the cravings of our nature; the fruit that is brought out of the earth for our bodies that are made of the earth, and are earthly, Ps. 104. 14.

(8.) That sins are debts which we are daily contracting, and which therefore we should every day pray for the forgiveness of. We are not only going being charged with our rent of daily sin, day by day, and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law, as well as the forfeiture of our soul, by our commissions; every day adds to the score of our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy, that we have so much encouragement given us to come every day to the throne of grace, to pray for the pardon of our sins of daily infirmity. God multiplies to pardon beyond score.

(9.) That we have no reason to expect, nor can with any confidence pray, that God would forgive our sins against him, if we do not sincerely, and from a truly christian principle of charity, receive those that have at any time affronted us, or been injurious to us. Though the words of our mouth be even this prayer to God, if the meditation of our heart at the same time be, as often as it is, malice and revenge to our brethren, we are not accepted, nor can we expect an answer of peace.

(10.) That temptations to sin should be as much dreaded and deprecated by us as sin by sin; and it should be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us, as to get the gratification of sin removed from us; and though temptation may be a tempting, as we are not to be left to Satan, to bring evil upon us. Dr. Lightfoot understands it of being delivered from the evil one, that is, the devil, and suggests that we should pray particularly against the appearances of the devil and his p’s sessions. The disciples were employed to cast out devils, and therefore were concerned to pray that they might be guarded against the particular spite he would always be sure to have against them.

IV. He stirs up and encourages importunity, perseverance, and constancy, in prayer: by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, ver. 5—8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a lost or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be both to accommodate him, for he has washed him with his swimming, and he is ready to forgive him, to have done a great deal to say in his excuse; the door is shut and locked, his children are asleep, in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he makes a noise, he shall disturb them; his servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and for his own part, he shall catch cold, if he rise to give him; but his neighbour will have no mav, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him, he will do so till he has what he comes for, so that he must give it; he would have told him of him; he will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that, ch. 18. 1. That men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity, we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity, because they are displeased with it, but God is pleased with it.

Now this similitude may be of use thus,

(1.) To direct us in prayer. [1. We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him. [2. We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot be without. [3. We must come to him in prayer for others as well as for ourselves. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord accepted Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42. 10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him in grace to enable us to do good, to feed many with our lips, to entertain and edify those that come to us. [4. We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that have not been hitherto, to go fully and carelessly, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread, if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. [5. We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same way with perseverance.

(2.) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man, who loves us as much more with a God, who is infinitely more kind.
and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual merits that we are importunate. If he does not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of nature to take comfort from, but the word which he has spoken; (v. 9, 10.) "Ask, and it shall be given you: either the thing itself you shall ask, or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh shall be removed, or sufficient grace given in. We had this before, Matt. 7, 7, 8. I say unto you, We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only ask, but we must seek, in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours; and in asking and seeking, we must continue pressing, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in concert, but by our particular prayers. Every one that asketh, receiveth, even the meanest soul, that asketh in faith. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, Ps. 34. 6. When we ask of God these things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done, in these requests we must not be importunate, must never hold our peace day or night; we must not keep silence, nor give God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a priests in the earth, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

V. He gives us both instruction and encouragement in prayer, from the consideration of our relation to God as a Father. Here is,

1. An appeal to the bosoms of earthly fathers; "If any one of you think that a father, and knows the heart of a father, and with a father's affection to a child, and care for a child, tell me, if his son ask bread for his breakfast, will he give him a stone to break on? If he ask a fish for his dinner, (when it may be a fish-day,) will he for a fish give him a serpent, that will poison and sting him? Or, if he shall ask an egg for his supper, (an egg and to bed,) will he offer him a scorpion? You know you could not be more unmoral to your own children." v. 11, 12.

2. An application of this to the blessings of our heavenly Father; (v. 13.) If we then, being evil, and give, and know how to give, good gifts to your children, much more shall God give you the Spirit. He shall give good things; so it is in Matthew. Observe,

(1) The direction he gives us what to pray for; we must ask for the Holy Spirit, not only as necessary in our praying well, but as inclusive of all the good things we are to pray for: we need no more to make us happy, for the Spirit is the Worker of spiritual life, and the Earliest of eternal life. Note, The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we are every one of us concerned earnestly and constantly to pray for.

(2) The encouragement he gives us to hope that we shall speed in this prayer; Your heavenly Father will give. It is in his power to give the Spirit; he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that one; but that is not all, it is in his promise, the gift of the Holy Ghost is in the covenant. Acts 2, 33. 38. And it is here inferred from parents' readiness to supply their children's needs, and gratify their desires, when their wants are natural and proper, If the child ask for a serpent, or a scorpion, the father, in kindness, denies him, but not if he ask for what is needful, and will be nourishing. When God's children ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for bread. For the Spirit is the Staff of life; may, he is the Author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents, though -will, be yet so kind, if they, though weak, be yet so knowing, that they not only give, but give with discretion, give what is best, in the best manner and time, much more shall your heavenly Father, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh both in wisdom and goodness, give you his Holy Spirit. If he, by a particular proof of the education of their children, to whom they design to leave their estates, much more will your heavenly Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he has predestinated to the inheritance of sons.

14. And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. 15. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16. And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. 17. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and a house divided against a house, falleth. 18. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. 21. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: 22. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. 23. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. 25. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. 26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The substance of these verses we had, Matth. 12, 22, &c. Christ is here giving a general proof of his divine power, by a signal instance of his power over Satan, his conquest of whom was an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was, to destroy the works of the devil; here too he gives an earnest of the success of that undertaking. He is here casting out a devil that made the poor possessed man dumb; in Matthew we are told that he was blind and dumb. When the devil was forced out by the word of Christ, the dumb spake immediately, echoed to Christ's word, and the lips were opened to show forth his praise. Now,

I. Some were affected with this miracle. The people wondered; they admired the power of God, and especially that it should be exerted by the hand of one who made so small a figure, that one who
the work of the Messiah, should have so little of that pomp of the Messiah, which they expected.

II. Others were offended at it, and to justify their unbelief, suggested that it was by virtue of a league with Beelzebub, that he did this, and in this Beelzebub, as in the devil's kingdom there are chiefs, which supposes that there are subalterns. Now they would have it thought, or said at least, that there was a correspondence settled between Christ and the devil, that the devil should have the advantage in the main, and be victorious at last, but that, in order hereto, in particular instances, he should yield Christ the advantage, and retire by consent. Some to corroborate this suggestion, and confront the evidence of Christ's miraculous power, challenged him to give them a sign from heaven, (v. 16.) to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the clouds, such as was upon mount Sinai when the law was given; as if a sign from heaven, not speakable by any sagacity of theirs, could not have been given as well by a compact and collusion with the prince of the power of the air, who works with power and lying wonders, as the casting out of a devil; nay, that would not have been any present prejudice to his interest, which this manifestly was. Note, Obstinacy in infidelity will never be at a loss for something to say in its own excuse, though ever so frivolous and absurd.

Now Christ here returns a full and direct answer to this cavil of theirs; in which he shows, that it can never be known, whether that such a subterfuge as Satan is, should ever give in to measures that had such a tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom, v. 17, 18. What they objected they kept to themselves, afraid to speak it lest he should be answered and baffled; but Jesus knew their thoughts, even when they industriously thought to conceal them; and he said, *You yourselves cannot but see the groundlessness, and, consequently, the spacelessness, of this charge; for it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by every day's experience that no interest can stand, that is divided against itself; not the mere public interest of a kingdom; nor the private interest of a house or family; if either the one or the other be divided against itself, it cannot stand. Satan would herein act against himself; not only by the miracle which turned him out of possession of the souls of people, but much more, the expectation of which the miracle was wrought for the explanation and confirmation of, which had a direct tendency to the ruin of Satan's interest in the minds of men, by mortifying sin, and turning men to the service of God. Now, if Satan should thus be divided against himself, he would hasten his own overthrow, which you cannot suppose an enemy to do, that acts so subtilly for his own establishment, and is so solicitous to have his kingdom stand.*

*It was a remarkable thing for them to impute that in him to a compact with Satan, which yet they applauded and admired in others that were of their own nation; (v. 19.)* "By whom do your sons cast them out? Some of your own kindred, as Jews, may and some of your own followers, as Pharisees, have undertaken, in the name of the God of Israel, to cast out devils, and they were never charged with such a hellish combination as I am charged with, I am no hypocrite, no hypocrite;"* let dem that in those who oppose us, which we yet allow of in those that flatter us.

3. That, in opposing the conviction of this miracle, they were enemies to themselves, stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, for they thrust from them the kingdom of God; (v. 20.) *If I with the finger of God cast out devils, as you may assure yourselves I do, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you; the kingdom of the Messiah offers itself and all its advantages to you, and if you receive it not, it is at your peril. *In Matthew it is by the Spirit of God, here by the finger of God; the Spirit is the arm of the Lord, Isa. 63. 1. His greatest and most mighty works were wrought by his Spirit; but in this this is to be, the finger of God, as if it were a sign from heaven. Possibly in this case it may refer to the coming of the Lord, it may have been intended by Satan, and in the fame of God, to do this, that he may procure Satan the advantage which he is desirous of; for this was then his own kingdom, in which he was Lord, and he may have been willing that it should be regarded as of the Lord, if it may intimate how easily Christ did, and could conquer Satan, even with the finger of God, the exerting of the divine power in a less and lower degree than in many other instances. He needed not make bare his everlasting arm; that bearing him, when he pleases, is crushed, like a moth, with a touch of a finger. Perhaps here is a allusion to the acknowledgment of Pharaoh's. wilderness; when they were in the wilderness; (Exod. 8. 19.) This is the finger of God. *Now if the kingdom of God be herein come to you, and you will be found by those cavils and blasphemies fighting against it, it will come upon you as a victorious force which you cannot stand before.*

4. That his casting out of devils was really the destroying of them and their power, for it confirmed a doctrine which had a direct tendency to the ruin of his kingdom, v. 21, 22. Perhaps there had been some who had cast out the inferior devils by compact with Beelzebub their chief; but that was without any real damage or prejudice to Satan and his kingdom; what he lost one way he gained another. The devil and such exorcists played booby, as we say, and while the forlorn hope of his army gave ground, the main body thereby gained ground; and this in the mean time Satan's power was not weakened by it in the least. But when Christ cast out devils, he needed not do it by any compact with them, for he was stronger than they, and could do it by force, and did it so as to ruin Satan's power, and blast his great design by that doctrine and that grace which break the power of sin, and so rout Satan's main body, take him all his armour, and divide his spoils, which no one devil ever did to another, or ever will. Now this is applicable to Christ's victories over Satan, both in the world and in the hearts of particular persons, by that power which went along with the preaching of his gospel, and doth still. And so we may observe here,

(1.) The miserable condition of an unconverted sinner. In his heart, which was fitted to be a habitation of God, the devil has his palace; and all the powers and faculties of the soul, being employed by him in the service of Satan. The heart of every unconverted sinner is the devil's palace, where he resides, and where he rules; he works in the children of disobedience. The heart is a palace, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the devil's palace. His lusts are done, his interests are served, and the Militia is in his hands; he usurps the throne in the soul. (2.) The devil, as a strong man armed, keeps this palace, does all he can to secure to himself, and to fortify it against Christ. All the precautions with which he hardens men's hearts against truth and holiness, are the strong holds which he erects for the keeping of his palace; this palace is his garrison. (3.) There is a kind of peace in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a strong man armed, keeps it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure and merry, has no doubt concerning the general kingdom of Satan, nor concerning the happy state of his centre, much less of the people of God; which he has not reason to expect. Before Christ appeared, all was quiet, because all went one way; but the preaching of the gospel disturbed the peace of the devil's palace.

(2.) The wonderful change that is made in conversion, which is Christ's victory over this usurper. Satan is a strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, as God, as Mediator. If we speak of strength, he is strong: more are with us than against us.
Observe, [1.] The manner of this victory. He comes upon him by surprise, when his goods are in peace, and the devil thinks it is all his own for ever, and overcomes him. Note, The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to liberty, and recovering his own interest in it, and dominion over it. [2.] The evidences of this victory. First, He takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted. The devil is a confidant adversary, he trusts to his armour, as Pharaoh to his rivers; (Ex. xii. 5.) but Christ disarms him. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the heart hardened, the heart humbled and changed, and made spiritual, and Satan's armament is taken away, Satan's armour is taken away. Secondly, He divides the spoils; he takes possession of them for himself; all the endowments of mind and body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him; yet that is not all, he makes a distribution of them among his followers, and, having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.

Now from hence he infers, that, seeing the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him, and to follow his guidance, to receive his gospel, and come heartily into the interests of it, for otherwise they would justly and truly be reckoned as siding with the enemy; (v. 23.) He that is not with me is against me. Therefore who rejected the doctrine of Christ, and slighted his miracles, were looked upon as adversaries to him, and in the devil's interest.

5. That there was a vast difference between the devil's going out by compact and his being cast out by compulsion. Those out of whom Christ cast him, he never entered into again, for so was Christ's charge; (Mark x. 23.) whereas, if he had gone out whenever he saw fit, he would have made a re-entry, for that is the way of the unclean spirit, when he voluntarily and with design goes out of a man, v. 24-26. The prince of the devils may give leave, nay, may give order to his forces to retreat, or make a feint, to draw the poor deluded soul into an ambush; but Christ, as he gives a total, so he gives a final, decisive, and total defeat to the enemy. As he is the heart of the amusement he has a further reach, which is, to represent the state of those who have had fair offers made them, among whom, and in whom, God has begun to break the devil's power, and overthrow his kingdom, but they reject his counsel against themselves, and relapse into a state of submission to Satan. Here we have,

[1.] The condition of a formal hypocrite, his bright side, and his dark side; his heart still on the devil's house, he calls it his own, and he retains his interest in it; and yet, [1.] The unclean spirit is gone out. He was not driven out by the power of converting grace, there was none of that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers; but he went out, withdrew for a time, so that the man seemed not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so deluded and under his temptations. Satan is gone, or has turned himself into another figure. [2.] The house is swept from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's; a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's; and a partial reformation, as Herod's. There are those that have escaped the pollutions of the world, and yet are still under the power of the god of this world, 2 Pet. 2. 20. The house is not washed, nor washed with blood; and Christ hath said, If I wash thee not, thou art defiled; and the house must be washed or it is none of his. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that besets the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched.

It is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, Matt. 23. 25. It is swept, but the leprosy is in the wall, and will be till something more be done. [3.] The house is garnished with common gifts and graces. It is not furnished with any true grace, but garnished with the pictures of all graces. Simon Magus was garnished with faith; Balaam with good desires; Herod with a respect for John; the Pharisees with many external performances. It is garnished, but it is like a fettered covered with silver dress, it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is garnished, but the property is not altered; it was never surrendered to Christ. It was Spenser's, yet he therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short.

[2.] Here is the condition of a final apostate, into whom the devil returns after he had gone out; (v. 26.) Then goes he, and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself; a certain number for an uncertain, as seven devils are said to be cast out of Mary Magdalene's seven wicked spirits are opposed to the seven spirits of God; (Rev. 1. 15.) these are said to be more wicked than himself. It seems, even devils are not all alike wicked; probably, the degrees of their wickedness, now that they are fallen, are as the degrees of their holiness were, while they stood. When the devil would do mischief most effectually, he employs those that are more mischievous than himself. These enter without any notice, in the name of a true grace, and dwell there, where they work, there they rule; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Note, [1.] Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, the shadows and shows will come to nothing; those that have not set that right, will not long be steadfast; where secret haunts of sin are kept up under the cloak of a visible profession, or dressed up in dross, it is evi
dence of a lasting apostasy. God is provoked to withdraw his restraining grace, and the close hypocrite commonly proves an open apostate. [2.] The last state of such is worse than the first, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostate states are usually the worst of men, the most vain and profligate, the most bold and daring, their consciences are seared, and their sins of long standing, the tribunal to which they are brought is the most aggravated, of all punishments, and the marks of his displeasure are open to them in this world, and in the other world they will receive the greater damnation. Let us therefore hear, and fear, and hold fast our integrity.

27. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we take it, as Dr. Hammond doth, to that of Christ's mother and brethren coming to speak with him, as 1 John xii. 21; (and yet it is not impossible there may be some time ago, ch. 8. 19.) but it contains an interruption much like that, and like that occasion is taken from it for an instruction.

1. The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman, and probably she was a person of some nobility, admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake; (v. 27.) As he spake these things, with a convincing force and evidence, a cer
tian women of the company was so pleased to hear now he had so offended the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame, and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, "Blessed is the man that hath her." What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! Surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that hath him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to be the mother of one that speaks as never man spake; that has so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth.

This was well said, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and the value she set on his doctrine and life: and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said, (ch. 1. 48.) All generations shall call me blessed; some even of this generation, bad as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an Honour, 1 Pet. 2. 7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify the honour of his natural kindred, and so knew him after the flesh, whereas we must now henceforth know him as he is.

2. The occasion which Christ took from thence to pronounce them more happy, who are his faithful and obedient followers, than she was, who bare and nursed him. He does not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mother, but he sheds her from this to that, which was of a higher consideration, and which more concerned her. Yet, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. v. 28. He thinks them so, and his saying that they are so, makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a check to her, for doing so much upon his bodily presence, and his human nature, partly as an encouragement to her, that she might be happier as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would hear the word of God, and keep it. Note. Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet these are only truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it, and keep it: that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

30. And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say. This is an evil generation: they seek a sign: and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man he to this generation. 31. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 33. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. 34. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when that eye is single, the whole body also is full of light: but when that eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Christ's discourse in these verses shows two things.

1. What is the sign we may expect from God, for the confirmation of our faith. The great and most convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and which they were yet to wait for, after the many signs that had been given them, was, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is,

4. A reproof to the people for demanding other signs than what had already been given them in great plenty; (v. 29.) The people were gathered thick together, a vast crowd of them, expecting not so much to have their consciences informed by the doctrine of Christ, as to have their curiosity gratified by his miracles. Christ knew what brought such a multitude together; they came seeking a sign, they came to gaze, to have something to talk of, which they came home; and it is an evil generation which meaning will awaken and convince, no the most sensible demonstrations of divine power and goodness.

2. A promise that yet there should be one sign more given them, different from any that had yet been given them, even the sign of Jonas the prophet, which in Matthew is explained, as being the resurrection of Christ. As Jonas being cast into the sea, and lying there three days, and then rising up alive, and preaching repentance to the Ninevites, was a sign to them, upon which they turned from their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection of Christ, and the preaching of his gospel immediately after to the Gentile world, be the last warning to the Jewish nation; if they be provoked to a holy jealousy by that, well and good: but if that do not work upon them, let them look for nothing but utter ruin. The Son of man shall be a Sign to this generation; (v. 50.) A sign speaking to them, though a Sign spoken against by this generation.

3. A warning to them to improve this Sign, for it was at their peril if they did not.

(1.) The queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their unbelief. v. 31. She was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that notwithstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive against foreign parts, she came from the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear his wisdom, not only to satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, especially in the knowledge of the true God and his worship, which is upon record, to her honour; and beheld, a greater than Solomon is here, saith 1 Kings 10. 28; more than a Solomon is here; that is, saith Dr. Hammond, more of wisdom and more heavenly divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's wise men's writings; and yet those wretched Jews will give no manner of regard to what Christ saith to them, though he be in the midst of them.

(2.) The Ninevites would rise up in judgment against them, and condemn their impiety; (v. 32.) They repented at the preaching of Jonas; but here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonas, is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a much sorrier ruin than that of Nineveh, and yet none are startled by it, to turn from their evil way, as the Ninevites did.

II. He shows what is the sign that God expects

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from us, for the evidencing of our faith; and that is, the serious practice of that religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe,

1. They had the light with all the advantage they could desire. For God, having lighted the candle of the gospel, did not put it in a secret place, or under a bushel; Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both Christ and his ministers, and her maidens, cry in the chief places of concourse, v. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a candlestick, so that all that come in may see it; and where they are, and whither they are going, and what is the true and sure and only way to happiness.

2. Having the light, their concern was, to have the sight; or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the object ever so clear, if the organ be not right, we are never the better; (v. 54.) The light of the body is the eye, which receives the light of the candle, when it is brought into the room. So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as this is, accordingly the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; accordingly it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

(1.) If this eye of the soul be single, if it see clear, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning their nature, truth only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister bylooks and intentions, the whole body, that is, the whole soul, is full of light, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both knowledge and joy; this denotes the same thing with that of the good ground, receiving the word, and understanding it. If our understanding admit the gospel full light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to fill it. And if the soul be thus filled with the light of the gospel, having no part dark; if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsanctified, then the whole soul shall be full of light, full of holiness and comfort; it was darkness itself, but is now light in the Lord, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give light, v. 55. Note, The gospel is the sun of good knowledge; whose dews and showers are thrown open to receive it; and where it comes, it will bring light with it. But,

(2.) If the eye of the soul be evil, if the judgment be bribed and biased by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures; if the understanding be prejudiced against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them, though brought with ever so convincing evidence, it is no wonder that the whole body, the whole soul is full of darkness, v. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort, from the gospel, that willfully shut their eyes against it; and what hope is there of such, what remedy for them? The inference from hence therefore is, (v. 33.) Take heed that the light which is in thee, be not darkness. Take heed that the eye of the mind be not blinded by partiality and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your inquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light and love and power of it; and not as the men of this generation whom Christ preached to, who never sincerely desired to know God's will, or designed to do it, and therefore no wonder that they walked in darkness, wandered endlessly and perished eternally.

37. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisées make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravishing and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? 41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But wo unto you, Pharisées! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Wo unto you, Pharisées! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. 45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also ye lawyers! for ye have made burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye hear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them shall be slain and persecuted; 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. 52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Christ here saith many of those things to a Pharisee and his guests in a private conversation at table, which he afterward said in a public discourse in the temple; (Matt. 23.) for what he said in public and private, was of a piece. He would not say that in a corner, which he durst not repeat and stand to in the great congregation; nor would he give those reproofs

CHRIST SAITH MANY OF THOSE THINGS TO A PHARISEE AND HIS GUESTS IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION AT TABLE, WHICH HE AFTERWARD SAID IN A PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN THE TEMPLE; (MATT. 23.) FOR WHAT HE SAID IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, WAS OF A PIECE. HE WOULD NOT SAY THAT IN A CORNER, WHICH HE DURST NOT REPEAT AND STAND TO IN THE GREAT CONGREGATION; NOR WOULD HE GIVE THOSE REPROFS
in any sort of sinners in general, which he durst not apply to them in particular as he met with them; for he was, and is, the faithful Witness. Here is, 1. Christ's going to dine with a Pharisee that very civilly invited him to his house; (v. 57.) In he spake, even while he was speaking, a certain Pharisee intercepted him, and, with some design, planned to bring him, to come forthewith, for it was dinnertime. We are willing to hope that the Pharisee was so well pleased with his discourse, that he was willing to show him respect, and desires him to have more of his company, and therefore gave him this invitation, and bid him truly welcome; and yet we have some cause to suspect that it was with an ill design, to break off his discourse with common people, and make an opportunity of ensnaring him, and getting something out of him which might serve for matter of accusation or reproach, v. 53, 54. We know not the mind of this Pharisee; but, whatever it was, Christ knew it: if he meant ill, he shall know Christ doth not fear him, if well, he shall know Christ is willing to do him good; so he went in and sat down to meat. Note, Christ's disciples must learn of him how to be ready, at the moment of time, and at all times, when they have an opportunity of ensnaring him, and getting something out of him which might serve for matter of accusation or reproach. 2. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, as those of that sort had sometimes done at the disciples of Christ for not washing before dinner, v. 38. He wondered that a Man of his sanctity, a Prophet, a Man of so much devotion, and such a strict conscience, would sit down to meat, and not first wash his hands, especially being newly come out of a mixt company, and there being in the Pharisee's dining-room, no doubt, all accommodations set ready for it, so that he needs not fear being troublesome; and the Pharisee himself and all his guests, no doubt, washing, so that he could not be singular; what, and yet not wash? What harm had it been, if he had washed? Why, was it not strictly commanded by the canons of their church? It was so, and therefore Christ would not do it, because he would witness against their assuming of a power to impose that as a matter of religion, which God commanded them not. The ceremonial law consisted in divers washings, but this was none of them, and therefore Christ would not practise it, no more in compliance to the Pharisee who invited him, nor though he knew that offence would be taken at his omitting it. The merit of which Christ, upon this occasion, gave to the Pharisees, without begging pardon even of the Pharisee whose guest he now was; for we must not flatter our best friends in any evil thing. 1. He reproves them for placing religion so much in these instances of it, which are only external, and fall under the eye of man, while these were not only frequent, but quite enjoined, which respect the souls and fall under the eye of God, and yet observe here, (1.) The absurdity they were guilty of; Ye Pharisees make clean the outside only, ye wash your hands with water, but do not wash water hearts from wickedness; these are full of covetousness and malice, covetousness of men's goods, and malice against good men. These would never be reckoned cleanly servants, that wash only the outside of the cup their master drinks out of, or the outside of the plate they eat out of, and take no care to make the inside clean, which immediately affects the meat and drink, and mingles with them all the filth that may adhere. The frame and temper of the mind in every religious service are the inside of the cup and plate; the impurity of that infects the services, and therefore to keep ourselves free from scandalous enormities, and yet to live under the dominion of spiritual wickedness, is as great an affront to God as it would be for a servant that gives the cup into his master's hand, clean wiped from all the dust on the outside, but within full of coals and spiders. Reckoning and wickedness, that is, reigning worldliness and reigning sinfulness, which men think they can find some cloak and cover for in this the things that they have made the outside of the cup clean from the more gross and scandalous and inexcusable sins of which are drunkenness. (2.) A particular instance of the absurdity of it; (v. 40.) Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? Did not that God who in the law: Moses appointed divers ceremonial washings with which you justify yourselves, which are such as no regard is had to also that ye should cleanse and purify your hearts? He who made laws for that which is without, did not he even in those laws further intend something within, and by other laws show how little he regarded the purifying of the flesh, and the putting away of the filth of that, if the heart he not made clean? Or, it may have regard to God, not only as a Lawgiver, but, (which the words seem to intimate,) as a Father. Did not God, who made us these bodies, (and they are fearfully and wonderfully made,) make us these souls also, which are more fearfully and wonderfully made; now if he made both, he justly expects we should take care of both; and therefore not only wash the body, which he is theFormer of, and make the hands clean in honour of his work, but wash the spirit, which he is the Father of, and get the leprosy in the heart cleansed. To this he subjoins a rule for making of our creature-comforts clean also; (v. 41.) Instead of washing your hands before ye go to meat, give alms of such things as ye have, (which is what is done, and you may use them comfortably.) There is a plain allusion to the law of Moses, by which it was provided that certain portions of the increase of their land should be given to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and when that was done, what was reserved for their own use, was clean to them, and they could in faith pray for a blessing upon it, Deut. 26. 12—15. Then we can with comfort enjoy the gifts of God's bounty ourselves, when we send forth to them for whom nothing is expected. Note, Those that are most useful, but the fatherless are thereof, and it was clean to him, (Jer. 31. 17.) clean, that is, permitted and allowed to be used, and then only it can be used comfortably. Note, What we have, is not our own, unless God have his dues out of it; and it is by liberality to the poor that we clear up to ourselves our liberty to make use of our creature-comforts. 2. He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law, v. 42. (1.) Those laws which related only to the means of religion they were very exact in the observance of, as particularly those concerning the maintenance of the priests; Ye pay tithe of mint and rue, pay it in kind, and to the full, and will not put off the priests with a modus decrundii or compounded for it. By this they would gain reputation with the people as strict observers of the law, and at the same time interest in the priests, in whose power it was many a time to do them a kindness, and no wonder if the priests and the Pharisees contrived how to strengthen one another's hands. Now Christ does not condemn them for being so exact in paying tithes, (These things ought ye to have done,) but for thinking that that would atone for the neglect of their greater duties; for, (2.) These laws which relate to the essentials of religion they made
nothing of; Ye pass over judgment and the love of God, ye make no conscience of giving men their due and God your hearts.

3. He reproves them for their pride and vanity, and affectation of precedence and praise of men; (v. 43.) "Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues;" (or consistencies where the elders met for government,) if ye have not those seats, ye are ambitious of them; if ye have, ye are proud of them; and therefore you are accused among the people, and to have their cap and knee." It is not sitting uppermost, or being greeted, that is reproved, but loving it.

4. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences; (v. 44.) "Ye are as graves overgrown with grass, which therefore appear not, and the men that walk over them, are aware of them, and so they contract the ceremonial pollution which by the law arose from the touch of a grave." These Pharisees were within full of abominations, as a grave of putrefaction, full of covetousness, envy, and malice; and yet they concealed it so artfully with a profession of devotion, that it did not appear, so that they who conversed with them, and followed their doctrine, were defiled with sin, and made worse in their state of sin; and yet, they making a show of piety, suspected no one. The contagion insinuated itself, and was insensibly caught, and those that caught it, thought themselves never the worse.

IV. The testimony which he bore also against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to expound the law according to the tradition of the elders, as the Pharisees did to observe the law according to that tradition.

1. There was one of that profession, who resented what he said against the Pharisees; (v. 45.) "Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also, for we are scribes; and are therefore hypocrites?" Note, It is a common thing for unhumbled sinners to call and count reproves reproaches. It is the wisdom of those who desire to have their sin mortified, to make a good use of reproves that come from ill will, and to turn them into reproves; if we can see the way hear of our faults, and amend them, it is well; but it is the folly of those who are wedded to their sins, and resolved not to part with them, to make an ill use of the faithful and friendly admonitions given them, which come from love, and to have their passions provoked by them as if they were intended for reproves, and therefore fly in the face of their reproves, and justify themselves in rejecting the reproof. Thus the prophet complained, (Jer. x. 19.) The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it. This lawyer espoused the Pharisee's cause, and so made himself partaker of his sins.

2. Our Lord Jesus thereupon took them to task; (v. 46.) "How unto you also, ye lawyers; and again, (v. 47.) Ye scribes also. They blessed themselves in the reputation they had among men; and in doing so, they thought them happy men, because they studied the law, and were always conversant with that, and had the honour of instructing people in the knowledge of it; but Christ denounced woes against them, for he sees not as man sees. This was just upon him for taking the Pharisees' part, and quarrelling with Christ because he reproved them. Note, Those who quarrel with the reproves of others, and suspect them to be reproves, do them, but get woes of their own by so doing."

1. The lawyers are reproved for making the services of religion more burdensome to others, but more easy to themselves, than God had made them; (v. 46.) "Ye laden men with burdens grievous to be borne, by your traditions, which bind them out from many liberties God has allowed them, and bind them up to many slaveries which God never enjoined them, to show your authority, and to keep people in awe; but ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers; that is, [1.] Ye will not burden yourselves with them, nor be yourselves bound by these restraints with which you hamper others. They would seem, by the hedges they pretended to make about the law, to be very strict for the observance of the law, but if you could see their practices you would find not only that they make nothing of those hedges themselves, but make nothing of the law itself neither; thus the confessors of the Romish church are said to do with their penitents. [2.] Ye will not lighten them to those ye have power over; ye will not touch them, that is, either to repeal them, or to dispense with them, when ye have power over them, and give them to the people. They would come in with both hands, to dispense with a command of God, but not with a finger, to mitigate the rigour of any of the traditions of the elders.

2. They are reproved for pretending a veneration for the memory of the prophets whom their fathers killed, when yet they hated and persecuted these in their own day, who were sent to them on the common business of the world, and for repentance, and direct them to Christ, v. 47—49.

[1.] These hypocrites, among other pretences of pity, built the sepulchres of the prophets; that is, they erected monuments over their graves, in honour of them, probably with large inscriptions containing high encomiums of them. They were not so superstitious as to enshrine their relics, or to think devotions the more acceptable to God for being paid at the tombs of the martyrs; they did not burn incense, or pray to them, or plead their merits with God; they did not add that iniquity to their hypocrisy; but, as if they owned themselves the children of the prophets, their heirs and executors, they repaired and beautified the monuments sacred to their pious memory.

[2.] Notwithstanding this, they had an invertebrate curiosity to those in their own day, that came to them in the spirit and power of those prophets; and, though they had not yet had an opportunity of carrying it far, yet they would soon do it, for the Wisdom of God said, that is, Christ himself would so order it, and did now foretell it, that they would slay and persecute the prophets and apostles that should be sent them. The Wisdom of God would thus make trial of them, and discover their obious hypocrisy, by bringing forth his decrees, and the sword, and the judgment to death. Christ foresaw this, not otherwise than as became the Wisdom of God in sending them, for he knew how to bring glory to himself in the issue, by the recompenses reserved both for the persecutors and the persecuted in the future state.

[3.] That therefore God will justly put another construction upon their building of the tombs of the prophets than what they gave it; the building of their sepulchres shall have this sense put upon it, that they resolved to keep them in their graves, whom their fathers had buried thicker. Josiah, who had a real
value for prophets, thought it enough not to disturb
the grave of the man of God at Bethel; Let no
man move his bones, 2 Kings 23: 17, 18. The
lawyers and doctors of the law, and all had
them as judges, it is such a piece of overbear-
ing as gives cause to suspect an ill-design in it,
and that it is meant as a cover for some design against
prophecy itself, like the kiss of a traitor as he hbst
his friend with a loud voice, rising early in
the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.
Prov. 27. 14.
[4.] That they must expect no other than to be
washed with the filters up of the measure
of perscriptions, v. 30, 31. They keep up the trade as
it was in succession, and therefore are responsible
for the debts of the common, even those it has been
contracting all along from the blood of Abel, when
the world began, to that of Zacharias, and so for-
ward to the end of the Jewish state; it shall all be
required of this generation, this last generation of
the Jews, whose sin in persecuting Christ’s apostles
wrought woe to any of the sirs that kind that their
fathers were guilty of, and so would bring great
upon them to the uttermost. 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16.
Their destruction by the Romans was so terrible, that
it might well be reckoned the completing of
God’s vengeance upon that persecuting nation.
(5.) They are reprobated for opposing the gospel
of Christ, and doing all they could to obstruct the
progress and success of it, v. 32. [1.] They are not,
even according to the duty of their profession, faithfully
exalted to the people those scriptures of the Old
Testament, which pointed at the Messiah, which
if they had been led into the right understanding
of the lawyers, they would readily have embraced
him and his doctrine, but, instead of that, they had
perverted these texts, and had cast a mist before
the eyes of the people, by their corrupt glosses
upon them, and this is called taking away the
light, or shutting up the kingdom of God among men. Matt.
23. 13. Note, Those who take away the key of know-
elc.se, shut up the kingdom of heaven. [2.] They
themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ,
though by their acquaintance with the Old Testa-
ment they could not but know that the Messiah
was and the Christ. If God were at all; they
saw the prophecies accomplished in that kind in
which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet
would not themselves enter into it: Say, v. 33. Them
that without any conduct or assistance of theirs
were entering in, did they all could to hinder
and disannul, by threatening to cast them out of
the synagogue, and otherwise terrifying them.
It is bad for people to be averse to revelation, but
more so to be against it.
Lastly, in the close of the chapter, we are told
how spitefully and maliciously the scribes and Phar-
isees contrived to draw him into a snare, v. 53, 54.
They could not bear these cutting reproves which
they must own to he just: but since what he had
said against them in particular, would not bear an
action, nor could they ground upon it any crim-
al accusation, as the Jews did, if because his reproves
were warm, they were afraid to keep them up intemperate
and passion, so as to put him off, they
would: they begin to urge him vehemently, to be
vexed and turn him, and to provoke him to speak
of many things, to propose dangerous questions to
him, leaving wait for something which might serve
the design they had of making him either odious
to the people, or obnoxious to the government, or both.
Thus did they seek occasion against him, like the
David’s enemies that did every day cross his words,
Ps. 56. 5. Evil men dig upon mischief. Note, Faith-
ful reprovers of sin must expect to have many en-
emies, and have need to set a watch before the door
of their lips, because of their observers that watch
for their halting. The prophet complains of those
in his time, who made a man an offender for a
word, and lay a snare for him that refrsith in the
gate, Isa. 29. 21. That we may bear trials of this
kind with patience, and get through them with pru-
dence, let us consider him who endured such contra-
diction of sinners against himself.

CHAP. XI.
In this chapter, we have divers excellent discourses of our
Savours’ usual various occasions; many of which are to
the same point with what is spoken in the foregoing
other the like occasions: for we may suppose that our
Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed
the same duties, at several times, in several companies,
and that one of the evangelists took them as he delivered
them at one time, and another at another time; and we
need thus to have percept upon percept, like upon line.
Here, Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypo-
crise, and of cowardice in professing Christianity and
preaching the gospel, v. 1. 12. He gives a caution
against carelessness, upon occasion of a covetous motion
made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a
rich man’s hoarding up, but making no provision for
worldly projects and hopes, v. 13. 21. He encour-
ages his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and
to live easy in dependence upon his providence, and engages
them to make religion their main business, v. 22, 34.
He tells them up to watchfulness for their Master’s
coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who
are then found faithful, and the punishment of those
who are found unfaithful, v. 35. 38. To this he expect
and perscriptions, v. 49. 53. He warns them to be observed
and improve the day of their opportunities,
and to make their peace with God in time, v. 5. 59.

1. In the mean time, when there were
gathered together an innumerable multi-
tude of people, insomuch that they trode one
upon another, he began to say unto his disci-
iples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the
Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
2. For there is nothing covered that shall
not be revealed: neither that shall not be
known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have
spoken in darkness shall be heard in the
light; and that which ye have spoken in
the ear, in the street, shall be proclaimed
upon the housetops.
4. And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid
of them that kill the body, and after that have no more
that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him which,
after he hath killed, hath power to cast into
hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are
not five sparrows sold for two far-
things? and not one of them is forgotten
before God: 7. But even the very hairs
of your head are all numbered. Fear not,
therefore: ye are of more value than many
sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Who-
soever shall confess me before men, him
shall the Son of man also confess before
the angels of God: 9. But he that de-
nieth me before men, shall be denied
before the angels of God. 10. And who-
soever shall speak a word against the Son
of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto
him that blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

We find here,
1. A vast auditory that was got together to hear Christ preach. The Scribes and Pharisees sought to accuse him, and did him mischief; but the people, who heard and believed the blessed doctrine of Christ, would not have the Pharisees be privy to the designs of jealousy, still admired him, attended on him, and did him honour; (v. 1.) In the mean time, while he was in the Pharisee's house, contending with them that sought to ensnare him, the people got together for an afternoon-sermon, a sermon after dinner, after dinner with a Pharisee; and he would not disappoint them. Though in the morning-sermon, his doctrine was hidden from them, and not understood by many; (v. 11, 29.) he had severely reproved them, as an evil generation that seek a sign, yet they renewed their attendance on him; so much better could the people bear their reproves than the Pharisees theirs.

The more the Pharisees strive to drive the people from Christ, the more flocking there was to him. Here was an innumerable multitude of people gathered together, so that they trode one upon another, in order to get to Christ, and come to within hearing. It is a good sight to see people thus forward to hear the word, and venture upon inconsequence and danger rather than miss an opportunity for their souls. Who are these that thus fly like the doves to their windows? Isa. 60. 8. When the net is cast where is such a multitude of fish, it may be hoped that some will be included.

II. The instructions which he gave his followers in the hearing of this auditory.
1. He began with a caution against hypocrisy. This he said to his disciples first of all; either to the twelve, or to the seventy. These were his more peculiar charge, his family, his school, and therefore he particularly warned them as his beloved sons; they made more profession of religion than others, and hypocrisy in them was the sin they were most in danger of. They were to preach to others; and if they freewill corrupt the word, and deal deceitfully, hypocrisy would be worse in them than in others. And besides, there was a Judas among them, that was a hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ's disciples were, forught we know, the best men then in the world, yet needed to be cautioned against hypocrisy, but Christ said this to the disciples in the hearing of this great multitude, rather than privately when he had them by themselves, to add the greater weight to the caution, and to let the world know that he would not comitenance hypocrisy, no, not in his own disciples.

Now observe,
(1.) The description of that sin which he warns them against, is the leaven of the Pharisees. [1.] It is leaven, it is spreading as leaven, invests itself into the whole man, and all that he does; it is swelling and souring as leaven, for it puff's men up with pride, inflates them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God. [2.] It is the leaven of the Pharisees: It is the sin they are most of them found in. Take heed of imitating them, be not of their spirit; do not you, dissemble in Christianity as they do in Judaism; make not your religion a cloak of malicefulness, as they do theirs. [2.] A good reason against it; (v. 2, 3.) For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed. It is to no purpose to dissemble, for sooner or later, truth will come out; and a lying tongue is but for a moment. If you speak in darkness that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your public professions, it shall be heard in the light; some way or other, shall be discovered, a bird of the air shall carry the wind; (Eccl. 5. 7.) and falsehood will be made manifest. The iniquity that is concealed with a show of piety, will be discovered, perhaps in this world, as Judas's was, and Simon Magus's, at furthest, in the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, (Ecc. 12. 14.) Rom. 2. 16. If men's religion prevail not to conquer and cure the wickedness of their disposition, on whomsoever it is practised, whether to a cloak, or a cloak; the day is coming, when hypocrites will be stripped of their fig-leaves.

2. To this he added a charge to them, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and not to betray it, through cowardice or base fear. Some make v. 2, 3. to be a caution to them not to conceal these things which they had been instructed in, and were employed to teach; and thus the world will be warned, whether in the present age, or in future ages, whether by an inexcusable hypocrisy, or an infallible revelation. It is his way to use in the present age, both warning by example, and manly exposure of the sin, and then he will hear, or whether they will forbear, tell them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; what has been spoken to you, and you have talked of among yourselves, privately, and in corners, that do you preach publicly, whoever is offended; for if you please men, you are not Christ's servants, nor can you please him. Gal. 1. 10. But the v. 2, not the context of it: it was likely to be a suflfering cause, though never a sinking one, let them therefore arm themselves with courage and divers arguments are furnished here, to steel them with a holy resolution in their work. Consider,
(1.) The power of your enemies is a limited power, v. 4. I say unto you, my friends, (Christ's disciples are his friends, he calls them friends, and gives them this friendly advice,) be not afraid; do not disquiet yourselves with tormenting fears of the power and rage of men. Note, These whom Christ owns for his friends, need not be afraid of any enemies. "Be not afraid, no, not of them that kill the body; let it not be in the power, not only of seers, but even of murderers, to drive you off from your work, for you that have learned to triumph over death, may say, even of them, Let them do the worst that they can, they shall have it in their power to do; the immortal soul lives, and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance." Note, These can do Christ's disciples no real harm, and therefore ought not to be dreaded, which can but kill the body; for they only send that to its rest, and the soul to its joy, the sooner.

(2.) God is to be feared more than the most powerful men; (v. 5.) I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, and what you shall fear. [1.] God, ye must fear God; for there is no more then they can do, the immortal soul lives, and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance. [2.] Moses conquers his fear of the wrath of the king, by having an eye to him that is invisible. By owning Christ you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put you to death; (and without God's permission they cannot do that;) but by owning Christ, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to hell, and there the fear of death may be more, and two evils the least is to be chosen, and the greatest to be dreaded, and therefore I say unto you, Fear him. "It is true," said that blessed martyr, Bishop Hooper, "life is sweet, and death bitter; but eternal life is more sweet, and eternal death more bitter." (3.) The lives of good christians and good ministers are the particular care of the Divine Providence. To encourage us in this use of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles, and build upon them; now a firm belief of the doctrine of God's universal providence, and
the extent of it, would be satisfying to us, when at any time we are in peril, and would encourage us to trust to God in the way of duty. [1.] Providence takes cognizance of the greatest actions; even of the sparrows. "Though they are of such small account, that five of them are sold for two farthings, yet not one of them is forgotten of God, but is provided for, and noticed in its death. Now, there is more of value than many sparrows, which may be destroyed, or may be forgotten, though imprisoned, though finished, though forgotten by your friends, much more precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of saints than the death of sparrows." [2.] Providence takes cognizance of the meanest interest of the disciples of Christ; (r. 7.) "Even the very hairs of your head are numbered; much more are your sighs and tears numbered, and the drops of your blood, which ye shed for Christ's name sake. An account is kept of all your losses, that they may be, and without doubt they shall be, recompensed unspeakably to your advantage."

(4.) You will be owned or disowned by Christ in the great day, according as you now own or disown him, v. 8, 9. [1.] To engage us to confess Christ before men, whatever we may lose, or suffer for our own conscience, or for his as a servant, we are assured that they who confess Christ now, will be owned by him in the great day before the angels of God, to their everlasting comfort and honour. Jesus Christ will confess not only that he suffered for them, and that they are to have the benefit of his sufferings, but that they suffered for him, and that his kingdom and interest on earth were advanced by these sufferings; and what greater honour can be done them? [2.] To deter us from denying Christ, and from every denial of these his truths and ways, we are here assured that these who deny Christ, and treacherously depart from him, whatever they may save by it, though it were life itself, and whatever they may gain by it, though it were a kingdom, will be vast losers at last, for they shall be denied before the angels of God; Christ will not know them, will not own them, will not show them any favour, which will turn to their everlasting destruction by their own fault. By the stress here laid upon their being confessed or denied before the angels of God, it should seem to be a considerable part of the happiness of justified saints, that they will not only stand right, but stand high, in the esteem of the holy angels; they will love them, and honour them, and own them, if they be Christ's servants: they are their fellow-servants, and they will take them for their companions. On the contrary, a considerable part of the misery of damned sinners will be, that the holy angels will abandon them, and will be the pleasure witnesses, not only of their disgrace, as here, but of their misery, for they shall be torned in the presence of the holy angels, (Rev. 14. 10.) who will give them no relief.

(5.) The errand they were shortly to be sent out upon, was of the highest and last importance to the children of men, to whom they were sent, v. 10. Let them be bold in preaching the gospel, for a sorer and heavier doom would attend those that rejected them, (after the Spirit was poured out upon them, which was to be the last method of conviction,) than those that now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him; "Greater works than these shall ye do, and, consequently, greater will be the punishment of those that blaspheme the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost in you. Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it is better for him that a millstone should be hung about his neck, and he should be cast into the depth of the sea." So great will the abhorrence be, at the meanness of his appearance, and speakaily and spiritually, of him, it is capable of some excuse: Rather, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But unto him that blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, that blasphemeth the Christian doctrine, and maliciously opposeth it, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and his attestation of Christ's being glorified, (Acts 2. 32—3. 32.) the privilege of the forgiveness of sins shall be denied, he shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel: you may shake off the dust of your feet against those that do so, and give them over as irreparable; they have forfeited that "continuance and that remainder which Christ was called to go into and which you are called to preach." The sin, no doubt, was the more daring, and, consequently, the case the more desperate, during the continuance of the extraordinary gifts and operations of the Spirit in the church, which were intended for a sign to them who believed not, 1 Cor. 14. 22. Those, who, though they were not convinced by them at first, yet examined them, there were hopes of, but those who blasphemed them, were given over.

(6.) Whatever trials they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honourably brought through them, v. 11, 12. The faithful martyr for Christ has not only sufferings to undergo, but a testimony to bear, a good confession to witness, and is concerned to do that well, so that the cause of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer in the bearing of this his cause, let him cast it upon God; "When they bring you into the synagogues, before church rulers, before the Jewish courts, or before magistrates and judges, Gentle rulers, rules in the state, to be examined about your doctrine, what it is, and what the proof of it: take no thought what we shall answer," [1.] "That ye may serve yourselves. Do not study by what art or rhetoric to mollify your judges, or by what tricks in law to bring yourselves off, if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually." [2.] "That ye may serve your Master, Jn, at this, but do not perplex yourselves about it, for the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of wisdom, shall teach you what you ought to say, and how to say it, so as it may be for the honour of God and his cause.

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. We have, in these verses,
I. The application that was made to Christ, very unreasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother, in a matter that concerned the estate of his deceased father. His brother, and he, were as one of the Jews called Ten-hameen—a son of violence, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of natural equity or natural affection, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so governed, have a God to go to, who will execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed.

2. Others think that he had a mind to do his brother wrong, and would have Christ to assist him; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule, (Deut. 21. 16, 17.) he would have Christ to alter the decree which the father gave. He was a follower of Christ at large, to divide the inheritance equally with him, in gavel-kind, share and share alike; and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against covetousness, especially a desire of having more, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a sinful desire of getting more than he had.

3. Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter; (v. 14.) Man, who made me a Judge, or a Divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ would not assume either a legislative power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a judicial power to determine controversies concerning them; he could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: Who made me a Judge? Probably, he refers to the indignity done to his brethren in Egypt, which Stephen upbraided the Jews with, Acts 7. 27, 35.

4. If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, Who made thee a Judge, or a Divider? He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal, (it was coronam iudicis, not before the praefiur iudicis,) and so dismisses his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuits of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do; Who made me a Judge? Note, Jesus Christ was no Usurper, he took no honour, no power, no authority, for himself, but what was given him, (Heb. 1. 3.) Wherefore, be humble, and hearken to the authority he did it, and who gave him that authority. Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. 1. It does not interlace with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power. 2. It does not interfere with civil rights, nor interpose in the business of the world, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not to be founded in grace. 3. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that, in consideration of that, Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature. 4. It does not encourage our contests with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace-sake, to be reconciled from our mutual faults. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life, (2 Tim. 4. 4.) to leave the word of God, to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, Tractant fabulae Fabri—Each workman to his proper craft.

II. The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from hence to give to his hearers. Though he hears what they say, and understands all they mean, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harboring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the root of so much evil. Here is, 1. The caution itself; (v. 15.) Take heed and beware of covetousness; see—Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them, and cause yourselves to preserve yourselves, keep a strict hand upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them. Covetousness is a sin in which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against. 2. The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution; For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his substance. This is a principle that is, Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world. (1.) The life of the soul, undoubtedly, doth not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last as long as it will last, (v. 21.) Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of earthly things, (v. 22.) Any abundance is as the grass of the field, that perisheth, and is eaten of the beast; and, as the grass of the field, so are these things, that do not endure in comfort, and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it; (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a feast of fat things:) and, on the other hand, many live very miserably, who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bewray their souls of good, (v. 21.) Many who have abundance, are discontented and fretting, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good doth their abundance do them. 3. The illustration of this by a parable; the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man, who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his own soul, and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man. (1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance; (v. 16.) The ground of a certain rich man. He had a great deal of land, and farmed it plentifully, (v. 17.) in a certain country. He had one piece of ground, which was his own; he was a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth for the king himself is served of the field, (Ex. 5.) He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully, and is winked at, and the possession of those good things, which may we not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us. (2.) Here are the works of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, (v. 17.) Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for
it. He is both a Discerner and Judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are bad, and thoughts are free.

[1.] What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicted himself with this thought, What shall I do because I have no room where to store my fruits? He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The poor began to complain of their wants, and to desire that they might have more, and they knew not where to have a meal’s meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disputing care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of these that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitude they are to keep what they have, and to add to it, how to spare, and how to spend; so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have, and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, What shall I do? And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he has abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in, that is all.

[2.] What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish. If he had been content with what was, it is the wisest course I can take; I will pull down my barns, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at ease. Now here, first, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, my fruits and my goods; whereas what we have, is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord’s goods, tenants at will of our Lord’s hand. It is my corn, (saith God) and my wine, Hos. 2, 8, 9. Secondly, It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well-bestowed; There will I bestow it all; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn. Thirdly, (saith he) to him to let his mind rise with his condition; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore he had better to have stocked some of his corn this once. Fourthly, It was folly for him to think to ease his cares by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; these know that, who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the care of inordinate care, is certainly useful, but the way of the world does but increase it. And besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him, the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Luke 16, 10. 16. Instead of this, let him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely and immediately away. This I will do, I will pull down my barns, and I will build greater, yea that I will; without so much as that necessary proviso, If the Lord will, I shall live, Jam. 4. 13, 14. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God’s hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow.

[3.] What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he made good these projects; Then I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; if these houses were now take thou thy rest, say thou thyself, canst thou drink all this wine? v. 19. He appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it. First, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them, (which will be a work of time,) then will he take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? God is all ready to accept the gifts, and he is already preparing to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places in the prosecution of his victories; Well, saith his friend, Cynes, and what must we do then? Posta quasi, says he, Then we shall live; At hoc jam beat, saith Cynes. He may live now if we please. Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas in an barn’s time they might be burnt to the ground, perhaps by lightning, which there is no defence against, and all that was laid up in them. A few years may make a great change; moth and rust may corrupt or thieves break through and steal. Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of it; man’s care is, to make himself great and rich; but if he made himself a whole pot of precious ointment; and then the whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world. Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to eat and drink; and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and putting themselves into a better capacity of serving God and his generation; as if we lived to eat, and did not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness. Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say this to his soul. If he had said, Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up, for many years, there had been no fault in him; but when he did talk to his soul, he made the spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn, or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a saint, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating and drinking, but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no way suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of, that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense.

(3.) Here is God’s sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth: He said to himself, said to his soul, Take thine ease; if God hath said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers, to make them easy; but God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. His neighbours knew that he was doing well for himself; (Ps. 39. 18.) but God said he was doing well for himself. Then fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. v. 20. God said to him, that is, de- creed this concerning him, and let him know it either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency; Job 20. 22. when his eyes were held waking upon his bed, with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve somewhat the end, but by
pulling them down, and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought this to an issue, and this left himself asleep again with the dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said, [1.] The character he gave him, Thou fool, thou Azazil, (alluding to the story of Nabul, that fool; Nabul is his name, and folly is with him,) to show he was like a fool even to himself, when he was regaling himself in his abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, Thou fool, and they will call themselves so. [2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death; This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul, (so the words are,) and then what these things be which thou hast provided? He thought he had goods that should be his many years, but he must part from them this night; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

Secondly, It is a force, an arrest, it is the requiring of the soul, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who cannot use it no better? Thy soul shall be required; that intimates that he is loath to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has torn it from him with violence, it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. They shall require thy soul; God shall require it, he shall require an account of it; "Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul? Give an account of that stewardship." They shall, that is, evil angels, as the messenger of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall require it as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires the soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Thirdly, It is a surprise, an unexpected force. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man, it is his morning; but it is night to a worldling, a dark night, he lies down in sorrow. It is this night, this present night, without delay, there is no giving bail, or begging day; this pleasant night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment; thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast, but in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa. 21. 4.

Fourthly, It is the leaving of all those things being, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. Their pomp shall not descend after them. (Ps. 49. 17.) but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit of anything they have had, except they have a saved a soul, saved them in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fifthly, It is leaving them to they know not who. "Then whose shall those things be? Not thine to be sure, and thou knowest not what they will prove, for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be wise or fools, (Ecc. 12. 18. 19.) whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or
yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 25. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burned; 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Our Lord Jesus is here inculcating some needful, useful lessons upon his disciples, which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterward to press upon them; for they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line: "Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection to the wealth of this world, I say unto you, my disciples, take heed of it." Thud, O man of God, see these things, as well as all, O man of the world, 1 Tim. 6. 11.

1. He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting, perplexing cares about the necessary supports of life, (v. 22.) Take no thought for your life. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness which rich people are most in danger of; and that is, a sensual complacency in the abundance of this world's goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of that, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to, that have but a little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best, and much more now that they had left all, to follow Christ; and that was, an anxious solicitude about the necessary supports of life. "Take no thought for your life, either for the preservation of it, or if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on." This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, Matth. 6. 25, &c. And the argument is, "You may be as rich, or as poor, as you please; and God will encourage to cast all your care upon God, which is the right way to care ourselves of it. Consider then,

1. God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the lesser. He has, without any care or forecast of our own, given us life and a body, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide for these. If we do not, we shall dishonor the care and pains, same, designed for our encouragement to cast all our care upon God, which is the right way to care ourselves of it. Consider then,

2. God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for good christians. "Trust God for meat, for he feeds the ravens; (v. 24.) they neither sow nor reap, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are fed, and never perish for want. Now consider how much better we are than the fowls of the air. Trust God for clothing, for he clothes the lilies; (v. 27, 28.) they make no preparation for their own clothing, they told not, they spun not, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet, as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully beautified. Now, if God has so clothe the flowers, which are fading perishing things, shall he not more clothe you with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing suited to your nature, as theirs is?" When God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, he also took care for their clothing; for though he did not furnish them with new clothes, yet (which came all to one) he provided that those they had should not wax old upon them, Deut. 8. 4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel; but then let them be of little faith. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith; for a powerful practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of these disquieting, perplexing imaginations.

3. Our cares are fruitless, vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them; they will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our reposé; (v. 35.) "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch; can add to his age one year, or one hour? Now if ye be not able to do that which is least, if it be not in your power to alter your statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things, which are as much out of your power, and about which it is as necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God?" Note, As in the case of the body, so in the case of the soul, it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carping and caring, will not mend it. An inordinate solicitous pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ; (v. 29, 30.) Whatever others do, seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; do not ye afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor weary yourselves with constant toil, do not ye hurry lither and thither with inquiry what ye shall eat or drink, as David's enemies, that wandered up and down for meat, (Ps. 59, 15.) or as the eagle that seeks the prey after off, Job 39. 29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus seek their food, but ask it of God day by day; let them not be of doubtful mind; μὴ μέμνησθεν Be not as me
trous in the air, that are blown lither and thither with every wind; do not, like them, rise and fall, but maintain a constant with yourselves, have your hearts fixed; live not in care ful suspense; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, ever upon the rack."

Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy for,

(1.) This is to make themselves like the children of this world; "All these things do the nations of the world seek. So that they care for the body only, and not for the soul, for this world only, and not for the other, look no further than what they shall eat and drink; and, having no all-sufficient God to seek to, and confide in, they burden themselves with anxious cares about those things; but it ill becomes you to do so. You, who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to walk in the way of this people." Isa. 8. 11, 12. When inordinate cares prevail over us, we should think, "What am I, a christian or a heathen? Baptized or not baptized? If a christian, if baptized, shall I rank myself with Gentiles, and join with them in their pursuits?"

(2.) It is needful for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life, for they have a father in heaven, who doth and will take care of them; "Your Father knows ye have need of these things, and considers it, and will supply your needs according to his riches and glory, for he is your Father, who made you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassion to them; your Father, who maintains you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you want no good thing." 3. They have better things to mind and pursue; (v. 31.) "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and mind that, ye, my disciples, who are to preach the kingdom of God; let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and that will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about the things of the world. And let all that have souls to save, seek the kingdom of God, in which only they can be safe. Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it, seek the kingdom of God, to be subjects in that, the kingdom of glory, to be princes in that, and then all these things shall be added to you; mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs."

(4.) They have better things to expect and hope for; (v. 32.) "Fear not, little flock." For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed; when we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination; therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we have to comfort us. Note, the Father has a kingdom for his children in this world. He has a kingdom for his own, he has a little flock; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard; a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel, (1 Kings 20, 27.) who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country. [3.] Though it be a little flock, quite over-numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered, by the number; yet it is the other way, they should not be afraid. "Fear not, little flock, but yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy." [3.] God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock; a crown of glory, (1 Pet. 5. 4.) a throne of power, (Rev. 3. 21.) unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The sheep on the right hand are called to come and inherit the kingdom, it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each. [4.] The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; it is God's rich grace, and is given to us as the effect of God's love; but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, even God's, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own? [5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the tears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble, for though it should come, it shall not come between the claims and promises of God." (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of, which cannot separate us from the love of God."

"Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you, for if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges lighter."

II. He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, v. 42, 34. Those who have done this may be very easy, as to all the events of time.

1. "Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it. Sell that ye have, and give alms," that is, "rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell that which you have surperfluities, all that you can spare from the supply of your wants, and these shall be given in alms, or for the poor, to be wasted in the floor. Sell that ye have, if ye find it a hinderance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, though they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell, to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it, by usury, but sell, and give alms; what is given in your estates, even only as much as may conduct you to the best interest, upon the best security."

2. "Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart, and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last. Grace will go with us into another world, for it is sovereign, in the soul, and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them. These will be treasures in heaven, that will enrich us to eternity. (1.) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend it up to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it. (2.) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approaches near it; what is laid up in heaven, has no reach of the reach of enemies. (3.) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, any more than it will waste with spending; the moth doth not corrupt it, as it doth our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven, if our hearts be there while we are here; (v. 34.) if we think much of heaven, and keep our eye upon it, and not upon this world's goods, we shall be ordered as if Christ's flock, and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But if your hearts be set upon the earth, and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

III. He charged them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ's coming; when all those who have laid up their treasure in that world, shall enter upon the enjoyment of it, v. 35, 36.

1. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants, servants that are to do him honour, in waiting on him, and attending his motions; if any man serve me, let him follow me, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; but that is not all, they must do him honour in waiting for him, and expecting his return. We
must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

2. Christ our Master, though now gone from us, will return again, return from the wedding, from solemnizing the nuptials abroad, to complete them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master's glorious appearance and doing everything with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and that being a critical day, they shall either stay with him, or he turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

3. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be in the night, it will be far in the night, when he has long deferred his coming; and when many have done looking for him, in the second watch, just before midnight, or in the third watch, next after midnight, v. 38. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for, (v. 40.) The Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not, without giving notice beforehand. This beproves not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are unthinking; and although they regardless of the notice given to them, so that, whenever he comes, it is in an hour that they think not.

4. That which he expects and requires from his servants, is, that they be ready to open to him immediately, whenever he comes, (v. 36.) that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or, rather to be received by him; that they be found as his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their lamps girded about, ready to meet the servants that are ready to go whether their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up, (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them,) and their lights burning, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

5. Those servants will be happy, who are found ready and in a good frame, when their Lord comes; (v. 37.) Blessed are those servants who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake, and aware of his first approach, of his first knock; and again, (v. 38.) Blessed are those servants, for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honour done them, as is scarcely to be found among men; he shall make them princes and servants, and give them a throne; for the betrothed bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not the manner of men; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as one that served; and did once, to show his condescension, gird himself, and serve them, when he washed their feet; (John 13. 4, 5.) it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before them, and as they enter thereunto, they shall find with him that his Father will honour them, John 12. 26.

6. We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming, that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man, to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made; The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would have come, then he would have watched, and have let servants be on the watch. v. 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never be off our guard. Or this may intimate the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the good man of the house had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sitten up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, as a thief in the night, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus watch. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls; be ye therefore ready also, as ready as the good man of the house would be, if he knew what hour the thief would come.

41. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

44. Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

49. I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth! I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Here is,

1. Peter's question, which he put to Christ upon occasion of the foregoing parable; (v. 41.) *"And, speakest thou this parable unto us that are the constant followers, to you that are ministers, or also to all that come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and in them to all Christians?" Peter was now, as often, a spokesman for the disciples. We have reason to bless God that there are some such forward ones, that have a gift of utterance, to let those that are such take heed of being proud. Now Peter desires Christ
to explain himself, and to direct the arrow of the foregoing parable to the mark he intended. He calls it a "parable", because it was not only figurative, but was not to be understood literally, as it was intended for us, or for all? To this Christ gives a direct answer, (Mark 13. 37.) What I say unto you, I say unto all. Yet here he seems to show that the apostles were primarily concerned in it. Note, We are all concerned to take to ourselves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to inquire according to concerning it; Speaketh thou this to us, or to all? Lord, Forsake thy servants. Doth this word belong to me? Speak it to my heart.

II. Christ's reply to this question, directed to Peter and the rest of the disciples. If what Christ had said before, did not so particularly concern them, but in common with other Christians, who must all watch and pray for Christ's coming, as his apostles; yet this that follows, is peculiarly adapted to ministers, who are the stewards in Christ's house. Now our Lord Jesus here tells them,

1. What was their duty as stewards, and what the trust committed to them. (1.) They are made rulers of God's household, under Christ, whose own the house is; ministers derive an authority from Christ to preach the gospel, and to administer the ordinances of Christ, and apply the seals of the covenant of grace. (2.) Their business is to give God's children and servants their portion of meat, that which is proper for them, and allotted to them; convictions and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong. Summ cuique.—To every one his own. This is rightly to divide the word of truth, 2 Tim. 2. 15. (3.) To give it them in due season, at that time and in that way which are most suitable to the temper and condition of those that are to be fed; a word in season to him that is weary. (4.) Herein they must approve themselves faithful and wise; faithful to their Master, by whom this great trust is reposed in them, and faithful to their fellow-servants, for whose benefit they are put in trust; and wise to improve an opportunity of doing honour to their Master, and service in the family. Ministers must be both skilful and faithful.

2. What would be their happiness, if they approve themselves faithful and wise; (v. 43.) Blessed is that servant, (1.) That is doing, and is not idle, nor indulgent of his ease; even the rulers of the household must be doing, and make themselves servants of all. (2.) That is so doing, doing as he should, giving them their portion of meat, by public preaching, and personal application. (3.) That is found so doing, when his Lord comes; that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding the difficulties he may meet with in the way. Now his happiness is illustrated by the performance of a steward, that has approved himself in a lower and narrower degree of service; he shall be preferred to a larger and higher. (v. 44.) He will make him ruler over all that he has, which was Joseph's preeminence in Pharaoh's palace. It's a necessary condition, that the Lord be faithful, shall obtain further mercy to be abundantly rewarded for their faithfulness in the day of the Lord.

3. What a dreadful reckoning there would be, if they were treacherous and unfaithful, v. 45, 46. If that servant begin to be quarrelsome and profane, he shall be called to an account, and severely punished. Note, the sin of Christ's ministers shall never be hid, there therefore shall here only observe. (1.) Our looking upon Christ's second coming as a thing at a distance, is the cause of all those irregularities which render the thought of it terrible to us; He saith in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming. Christ's patience is very often misrepresented, his delay to his discouragement of his people, and the encouragement of his enemies. (2.) The persecutors of God's people are commonly abandoned to security and sensuality; they beat their fellow-servants, and then eat and drink with the drunken, altogether unconcerned of them, or their brethren, as the king and Haman, who sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed. Thus they drank, to drown the clamours of their own consciences, and baffle them, which otherwise would fly in their faces. (3.) Death and judgment will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers who should be a sweet savour to them, at an hour when they are not aware, it will be the determining of them to endless misery, they shall be cut in sunders, and have their portion assigned them with the unbelievers.

4. What an aggravation it would be of their sin and punishment, that they knew their duty, and did not do it, (v. 47, 48.) For that servant that knew his lord's will, and did not do it, neither laboured, nor hearkened to his lord's will, shall be beaten with many stripes, his punishment shall, in consideration of that, be mitigated. Here seems to be an allusion to the law, which made a distinction between sins committed through ignorance and presumptuous sins, (Lev. 5. 15. Numb. 15. 39, 40.) as also to another law concerning the number of stripes given to a mushroom, (Numb. 19. 16.) and the acceptance of that number, Lev. 25. 22.

2. Now, (1.) Ignorance of our duty is an extenuation of sin. He that knew not his lord's will, through carelessness and neglect, and his not having such opportunities as some others had of coming to the knowledge of it, and did things worthy of stripes, he shall be beaten, because he might have known his duty better, but with few stripes; his ignorance excuses in part, but not in whole. Thus through ignorance the Jews put Christ to death, (Acts 3. 17. 1 Cor. 2. 8.) and Christ pleaded that ignorance in their excuse; They know not what they do. (2.) The knowledge of our duty is an aggravation of our sin; That servant that knew his lord's will, and yet did his own will, shall be beaten with many stripes. God will justly inflict more upon him for abusing the means of knowledge he afforded him, which others would have made a better use of; and because it argues a great degree of wilfullness and contempt, to sin against knowledge, of how much sorer punishment then shall they be thought worthy, beside the many stripes that their own consciences will give them! Son, remember. Here is a good reason for this added. To whomsoever much is given, of him shall more be required. The servants, who were committed as a trust to be accounted for, those that have greater capacities of mind than others, more knowledge and learning, more acquaintance and converse with the scriptures, to them much is given, and their account will be accordingly.

III. A further discourse concerning his own sufferings, which he expected, and concerning the sufferings of his followers, which he also expected. First, in expectation of; in general, (v. 49.) I am come to send fire on the earth. By this some understand the preaching of the gospel, and the pouring out of the Spirit, holy fire; this Christ came to send with a commission to refine the world, to purge away its dross, to burn up its chaff; and it was already kindled; the gospel was begun to be preached, some prefaced there were and the kindling of it with the Holy Ghost and with fire, this Spirit descended in fiery tongues; but by what follows, it seems rather to be understood of the fire of persecution; Christ is not the Author of it, as it is the sin of the incendiaries, the persecutors; but he ferments it, nay he commissions it, as a refining fire for the trial of the persecutors. This fire was already kindled in the eminence of the called Jews to Christ, and his followers. (a. What ill will I that it may pre-
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tells the to travails, to the was kindled, and those that do receive it, proves, though not the cause, yet the occasion, of division. While the strong man armed kept his palace, in the Gentile world, his goods were at peace; all was quiet, for all went one way, the sects of philosophers agreed well enough, so did the worshippers of different deities; but when the gospel was preached, and many were enlightened by it, and turned from the power of Satan to God, then there was a disturbance, a noise and tumult. Ezek. 37. 7. Some distinguished themselves by embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so. Yea, and among them that received the gospel there would be different sentiments; and lesser things, which would occasion division; and Christ permits it for holy ends,(1 Cor. 11. 19.) that christians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, Rem. 14. 1, 2.

(2.) "That this division will reach into private families, and the preaching of the gospel will give occasion for discord among the nearest relations; (v. 53.) The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father, when the one turns christian, and the other does not; for the one that does turn christian, will be zealous by arguments and endeavours to turn the other too; (1 Cor. 7 16.) as soon as ever Paul was converted, he disput ed: (Acts 9. 29.) the one that continues in unbelief will be provoked, and will hate and persecute the one that by his faith and obedience witnesses against, and condemns, his own faith and obedience. A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection; see Math. 10. 34.—24. 7. Even mothers and daughters fall out about religion; and those that believe not, are so violent and outrageous, that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the Acts, that whereas the gospel came, persecution was carried up; it was everywhere spoken against, and there was no small stir about that way. Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves peace upon earth, for they are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."

54. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower: and so it is. 55. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it, that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? 58. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayst be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Having given his disciples their lesson in the foregoing verses, here Christ turns to the people, and gives them theirs, v. 54. He said also to the people: he preached ad populum—to the people, as well as ad clerum—to the clergy. In general, he would have them be as wise in the affairs of their souls as they are in their outward affairs. Two things he specifies,

1. Let them learn to discern the way of God toward them, that they may proceed accordingly. They were weather-wise, and by observing the winds and clouds, could foresee when there would be rain, and when there would be hot weather; (v. 54, 55.) and they did, accordingly, either house their hay and corn, or throw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they fore-saw the weather would be. Even in the change of the weather God gives warning to us what is coming, and art has improved those notices of nature in weather-glasses. These preparations here spoken of, were made by repeated observations upon the chain of causes; from what has been we conjecture what will be; see the benefit of experience, by ta
king notice we may come to give notice; whose is wise, will observe and learn. See now,
1. The particulars of the presages: "Ye see a cloud arising out of the west;" (the Hebrew would say, "out of the sea;") "perhaps it is at first no bigger than a man's hand," (1 Kings 18:44), but ye say, "There is a shower in the womb of it, and it proves so. When ye observe the south wind blow, ye say, "There will be heat," (for the hot countries of Africa lay not far south from Judea,) "and it usually comes to pass; yet nature has not tied itself to such a track, but that sometimes we are cut in our prognostics.

2. The inferences from them, (v. 56.) "Ye hypocrites, how ye pretend to be wise, but really are not so, who pretend to expect the Messiah and his kingdom." (for so the generality of the Jews did,) "and yet are no way disposed to receive and entertain it, how is it that you do not discern this time, that ye do not discern that, according to the indications given in the Old-Testament prophecies, now is the time for the Messiah to appear, and that, according to the marks given of him, I am he? Why are ye not aware that ye have now an opportunity which ye will not have long, and which ye may never have again, of securing to yourselves an interest in the kingdom of God, and the privileges of that kingdom?" Now is the accepted time, now or never. It is the folly and misery of man, that he knows not his time. Eccl. 9. 12. This was the ruin of the men of that generation, that they knew not the day of their visitation, Isai. 58:13. But a man's heart discerns time and judgment; such was the wisdom of the men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times. 1 Chron. 12. 32. He adds (v. 57.) "Yea, and why even of yourselves, though ye had not these loud alarms given you, judge ye not what is right? Ye are not only stupid and regardless in matters that are purely of divine revelation, to submit to them had been worse to the Jews, for which gives you, but ye are so even in the dictates of the very light and law of nature." Christianity has reason and natural conscience on its side; and if men would allow themselves the liberty of judging what is right, they would soon find that all Christ's precepts concerning all things are right, and that there is nothing more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us, than to consider how to be benefited by them.

II. Let them hasten to make their peace with God in time, before it be too late, v. 55, 59. This we had upon another occasion. Matt. 5. 26.

1. We reckon it our wisdom in our temporal affairs, to compound with those with whom we cannot contend, to agree with our adversary upon the best terms we can, before the equity be foreclosed, and we be left to the rigour of the law; "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, to whom the appeal is made, and knowest that he has an advantage against thee, and thou art in danger of being cast, ye know it is the most prudent course, to make the matter up between yourselves: as thou art in the way, give diligence to be delivered from him, to get a discharge, lest judgment be given, and execution awarded according to law." Why? because it is a matter of extremity, but accommodate them in time.

2. Let us do thus in the affairs of our souls; we have by sin made God our Adversary, have provoked his displeasure against us, and he has both right and might on his side; so that it is to no purpose to think of carrying on the controversy with him either at bar or in battle. Christ, to whom all power is given, is the Mediator before whom we are hastening to appear; if we stand at his trial before him, and insist upon our own justification, the cause will certainly go against us; the Judge will deliver us to the officer, the ministers of his justice, and we shall be cast into the prison of hell, and the debt will be exacted to the utmost, though we cannot make a full satisfaction for it, it will be continually demanded, till the last mite be paid, which will not be to all eternity. Christ's sufferings are short, yet the value of them made them fully satisfactory. In the sufferings of the damned sinners, what is wanting in value, must be made up in an endless duration. Now, in consideration of this, let us give diligence to be delivered out of the hands of God as an Adversary, into his hands as a Father, and this as we are in the way, which has the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are going, and when we think we are going, is the time to be warned by repentance and faith, through Christ, (who is the Mediator as well as the Magistrate,) to get the quarrel made up, while it may be done, before it be too late. Thus was God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, beseeching us to be reconciled. Let us take hold on the arm of the Lord stretched out in this gracious offer, that we may make peace, and we shall make peace; (Isa. 57. 4, 5.) for we cannot walk together till we be agreed.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The good improvement Christ made of a piece of news that was brought him concerning some Galileans that were slain, v. 1. 2. 3. and why they were killing those when they were sacrificing in the temple at Jerusalem, v. 1. 5. II. The parable of the fruitless fig-tree, by which we are warned to bring forth fruits meet for that repentance which he had in the former passage called us to, v. 6. 9. III. Christ's healing of a poor infirm woman on the sabbath-day, and justifying of himself in it, v. 11. 17. IV. A repetition of the parables of the grains of mustard-seed, and the leaven, v. 18. 22. V. His answer to the question concerning the number of the saved, v. 25. 30. VI. The sight he put upon Herod's malice and enemies, and the doom of Jerusalem read, v. 31. 35.

1. [HERE] were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. 4. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5. I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

We have here,
1. Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, v. 1. Let us consider,
1. What thisatical story was: it is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the histories of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing of some Samaritans, who, under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to Jerusalem, to carry away the Samaritans' temple; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulotina, who is called Judas of Galilee, (Acts 5. 37.) who disowned Caesar's authority, and refused to pay tribute to him; or perhaps these, being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in with that pretender, were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable that this outrage committed upon them by Pilate, occasioned the
quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of, ch. 23. 13. We are not told what number they were, perhaps but a few, when Pilate had some particular finding against; (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus;) but the circumstance remarked is, that he mangled their blood with their sacrifices in the court of the temple. Though perhaps the thing was not at all that wicked, it was not, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whether the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were themselves killing their sacrifices, which was allowed for the priest's work (they said) began with the sprinkling of the blood: and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at that time when they were off their guard. (They had generally went well armed,) and mangled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the holiness of the place nor the work, would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, that neither feared God nor regarded man. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a pit and a snare for them. Why it was related at this season to our Lord Jesus. (1.) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them. (2.) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be delivered to the officer, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," they say, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly delivered to the officer, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready." Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God, and to enforce it upon ourselves, by observing the providences of God. (3.) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a Preceptor, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite out; for Christ was now going up into Jerusalem, to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice. (4.) Perhaps this was told Christ, to deter him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship, v. 22, lest he should serve him as he had served these Galileans, and should suggest against him, as, probably, he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his cruel treatment of them. He came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a seditious design, under colour of sacrificing, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hands was in, should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way. (5.) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful intent, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet that, without doubt, they were guilty, and sinned thereby. This was enough to permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invincible; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they will, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them; this late of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable, construction, shall be called a just judgment of God upon them, though they knew not for what.

11. Christ reply to this report of which he, He recites the history of their story, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since the tower in Siloam fell, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is, that this tower was adjacent to the pool of Siloam, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to these porches which were by the pool, in which the sick had come to drink of the water; (John 5. 2.) and that they who were killed, were some of those in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Wherever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them. Ezek. 9. 12. Towers, such as were built for sale, often are the cause of men's destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and such like events, nor from thence to censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners; Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, v. 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were good of fancy thing furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ referred upon them the story of the men of Jerusalem, that came to an untimely end; for with what measure of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again. Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were delibes to divine justice above all men that died at Jerusalem? I tell you nay. Whether it be for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold, to be purified, not as dross and chaff, to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in his case; for the works of him, lest we add sorrow to the sorrowful: nor, lest we condemn the generation of the righteous, Ps. 73. 14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because all things come acbe to all, Ecol. 9. 1, 2. And we might as justly conclude that the oppressors, and Pilate among the rest, on whose side are power and success, are the greatest saints, as that which is light, which are the works of men, who are all in tears, and they have no comfort, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the greatest sinners. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do shall we be done by Judge not, that we be not judged, Matth. 7. 1. 3. On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, Except we repent, we shall all likewise die, v. 5, 7. This was the conclusion to so much as they did, and had been dealt with according to our sins, according to the immensity of our holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censures, not only that we are sinners, but that we are great sinners as they
have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for. (2.) That therefore we are all concerned to repent, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do something more. The judgements of God and the world call us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to gain room for, and give hope to, but to enjoyn upon us,—and that is, to repent. (3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way; so impiety shall not be your ruin, but upon no other condition. (3.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some have an emphasis upon the word likewise, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their cars, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Babel. But certainly it looks farther; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perish out of this world. The same Jesus that bid us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bid us repent, for otherwise all shall perish. For if he hath not before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice. (5.) That the perishing of these in their impenitency will be in a particular manner aggravated, who have been most harsh and severe in judging others.

6. He spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; except ye be reformed, ye will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down." 1. This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and service; but when they were learning, when they were praised and honoured, he would have accounted fruit; but they disappointed his expectations, they did not do their duty, they were a reproach, instead of being a credit, to their profession; upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's, as of old upon the fig-tree, be grace, the promise, and the hope of God, come the benefit of God again to them, with time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance; some of them were wrought upon to repent, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and with no remedy came upon them; about forty years after they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (Matth. 3. 16.) which saying of his this parable er caudes.

1. Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it, that the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. New observe here, This is the most severe rebuke which the Lord put to this fig-tree had; it was planted in a vineyard, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it, and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in vineyards, (these are for vines,) but by the way-side, Matth. 21. 19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain man, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note, The church of God is his vineyard, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isag. 5. 1, 2. We are fig-trees planted in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and it is our privilege and happiness that we have so, it is a distinguishing favour. He has not dealt so with other nations.

2. The owner's expectation from it; He came, and sought fruit upon the tree, and he had reason to expect it. He did not send, but came himself, insatiating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, came to his own, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects fruit from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has his eye upon those that enjoy the gospel, to see whether they live up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace. Let every Lord, Lord; blossoms will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be fruit. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel-light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation; He found none, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him, and a grief to the Spirit of his grace. (1.) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard; I come, seeking fruit, but am disappointed; I find none, looking for grapes, but behold, wild grapes; he is grieved with such a generation. (2.) He aggravates it, with two considerations: (1.) They had waited long, and yet was disappointed; as he was not high in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not much fruit, so he was not hasty, he came three years, year after year; applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us, that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering, with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. (2.) How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit, but has not found any. This is the very fruitless life of Christ's people minutely, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us, that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering, with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit, but has not found any. This is the very fruitless life of Christ's people minutely, which were now expiring.
more cumbered, if it be a high large-spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

4. The donkeys passed upon it: Cut it down. He saith this to the Discers of the vineyard, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers, who are, in his name, to declare this. Note, 1. There can be expected no cumbering barren trees, than that they should be cut down. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismissed, and thrown open to the common, (Isa. 5. 5, 6,) so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard cut out of it, and within which it is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa. 6. 9, 10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for why cumbereth the ground? What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose.

5. The Discers’ intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor, he ever lives, interceding; ministers are intercessors; they that dress the vineyard, should intercede for it; these we preach to, we should pray for, for we must give ourselves to the word of God, and to prayer. Now observe,

(1.) What is it he prays for, and that is a reproach; Lord, let it alone this year also. He doth not pray, Lord, let it never be cut down,” but, Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the Discers’ intercession for the barren tree, but let it alone; it is to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God. [2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that barren trees are not cut down immediately; it had not been for this interposel, the whole world had been cut down, unpardoned; and therefore now, Lord, let it alone; and it is he that upholds all things.

[3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reproach of barren fig-trees: Lord, let them alone; continue them yet a while in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious.

Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath.

[4.] Reproaches of mercy are but for a time; Let it alone this year also, a short time, but a sufficient time, to show that the Lord may hope he will have yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always.

[5.] Reproaches may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(2.) How he promises to improve this reproach, if it be obtained; Till I shall dig about it, and d own it. Note, [1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavors. The Discers seems to say, Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness.” Thus in all our prayers we must request God’s grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for. [2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The Discers of the vineyard engages to do his part, and therein teaches ministers to do theirs. He will dig about the tree, and will d own it. Unfruitful cistians must be awakened by the terrors of the law, which break up the fallow ground, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fastening, as manure to the tree; both must be tried, the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(3.) Upon what ground he leaves the matter; “Let us try it and try what we can do with it one year more, and if it bear fruit, well; if not, it is possible, say there is hope, that yet a day, be fruitful; in that hope the Owner will have patience with it, and the Discers will take pains with it, and if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word well is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt: If it bear fruit; supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the Owner and Discers will be; if it bear fruit, there will be abundant rejoicing of the owner, and encouragement to the Discers; but it cannot be better expressed than as we do,

Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if, after long unfruitfulness, they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find all is well. God will be pleased, or he will be pleased; ministers’ hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now, and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it: the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is well for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall receive blessing from God.” (Heb. 6. 7.) it shall be purged, and shall bring forth more fruit, for the Father is its Husbandman; (John 15. 2.) and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

But he adds, If not then, after that, thou shalt cut it down. Observe here, [1.] That though God bear long, he will not bear always, with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be cut down at last, and cast into the fire. [2.] The longer God has waited, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down after that, after all these expectations, and all this time, and all these delays, and all this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation.

[3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God doth not take pleasure in: for observe here, the Owner said to the Discers, “Do thou cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground.” “Nay,” said the Discers, “if it must be done at last, thou shalt cut it down, let not my hand be upon it.” [4.] Perhaps I will not take pains for it, these Discers, and I will not take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness, will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay they will approve and applaud the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, Rev. 15. 3, 4.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath: 11. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. 15. The Lord
then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to water it? 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Here is,

I. The miraculous cure of a woman that had been long under a spirit of infirmity. Our Lord Jesus spent his sabbaths in the synagogues, v. 10. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity, and not think we can spend the sabbath as we please in reading our good books, or religious assemblies are a divine institution, which we must bear our testimony to, though but of two or three. And when he was in the synagogues on the sabbath-day, he was teaching there—in idibus; it denotes a continued act; he still taught the people knowledge. He was in his element when he was teaching. Now, to confirm the doctrine he preached, and recommend it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation, he wrought a miracle, a miracle of mercy.

1. The object of charity that presented itself, was, a woman in the synagogue, that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, v. 11. She had an infirmity, which an evil spirit, by divine permission, had brought upon her, which was such, that she was bowed together on the sabbath-days. Not, Even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous, can shame not should not keep us from public worship on sabbath-days; for God can help us, beyond our expectation. The offer of this cure to one that sought it not, bespeaks the preventing mercy and grace of Christ: (v. 11.) When Jesus saw her, he called her to him, it does not appear that she made any application to him, or had any expectation from him; but before she called he answered. She came to him, to be taught, and to get good to her soul, and then Christ gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Note, Those whose first and chief care is for their souls, do best befriend the true interests of their bodies likewise, for other things shall be added to them. Christ in his gospel calls and invites those to come to him for healing, that labour under spiritual infirmities, and if he calls us, he will undoubtedly help us when we come to him.

2. The cure effectually and immediately wrought, bespeaks his almighty power. He laid his hands on her, and said, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity; though thou hast been long labouring under it, thou art at length released from it.” Let not those despair, whose disease is inveterate, who have been long in affliction, God can at length relieve them; therefore, though he tarry, wait for him. Though it was a spirit of infirmity, an evil spirit, that she was under the power of, Christ, has power superior to that of Satan, is stronger than he. Though she could in no wise lift up herself, Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself. She that had been crooked, was immediately made straight, and the scripture was fulfilled, (Ps. 146. 8.) The Lord rebuketh them that are bowed down.

This cure represents the work of Christ’s grace upon the souls of people. (1.) In the conversion of sinners. Unsanctified hearts are under this spirit of infirmity, they are disturbed, the faculties of the soul are quite out of place and order; they are bowed down toward things below. O curious in terra animae!—wae solis potestates in terris attollentur. They can in no wise lift up themselves to that eternal state; and God is the only one that can raise them in the better state, the spiritual state, is the contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ, but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he looses them from their infirmity; makes the soul straight, reduces it to order, raises it above worldly regards, and directs its affections and aims heavenward. Though man cannot make that straight, which God has made crooked, (Ecc. 7. 13.) yet the grace of God can make that straight, which the sinner has made crooked.

(2.) In the consolation of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a spirit of infirmity, a spirit of bondage; through prevailing grief and fear, their souls are cast down and discouraged within them, they are troubled, they are bowed down in some of their sabbath-days, Ps. 88. 6. But Christ, by his spirit of adoption, loses them from this infirmity in due time, and raises them up.

4. The present effect of this cure upon the soul of the patient as well as upon her body; she glorified God, gave him the praise of her cure, to whom all praise is due. When crooked souls are made straight, there will show it by their rejoicing in a sabbath-day long, Ps. 38. 6. But Christ, by his spirit of adoption, loses them from this infirmity in due time, and raises them up.

II. The offence that was taken at this by the ruler of the synagogue, as if our Lord Jesus had committed some heinous crime, in healing this poor woman. He had indignation at it, because it was on the sabbath-day, v. 14. One would think that the miracle should have convinced him, and that the circumstance of its being done on the sabbath day could not have served to exculpate him. In the next verse, he says, though he should not have done this, he would have done it, if it had been lawful to do it, (v. 15.) The Lord then answered him, as he had answered others, who in like manner ca
villed at him, Then hypocrites. Christ, who knows men's hearts, may call these hypocrites, whom it would be presumption for us to call so, who must judge charitably, and can judge but according to the outward appearance. Christ knew that he had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, that he did cloud that with a pretended zeal for the sabbath-day, and that when he bid the people come on the sixth day, and be healed, he really could not have them he healed any day. Christ could tell him this, but he vouchsafes to reason the case with him; and,

1. He appeals to the common practice among the Jews, which was never disallowed, that of watering their cattle on the sabbath-day; the cattle stood in the stable, and constantly looked from the stall on the sabbath-day, and led away to watering. It would be a barbarous thing not to do it; for a mercerish man regards the life of his beast, his own beast that serves him. Letting the cattle rest on the sabbath-day, as the law directed, would be worse than working them, if they must be made to fast on that day, as the Nineteen's cattle on their fast-day, then were not permitted to feed or drink water, Jon. 3. 7.

2. He applies this to the present case; (r. 16.) "Must an ox or an ass have compassion showed them on the sabbath-day, and have so much time and pains bestowed upon them every sabbath, to be bosed from the stall, led away perhaps a great way to the water, and then back again; and shall not there be a little thing with a touch of the mouth? for, in the word's speaking, be bosed from a much greater grievance than that which the cattle undergo, when they are kept a day without water? For consider, (1.) She is a daughter of Abraham, whom you all pride yourselves in a relation to; she is your sister, and shall she be denied a favour that you grant an ox or an ass, dispensing a little with the supposed strictness of the sabbath-day? She is a daughter of Abraham, and therefore is entitled to the Messiah's blessings, to the bread which belongs to the children." (2.) She is one whom Satan has bound, he has a hand in the affliction, and therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of pity to God, to break the power of the devil, and baflle him. (3.) "She has been in this deplorable condition, to these eighteen years, and therefore now that there is an opportunity of delivering her, it is one of the greatest kindness in the world to have it, for any of you would have thought eighteen years' affliction full long enough.

IV. The different effect that this had upon those that heard him. He had sufficiently made it out, not only that it was lawful, but that it was highly fit and proper, to heal this poor woman on the sabbath-day, and thus publicly in the synagogue, that they might all be witnesses of the miracle. And now observe,

1. What a confusion this was to the malice of his persecutors; When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed. (r. 17.) They were put to silence, and were vexed that they were so, that they had not a word to say for themselves: it was not a shame that worked repentance, but indignation rather. Note. Sooner or later, all the adversaries of Christ will, whether in the service of Satan, or his doctrine and miracles, will be made ashamed.

2. What a confirmation this was to the faith of his friends; All the people, who had a better sense of things, and judged more impartially than their rulers, rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. The shame of his foes was the joy of his followers; the increase of his interest was what he came fretted at, and the other triumphed in. The things Christ did, were glorious things; they were all so, and, though now clouded, perhaps will appear so, and we ought to rejoice in them. Every thing that is the honour of Christ, is the comfort of Christians.

13. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? 19. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden: and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? 21. It is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The gospel's progress foretold in two parables, which we had before, Matth. 13. 31, 33. The kingdom of the Messiah is the kingdom of God, for it advances his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes, about it. Now, when we would describe a thing to those that are strangers to it, we choose to do it by similitudes; (r. 19.) "Such a person you know not, but I will tell you whom he is like." so Christ undertakes here to show what the kingdom of God would be. Christ says, (r. 21.) "Ilieroent shall I liken the kingdom of God? r. 20. It will be quite another thing from what you expect, and will operate, and gain its point, in quite another manner."

(1.) "You expect it will appear great, and will arrive at its perfection all of a sudden; but you are mistaken, it is like a grain of mustard-seed, a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and pupils, but as little as a grain of mustard seel, would be proper to receive it, it swells a great tree," r. 19. Many perhaps were prejudiced against the gospel, and leath to come in to the obedience of it, because its beginning was so small; they were ready to say of Christ, Can this man save us? And of his gospel, Is this likely ever to come to any thing? Now Christ would remove this prejudice, by assuring them that though its beginning was small, its last end should greatly increase: that many who would come, should come upon the wing, should fly like a cloud, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction than in the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, Dan. 4. 21.

(2.) "You expect it will make its way by external means, by subduing nations and vanquishing armies; though it should work like heaven, silently and insensibly, and without any force or violence, r. 21. A little leaven with the whole lump, so the doctrine of Christ will strangely diffuse its relish into the world of mankind: in this it triumphs, that the savour of the knowledge of it is unaccountably made manifest in every place, beyond what one could have expected, 2 Cor. 2. 14. But you must give it time, wait for the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world, and you will find it does wonders, and alters the property of the souls of men. By degrees the whole will be leavened, even as many as are, like the meal to the leaven, prepared to receive the savour of it."

2. Christ's progress toward Jerusalem recorded; (r. 22.) He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying. Here we find Christ an Itinerant, but an itinerant Preacher, journeying toward Jerusalem, to the Feast of Dedication, which was in the winter, when travelling was uncomf ortable, yet he would be about his Father's business: and therefore, whatever cities or villages he could
make in his way, he gave them a sermon or two, not only in the cities, but in the country-villages. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavour to be doing all the good we can.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that are saved? And he said unto them, 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. 28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

We have here,

1. A question put to our Lord Jesus; who it was that put it, we are not told, whether a friend or a foe; for he gave both a great liberty of questioning him, and returned answers to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The question was, Are there few that are saved? 23. καθιστήρι σωσιματον· "If the saved be few? Master, I have heard thou shouldst say so; Is it true?"

1. Perhaps it was a cautious question; he put it to him, tempting him, with a design to ensnare him, and lessen his reputation. If he should say that many would be saved, they would reproach him as too liberal, and making salvation cheap; if few, they would reproach him as precise and strait-laced. The Jewish doctors said, That all Israel should have a place in the world to come; and would he dare to contradict that! Those that have sucked in a corrupt notion, are ready to make it the standard by which to measure all men's judgments; and in nothing do men more betray their ignorance, presumption, and partiality, than in judging of the salvation of others.

2. Perhaps it was a curious question, a nice speculation, which he had lately been disputing upon with his companions, and they all agreed to refer it to Christ. Note, Many are more inquisitive respecting who shall be saved, and who not, than respecting what they shall do to be saved. It is commonly asked, "May such and such be saved?" But it is well that we may be saved without knowing that.

3. Perhaps it was an admiring question; he had taken notice how strict the law of Christ was, and how bad the world was, and comparing these together, cries out, "How few are there that will be saved!" Note, We have reason to wonder, that of the many to whom the word of salvation is sent, there are so few to whom it is indeed a saving word.

4. Perhaps it was an inquiring question; "If there be few that be saved, what then? What influence should this have upon me?" Note, It concerns us all seriously to improve the great truth of the fewness of those that are saved.

II. Christ answereth this question, which directs us what use we make of this doctrine. Our Saviour did not give a direct answer to his inquiry, for it was not to guide men's consciences, not to gratify their curiosity. Ask not, "How many shall be saved?" But, be they more or fewer, "Shall I be one of them?" or, Whatever shall become of such and such, and what shall this man do?" But, "What shall I do, and what will become of me?" Now in Christ's answer observe,

1. A quickening exhortation and direction; Strive to enter in at the strait gate. This is directed not to him only that asked the question, but to all, to us, it is in the plural number; Strive ye. Note, (1.) All that will be saved, must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as amounts to less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline. (2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate, must strive for it. It is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, strive against sin and Satan; we must strive in every duty of religion, strive with our own hearts, παραμετορισθείν; "Be in an agony, have as that man who ran for a prize, exert ourselves to the utmost.

2. Divers awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them! They are such considerations as will serve to answer the question, Are there few that shall be saved?

(1.) Think how many take some pains for salvation, and yet perish because they do not take enough; and you will say that there are few that will be saved, and that it highly concerns us to strive; Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; they seek, but they do not strive. Note, The reason why many come short of grace and glory, is, because they rest in a lazy seeking of that which will not be attained without a laborious striving. They have a good hope of happiness, and a good opinion of holiness, and take some good steps, and some good steps; but their convictions are weak, they do not consider what they know and believe, and, consequently, their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they come short, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ avers this upon his word, I say unto you; and we may take it upon his word. For he knows both the counsels of God and the hearts of the children of men.

(2.) Think of the distinguishing day that is coming, and the decisions of that day; and you will say there are few that shall be saved, and that we are concerned to strive; The Master of the house will rise up, and shut to the door. 25. Christ is the Master of the house, that will take cognizance of all that frequent his house, knows both the comers and goers, and these that press and repass. Now he seems as if he left things at large; but the day is coming when he will rise up, and shut to the door. What door? 26. A door of distinction. Now, within the temple of the church there are carnal professors who worship in the outer-court, spiritual pre-fessors who worship within the veil; between these the door is now open, and they meet promiscuously in the same external performance. But when the Master of the house is risen up, the door will be shut between them, that these who are,
[Verse 2] A door of denial and exclusion. The door of mercy and grace has long stood open to them, but they would not come in by it, would not be beholden to the favour of that door, they hoped to climb up some other way, and to get to heaven by their own merits. If they fell, the devil will say, 'I cast you down; I will not keep you long in the congregation of the righteous.' Then you shall return, and discern betwixt them. [Verse 3] What grounds they had for this confidence. Let us see what their plea is, v. 26. First, They had been Christ's guests, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours: 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence.' Judges are bread with Christ, dined with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in partake of the sacred meats. Second, They had been Christ's hearers: had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law: 'Thou hast taught us in our streets.' A distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for wouldst thou teach us, and not save us? [Verse 4] How true confidence will fill them, and all the pretexts he rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, 'I know you not whence you are.' v. 25. And again, (v. 26.) I tell you, I know you not, depart from me. He doth not deny that that which they pleaded was true, they had eaten and drunk in his presence, by the same token, that they had no sooner eaten of his bread, than they lifted up the heel against him. He had taught in their streets, by the same token they had despised his instruction, and rejected it. And therefore, he, denying himself, He disdains them: 'I know you not; you do not belong to my family. The Lord knows them that are his, but them that are not he does not know; he has nothing to do with them: 'I know you not whence you are. Ye are not of me, ye are not from above, ye are not branches of my house, of my vine.' Second, He disdains them: Depart from me. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ: the principal part of the misery of the damned, 'Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water.' Thrust, He gives them such a character as is the reason of this doom: Ye are workers of iniquity. This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of goodness, they have dishonoured the name and blood of Christ, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery. [Verse 4] How terrible their punishment will be; (c. 28.) There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved: 'Ye shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of heaven, and they which despise you shall be thrust out.' Observe here, [Verse 5] That the New Testament saints are in the kingdom of God: these had been by the Messiah, who died before his coming; for they saw his day at a distance, and it reflected comfort upon them. [Verse 6] That New Testament sinners will be thrust out of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. [Verse 7] That the sight of the sinners' misery will be a great aggravation of sinners' misery: they shall thus far see the kingdom of God, that they shall see the proverbs in it, when they hated and despised, and themselves, who thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Ps. 112. 10. [Verse 8] Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding: (c. 29, 36.) They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first. [Verse 9] By what Christ had said, it appeared that few should be saved, of these whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain, for though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world, that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there, whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many there, whom we verily expected to have found there. [Verse 10] Those who sit down in the kingdom of God, are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far—from the east, and from the west; from the north, and from the south; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties, and discouragements, which shows that the new kingdom, must strive, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They who travel now in the service of God and religion, shall shortly sit down to rest in the kingdom of God. [Verse 11] Many who stood fair for heaven, came short, and others, who seemed best for it, turned out to the way, and won no places: they were not of the marriage band, and therefore it comes upon us to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desired the Jews might be, to a holy emulation by the zeal and forwardness of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be by striving, why should not I strive? 31. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. 32. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Beltz. I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.
vertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 31. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 32. Behold your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Here is,

I. A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction; (v. 31.) Certain of the Pharisees (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee, as he did John. Some think that those Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had no power in the country, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance, denouncing punishment against, and unwilling to get rid of Christ out of his dominions; and when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to frighten him away by sending him this threatening message.

II. His defence of Herod's rage and the Pharisees too: he fears neither the one nor the other; Go ye and tell that fox so, v. 32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft, and treachery, and busyness, and preying (as they say of a fox) farthest from his own den. And though it be a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it him, nor was it in a violation of that law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. For Christ was a Prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a King, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. "Go, and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too," (for so it is in the original, τον αυτον τον αβατον, "that Pharisee whoever he is that whispers this in my ear, let him know that I do not regard him, nor respect his enemices." For if I know that I must die, and must die shortly, I expect it and count upon it, the third day;" that is, "very shortly: my hour is at hand." Note, it will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. For it will kill me, he will not spare me.

2. I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him, I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected. I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking, I shall have completed my business; τελεσαμενοι—I shall be consecrated. When Christ died, he is said to have sanctified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. "I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me, till I have done my work." Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. I will cast out devils, and do cures, to-day, and to-morrow," that is, "now and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must go about, as I now do, preaching and healing, to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." Note, it is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the most, then we must be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. "I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction. It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," that is, "any where but at Jerusalem." If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great Sanhedrin, which always sat at Jerusalem; it was cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

III. His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, v. 34, 35. This we had, Matt. 23. 37—39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to sing a dirge in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note, 1. The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God, is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ hath showed himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection: How often would I have gathered the children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings; with such care and tenderness!

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is, because they will not; I would, I often would, and ye would not. Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves, is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though hugely frequented, is yet desolate, if Christ have deserted it: he leaves it to them, they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make the best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore, saith he, "You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more;" as Moses said to
Pharaoh, when he forbade him his presence, Exod. 10. 29, 30.

7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced.

Then you will say, with yourself, that is, "I will be glad to be among those that say so, and will not see me to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, we have, I. The cure which our Lord Jesus wrought upon a man that had dropsies, on the sabbath-day, and in the presence of the Pharisees and lawyers. II. A lesson of humility given to those who were ambitious of the highest rooms, v. 7, 11. III. A lesson of charity to those who feared the rich and did not feel the poor. v. 12, 14. IV. The success of the gospel-offer foretold in the parable of the guests invited to a feast, signifying the rejection of the Jews, and all others that set their hearts upon this world, and the entertainment of the Gentiles, and all others that come empty of self, to be filled with Christ, v. 13, 24. V. The great law of discipleship laid down, with a caution to all that will be Christ's disciples, to undertake it deliberately, and with consideration, and particularly to ministers to retain their favour, v. 25, 35.

1. AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3. And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? 4. And they held his peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; 5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? 6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

In this passage of story we find,

I. That the Son of man came, eating and drinking, conversing familiarly with all sorts of people; not declining the society of publicans and sinners, even though they were in the very family of Pharisees, though they hate him ill will, but accepting the friendly invitations both of the one and the other; that, if possible, he might do good to both. Here he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, a ruler, it may be, and a magistrate in his country, to eat bread on the sabbath-day, v. 1. See how favourable God is to us, that he allows us time, even on his own day, for bountiful refreshments; and how careful we should be not to abuse that liberty, or turn it into licentiousness. Christ went not to eat bread, to take such refreshment as was necessary on the sabbath-day. Our sabbath-meals must, with a particular care, be guarded against all manner of excess. On sabbath-days we must do, as Moses and Jethro did, eat bread before God, (Exod. 18. 12.) and, as is said of the primitive christians, on the Lord's day, must eat and drink, as those that must hasty again before we go to rest, that we may not be unfit for that.

II. That he went about, doing good. Wherever he came, he sought opportunities to do good, and not only imposed those that felt in his way; here was a certain man before him, which had the dropsy, v. 2. We do not find that he offered himself, or that his friends offered him to be Christ's patient; but Christ presented himself with the blessings of his goodness, and before he called he healed him and presented him.

Note, It is a happy thing to be where Christ is, to be present before him, though we be not presented, to him. This man had the dropsy; it is probable, in a high degree, and that he appeared much swollen with it; probably, he was some relation of the Pharisee's that now lodged in his house, which is not likely then that he should be invited a guest at the table.

III. That he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; (v. 1.) They watched him. The Pharisee that invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ knew it, and yet went, for he knew himself a match for the most subtle of them, and how to order his steps with an eye to his observers. Those that are watched had need to be careful. It was, as Dr. Hammond observes, contrary to all laws of hospitality, to seek advantage against one that you invited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to amuse the birds, held their peace, and acted very silently. When Christ asked them whether they thought it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day, (and herein he is said to answer them, for it was an answer to their thoughts, and thoughts are words in Jesus Christ,) they said neither Yes nor Nay, for their design was to inform against him, not to be informed by him. They would not say, It was lawful to heal, for then they would preclude themselves from imputing it to him as a crime; and yet the thing was so plain and self-evident, that they could not for conscience say it was not lawful. But the wise, and men have often been found for doing that which was in their persecutors, if they would but give their consciences leave to speak out, could not but own to be lawful and good. Many a good work Christ did, for which they cast stones at him and his name.

IV. That Christ would not be hindered from doing good by the opposition and contradiction of sinners; (v. 2.) He took him, and healed him, and let him go. Perhaps he went into another room, and healed him there, because he would neither proclaim himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the less offensive. Or, He took him, that is, he laid hands on him, to cure him; When Jesus understood of them the intentions of the Pharisees, he went into another room, and healed him there, because he would neither proclaim himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the less offensive. Or, He took him, that is, he laid hands on him, to cure him; When Jesus understood of them the intentions of the Pharisees, he went into another room, and healed him there, because he would neither proclaim himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the less offensive. Or, He took him, that is, he laid hands on him, to cure him; When Jesus understood of them the intentions of the Pharisees, he went into another room, and healed him there, because he would neither proclaim himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the less offensive.

V. That our Lord Jesus did nothing but what he could justly, to the confusion and confusion of those that quarrelled with him, v. 5, 6. He still answered their thoughts, and made them hold their peace for shame, who before held their peace for subtility by an appeal to their own practice, as he had been used to do upon such occasions, that he might show them how inconsistent it was to condemn himself to be crucified. Which if he shall have an angel, he must be fallen into a pit, by accident, will he not pull him out on the sabbath-day, and that straightforward, not deferring it till the sabbath be over, lest it perish? Observe, It is not so much cut of compassion to the poor creature, that they do it, but a concern for their own interest. It is their own, and their own use, that is worth money, that they will dispense with the law of the sabbath for the saving of; that this was an evidence of their hypocrisy, and that it was not out of any real regard to the sabbath, that
7. And he put forth a parable to those which were privy, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest seat; lest a more honourable man than thee be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. 11. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. 12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. 13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable, edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find that when he had none but his disciples, that were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was good, and to the use of edifying: and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that watched him, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them; though the wicked were before him, he did not keep silence from good, (as David did, Ps. 39. 1, 2.) for, notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had but the heart but within him, nor was his spirit disturbed. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, but we must go beyond common harmless talk, and should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables, to speak well of him, and learn to spiritualize common things. The lips of the righteous should then feed many. Our Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet, as one that had not respect of persons, 1. He took occasion to reprove the guests for sitting to sit uppermost, and from thence gives us a lesson of humility. 1. He observed how these lawyers and Pharisees affected the highest seats, toward the head-end of the table, v. 7. He had charged that sort of men with this in general, ch. 11. 43. Here he brings home the charge to particular persons; for Christ will give every man his own. He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; every man, as he came in, got as near the best seat as he could. Note, Even the common actions of life, Christ's eye is upon us, and he marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables, and makes remarks upon it. 2. He observed how those who were thus aspiring, often exposed themselves, and came off with a blur; whereas those who were modest, and seated themselves in the lowest seats, often gained respect here. (1.) Those who, in the highest seats, may perhaps be degraded, and forced to come down to give place to one more honourable, v. 8, 9. Note, It ought to check our high thoughts of ourselves, to think how many there are, that are more honourable than we, not only in respect of worldly dignities, but of personal merits and accomplishments. Instead of being proud that so many give place to us, it should be humbling to us, that there are so many that we must give place to. The master of the feast will marshal his guests, and will not see the more honourable kept out of the seat that is his due, and therefore will make bold to take him lower that usurped it; Give this man place; and this will be a disgrace to him that would be thought more deserving than really he was, before all the guests and company. Pride will have shame, and will at last have a fall. (2.) Those who, when they come in, content themselves with the lowest seats, are likely to be preferred; (v. 10.) "Go, and sit thouself in the lowest seat, as taking it for granted that thy friend who invited thee, has guests to come, that are of better rank and quality than thou art; but perhaps it may not prove so, and then it will be better for thee to eat with thy friend, go up higher. The up of the feast will be so just to thee, as not to keep thee at the lower end of the table, because thou wast so modest as to seat thyself there." Note, The way to raise high, is, to begin low; and this recommends a man to those about him; "Thou shalt have honour and respect before those that sit with thee. They will see thee to be an honourable man, beyond what first they thought; and honour thee, for shewing up for shining out of obscurity. They will likewise see thee to be a humble man, which is the greatest honour of all. Our Saviour here refers to that advice of Solomon, (Prov. 25. 6, 7.) Stand not in the place of great men, for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be put lower." And Dr. Lightfoot quotes a parable out of one of the Rabbins, somewhat like this, "There was (said he) "were bidden to a feast; one sat highest, for, said he, I am a prince; the other next, for, said he, I am a wise man; the other lowest, for, said he, I am a humble man. The king seated the humble man highest, and put the prince lowest." 3. He applies this generally, and would have us all learn not to mind high things, but to content ourselves with meaner actions, as he did this; this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men, for wherever exalteth himself shall be abased; but humility and self-denial are really honourable, he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted, v. 11. We see it in other instances, that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit; and before honour is humility. It was observed of our Saviour, at the feast, for inviting so many rich people, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have invited the poor, or, which was as much, to have sent portions to them for whom nothing is prepared, and who could not afford themselves a good meat's meal. See Neh. 8. 10. Our Saviour
here teaches us, that the using of what we have, in works of charity, is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificient house-keeping.

1. "Cove not to treat the rich; (v. 12.) invite not thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours that are rich." This does not prohibit the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivation of friendship among relations and neighbors. But, (2.) Do not come from want of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayst not disable thyself to lay out in a better manner, in almsgiving. "Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor." Solomon saith, "He that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want," Prov. 22. 10. "Give" (sauth Flair, Epist.) "to thy friends, be remembered in the resurrection to those that need thee not." (2.) "Be not proud of it." Many make feasts, only to make a show, as Ahasuerus did; (Esth. 1. 3, 4.) and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies. (3.) "Aim not at being paid again in your own coin." This is the which our Saviour blames in making such entertaining.

2. "Be forward to relieve the poor; (v. 13, 14.) When thou maketh a feast, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite the poor and maimed, such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity, they want necessaries; furnish them, and they will recompence thee with their prayers; they will commend thy prudences, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away, and reproach thee. They will not say that thou givest because they cannot recompense thee, they art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set cut to the best interest, on the best security, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." There will be a resurrection of the just, a future state of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world; and we may be sure that the charitable will be recompenced, in that resurrection, for all are righteoussness. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God doth not pay the best men in those things; but they shall in no wise lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the resurrection. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned till the resurrection.

15. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come: for all things are now ready. 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19. And another said, I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were hidden shall have taste of my supper. Here is another discourse of our Saviour's, in which he spiritualizes the feast he was invited to; which is another way of keeping up good discourse in the midst of common actions. The occasion of the discourse was given by one of the guests, who, when Christ was giving rules about feasting, said to him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, (v. 15.) which, some tell us, was a saying commonly used among the rabbins. But with what design does this man bring it in here? 1. Perhaps this man, observing that Christ reproved first the guests, and then the master of the house, fearing he should put the compur out of humour, started this, to divert the discourse to something else. Or, 2. Admiring the good rules of humility and charity which Christ had now given, but desirous of seeing them lived up to in the present degenerate state of things, he longs for the kingdom of God, when these and other good laws shall obtain, and pronounces them blessed, who shall have a place in that kingdom. Or, 3. Christ having mentioned the resurrection of the just, as a recompence for charity, and Jesus confirms what he said, "Yea, Lord, they that shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, shall eat bread in the kingdom, and that is a greater recompense than being reinvited to the table of the greatest man on earth." Or, 4. Observing Christ to be silent, after he had given the foregoing lessons, he was willing to draw him in again to further discourse, so wonderfully well- pleased was he with what he had said, and something more likely to engage him, than to mention the kingdom of God. Note, Even these that are not of ability to carry on good discourse themselves, ought to put in a word now and then, to comtance it, and help it forward. Now that which this man said, was a plain and acknowledged truth, and it was quoted very appropriately now that they were sitting at meat; for we shall take much occasion from hence this word, and speak of these heavenly and spiritual things which in scripture are compared to them; for that is one end of borrowing similitudes from them. And it will be good for us, when we are receiving the gifts of God's Providence, to pass through them in the consideration of the gifts of his grace, these better things. This thought will be very sensible when we are partaking of bodily refreshments: Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom.
of God. (1.) In the kingdom of grace, in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was expected now shortly to be set up. Christ promised his disciples that they should eat and drink with him in his kingdom. They that partake of the Lord's supper, eat bread in the kingdom of God. (2.) In the kingdom of glory; the dispensation of heaven is an everlasting feast; blessed are they that shall sit down at that table, whence they shall rise no more.

11. The parable which our Lord Jesus put forth upon this occasion, v. 16, &c. Christ joins with the good man in what he said; "It is very true, Blessed are they that shall partake of the privileges of the Messiah; and therefore, they will not enjoy that privilege? You Jews, who think to have the monopoly of it, will generally reject it, and the Gentiles will be the greatest sharers in it." This he shows by a parable; for, if he had spoken it plainly, the Pharisees would not have borne it.

Now in this parable we may observe,

1. The free grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ; it appears, (1.) In the rich provision he has made for poor souls, for their nourishment, refreshment, and entertainment; (v. 16.) A certain rich man made a great supper. There is that in Christ and the grace of the gospel, which will be food and a feast for the soul of man that knows its own capacities, for the soul; a fanner that knows its own necessities and miseries. It is called a feast, because in those countries supper-time was the chief feasting-time, when the business of the day was over. The manifestation of gospel-grace to the world was the evening of the world's day; and the fruition of the fulness of that grace in heaven is reserved for the evening of our day. (2.) In the gracious invitation given us to come and partake of this provision. Here is, (1.) A general invitation given he bade many. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake of the benefits of his gospel. There is provision enough for as many as come; it was prophesied of as a feast for all people, Isa. 25. 6. Christ in the gospel, as he keeps a good house, so he keeps an open house. (2.) A particular memorandum given, when the supper-time was at hand; the servant was sent round to put them in mind of it; Come, for all things are ready. When the time of the church and the gospel-church was planted, those who before were invited, were more closely pressed to come in presently; Now all things are ready, the full discovery of the gospel ministry is now made, all the ordinances of the gospel are now instituted, the society of Christians is now incorporated, and, which crowns all, the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the gospel now given; "All things are now ready, now is the accepted time, it is now, and has not been long, it is now, and will not be long; it is a season of grace that will be soon over; and therefore come now; do notdelay; accept the invitation; believe yourselves welcome; eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." 2. The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. The invited guests declined coming, they did not say flat and plain that they would not come, but they all with one consent began to make excuse, v. 18. One would have expected that they should all with one consent have come to a good supper, when they were so kindly invited to it; who would have refused such an invitation? Yet, on the contrary, they all found out some pretence or other to shift off their attendance. This bespeaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to close with Christ, and accept of the offers of his grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It speaks also the backwardness there is in most people to close with the gospel-call. They cannot for shame avow their refusal, but they desire to be excused; they all erw yte, some supply zye, all straightforward, they could give an answer extempliand; and needed not to study it; were not to seek for an excuse. Others supply yezo, they were unwilling in it; much one by one was excused.

(1.) Here were two that were purchasers, who were in such haste to go and see their purchases, that they could not find time to go to this supper; one had purchased land, he had bought a piece of ground, which was represented to him to be a good bargain, and he must needs go and see whether it was so or no; and therefore I pray thee have me excused. His heart was so much upon the enlarging of his estate that he could not come and have the refreshment given to him from his own house, good of itself, good to him, and good to the master of the feast; this shows that he was unwilling to be excused, but that he was likely to sup alone, for the guests that were invited, though they had timely notice a good while before, that they might order their affairs accordingly, yet were now engaged to some other business. He made the matter neither better nor
worse, but related it just as it was. Note, Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace; if they see the travail of their soul, they must go to God with their thanks; if they labour in vain, they must go to God with their complaints. They will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ; they shall then see whether their labour was in vain; then, and not now, they will know the issue of their labours, and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited; and for those who accepted the call, Behold, I and the children thou hast given me. The apostle urges this as a reason why people should give ear to the word of God sent them by his ministers, for they watch for your souls, as those that must give account, Heb. 13. 17.

Note, The ungratitude of those that slight gospel offers, and the contempt they put upon the God of heaven thereby, are a very great provocation to him, and justly so. Abused mercy turns into the greatest wrath. The doom he passed upon them, was, None of the men that were hidden, shall taste of my supper. This was like the doom passed upon ungrateful Israel, when they despised the holy places, went to the mountains, and those that should not enter into his rest. Note, Grace despised is grace forfeited, like Esau's birthright. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have him when they would. Even those that were hidden, if they slight the invitation, shall be forbidden; when the door is shut, the foolish virgins will be denied entrance.

The case that was taken to furnish the table with guests, as well as meat. 46, (saith he to the servants,) Go, first into the streets and lanes of the city, and invite, not the merchants that are going from the custom-house, or the tradesmen that are shutting up their shops, they will desire to be excused; (one is going to his compting-house, to cast up his books, another to the tavern, to drink a bottle with his friend;) but, that you may invite those that will be glad to come, bring in hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind; pick up the common beggars. The servants object not, that it will be a disarrangement to the master and his house, to have such guests at his table; for they knew his mind, and they soon gather an abundance of such guests; Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the Scribes and Pharisees, such as Christ was never at dinner with, but of publicans and sinners, these are the poor and the maimed. But yet there is room for more guests, and provision enough for them all. Go, then, secondly, into the highways and hedges; go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning now in the evening from their work in the field, from hedging and ditching there, and compel them to come in, not by force of army, but by love and enticing words, and the love of Christ shew earnest with them, for in this case it would be necessary to convince them that the invitation was sincere, and not a baulter; they will be shy and modest, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome, and therefore be importunate with them, and do not leave them till you have prevailed with them. This refers to the calling of the Gentiles, to whom the word of the Gospel was first preached; and the first of them that believed, the preaching of the Gospel, and with them the church was filled.

Now observe here, (1.) The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, shall appear not to have been made in vain: for if some reject it, yet others will thankfully accept the offer of it. Christ comforts himself with this, that, though Israel be not gathered, yet he shall be glorious, as a Light to the Gentiles, Isa. 44. 5. 6. God will have a church in the world, though there are those that are unchurched; for the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God to effect. (2.) Those that are very poor and low in the world, shall be welcome to Christ as the rich and great; nay, and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages, as the poor, and bodily infirmities, as the maimed. Many prophets have spoken, but this prophet spake, as the Authorized Version plainly refers to what he had said just before, in enjoining us, to invite to our tables the poor and maimed, the lame and blind, v. 1. For, the consideration of the constancy which Christ's gospel gives to the poor, should engage us to be charitable to them. His confessions and compassions toward them would engage ours. (3.) Many times the gospel hath the most success with those that are least likely to have the benefit of it, and less prepared for it than others; to it was least expected. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees; so that the last shall be first, and the first last. Let us not be confident concerning those that are most forward, nor despise these that are least promising. (4.) Christ's ministers must be both very importunate and very importunate in inviting to the Gospel and to the table, and the Lord will not be mocked. (v. 21.) Lose no time, because all things are now ready. Call them to come to-day, while it is called to-day. And compel them to come in, by accosting them kindly, and drawing them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. Nothing can be more absurd than fettering an argument from hence for compelling men's consciences, nay, for compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion; You shall receive the Lord's supper, or you shall not be numbered among the people of God. (5.) Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still there is room for more; for the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves. (6.) Christ's house, though it be large, shall at last be filled; it will be so when the number of the elect is completed, and as many as were given him are brought to him. 25. And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that he hath laid be in vain. 30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.
33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned! 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See how Christ in his doctrine suited himself to those to whom he spake, and gave every one his portion of meat. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity. He is in these verses directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him: and his exhortation to them is, to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did. See here,

I. How zealous people were in their attendance on Christ; (v. 25.) There went great multitudes with him, many for love, and more for company, for where there are many, there will be more. Here was a mixt multitude, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate between them, and between the best, as Luke's 16:17, through the love that decline the service of Christ, and opportunities of converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of disabling a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to believe, that they love them better than Christ.

(2.) That they must be willing to bear that which was very heavy; (v. 27.) Whosoever doth not carry his cross, as those did, that were condemned to be crucified, in submission to the sentence and in expectation of the execution of it, and so come after me, whithersoever I shall lead him, he cannot be my disciple; that is, (saith Dr. Hammond,) he is not for my turn; and my service, being so sure to bring persecution along with it, will not be f. r. h. Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, and they are not all under their crosses; but the crucified, being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace; for no name is more ignominious than furrer—the bearer of the gibbet. He must bear his cross, and come after Christ; that is, he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye to Christ, and fetch encouragement from him, and live in hope of a recompence with him.

2. He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Since he has been so just to us, as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so just to ourselves, as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did when they promised to serve the Lord, Josh. 24:19. It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other cases. The cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny. Satan shows the best, but hides the worst; because his best is better, and his worst so bad that Christ's will abundantly. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter, that we must consider the perils of it.

(1.) When we take upon us a profession of religion, we are like a man that undertakes to build a tower; and therefore must consider the expense of it; (v. 29—30.) Which of you, intending to build a tower, or stately house for himself, suiteth not down first, and counteth the cost? And he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will lie him in. Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by saying, We will begin, but we cannot finish.

1. All that take upon them a profession of religion, undertake to build a tower, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to Heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to Heaven, which therefore shall have its top-stone brought forth. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven. 2. Those who
that intend to build this tower, must sit down, and count the cost; let them consider, it will cost them the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts, it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties; it may, perhaps, cost them their reputation among men, their esteem and regard, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and without price? [3.] Many that begin to build this tower, do not go on with it, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a root, fixed principle, and either it is brought to perfection in the work, it is the work of us in ourselves sufficient to finish this tower, but Christ hath said, My grace is sufficient for thee, and that grace shall not be wanting to any of us, if we seek for it, and make use of it. [4. 4.] Nothing is more shameful than for those that have begun well in religion to break off; every one will justly mock him, as having lost all his labour hitherto, for want of perseverance. We lose the thousand things for the sake of one, (2 John 8.) and all we have done and suffered. is in vain. Gal. 3. 4.

(2.) When we undertake to be Christ's disciples, we are like a man that goes to war, and therefore must consider the hazard of it, and the difficulties that are to be encountered, v. 31. 32. A king that declares war against a neighbouring prince, considers whether he hath strength wherewith to make his part good, and to lay by all his means. Note, [1.] The state of a christian in this world, is a military state. Is not the christian like a warrior? We have many passer in our way, that must be disputed with dint of sword; nay, we must fight every step we go, so restless are our spiritual enemies in their opposition. [2.] We ought to consider whether we can endure the hardship which a good soldier of Jesus Christ must be content to endure; we must stand up, when we can stand ourselves for Christ's banner; whether we are able to encounter the forces of hell and earth, which come against us twenty thousand strong. [3.] Of the two it is better to make the best terms we can with the world than pretend to renounce it, and afterward, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, to return to it. That young man that could not find in his heart to be POSIX for Christ, did better to go away from Christ sorrowing than to have staid with him dissembling. This parable is another way applicable, and may be taken as designed to teach us to begin speedily to be religious, rather than to begin cautiously; and may mean the same with Matt. 3. 23. Agree with thine adversary quickly. Note, First, Those that persist in sin, make war against God, the most unmerciful of all; and their rebellion, as against their own illustrious Sovereign, whose government is perfectly just and good. Secondly, The proudest and most daring sinner is no equal match for God; the disproportion of strength is much greater than that here supposed between ten thousand and twenty thousand. Do we provoke the Lord? Are we stronger than he? No, surely; who knows the end of his ways? In consideration of this, it is our interest to make peace with God, and send to desire conditions of peace, they are offered to us, and are exceeeional, and highly to our advantage; let us acquaint ourselves with them, and be at peace; do this in time, while the other is yet a great way off; for delays in such a case are highly dangerous, and make after-applications difficult.

But the application of this parable here, (v. 33.) is to the consideration that ought to be exercised when we take upon us a profession of religion, Solomon with. With good advice make war: (Prov. 20. 18.) for he that draws the sword, throweth away the scabbard; so with good advice enter upon a prosecution of religion, as those that know that except you make all you have, you cannot be Christians. It is, even upon this account, that that is spoken of, in that all will live gods in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, and yet continue to live godly.

3. He warns them against apostasy and a degeneracy of mind from the truly christian spirit and temper, for that would make them utterly useless, v. 34, 35. (1.) Good Christians are the salt of the earth, and good ministers especially, (Matt. 5. 13.) and this salt is good and of great use; but by their instructions and examples they season all they converse with, to keep them from putrefying, and to quicken them, and make them savoury. (2.) Degenerate christians, who, rather than part with what they have in the world, will throw up their profession, and then of course become carnal and worldly, and wholly destitute of a christian spirit, are like salt that has lost its savour; like that which the chemists call the cadutia mortuum, that has all its salts drawn from it, that is the most useless, worthless thing in the world; it has no manner of virtue or good property in it. (1.) It can never be recovered, Wherefore shall it be seasoned? You cannot salt it. This intimates that it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to recover an apostate, Heb. 6. 4-6. If Christ's will, and the work of grace and sensibility, if that remedy have been tried in vain, their case must even be concluded desperate. (2.) It is of no use; it is not fit, as dung is, for the land, to manure that, nor will it be the better if it be laid in the dunghill to rot, there is nothing to be got out of it. A professor of religion, whose mind and manners are depraved, is the most useless animal that can be. He has the applause of the wise, and the healthy name, and a sound knowledge of it, is so essentially, that none are the better for it: it is a parable in the mouth of a fool. (3.) It is abandoned; men cast it out, as that which they will have no more to do with. Such scandalous professors ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have forfeited all the honours and privileges of their church-membership, but because there is danger that others will be influenced by them. Our favours to such professors will be of no use; but to all to take notice of it, and to take warning; He that ears to hear, let him hear. Now can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, and particularly to the alarms he has given us of the danger we are in of apostasy, and the danger we run ourselves into by apostasy?

CHAP. XV.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; so, in this chapter, the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees at the grace of Christ and his doctrine, was a true reason for the giving occasion for a more full discovery of that grace than perhaps otherwise we should have had, in these three parables which we have in this chapter, the scope of which all in the same sense, is only to shew, not that the Old Testament, in the Old Testament, that he had no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, but that he has great pleasure in their return and repentance, and repairs in the gracious entertainment he gives them thereupon. Here is, 1. The offence which the Pharisees took at Christ for conversing with unclean men and publicans, and preaching his gospel to them, v. 1, 2. His justification of himself in it, by the design and power of God in it; and the benefit and advantage of the effect of it, and that was, the bringing of them to repent, and reform their lives; than which there could not be a more pleasing and acceptable service done to God; which he shows in three particular instances. Next, 3. He declared how the lost sinner was found, v. 4. v. 7. 2. Of the lost son that had been a prodigal, but returned to his father's house, and was received with great joy, though his other brother, like these scribes and Pharisees, was offended at it, v. 11. 12.
1. THEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him. 2. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. 8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Here is,

I. The diligent attendance of the publicans and sinners upon Christ's ministry; Great multitudes of Jews went with him, (ch. 14. 35.) with such an assurance of admission into the kingdom of God, that he found it requisite to say that to them, which would shake their vain hopes. Here multitudes of publicans and sinners drew near to him, with an humble, modest fear of being rejected by him, and to them he found it requisite to give encouragement, especially because there were some haughty, supercilious people, that frowned upon them. The publicans, who collected the tribute paid to the Romans, were perhaps some of them bad men, but they were all industriously put into an ill name, because of the prejudices of the Jewish nation against their office; they are sometimes ranked with harlots, (Matt. 21. 32.) here and elsewhere with sinners, such as were openly vicious, that traded with harlots; known rakes. Some think that sinners here were heathen, and that Christ was now on the other side Jordan, or in Galilee of the Gentiles. These drew near, when perhaps the multitude of the Jews that had followed him, were (upon this approach to the close of the preceding chapter) dropped off; thus afterward the Gentiles took their turn in hearing the apocryphases, when the Jews had rejected them. They drew near to him; being afraid of drawing nearer than just to come within hearing. They drew near to him, not, as some did, for curiosity to see him, nor as others did, to solicit for cures, but to hear his excellent doctrine. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, this we must have in our eye, to hear him; to hear his instructions he gives us, and his answers to our prayers.

II. The offence which the scribes and Pharisees took at this; (v. 2.) They murmured, and turned it to the reproach of our Lord Jesus, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 1. They were angry that publicans and heathens had the means of grace allowed them, were called to repent, and encouraged to hope for pardon upon repentance; for they looked upon their case as desperate, and that none but Jews had the privilege of repenting and being pardoned, though they saw the Jews very negligent of repentance to the nations, and Daniel particularly to Nebuchadnezzar. 2. They thought it a disparagement to Christ, and inconsistent with the dignity of his character, to make himself familiar with such sort of people; to admit them into his company, and to eat with them. They could not, for shame, confess his love to them, though that was the reason they were most enraged at; and therefore they reproached him for eating with them, which was more expressly contrary to the tradition of the elders. Censure will fail, not only upon the most innocent and the most excellent persons, but upon the most innocent and most excellent actions, and we must not think it strange.

III. Christ's justifying of himself in it, by showing that the worse these people were to whom he preached, the more glory would redound to God, and the more joy there would be in heaven, if by his preaching they were brought to repentance. It would be a more pleasing sight in heaven, to see Gentiles brought to the worship of the true God, than to see Jews go on in it; and to see publicans and sinners live an orderly sort of life, than to see Gentiles, and even the best of them, go on with a life like living such a life. This here illustrates by two parables, the explication of both which is the same.

1. The parable of the lost sheep. Something like it we had, Matth. 18. 12. There it was designed to show the care God takes for the preservation of saints, as a reason why we should not offend them; here it is designed to show the pleasure God takes in the conversion of sinners, as a reason why we should rejoice in it. We have here,

1. The case of a sinner that goes on in sinful ways; he is like a lost sheep; a sheep gone astray; lost to God, who has not the honour and service he should have from him; lost to the flock, which has no communion with him; lost to himself, he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the heaps of prey, subject to frights and fears, sometimes under the Shepherd's care, and wanting the green pastures; and it cannot of itself find the way back to the fold.

2. The care the God of heaven takes of poor wandering sinners. He continues his care of the sheep that did not go astray, they are safe in the wilderness; but there is a particular care to be taken of this lost sheep; and though he has lost and gone astray, a considerable flock, yet he will not lose that one; but he goes after it, and shows abundance of care. [1.] In finding it out; he follows it, inquiring after it, and looking about for it, until he finds it. God follows backsliding sinners with the calls of his word, and the strivings of his Spirit, until at length they are wrought upon to think of returning. [2.] In bringing it home; though he finds it weary, and half naked, and without the comforts of an Christian's blessing, and not able to bear being driven home, yet the doth not leave it to perish, and say, It is not worth carrying home; but lays it on his shoulders, and, with a great deal of tenderness and labour, brings it to the fold. This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were once astray; (Isa. 53. 6.) the value of the whole race to God was so great, that he did not leave one of his children that had a hundred; what less would it have been to God, if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to look and save that which was lost, Luke 19. 10. Christ is said to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry
them in his bosom, denoting his pity and tenderness toward poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, denoting the power whereby he supports and bears them up; those can never perish, whom he carries upon his shoulders.

(3.) The pleasure that God takes in repenting, it is that he has not lost his labour in seeking; and the joy is the greater, because he began to be out of hope of finding it; and he calls his friends and neighbours, the shepherds that keep their flocks about him, saying, Rejoice with me; perhaps among the pastoral songs which the shepherds used to sing, there was one for such an occasion as this which might have been sung, as the Psalmist, Ps. 68:19, says. 

For I have found my sheep which was lost, whereas they never sing, Rejoice with me, for I have found noite. Observe, He calls it his sheep though a stray, a wandering sheep; he has a right to it: (All souls are mine;) and he will claim his own, and recover his right; therefore he looks after it himself, I have found it; he did not send a servant, but his own Son, the great and good Shepherd, who will find the lost, and seek, and will be found of those that seek him not.

2. The parable of the lost piece of silver.

(1.) The loser is here supposed to be a woman, who will more passionately grieve for her loss, and rejoice in the finding of what she lost, than perhaps a man would do, and therefore it the better serves the purpose of the parable. She has ten pieces of silver, and out of them losses one. Let this keep up in us high thoughts of our own value; not withstanding the sinfulness and misery of the world of mankind, that there are nine to one, nay, in the foregoing parable there are ninety-nine to one, of God's creation, that retain their integrity, in whom God is praised, and never was dishonoured. O the numberless beings, for aught we know, numberless worlds of beings that never were lost, or stept aside from the laws and ends of their creatures, and yet have never been more glorious in the judgment of their Maker, than there is over ninety-nine just persons, who need no repentance.

(2.) The parable is, That which is lost is a piece of silver, 12 s. 3d. — the fourth part of a shilling. The soul is silver of intrinsic worth and value: not of base metal, as iron or lead, but of silver; the mines of which are royal mines. The Hebrew word for silver is taken from the desirableness of it. It is silver coin, for so the drachma was; it is stamped with God's image and superscription, and therefore must be rendered to him. Yet it is common to lose half of it, or to lose half of the value of it, by turning it into silver half penny; intimating, that though sinful men be left to perish, God would be no loser. This silver was lost in the dirt; a soil plunged in the world, and overwhelmed with the love of it, and care about it, is like a piece of money in the dirt; any one would say, It is a thousand pities that it should be there.

(3.) Here is a great deal of care and pains taken in finding of it. The woman lights a candle, to look behind the door, under the table, and in every corner of the house, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she find it. This represents the various means and methods God makes use of to bring lost souls home to himself: he has lighted a candle of the gospel, not to show himself the way to us, but to show us the way to him, to discover us to ourselves; he has sought the house by the convictions of the word, and found it; he has made his heart to desire, his heart is upon it, to bring lost souls to himself.

(4.) Here is a great deal of joy for the finding of it; (v. 9.) Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Those that rejoice, desire that others should rejoice with them; those that are merry, would have others merry with them; she was glad that she had found the piece of money, though she should spend it in entertaining those whom she called to make merry with her. The pleasing surprise of finding it, put her, for the present, into a kind of transport, exultavit, exultavit. I have found, I have found, is the language of joy.

3. The explication of these two parables is to the same purport; (v. 7, 10.) There is joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth. What! did some of them, at least, (and if but one of them did repent, Christ would reckon it worth his while,) more than over a great number of just persons, which need no repentance? Observe,

(1.) The repentance and conversion of sinners on earth, are matter of joy and rejoicing in heaven. It is possible that the greatest of sinners may be brought back into the way of life and salvation; and if so, it is matter of joy both here and there, and the worst are not to be despised of; and if there be a great rest of sinners, if they repent and turn, shall find mercy. Yet that is not all. [1.] God will delight to show them mercy; will rejoin their conversion a return for all the expense he has been at upon them. There is always joy in heaven; God rejoiceth in all his works, but particularly in the works of his grace; he rejoiceth to do good to penitent sinners, with whose whole heart, and his whole soul. He rejoiceth not only in the conversion of churches and nations, but even over one sinner that repenteth, though but one.

[2.] The good angels will be glad that mercy is shown them, so far are they from repining at it, though these of their nature that sinned be left to perish, and no mercy showed to them; though these sinners that repent, that are so mean, and have been so vile, are, upon their repentance, to be taken into communion with them, and shortly to be made like them, and equal to them. The conversion of sinners is the joy of angels, and they gladly become ministering spirits to them for their good, upon their conversion. The redemption of mankind was matter of joy in the presence of the angels; for they sung, Glory to God in the highest. Luke 2. 14.

(2.) There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, and turneth to be religious from a course of life that had been notoriously vile and vicious, than there is over ninety-nine just persons, who need no repentance. [1.] More joy for the redemption and salvation of fallen man than for the preservation and confirmation of the angels that stand, and did indeed need no repentance. [2.] More joy for the conversion of the sinners of the Gentiles, and of those publicans that now heard Christ preach, than for all the praisings and doings, and all the God I know thee, or other wise, that was shown among the Gentiles despised, the sinfull Jews, who thought that they needed no repentance, and that therefore God should abundantly rejoice in them, and make his boast of them, as those that were most his honour; but Christ tells them that it was quite otherwise, that God was more praised in, and pleased with, the penitent, broken heart, of one of those despised, envious sinners, than all the long prayers which the scribes and Pharisees made, who could give no such assurance of themselves. Nay, [3.] More joy for the conversion of one such great sinner, such a Pharisee as Paul had been in his time, than for the regular conversion of one that had always conducted himself daintily and well, and comparatively needs no repentance, needs not such a universal change of the life as those great sinners need. Not but that it is best not to go astray; but the grace of God, both the power and the pity of it, is not to make a sinner worse, or the better for them to repent, and be great sinners, more than in the conducting of those that never went astray. And many times those that have been great sinners before their conversion, prove more eminently and zealously good after, of which Paul is an instance, and therefore in him God was greatly glorified, Gal. 1. 24. They to whom much is forgiven, will love much. It is spoken after the manner of men; we are moved with a more sen-
sible joy for the recovery of what we had lost than for the continuance of what we had always enjoyed; for health out of sickness than for health without sickness. It is as life from the dead. A constant course of religion may in itself be more valuable, and yet a sudden return from an evil course and way of sin may yield a more surprising pleasure. Now if there is such joy in heaven, for the conversion of sinners, then the Pharisees were very much strangers to a heavenly spirit, who did all they could to hinder it, and were grieved at it; and who were exasperated at Christ when he was doing a piece of work that was of all others most grateful to Heaven.

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto him his living. 13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing: 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. 29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devised thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

We have here the parable of the prodigal son; the scope of which is the same with those before, to show how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such, upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth both the riches of gospel grace than those did, and it has been, and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. Now,

I. The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind; to the whole family of Adam: we are all his offspring; have all one Father, and one God created us, Mal. 2. 10. From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for he has the educating and portioning of us, and will put us in his testament, or leave us out, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees, that these publicans and sinners, whom thus they despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; (Rom. 3. 29.) the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

II. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had reared them all, one and all, and had given them many and much; some grave and sober, reserved and austere, sober himself, but not at all good-humoured to those about him; such an one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other volatile and mercurial, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virginal education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance to. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God, which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some.

Now we are to observe concerning him,

1. His riot and ramble when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

(1.) What his request to his father was; (v. 12.) He said to his father, proudly and pertly enough, "Father, give me," (he might have put a little
more in his mouth, and have said, Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an
imperious demand,) give me the portion of goods that
fall to me; or, what he calls, the portion which falls to
me as my due." Note, It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men
look upon God's gifts as due debts. "Give me the
portion, all my child's part, that falls to me;" not,
"Try me with a little, and see how I can manage
that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but,
"Give it me all at present in possession, and I will
never expect any thing in reversion, any thing here-
after." Note, The great folly of sinners, and that
which ruins them, is, being content to have their por-
tion in hand; now in this life-time to receive their
good things. They look only at the things that are
seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present
gratification, but have no care for a future felicity,
when that is spent and gone.

And why did he desire to have his portion in his
own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to
business, and trade with it, and so to make it more? No,
he had no thought of that. But, [1.] He was
weary of his father's government, of the good order
and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of
liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest sla-
very, for such a liberty to sin is. See the folly of
many young men, who are religiously educated, but
are impatient of the confinement of their education,
and never think themselves their own masters, their
own men, till they have broken all God's hands in
submission, cast away his cords from them, and,
instead of them, bound themselves with the cords
of their own lust. Here is the original of the apos-
tasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up
to the rules of God's government, they will themselves
be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what
themselves please. [2.] He was willing to get
from under his father's eye, for that was always a
care; and everyone of us will be as bad as we can,
and act as we please, if we are left to ourselves. A
shame of God and a willingness to disbelieve his
insufficiency, are at the bottom of the wickedness of
the wicked. [3.] He was distrustful of his father's
management; he would have his portion of goods
imstitial, for he thought that his father would be lay-
ing up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that,
would limit him in his present expenses, and that
he did not like. [4.] He was proud of himself, and
had a conceit of the splendor of his family, and that
if he had but his portion in his own hands, he
could manage it better than his father did, and make
a better figure with it. There are more young peo-
ple ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever.
Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by
a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be
beholden even to God himself; and this is at the
bottom of sinners persisting in their sin—they will
be as gods.

(2.) How kind his father was to him; He divided
unto them his living. He computed what he had to
dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger
son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought
to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he de-
sired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and
we may see what he got by it; (v. 31.) All that I
have, is thine. He would have them stay the son's
share, and he, his own. He gave the younger son what
he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he
did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as
he expected, and perhaps more. [1.] Thus he
might now see his father's kindness, how willing he
was to please him, and make him easy, and that he
was not such an unkind father as he was willing to
represent him, when he wanted an excuse to be
gone. [2.] Thus he would in a little time be made
to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise
manager for himself as he would be thought to be.

Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and
gives to them all life, and breath, and all things,
even to the evil and unthankful, so as justly to be
divided between them. God's giving of us life,
is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

How he managed himself when he had got his
portion in his own hands; he set himself to spend it
as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do,
in a little time he made himself a beggar, not many
days after, v. 13. Note, If God leaves us ever so
to little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we de-
part from him. As soon as ever the loads of restraining
grace are taken off, we are soon gone. That which
the younger son determined, was, to be gone pre-
sently, and, in order to that, he gathered all to-
together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture
them all.

Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble
of his represents to us a sinful state, that miserable
state into which man is fallen.

First, A sinful state is a state of departure and dis-
tance from God. 1. It is the sinfulness of sin, that
is an apostacy from God. He took his journey from
his father's house. Sinners are fled from God; they
go a choring from him, they revolt from their alle-
giance to him, as a servant that runs from his ser-
vice, or a wife that treacherously departs from her
husband, and say unto God, Depart. They get as
far off as they can. The sinners in the city in which
they were brought up, their residence, and are
themselves abroad in the service and enjoyment of it
they spend their all. 2. It is the misery of sinners,
that they are afar off from God, from him who is
the Fountain of all good, and are going further and
further from him. What is hell itself, but being
afar off from God?

Secondly, A sinful state is a spending state; There
he wasted his substance with riotous living (v. 13.)
devoured it (v. 50.) and in a little time
he spent it all, v. 14. He bought fine clothes;
spent a deal in meat and drink, treated high,
conversed with those that helped him to make an end
of what he had, in a little time. As to this world,
they that live riotously, waste what they have, and
will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend
that upon their lusts, which should be for the ne-
necessary subsistence of themselves and their families.
But this is not to be applied spiritually; wiful sin-
ers, they use their inheritance, for they misemploy
their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, mis-
prend their time and all their opportunities; do not only
bury, but embezze, the talents they are entrusted
to trade with for their Master's honour; and the
gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable
them to serve God, and to do good with, are made
the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is
made a drudge, either to the world or to the flesh,
wastes his substance, and lives riotously. One sinner
destroys much good, Eccl. 9. 18. The good he de-
strays, is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are
his Lord's goods that he wastes, which must be ac-
counted for.

Thirdly, A sinful state is a wanting state; When
he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to
seek such another prey; and there arose a mighty
 famine in the land of his fathers; and in the thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, v. 14. Note,
Wifal waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in
time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel
of bread; especially when bad times hasten on the
consequences of bad husbandry, which good hus-
bandry would have provided for. This represents
the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their
own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in
Christ, the stirvings of the Spirit, the admonitions
of conscience; these they game away for the plea-
sure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then
are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessities for their souls, they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where famine reigns, a mighty famine; for the heaven is as brass; the dews of God’s favour and blessing are withheld, and we must need want good things if God deny them us; and the earth is as iron; the sinner’s heart is so hardened, that the force of God’s motions, and his power, and all the powerful things and barren, and has no good in it, those sinners are wretchedly and miserably poor, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it, by refusing the supplies offered.

Fourthly, A sinful state is a vile, servile state. When this young man’s riot had brought him to want, he went, he went brought him to servitude; (v. 15.) He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country. The same wicked life that before was represented by riotous living, is here represented by servile living; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country, for he is both in city and country; sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work; to be at his beck and upon his errands. There is a service of God, and a portion. They that commit sin, are the servants of sin, John 8. 34. How did this young gentleman debase and disfigure himself, when he hired himself into such a service and under such a master as this! He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep, (there had been some credit in that employment, Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheeps;) but to fence, to go about with his master’s service, and make provision for the flesh, to stuff the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

Fifthly, A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service; and he must be content with the provision which not the house, but the field, afforded, but is poor provision; (v. 16.) He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks that the swine did eat. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-companion with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves in will, will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfies not, Isa. 35. 2. That which is the stumbling-block of their iniquity, will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels. Ezek. 7. 19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are those to previous souls? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them, feeds on wind, (Hos. 12. 1.) feeds on ashes, Isa. 44. 20.

Sixthly, A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by working, took to begging; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was raskis, and proverbs to everybody; such poor are least pitied. This is the application of the parable, intimated that those who depart from God, cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh; (those gods which we have served;) they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give it, which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God’s help, he will not give it thee. If thou forsake all else, the world will not help thee.

Seventhly, A sinful state is a state of death; (v. 24, 32.) This my son was dead. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body, or a branch from the tree, and therefore dead, and it is his own doing.

Eighthly, A sinful state is a lost state; This my son was lost; lost to every thing that was good, lost to the best of all, except his own vain desires, and he was raskis, and proverbs to everybody. He was so far from the sight of God, that they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God, are lost souls; lost as a traveller that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

Ninthly, A sinful state is a state of madness and jactitation, as is intimated in that expression, (v. 17.) when he came to himself, which intimates that he had been beside himself, surely he was so when he left his father’s house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. Madness is said to be in the heart of sinners, Ex. 9. 3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are mad, destroy themselves with furious zeal and impetuosity, they blind themselves with foolish hopes; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

2. We have here his return from this ramble, his penitent return to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he thought himself more than it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not despair of the worst; for while there is a sense of turning sinners from the error of their ways, they are sensible proofs both of the vanity of the world and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually, when we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and have tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to turn to God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and no man gives unto us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

2. What was the preparatory for it; it was considered. He said within himself, he reasoned within himself, when he recovered his right mind, How many hired servants of my father’s have enough! Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Ezek. 18. 28. He considers and turns. To consider is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, and to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly.

Now observe what it was that he considered.

1. He considered how his condition was; I was hungry, but I am hungered; and, I was perishing with hunger, for I see not what way to expect relief.” Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ, till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin; and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. Master save us, we perish. And though he said he had been in Christ, he was therefore reject us, nor think himself disowned by what is under, and being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

2. He considered how much better it might be
made, if he would but return; How many hired ser-

vant of my father's, the meanest in his family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare: such a good house does he keep! Note, First, In our Father's house there is bread and wine, and such good wine shall we take with us. 

Thirdly, Even the hired servants in God's family are well provided for; the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and depend upon his reward, shall be well provided for. 

Fourthly, The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have gone astray from God, to think of returning to him. Thus that attendance reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lover; I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now, Hos. 2. 7.

(3.) What was the purpose of it. Since it is so, that he is determined to go home, and return to his father, it is to see how he may order his cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments. We have liberty of speech, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it.

Let us observe what he purposed to say,

First, He would confess his fault and folly: I have sinned. Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon. If we plead not guilty, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocency, which will certainly be our condemnation. We are, as it were, the captives, penitent, and obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that confess their sins.

Secondly, He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter, that he would say a load upon himself for it; I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. Let those that are unthankful to their earthly parents, think of this, they sin against heaven, and before God. Offences against them are offences against God. Let us all think of his, as that which renders our sin exceeding sinful, and should render us exceeding sorrowful for it. 

Sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us; We have sinned against heaven. God is here called Heaven, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the Heavens do rule. The malignity of sin aims high, it is against Heaven. The daring sinner is said to have set his mouth against the Heavens, Ps. 75. 9. Yet it is important malice, for we cannot hurt the Heavens. Nay, it is foolish malice; what is shot against the heavens, will return upon the head of him that shoots it, Ps. 7. 16. Sin is an affront to the God of Heaven, it is a sin against the glory and holiness of the Heavens that devest and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven.

Secondly, He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledged himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family; I am no more worthy to be called thy son, v. 29. He does not deny the relation, (for that was all he had to trust to,) but he owns his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of goods that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

Fourthly, He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there; "Make me as one of thy hired servants; that is good enough, and too good for me." Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it he but as a hireling. Psal. 105. 4. Ed. Speaketh, He will not only submit to it, but count it a preference, in comparison with his present state. Those that return to God, from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him; "Make me a hired servant, that I may show I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it."

Thirdly, He would make all this he would have an eye to his father as a father; I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father. Note, Eying God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance, and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights both by penitents and petitioners to be called Father; Abraham was a dear son.

(4.) What was the performance of this purpose? He arose, and came to his father. His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said that we will arise, and go? Let us immediately arise, and come. He did not wait till the word was expired, and could get no further, but weak and weary as he was, he made a thorough business of it. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works.

3. We have here his reception and entertainment with his father, He came to his father; but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome. And by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent, and submit themselves not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case by the wisdom that is from above, which is gentle, and easy to be en
treated; herein let them be followers of God, and meekful, as he is. But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners that repent, and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

(1.) The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son; (v. 20.) When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him. He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance. God does not wait for sinners to come to his feet, but draws near to them, and2
comes to meet them in their way. Wherever sinners are, God's heart is there, and he is ready to welcome them, to embrace them, and to forgive them.

(2.) He expressed his kindness by several gracious acts upon his repentance; even before we call, he answers; for he knows what is in our hearts. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. How lively are the images presented here! [1.] Here were eyes of mercy, and those eyes quick-sighted; When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, before any other of the family were aware of him, as if from the top of some high tower he had been looking that way all the time. The son was gone, with such a thought as this. "O that I could see yonder wretched son of mine coming home!" This intimates God's desire of the conversion of sinners, and his readiness to meet them that are coming toward him. He looketh on men, when they are gone astray from him, to see whether they will return to him, and he is aware of the first inclination of their hearts, and their good resolutions, and he quickens them with his presence. [2.] He expressed his mercy, and those mercies turning within him, and yearning at the sight of his son; He had compassion. Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner; though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, Hos. 11. 8. Judg. 16. 16. [3.] Here were feet of mercy, and those feet quick-paced; He ran, this denotes how swift God is in the execution of mercy. The prodigal son came slowly, under a burden of shame and fear; but the tender father ran to meet him with his encouragements. [4.] Here were arms of mercy, and those arms stretched out to embrace him; He fell on his neck; though guilty, and deserving to be beaten, though dirty, and newly come from feeding swine, that any one who had not the strongest and tenderest compassions of a father, would have bended to touch him; yet he thus takes him in his arms, and lays him in his bosom. Thus dear are true penitents to God, thus welcome to the Lord Jesus. [5.] Here were lips of mercy, and those lips dropping as a honeycomb; He kissed him. This kiss not only assured him of his welcome, but sealed his pardon; his former follies shall be all forgiven, and not mentioned against him, as our Lord said by way of upbraiding. This was like David's kissing Absalom, 2 Sam. 14. 33. And this intimates how ready and free and forward the Lord Jesus is to receive and entertain poor returning, repenting sinners, according to his Father's will.

(2.) The penitent submission which the poor prodigal made to his father; (v. 21.) He said unto him, Father, I have sinned. Note, Even those that have received the pardon of their sins, and the notable sense of their pardon, must have in their hearts a sense of sin, and with their mouths must make a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned Ps. 51. after Nathan had said, The Lord hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin should increase our sorrow for it; and the sense of the evangelical death, which is increased by such a consideration. See Ezek. 16. 63. Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am raccified toward thee. The more we see of God's readiness to forgive us, the more difficult it should be to us to forgive ourselves.

(3.) The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose to say, (v. 19.) which we do not find that he did say, (v. 21.) and that was, Make me as one of thy hired servants. We cannot think that he forgot it, much less that he changed his mind, and was now himself in his heart placed at a less estimation than a hired servant, but that the father interrupted him, prevented his saying it; "Hold, son, talk no more of thine unworthiness, thou art heartily welcome, and, though not worthy to be called a son, shalt be treated as a dear son, as a pleasant child." He who is thus entertained at first, needs not ask to be made as a hired servant, but God does thus deal with him. Here God comforted him, Jer. 31. 18, 20. It is strange that here is not one word of rebuke; "Why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home till beaten hither with your own rod." No, here is nothing like this; which intimates that, when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more; "I will not remember their iniquity." He shall not be mentioned against them, Ezek. 18. 22. But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did, or could, expect. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner prepared, and let him come and have it. But God does more, he returns him to his former employment, and makes him lord of all his goods. Thus it was with David's son Solomon, when David was dead and his kingdom was divided between his sons. Solomon's kingdom was made greater than his father's, 2 Chron. 9. 8, 9. And thus God comforted the prodigal, Jer. 31. 20, 22. This is a ray of light, and a morsel of meat, from the sun of righteousness, a figure of the gospel, 2 Chron. 7. 1, 14. But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did, or could, expect. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner prepared, and let him come and have it. But God does more, he returns him to his former employment, and makes him lord of all his goods. Thus it was with David's son Solomon, when David was dead and his kingdom was divided between his sons. Solomon's kingdom was made greater than his father's, 2 Chron. 9. 8, 9. And thus God comforted the prodigal, Jer. 31. 20, 22. This is a ray of light, and a morsel of meat, from the sun of righteousness, a figure of the gospel, 2 Chron. 7. 1, 14.
They that are sanctified, are admonished and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him his ring: "Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it." Thirdly, The preparation of the gospel of peace, is shoes for our feet; (Eph. 6. 15.) that, compared with this here, signifies (Seth Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and saving of those that live in idolatry, even by their examples. David, when pardoned, will teach transgressors God's ways, and Peter, when he is converted, will strengthen his brethren. Or, it intimates that they shall go on cheerfully, and with resolution, in the way of religion, as a man does when he has shoes on his feet, above what he does when he is barefoot.

[2.] He came home hungry, and his father not only fed him, but feasted him; (v. 23.) "Bring brother the fattened calf, that has been stall-fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and kill it, that my son may be satisfied with the best we have." Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meat; but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fattened calf can never be better bestowed. It was the Father's delight that provided it, and the brother's own Father also to all those who come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. Now he found his own words made good, in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.

(4.) The great joy and rejoicing that there were for his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a feast for the family; "Let us all eat and be merry, for it is a good day;" for this my son was dead, when he was in his ramble, but his return is as life from the dead, he is alive again: we thought that he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold, he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found." Note, [1.] The conversion of a soul from sin to God, is the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost; it is a great and wonderful and happy change. What was in itself dead, is made alive; what was lost to God and his church, is found, and what was unprofitable becomes profitable. Phil. 1. 11. It is such a change as that upon the face of the earth, when the spring returns. [2.] The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven; and all that belong to his family, ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should also. God was pleased with Joseph's joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing. Therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God's design; it is the bringing of these to Christ, whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. We joy for your sake before our God, with an eye to him, (1 Thess. 3. 9.) and we are our rejoicing in the presence of God, (2 Cor. 8. 9.) who is the Master of the family, 1 Thess. 2. 19.

The family complied with the master; they began to be merry. Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is. We have here the refining and engraving of the elder brother, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them; and he represents it as so as not to aggravate the matter, but as allowing them still the privileges of elder brethren; the Jews had these privileges, (though the Gentiles were favoured,) for the preaching of the gospel must begin at Jerusalem. Christ, when he reproves them for their faults, yet adds them to a good temper toward the poor publicans. But by the elder brother here we may understand those who are really good, and have been so from their youth up, and never went astray into any vicious course of living; who comparatively need no repentance: and to such these words in the close, Son, thou art ever with me, are applicable without any difficulty, but not to the scribes and Pharisees.

Now concerning the elder brother, observe,

(1.) How foolish and fractious he was upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it. It seems he was abroad in the field, in the country, when his brother came, and by the time he was returned home, the mirth was begun; When he drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing; either while he was getting home, or after he had eaten and were full, v. 25. He inquired what those things meant, (v. 26.) and was informed that his brother was come, and his father had made him a feast for his welcome home, and great joy there was, because he had received him safe and sound, v. 27. It is but one word in the original; he had received him εὐξεστόν—health, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his right mind, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received safe and sound. Now this disqualified him to the highest degree; He was angry, and would not go in, (v. 28.) not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would show his displeasure at it, and would intimate to his father, that he should have kept out his younger brother. This shows what is a common fault. [1.] In men's families, that those who have always been a comfort to their parents, think they should have the monopoly of their parents' favours, and are apt to be too sharp upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents' kindness to them. [2.] In God's family, those who are comparatively innocents, seldom know what they may be rankling in the hearts of these who are manifestly penitents. The language of such as we have here, in what the elder brother said, (v. 29, 36.) and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and soberly, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it.

First, He boasted of himself and his own virtue and obedience. He had not run from his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a servant in it, and had done so long: Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and never transgressed I at any time thy commandment. Note, It is too common for these that are better than their neighbours to boast of it, yea, and to make their boasts of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. I am apt to think that this elder brother would be glorified that he had never transgressed his father's commands, for then I believe he would not have been so obstinate as now he was to his father's entreaties. However, we will admit it comparatively; he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those
that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but not to be boast of.

Secondly, He complained of his father, as if he had not been so kind to him as he ought to have been, who had been so dutiful; Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. He was out of humour now, else he would not have made this complaint; for, no question, if he had asked such a thing at any time, he might have had the like. He thought it was high time to think that he did not desire it, but the killing of the fatted calf put him upon making this peevish reflection. When men are in a passion, they are apt to reflect so as they would not if they were in their right mind. He had been fed at his father's table, and had many a time been merry with him and the family; but his father had never given him so much as a kid, which was but a small token of the fatted calf. Note, Those that think highly of themselves and their services, are apt to think hardly of their master, and mealy of his favours. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God hath thought fit to give us, much more of those that he hath not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not complain. He would have his father give him a kid, though he was a guest, and his friends abroad, whereas the fatted calf he grudged so much, was given to his brother, not to make merry with his friends abroad, but with the family at home: the midst of God's children should be with their friends and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any other friends. Thirldly, He was very ill-humoured towards his younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and said concerning him. Some good people are apt to be over-taken in this fault, nay, and to indulge themselves too much in it; to look with disdain upon those who have not preserved their reputation so clean as they have done, and to be sour and morose toward them, yea though they have given very good evidences of their repentance and reformation; this is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let us observe the instances of it.

1. He would not go in, except his brother be turned out; one house shall not hold him and his own brother, no not his father's house. The language of this was that of the Pharisee, (Isa. 65. 5.) Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou; and, (Luke 18. 11.) I am not as other men, I am the father of the Lord's circumcision, and this he represents to his father; see, we are to shun the society of these sinners whom we are in danger of being infected by, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, whom we may get good by. He saw that his father had taken him in, and yet he would not go in to him. Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot find in our hearts to receive those whom God hath received, and to admit these into familiar friendship and fellowship with us, whom we have reason to think God has a favour for, and who are taken into friendship and fellowship with him.

2. He would not call him brother; but this thy son, which sounds arrogantly, and without reflection upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal; "He is thy son, thy darling." No, Forgiving the relation we stand in to our brethren and others, and considering the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor brethren, and let the innocents call the penitents so.

3. He aggravated his brother's faults, and made the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his father against him; He is thy son, whom thou hast wholly delivered thy living with harlots. It is true, he had spent his own portion foolishly enough; (whether upon harlots or no we are not told before; perhaps the only language of the elder brother's jealousy and ill will;) but that he had devoured all his father's living, was false, the father had still a good estate; now this shows how apt we are, in concerning our brethren, to make the worst of everything, and to set it out in the blackest colours, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father does by us, who is not extreme to nullify a man's good, even when they are in a fault, and passionately justifies

4. He grudged him the kindness that his father showed him; Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note, It is a wrong thing to envy penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil because his is good. As we must not envy those that are the worst of sinners, the gifts of common providence, (Luke (Luke 15. 11.), (Luke 15. 11.),) nor those that have been the worst of sinners, the gifts of covenant-love upon their repentance; we must not envy them their pardon, and peace, and comfort, no, nor any extraordinary gift which God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had been a prodigal, had defrauded his family, had been a hater, had been a persecutor of the church; yet, when after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him, and more honour put upon him than the other apostles, they who were the elder brethren, who had been serving Christ when he was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any time his commandments, did not envy him his visions and revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness. Methinks, the mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as bright in his tender and gentle bearing with frivolous saints, represented by the elder brother here, as before, in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented by the younger brother. The disciples of Christ themselves had many infinities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bore with them, as a nurse with her children; see 1 Thess. 2. 7.

[1.] When he would not come in, his father came out, and persuaded him. He was much more gentle and winning, than his brother; and seeing that he was come to repent, and was a broken-hearted man, he persuades him, speaks such good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, "If I will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is not the house my own, and may I not do what I please in it? Is not the fatted calf my own, and may I not do what I please with it?" No, as he went to meet the younger son, so now he goes to meet the elder, does not the prodigal stand in need of some kind message to him, but went himself. Now, First, This is designed to represent to us the goodness of God; how strangely gentle and winning he has been toward those that were strangely forward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain; "Why art thou wrathful? He bare Israel's manners in the wilderness, Acts 15. 18. How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he had fought God's cause, and refused to eat, 1 Kings 19. 10., and brought him, as we are told, upon the ship with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this, for he was there disquieted at the repentence of Nineveh, and the mercy showed it, as the elder brother here; and those questions, Dest thou well to be angry; and, Should not I spare Nineveh? are not like these expostulations of the father with the elder brother here. Secondly, It is to teach all superiors to be kind gentle with their inferiors, even when they are in a fault, and passionately justifying
 themselves in it, than which nothing can be more provoking; and yet even in that case let fathers not provoke their children to more wrath, and let masters forbear threatening, and both shew all meekness. 2. His father assured him that the kind entertainment he gave his younger brother, was neither any reflection upon him, nor should be any prejudice to him; (p. 31.) ‘Thou shalt not see the worse for it, nor have the less for it, Son, thou art ever with me; the reception of him is no rejection of thee, nor what is laid out on him, any sensible diminution of what I design for thee; thou shalt be continued in thy estate;’ (see above, verse 4.) This may be called the double portion; (so the Jewish Law called it;) then shall he be hence an heir; (so the Roman Law called it;) ‘all that I have is thine, by an indestructible title.’ If he had not given him a kid, to make merry with his friends, he had eaten bread at his table continually: and it is better to be happy with our Father in heaven, than with any friends we have in the world. Note, First, It is the unceasing happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father’s house, that are, and shall be, ever with them; they are so this world by faith, they shall be so in the other world by fruition, and all that he has, is theirs; for if children, then heirs, Rom. 8. 17. Secondly, Therefore we ought not to envy others God’s grace to them, because they shall have never the less for their sharing in it. If we be true believers, all that God is, and all that he is, is ours; and if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has, is theirs too, and yet we have not the less; as they that walk in the light and warmth of the sun, have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much: for Christ in his church, is like as they say of the soul in the body, it is tota in tuto—the whole in the whole; and yet tuta in qualibet parte—the whole in the part. 3. His father gave him a good reason for this uncommon joy in the family; (p. 32.) ‘It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.’ He might have insisted upon his own authority; ‘It was my will that the family should make merry and be glad.’ Sum pro ratione volantis—My reason is, I will it to be so. But it does not become even those that have authority, to be vouching and appealing to that alone: that is, no, not in matters so cheap and common; it is better to give a convincing reason, as the father does here; ‘It was meet and very becoming, that we should make merry for the return of a prodigal son, more than for the perseverance of a dutiful son; for though the latter be a greater blessing to a family, yet the former is a more sensible pleasure. Any family would be more transported with joy at the dismission of a dead child to life, or at the recovery of a child from sickness that was adjudged mortal, than for the continued life and health of many children. Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh shall, sooner or later, be silent before him. We do not find any reply that the elder brother made to what his father said, which intimates that he was entirely satisfied, and acquitted in his father’s will, and was content to be left behind. But his father put him in mind that he was his brother; This thy brother. Note, A good man, though he have not such command of himself at all times as to keep his temper, yet will, with the grace of God, recover his temper; though he fall, yet shall he not be utterly cast down. But as for the Scribes and Pharisees, for whose conviction it was primarily intended, for that which appears, they continued the same disaffection to the sinners of the Gentiles, and to the gospel of Christ because it was preached to them.

CHAP. XVI.

The scope of Christ’s discourse in this chapter, is, to awaken and quicken us all; to use this world as not to abuse it; to manage all our possessions and engagements, so that they may be that which is for our own interest, and for the interest of the world; for all shall be either the one or the other, according as we use them now. 1. If we do good with them, and lay out what we have in works of piety and charity, and the like, such a spirit of love, and this he shows in the parable of the unjust steward, who made so good a hand of his master’s goods, that, when he was turned out of his stewardship, he had a comfortable subsistence for the rest of his life; Acts 27. 34. 2. If instead of doing good with our worldly employments, we make them the food and fuel of our lusts, of our luxury and sensuality, and thereby do to the poor, we shall certainly perish eternally, and the things of this world, which were thus abused, will but add to our misery and torment. This he shows in the other parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which has likewise a further reach, and that is, to awaken us all to take the warning given us by the written word, and not to expect immediate answers from the other world, v. 19. 31.

1. A XIX he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5. So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and he said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9. And I say unto you. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give thee that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters: for
either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. 16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. 17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. 18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery. 

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to allure the curious to it, nor to enthrall us with notions of divine mer- cy, not, the divine revelation of both these in the gospel, is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of Christian duties, and, as much as any one thing, to the duty of beneficence, and doing good to those who stand in need of anything that either we have, or can do for them. This our Saviour is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favour of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intention, and therefore we must not hence infer that any one can befoul us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord; but that, in the general, we must so lay out what we have, in works of piety and charity, as that we may meet it again with comfort, on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be as diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests. So Dr. Clarke.

Now let us consider,

1. The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as stewards of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards; whatever we have, the property of it is God's, we have only the use of it, the free gift of God. He is the Lord of all that is in heaven and earth. Man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered: if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship. 

Now, 1. Here is the dishonesty of this steward. He wasted his lord's goods, embezzled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was accused to his lord, v. 1. We are all liable to the same charge; we have not made a due improvement of what God has intrusted us with in this world, but have per verted his purpose. And that we may not be for this judged of our Lord, it concerns us to judge ourselves.

2. His discharge out of his place. His lord called for him, and said, "How is it that I hear this of thee? I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it, but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy to make him. He must make up his accounts, and be gone in a little time. Now this is the design of the parable. (1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our stewardship in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and dismiss us from our stewardship, will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places, and have the same. (2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death, is just, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us. (3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us, we must give an account of it to our Lord; after death the judgment; both which, both our discharge and our account, we are fairly warned of, and ought to be engaged to be diligent stewards all our days, that we may be found approved in that day of the Lord.

3. His after-wisdom. Now he began to consider, What shall I do? v. 3. He would have done well to have considered that before he had so foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to consider late than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are come home to consider what we should do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood? (1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work: "I cannot dig; I cannot earn my bread by my labour." But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he was either old or lame, but the truth is, he is lazy; he cannot is a mild way; it is not a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He cannot dig, for he was never used to it: now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world; nor indeed can do anything to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of humility as to get his bread by begging; To beg I am ashamed. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness; these whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be ashamed to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed, than to beg his other master, than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it; (v. 4.) I am resolved what to do. My lord turns me out of his house, I have none of my own to go to, I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many kindnesses, and is a man who will so relieve them, that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends, was, by strik ing off a considerable part of their debt to his lord,
and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed his lord a hundred measures of barley, and in the note to his bond put the rent in pais his rent; "Take thy bill," said he, here it is, and sit down quickly, and write fifty; (v. 6) so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, He was in haste to have it done; "Sit down quickly, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed his lord a hundred measures of wheat, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and laid him write five; (v. 7) probably, he did the like by others, abating more or less, proportionably to what he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are most so to those who have most of them, who devote upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to cheat them, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found everywhere. These incidents of trust is repeated; how hard is it to find one that confidence can be reposed in! Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward was turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a faith, though they smart for it.

4. The approbation of this; (v. 8.) The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. It may be meant of his lord, the lord of that servant, whose steward he was, or of the lord of the country in which he parted his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of our Lord, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity." He does not commend him because he had done falsely to his master, but because he had done wisely for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what hard bargains he had set them, so that they could not pay their rent, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown behindhand, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of which, he forgave them all, finding the good of both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating of their rent for the future. How much owes thou? may mean, "What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will sit thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have." He had been all for his lord, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have their favour when he had lost his. These incidents of trust is repeated; a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only.

Now, this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world; The children of this world, who choose and have their portions in it, are wise for their generation, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the children of light, who enjoy the gospel, in their generation, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note, (1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world, is to be imitated by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities; to do that first, which is most needful; in summer and harvest to lay up for winter; to take a good bargain when it offers itself; to trust the faithful, and not the false. O that more of our spiritual affairs! (2.) The children of light are commonly outdone by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are truly wise, it is only in their generation; but in that they are wiser than the children of light in theirs; for though we are told that we are to be chiefly turned out of our stewardships, yet we do not provide as we should for such a day; we live as if we were to be here always, and as if there were not another life after this; and are not solicitous, as this steward was, to provide for hereafter; though, as children of the light, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see another world before us; yet we do not prepare for it, do not seek our best effects and advantages in it, the better for our souls.

II. The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it; (v. 9.) "I say unto you, thou foolish servant, what was there that I should shew thee? I came to shew thee. Therefore ought ye also to do good, — etc."

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to: to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world; "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends." It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money, as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to profit, and lay it out to interest, and thus to the other fund. Now we should arm them to make use of our money, so that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so cast it upon the waters, as that we may find it again after many days, Ecle. 11. 1. And in our case, though whatever we have is our Lord's goods, yet, as long as we dispose of them among our lord's tenants, and for the advancement of his kingdom, and to the support of our families, we are, so far from being wrong to our Lord, that it is due to him as well as policy for ourselves.

Note, (1.) The things of this world are the mammon of unrighteousness, or the false mammon; not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness, will certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations upon them, and will, like their possessor, be quickly cut off from being a wrong to our Lord, that it is due to him as well as policy for ourselves.

(2.) The true mammon of unrighteousness is not to be trusted to for a happiness, yet it may and must be made use of in subserviency to our pursuits of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may make to ourselves friends with it, not by way of purchase or merit, but recommendation; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the other friends and it is a desirable thing to be befriended in the account and state to come. (3.) At death we must all fail in this world when we suffer an eclipse. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to fail, when he becomes a bankrupt; we must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will all fail us; flesh and heart fail. (4.) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that when we fail at death we may be received into everlasting habitations in heaven. The habitations in heaven are everlasting; not made with hands, but eternal. 2 Cor. 5. 1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to receive them; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and when a guard of angels carries them thither, a choir of angels is ready to receive them there. The poor saint's dying journey, is cheered and consoled by the assurance that in this world distributed to their necessities. (5.) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them lay up in store a good.
bond, a good security, a good foundation for the time to come, for an eternity to come. See 1 Tim. 6. 17—19, which explains this here.

(1.) If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit and secure the grace of God, yet the use of the things of this world in the use of them may be justly reckoned a forfettering of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shows, v. 10—12.

[1.] The riches of this world are the less; grace and glory are the greater. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things in this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we shall be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we shall receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us; He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God; and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and the more serviceable gifts of the Spirit, will receive the grace that he buries the one talent of this world's wealth, will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain, they are the unrighteous mammon, which is hastening from us space, which if we will make any advantage of, we must leave ourselves quickly; but if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only true riches? v. 11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are truly rich, and very rich, who are rich in faith, and rich toward God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnest of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, and expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in order ad spiritualia— with a spiritual reference, so that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the true riches, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God; for God gave to a man that is good in his sight, that is, to a free-hearted child of God, the gift of a good conscience; they are another's (Eccl. 2. 26) that is, to a man that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon, he gives the true riches.

[3.] The riches of this world are another man's; they are τις φυτών, not our own, for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest; they are not our own, for they are God's, his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in the original. Many of them are another man's; we have them from others; we use them for others, and what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes, while still they are increased that eat them; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know of who? But spiritual and eternal riches are our own, (they enter into the soul that becomes possessed of them,) or spiritual and eternal property, that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call our own. But how can we expect God should enrich us with these, if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, which we are but stewards of? (2.) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God, than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make mammon, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service, v. 13. Ab servant can serve two masters, whose commands are so inconsistent as these of God and mammon. If a man will lord the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God, and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion trample to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world; but on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world, (whenever God does not make it his instrument to serve the world,) and hate that, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to the furtherance of him in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us; he cannot serve God and mammon.

3. We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them. 

(1.) They wickedly retorted him, v. 14. The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they could not hear. Let us consider this, First, As their sin, and the fruit of their covetousness, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercises of devotion, yet are ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that touched, which was their Deliah, their darling lust; for this they derided him, ἐποίησαν τοὺς φοβίσας αὐτὸν, and they scoffed at his words, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, Jer. 6. 10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to make a jest of the word of God, who are resolved that they will not he ruled by it; but they will find at last it cannot be turned off. Secondly, As his suffering. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their contempt; they had him in derision all the day. He that spake the word of God was laughed at, he was ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly derided, may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man, to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at. Christ's apostles were mocked, and no wonder; the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

(2.) He justly reproved them; not for deriding him (he knew how to despise the shame,) but for deriding themselves with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, v. 15. Here is, 

[2.] Their specious outside; nay, it was a splendid one. First, They justified themselves before men; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to have a high opinion of themselves, they had a high piety and zeal, and justified themselves in that claim; Ye are they that do that, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; ye are notorious for this. Secondly, They were highly extolled among men; men did not only acquit them from any blame they were under, but applaud them, and had them in veneration, not only as good men, but as the best of men. Their sentiments were
The sin of the world is its love of wickedness. God knows our hearts, and how much deceit is there, for we have reason to abuse and distrust ourselves. Secondly, it is fully to judge of persons and things by the opinion of men concerning them, and to go down with the stream of opinions in the world, which is highly esteemed among men, who judge according to outward appearance, is perhaps an abomination in the sight of God, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment we are sure, is according to truth. On the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn, who yet are accepted and approved of God. 2 Cor. 10. 13.

(53.) He turned them from the publicans, and sinners, more especially to be brought up by his gospel than these covetous concurred Pharisees (v. 16.) “The law and the prophets were indeed until John: the Old-Testament dispensation, which was confined to you Jews, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation: and you are pulled up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets, but since John Baptist appeared, the kingdom of God is preached; a New-Testament dispensation, which does not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but every man press into the gospel kingdom, Gentiles as well as Jews; and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his better go before him into it, or to stay till the rulers and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political, national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when salvation was known of the Jews; but it is made a particular personal concern, and therefore every man that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting. Some give this sense of it: they derided Christ for speaking in contempt of riches, for thought them not many promises of riches and other temporal good in the New Testament than the prophets? And were not many of the best of God’s servants very rich, as Abraham and David? “It is true,” said Christ, “so it was, but now the kingdom of God is begun to be preached, things take a new turn; now blessed are the poor, and the mourners, and the persecuted.” The Pharisees require the people for their high opinion of them, after they have obtained a formal religion: “But,” saith Christ, “now that the kingdom is preached abroad, the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees, as they have had, they cannot content themselves with such an indifference in religion as they have been trained up in, but they press with a holy violence into the kingdom of God.” Note, These that would go to heaven, must take pains, must strive against the stream, must pass against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

(4.) Yet he protests against any design to invalidate the law? (v. 17.) “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail.” The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel, and its shades are filled up with the gospel-colours; not one tittle of that fails; for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very bright, witness the Epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were condemned at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, which the gospel has indeed taken away the permission of, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive condition of nature, and “the law is fulfilled” (v. 18), which we had before, Matt. 5. 31—19. 9. Christ will not allow diversions, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men’s corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far indulged as that permission did indulge them. For the more they are indulged, the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst the good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father’s house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. And Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.
As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all; so this sets before us the wrath to come, and is designed for our awakening: and very fast asleep are we in sin, that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness; now this parable was intended to make them very serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and afflication, and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality. Now this parable, by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting those two great intentions.

But this parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which he addressed his discourse to the rich and those who had sinned borrowed from worldly things, as these of the sower and the seed, (except that of the sheep and goats,) the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this. But here the spiritual things themselves are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. Yet we need not call it a history of a particular event, that was in the words of fact that is true every day; that poor godly people, when men neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heaven in bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows; and that rich epicures, who live in luxury, and are merciful to the poor, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is the more grievous and terrible to them, because of the sensual lives they lived: and that there is no remission of its relief from their torments. Is this a parable? What similitude is there in this? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it the more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Saviour came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to show us the reference which this world has to that; and here he does it.

In this description, (for so I shall choose to call it,) we may observe,

1. The different condition of a wicked rich man, and a godly poor man, in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true church, of a good man, and a favourite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favourable thoughts of a poor man. This mistake Christ, upon all occasions, set himself to correct, and here very fully; where we have,

1. A wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity; (r. 19.) There was a certain rich man, from the Latin we commonly call him Dives—a rich man; but, as Bishop Tillotson observes, he has this name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been inviolable to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill-will. But others observe, that Christ would not do the rich man so much honour as to name him, though when perhaps he called his hands by his own name, he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is to be given when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion. Now we are told concerning this rich man, (1.) That he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and that was his adorning. He had fine linen for pleasure, and clean, no doubt, every day; night-linen, and day-linen. He had purple for state, for that which is above all poor men's graces; which has made some conjecture that Christ had an eye to Herod in it. He never appeared abroad but in great magnificence. (2.) He dined deliciously and sumptuously every day. His table was furnished with all the

varieties and dainties that nature and art could furnish him with; his side-table richly adorned with plate, his servants, who waited at table, in rich livery, and the guests at his table, no doubt, such as he thought graceful it.

Well, and what harm was there in all this? It is no sin to be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, though we are to keep a check on it, that a man's estate will afford. Nor are we told that he was guileful, or fraudulent, or opressor, or extortioner, no, nor that he was drunk, or made others drunk; but, [1.] Christ would hereby show that a man may have a great deal of the wealth and pomp and pleasure of this world, and yet lie and perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. We cannot suffer from men's living great, or God's people to lie to them in giving them too much, or that they love God for their wealth, much; happiness consists not in these things. [2.] That plenty and pleasure are a very dangerous, and to many a fatal temptation to luxury and sensuality, and forgetfulness of God and another world. This man might have been happy if he had not had great possessions and enjoyments. [3.] That the indulgence of the poor is a sacred and lawful pleasure of that, and the ruin of many a soul, and the source of it. It is true, eating good meat and wearing good clothes is lawful; but it is as true, that it often becomes the food and fuel of pride and luxury, and so turns into sin to us. [4.] That fasting ourselves and our friends, and, at the same time, forgetting the distresses of the poor and afflicted, are very provoking to God and damning to the soul. The sin of the rich man was, that he ran riot in the use of his怒 or his diet, but his providing for himself only.

2. Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress; (v. 20.) There was a certain beggar, named Lazarus; a beggar of that name, eminently devout, and in great distress, was, probably, well known among good people at that time; a beggar, suppose such one as Eleazar, or Lazarus. Some think Eleazar was the proper name for any poor man; for it signifies the help of God, which they must fly to, that are destitute of other helps. This poor man was reduced to the last extremity, as miserable as you can lightly suppose a man to be in this world, as to outward things. (1.) His body was full of sores, like Job. To be sick and weak in body is a great affliction; and to have sore sores, and to be left to the patient, and more loathsome to those about him. (2.) He was forced to beg his bread, and to take up with such scraps as he could get at rich people's doors. He was so sore and lame, that he could not go himself, but he was carried by some compassionate hand or other, and laid at the rich man's gate. Note, These that are not able to help the poor with their purses, should help them with their pains; those that cannot lend a purse, should lend them a hand; those that have not wherewithal to give to them themselves, should either bring them, or go for them, to those that have. Lazarus, in his distress, had nothing of his own to subsist on, no relation to go to, nor did the parish take care of him. It is an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, that such a godly man as Lazarus was, should be suffered to perish ignorant of necessary food. Now observe by

[1.] His expectations from the rich man's table, He desired to be fed with the crumbs, v. 21. He did not look for a mess from off his table, though he ought to have had one, one of the best; but would be thankful for the crumbs from under the table, the broken meat which was the rich man's leavings; nay, the leavings of his dogs. The purse is a very small place, and must be content with such as they can catch. Now this is taken notice of to show, First, What was the distress, and what the disposition of the poor man. He was poor, but he was poor in spirit,
contendedly poor. He did not die at the rich man's gate, complaining, and bawling, and making a noise, but silently and modestly desiring to be fed with the crumbs. This miserable man was a good man, and in favour with God. Note, It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world, while wicked people have much to boast of. Ps. 73. 10, 11. Here is a child of wrath and an heir of hell sitting in the house, faring sumptuously; and a child of love and an heir of heaven, lying at the gate, perishing for hunger. And is men's spiritual state to be judged of then by their outward condition? Secondly, What was the temper of the rich man toward him? we are not told that he abused him, or forbidden him to come to him, or did him more harm, but it is intimated that he slighted him; he had no concern for him, took no care about him. Here was a real object of charity, and a very moving one, which spoke for itself; it was presented to him at his own gate; the poor man had a good character and a good conduct, and every thing that could recommend him. A little thing would be a great kindness to some, and a great discovery of charity to others. This rich man did not order him to be taken in, and lodged in the barn, or some of the out-buildings, but let him lie there. Note, It is not enough not to oppress and trample upon the poor; we shall be found unfaithful stewards of our Lord's goods in the great day, if we do not succour and relieve them. The reason given for the most fearful doom is, I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat. I wonder how these rich people, as they bear the name of Christ, and say that they believe it, can be so unconcerned as they often are, in the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted.

[2.] The usage he had from the dogs; The dogs came and licked his sores. The rich man kept a kennel of hounds, it may be, or other dogs, for his diversion, and to please his fancy; and these were fed to the full, while poor Lazarus could not get enough to keep him alive. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for hereafter, that feed their dogs, but neglect the poor. And it is a great aggravation of the uncharitableness of many rich people, that they bestow that upon their fancies and follies, which would supply the necessity, and rejoice the heart, of many a good Christian in distress. Those offend God, no, and they put a contempt upon human nature, that partner their dogs and horses, and let the families of their poor neighbours starve. Now those dogs came, and licked the sores of poor Lazarus; which may be taken, First, As an aggravation of his misery. His sores were bloody, which tempted the dogs to come and lick them, as they did the blood of Naboth and Ahab, 1 Kings 21. 19. And we read of the tongue of the dogs dipped in the blood of innocents, Ps. 83. 22. They attacked him while he was yet alive, as if he had been already dead, and he had not strength himself to keep them off, nor would any of the servants be so civil as to check them. The dogs were like their master, and thought they fared sumptuously when they regaled themselves with human gore. Or, it may be taken, Secondly, As some relief to him in his misery; as the dog is comforted toward him, but the dogs come, and licked his sores, Ps. 35. 13. They lifted and eased them; it is not said, They sucked them, but licked them, which was good for them. The dogs were more kind to him than their master was.

II. Here is the different condition of this godly poor man, and this wicked rich man, at, and after, death. Hitherto the wicked man seems to have the advantage, but Eritis acta probat—Let us wait a while, to see the end hereof.

1. They both die; (r. 22.) The beggar died; the rich man also died. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly; there they meet together. One dieth in his full strength, and another in the bitterness of his soul; but they shall be done alike in the dust, Job 21. 26. Death favours not either the rich man for his riches, or the poor man for his poverty. Saints die, that they may bring their scruples to an end, and may enter upon their joys. Sinners die, that they may go to give up their account. It concerns both rich and poor to prepare for death, for it waits for them both. Mars sextra ligibus sequeat—Death blends the sepulchre with the spade.

2. The beggar died first. God often takes godly people out of the world, when he leaves the wicked to flourish still. It was an advantage to the beggar, that such a speedy end was put to his miseries; and since he could find no other shelter or resting-place, he was hid in the grave, where the weary are at rest.

3. The rich man died, and was buried. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man; they digged a hole any where, and buried his body in, without any solemnity; he was buried with the burial of an ass: nay, it is well if they let the dogs lick his sores, did not let them gnaw his bones. But the rich man was laid formally, his body was washed, and anointing, and other things done; he had a train of mourners to attend him to his grave, and a stately monument set up over it; probably, he had a funeral oration in praise of him, and his generous way of living, and the good table he kept, which those would commend, that had been feasted at it. It is said of the wicked man, that he is brought to the grave with no small ado, and laid in the tomb, and the cote of the man is covered, which was not possible, are made sweet to him, Job 21. 22.

33. How foreign is the ceremony of a funeral to the happiness of the man! 4. The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. How much did the honour done to his soul, by this convoy of it to its rest, exceed the honour done to the rich man, by the carrying off his body with so much magnificence to its grave? Observe, (1.) His soul existed in a state of separation from its body. It did not die, or fall asleep, with the body, his candle was not put out with him, but lived, and acted, and knew what it did, and what was done to it. (2.) His soul removed to another world, to the world of spirits: it returned to God who gave it, to its native country; this is implied in its being carried. The spirit of a man goes upward. (3.) Angels took care of it; it was carried by angels. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die, and have a charge concerning them, to bear them up in their hands, not only in their journeys to and fro on earth, but in their great journey to their long home in heaven, be both their guide and their guard through regions unknown and unsafe. The soul of man, if not chained to this earth, and tugged by the terrors of the conscience, is in itself a holy, spiritual, and immaterial being, by which it springs upward as soon as it gets clear of the body; but Christ will not trust those that are his to that, and therefore will send special messengers to fetch them to himself. One angel one would think sufficient, but here are more, as many were sent for Elijah, Amasis, king of Egypt, had his chariot drawn by kings; but what was that honour to this? Saints ascend in the virtue of Christ's ascension; but this convoy of angels is added for state and decorum; saints shall be brought home, not only safely, but
honourably. What were the bearers at the rich man’s funeral, though, probably, those of the first rank, compared with Lazarus’ bearers? The angels were not shy of touching him, for his sores were on his body, not on his soul; that was presented to God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Thus the poor, who have no light in the dark or the gap of the earth, press in. The reason is plain—just excir- ping, “now come, and do your office.” 4. It was carried into Abraham’s bosom. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death, three ways; they go to the garden of Eden; they go to be under the shade of glory; and they go to the bosom of Abraham; and that is it which our Saviour here makes use of. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation, and so the souls of the faithful be gathered but to him, with whom was a true father, lays them in his bosom, especially at their first coming, to bid them welcome, and to refresh them when newly come from the sorrows and fatigues of this world? He was carried to his bosom, that is, to feel with him, for at least the guests are said to lean on one another’s breasts; and the saints in heaven sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham was a great man, and rich, yet in heaven he does not disdain to lay poor Lazarus in his bosom. Rich saints and poor meet in heaven. This poor Lazarus, who might not be admitted within the rich man’s gate, is conducted into the dining-room, into the bed-chamber, of the heavenly palace; and he is laid in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich glutton scorched to set with the dogs of his flock. 5. The next news you hear of the rich man, after the account of his death and burial is, that in hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torment, v. 23. (1.) His state is very miserable. He is in hell, in hades, in the state of separate souls, and there he is in the utmost misery and anguish possible. As the souls of the righteous are immediately after they are de- livered from the bondage of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; so wicked and unsanctified souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment endless, useless, and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. This rich man had entirely devoted himself to the pleasures of the world of sense, was wholly taken up with that, and was ND: now he finds himself in an other position, and therefore was wholly unfit for the pleasures of the world of spirits; to such a carnal mind as his they would indeed be no pleasure, nor could he have any relish of them, and therefore he is of course excluded from them. Yet that is not all; he was hard-hearted to God’s poor, and therefore he is not only cut off from mercy, but he has judge- ment without mercy, and falls under a punishment of sense as well as a punishment of loss. (2.) The misery of his state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus; He lifts up his eyes, and sees, Abraham after off, and Lazarus in his bosom. It is the soul that is in torment, and they are the eyes of his mind that are lifted up. He now began to consider what was become of Lazarus; he does not find him where he himself is, nor he plainly sees him, and with as much assurance as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes, afar off in the bosom of Abraham. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned we had before; ch. 13, 28. Ye shall see Abraham, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. [1.] He said, Abraham after off. To see Abraham we should think a pleasing sight; but to see him afar off was a tormenting sight. Near himself he saw devils and damned companions, frightful sights, and painful ones; afar off he saw Abraham. Note, Every sight in hell is aggravating. [2.] He saw Lazarus in his bosom; that same Lazarus whom he had looked upon with so much scorn and contempt, as not worthy his notice, he now sees preferred, and to be envied. The sight of him brought to his mind his own cruel and barbarous conduct toward him; and the sight of him in that happiness made his own misery the more grievous.

1. The request which the rich man made to Abra- ham for some mitigation of his present misery; (v. 24.) seeing Abraham afar off, he cried to him, cried aloud, as one in earnest and as one in pain and mis- ery, mixing shrieks with his petitions, to enforce them by moving compassion. He that used to com- mand aloud, now begs aloud; louder than ever La- zarus ever commanded. These cries and supplications are all turned into lamentations. Observe here, (1.) The title he gives to Abraham; Father Abra- ham. Note, There are many in hell, that can call Abraham father; that were Abraham’s seed after the flesh; many, and many that were, in name and profession, the children of the covenant made with Abraham. Perhaps this rich man, in his carnal state, had ridiculed Abraham and the story of Abra- ham, as the scorrers of the latter days do; but now he gives him a title of respect, Father Abraham. Note, The day is coming, when wicked men will be glad to scrape acquaintance with the righteous, and to claim kindred to them, though now they slight them. Abraham in this description represents Christ, for to him all judgment is committed, and for him they shall come; and by this Abraham may speak. Those that now slight Christ, will shortly make their court to him, Lord, Lord. (2.) The representation he makes to him of his present deplorable condition; I am tormented in this flame. It is the torment of his soul that he com- plains of, and therefore such a fire as will operate upon souls; and such a fire the wrath of God is, fastening upon a guilty conscience; such a fierce and horrifying state, and the reproaches of a self-acquiring, self-condemning heart. Nothing is more painful and terrible to the body than to be tormented with fire; by that therefore the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented. (3.) His request to Abraham, in consideration of this misery; Have mercy on me. Note. The day is coming upon the sinner, that makes right of the mercy of Abraham, will be hard for it. O for mercy, mercy, when the day of mercy is over, and offers of mercy are no more made. He that had no mercy on Lazarus, yet expects Lazarus should have mercy on him. “For,” thinks he, “Lazarus is better natured than ever I was.” The particular favour he beseeches is, Send Lazarus, that he may dip the point of his finger in water, and cool my tongue. Here he com- plains of the torment of his tongue particularly, as if he were more tormented there than in any other part, the punishment answering the sin. The tongue is one of the organs of speech, and by the torment of that he is put in mind of all the wicked words that
he had spoken against God and man; his cursing, and railing, and blasphemy, all his hard speeches, and filthy speeches; by his words he is condemned, and therefore in his tongue he is tormented. The tongue is also one of the organs of tasting; and therefore the torments of that will remind him of his inordinate relish of the delights of sense, which he had relished under his tongue. [2] He desires a drop of water to cool his tongue. He does not say, Father Abraham, and is glad to come to thee to wash, as Lazarus lies; unscripted souls do not, cannot, truly desire the happiness of heaven; nay, he does not say, "Father Abraham, order me a release from this misery, help me out of this pit," for he utterly despairs of that; but he asks as small a thing as could be asked, a drop of water to cool his tongue for one moment. [3] He desires that Lazarus might bring it. I have sometimes been suspected that he had herein an ill design upon Lazarus, and hoped, if he could get him within his reach, he should keep him from returning to the bosom of Abraham again. The heart that is filled with rage against God, is filled with rage against the people of God. But we will think more charitably even of a damned sinner, and suppose he intended here to show respect to Lazarus as one whom he would now gladly be hand-friends with, because he loved him, and thinks Lazarus will not be unwilling to do him this good office for old acquaintance's sake. Grocius here quotes Plato describing the torments of wicked souls, and among other things he saith, They are continually having on those when they have murdered, or been any way injurious to, calling upon them to forgive them the wrongs they did them. Note, There is no day coming, when those that need and desire the people of God would gladly receive kindness from them.

2. The reply which Abraham gave to this request. In general, he did not grant it. He would not allow him one drop of water to cool his tongue. Note, The damned in hell shall not have any the least abatement or mitigation of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain in hell to expect the least drop of mercy. See how justly this rich man is paid in his own coin. He that denied a crumb, is denied a drop. Now it is said to us, Ask, and it shall be given you; but if we let slip this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us. But this is not all; had Abraham only said, "You shall have nothing to abate your torment," it had been so; but he saith a great deal which would add to his torment, and make the flame the better. For every thing in hell will tormenting.

(1.) He calls him son; a kind and civil title, but here it serves only to aggravate the denial of his request, which shuts up the bowels of the compassion of a father from him. He had been a son, but a rebellious and renegade son, even from his own father. See the file of those who rely on that plea, We have Abraham to our father, when we find one in hell, and doomed to be there for ever, whom Abraham calls son. [2] He puts him in mind of what had been both his own condition, and the condition of Lazarus, in their lifetime: Son, remember this is a cutting word. The memories of damned souls will be their torment. He meant not only to speak of the torment they had in mind, but stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Nothing will bring more oil to the flames of hell than Son, remember. Now sinners are called upon to remember, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. "Son, remember the Creator, thy Redeemer, remember the latter end;" but they can turn a deaf ear to these memories, and forget that for which they have their memories; justly therefore will their everlasting misery arise to a Son, remember, which they will not be able to turn a deaf ear to. What a dreadful deal will this ring in our ears, "Son, remember" the many warnings that were given thee, not to come to this place of torment, which thou wouldest not regard; remember the fair offers made thee of eternal life and glory, which thou wouldest not accept, and that which he here put in mind of, is, [1] That thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things. He does not tell him that he had abused them, but that he had received them; "Remember what a bountiful benefactor God has been to thee, how ready he was to do thee good; thee couldst not therefore say, He owes thee any thing, no, not a drop of water." What he gave thee, thou receivedst, and that was all; thou never gave him a receipt for them, in a thankful acknowledgment of them, much less didst thou ever make any grateful return for them, or improvement of them; thou hast been the grave of God's blessings, in which they were buried, not the field of them, in which they were sown. Thou receivest thy good things; thou receivest them, and usedst them, as if they had been thine own, and thou hadst no need of them, or they for another.

Or rather, they were the things which thou didst choose for thy good things, which were in thine eye the best things, which thou didst content thyself with, and portion thyself in. Thou hadst meat and drink, and clothes of the richest and finest, and these were the things thou didst place thy happiness in; they were thy reward, thy consolation, the fancy thou didst agree for, and thou hast had it. Thou dost not for the good things of thy lifetime, and hast no thought of better things in another life, and therefore hast no reason to expect them. The day of thy good things is past and gone, and now is the day of thine evil things, of recompense for all thine evil deeds. Thou hast already had the last drop of the vials of mercy that thou couldst expect to fall to thy share; and there remains nothing but vials of wrath without mixture. [2] "Remember, too, what evil things Lazarus received." Thou enviest him his happiness here; but think what a large share of misery he had in his lifetime. Thou wast as much good as could be thought to fall to the lot of so bad a man, and he as much evil as could be thought to fall to the lot of so good a man. He received his evil things; he bore them patiently, received them from the hand of God, as Job did: (ch. 2. 10. Shall not the Revenge of the Righteous be concluded at the end of life?) He received them as the fruit of his spiritual distemper, and the cure was effectual. As wicked people have good things only in this life, and at death they are far more separated from all good; so godly people have evil things only in this life, and at death they are for ever put out of the reach of them. Now Abraham, by putting him in mind of what his condition had been in life, he can give him reason to consider how he had behaved toward Lazarus, when he was revelling in his good things, and Lazarus groaning under his evil things; he cannot forget that then he would not help Lazarus, and then how could he expect that Lazarus should now help him? Had Lazarus in his life-time afterward grown rich, and he poor, Lazarus would have thought it his duty to relieve him, and not have used up his good things in indulgence; but in the future state of recompense and retribution, those that are now dealt with, both by God and man, better than they deserve, must expect to be rewarded every man according to his works.

(3.) He puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery; But now the tables are turned, and so they must abide for ever; now he is
comforted, and thou art tormented. He did not need to be told that he was so comforted, he felt it to his cost: or, worse than that, one who lay in the bosom of Abraham, could not but be comforted there; yet Abraham puts him in mind of it, that he might, by comparing one thing with another, observe the righteousness of God, in recompensing tribulation to them who trouble his people, and to those who are troubled, 2 Thess. 1, 6, 7. He observe, [1.] Heaven is for those who are tormented: hence it is they who are suffering, and waiting, and pain in perfection. [2.] The soul, as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment, immediately, and does not sleep, or go into purgatory. [3.] Heaven will be heaven indeed to those that go thither through many and great calamities in this world; of those that had grace, but little of the comfort of it here, (perhaps their thoughts refused to be comforted,) yet, when they are fallen asleep in Christ, you may truly say, "Now they are comforted: now all their tears are wiped away, and all their fears are vanished." In heaven there is everlasting consolation. And, on the other hand, hell will be hell indeed to those that go thither from the midst of the enjoyment of all the delights and pleasures of sense; whereas the great calamities, of the greater, are such calamities are described to be to the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. 28, 56.
(4.) He assures him that it was no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus; for, (v. 26.) Beside all this, worse yet, brethren, as and you there is a great gulf fixed, an impassable one; a great chasm, that there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners. [1.] The kindest saint in heaven cannot make a visit to the congregation of the dead and damned, to comfort or relieve any there, who once were their friends. "They that would pass from hence to you, cannot; they cannot leave beholding the face of their Father, nor the work about his throne, to fetch water for you; that is none of their business." [2.] The most daring sinner in hell cannot force his way out of that prison, cannot get over that great gulf. They cannot pass to us, that would come from thence. It was not to be expected, for the door of mercy is shut; the bridge is drawn; there is no coming out upon parole or bail, no, not for one hour. In this world, when he closed the gate, there is no gulf between this state of nature and grace and hell, no may pass from one to the other, from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It is a pit in which there is no water, and out of which there is no redemption. The decree and counsel of God have fixed this gulf, which all the world cannot unfix. This abounds this miserable creature to despair; it is now too late for any change of his condition, or any the least relief: it might have been prevented in time, but it cannot now be remedied to eternity. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irreversible and unalterable sentence. A stone is rolled to the door of the pit, which cannot be rolled back.
3. The further request he had to make to his father Abraham; for himself, his mouth is stopped, and he has not a word to say in answer to Abraham's denial of a drop of water. Damned sinners are made to know that the sentence they are under is just, and they cannot alleviate their own misery by making any objection against it. And since he cannot obtain a drop of water to cool his tongue, we may suppose he growed his tongue for pain, as is said to do, on whom one of the nails of God's wrath is fixed out, Rev. 16, 10. The shrieks and outcries which we may suppose to be now uttered by him were hideous; but since he has an opportunity of speaking to Abraham, he will improve it for his relations whom he had left behind, since he can not improve it for his own advantage. Now as to this.
(1.) He begs that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house, upon an errand thither; (v. 27.) I pray thee therefore, father Abraham, that thou sendest one to them, who is come hither, and says to them, O send to prevent their coming hither." or, "Though there is a great gulf fixed between you and me, yet since there is no such gulf fixed between you and them, send him thither. Send him back to my father's house; he knows well enough where it is, has been there many a time, having been denied the crumbs that fell from the table. He knows I have five brethren, and if he appear to them, they will know him, and will regard what he saith, for they knew him to be an honest man; let him testify to them; let him tell them what condition I am in, and that I brought myself to it by my luxury and sensuality, and my immorality to the poor; let him warn them not to tread in my steps, nor go on in the ways I went in; let them also come into the same misery." v. 26. Some observe, that he speaks of a great gulf only, whom they infer he had no children, else he would have mentioned them, and then it was an aggravation of his much bitterness, that he had no children to provide for. Now he would have them stopped in their sinful course. He does not say, "I beseech me, to them, that I may testify to them," for he knew that there was a gulf fixed, and despaired of a permission so favourable to himself: his going would frighten them out of their sins; but, "Send Lazarus, whose address will be less terrible, and yet his testimony sufficient to frighten them out of their sins."
Now he desired the preventing of their ruin, partly in tenderness to them, for whom he could not but feel a natural affection; he knew their temptations, their ignorance, their infidelity, their inconsideration, and wished to prevent the destruction they were running into; but it was partly in tenderness to himself; for their coming to him, to that place of torment, would aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to show them the way thither, as the sight of Lazarus helped to aggravate his misery. When partners in sin come to be sharers in woe, as tares bound in bundles for the fire, they will be a terror to one another.
(2.) Abraham denies him this favour too. There is no request granted in hell. Those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham, a justification of their praying to saints departed, and they see it is not unavailing, and is a test of faith in their prison; they have the written word, which they may read and hear read; "Let them attend to it, the word of a prophet, for God will not reject out of the common people a refuge for them." Here is their privilege; They have Moses and the prophets, and their duty; "Let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment." By this it appears
there is sufficient evidence in the Old Testament, in Moses and the prophets, to convince those that will hear them impartially, that there is another life after this, and a state of rewards and punishments for good and bad men; for that was the thing which the rich man would have his brethren assured of, and for that they are turned over to Moses and the prophets. 

(3.) He urges his request yet further; (v. 30.) "Say, father Abraham, give me leave to press this. It is true, they have Moses and the prophets, and if they would but give a due regard to them, it would be sufficient; but they do not, they will not; yet it may be hoped, if one went to them from the dead, they would repent; that would be a more serious conviction to them. They are turned to Moses and the prophets, and therefore regard them the less; but this would be a new thing, and more startling; surely that would bring them to repent, and to change their wicked habit and course of life." Note, Foolish men are apt to think any method of conviction better than that which God has chosen and appointed. 

(4.) Abraham insists upon the denial of it, with a conclusive reason; (v. 31.) "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, and will not believe the testimony nor take the warning they give, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. If they regard not the public revelation, which is confirmed by miracles, neither would they be wrought upon by a private testimony to themselves." [1.] The matter was long since settled among them, that God should speak by Moses and the prophets; and they would in like manner be turned to them, and by immediate messengers from heaven. Israel chose it in mount Sinai, because they could not bear the terror of such expressures. [2.] A messenger from the dead, could say no more than what is said in the scriptures, nor say it with more authority. [3.] There would be every jot as much reason to suspect that to be a cheat and a delusion, as to suspect the scriptures to be false, and much more; and if this were so, the man would certainly be so in another. [4.] The same strength of corruption that breaks through the convictions of the written word, would certainly triumph over those by a witness from the dead; and though a sinner might be frightened at first by such a testimony, when the fright was over, he would soon return to his hardness. [5.] The scripture is now the ordinary way of God's making known his will; and it is sufficient; and it is, and it is to be used as such, and must be so; and it is the only assurance for us to prescribe any other way, nor have we any ground to expect or pray for the grace of God to work upon us in any other way abstracted from that, and when that is rejected and set aside. This that our Saviour here said, was soon after verified in the unbelieving Jews, who would not hear Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and then would be persuaded, though Lazarus rose from the dead, and said to them, that Christ named this poor man Lazarus; nay, they consulted to put him to death, and did put him that raised him, to death, and would not be persuaded by him neither, though he also rose from the dead. When Eutychus was raised to life, the people that were present continued to hear Paul preach, but did not turn to inquire of him. And in the closing of the Acts, he descends in an invisible manner, and apparitions, nor seek to the dead, he brings to the law, and to the testimony, (Isa. 1. 19, 20.) for that is the sure word of prophecy, which we may depend upon. 

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, we have I. Some particular discourses which Christ had with his disciples, in which he teaches them to take heed of giving offence, and to forgive the injuries done them. (v. 1. . . .) encourages them to pray for the increase of their faith, (v. 5, 6.) and then teaches them humility, whatever service they had done for God, v. 7. 10. II. His cleansing of ten lepers, and the thanks he had from one of them only, and he a Samaritan, v. 11. 19. III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of an inquiry of the pharisees, when the kingdom of God should appear, v. 20. 37. 

1. THEN said he unto the disciples. It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea: and it should obey you. 7. But which of you, having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.

We are here taught, 1. That giving of offences is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid, and carefully watch against, v. 1. 2. We can expect no other than that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but they will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom they come, his doom will be heavy, (v. 2.) more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors, who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more hazardous than that of millstones. This speaks a wee. 1. To persecutors, who offer any thing by the law or practice of Christ's little ones, in word, or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it. 2. To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ, and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples; for they are those by whom offences come. 3. To those who, under the profession of the Christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the hands and sadden the hearts of God's people: for by them the offence comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will
be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but
offences will come.
11. That forgiving of offences is a great duty, and
which we should every one of us make con-
science of; (v. 3.) Take heed to yourselves.
Ministers must be very careful not to
say or do any thing that may be a discouragement
to weak Christians; there is need of great caution,
and they ought to speak and act very considerately,
for fear of this: or, When your brother trespasses
against you, do you not think, put any slight or
afford him, if he be necessary to any damage
done in your property or reputation, take heed
to yourselves at such a time, lest you be put into
a passion; lest, when your spirits are provoked, you
speak unwisely, and rashly vow revenge, (Prov.
24. 29.) I will so do to him, as he has done to me.
Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you
say amiss.
1. If you are permitted to rebuke him, you are
advised to do so. Smother not the resentment, but
give it vent; tell him his faults, show him whereby
he has not done well nor fairly by you, and, it may
be, you will perceive (and you must be very willing
to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not
a trespass against you, or not designed, but an over-
sight, and either you will do well to forgive him
for misunderstanding him; "as Jcss. 22. 30, 31.
2. You are commanded, upon his repentance,
to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to
him; If he repent, forgive him; forget the injury,
ever think of it again, much less upbraid him with
it. Though he do not repent, you must not there-
fore bear malice to him, or meditate revenge; but
if he does at last say that he repent, you are not
bound to be free and familiar with him as you have
been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the of-
ence of the Christian community he is a member of,
let him be gravely and mildly reproved for his sin,
and, upon his repentance, received into friendship
and communion again." This the apostle calls for-
giveness. 2 Cor. 2. 7.
3. If you are to repent this every time he repeats
his trespass, v. 4. If he could be supposed to be
either so negligent, or so impudent, as to trespass
against thee seven times in a day, and as often pro-
fesses himself sorry for his fault, and promises not
again to offend in like manner, continue to forgive
him. Humanum est errare.—To err is human.
Note. Christians should be of a forgiving spirit,
will ing to make the best of every body, and all about
them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to
aggravate them; and should contrive as much to
show that they have forgiven an injury, as others to
show that they resent it.
11. That we have all need to get our faith
strengthened, because, as that grace grows, all
other graces grow. The more firmly we believe
the grace of Christ, the more confidently we
rely upon the grace of Christ, and the more it will be
with us every way. Now observe here,
1. The address which the disciples made to
Christ, for the strengthening of their faith, v. 5.
The apostles themselves, so they are here called,
though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's
kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and de-
defciency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's
grace for the improvement of it. They said unto
Lord, "Increase our faith, and perfect what is
lacking in it. Let the discoveries of faith be more
clear, the desires of faith more strong, the depend-
ences of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications
of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights
of faith more pleasing." Note, The increase of our
faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we
should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some
think that they put up this prayer to Christ, upon
occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of
forgiving injuries; "Lord, increase our faith, or we
shall never be able to practise such a difficult duty
as this." Faith in God's pardoning mercy will en-
able us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie
in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others
think that it was upon some other occasion, when
the apostles were run abroad in working some mira-
acle, and were reproved by Christ for the weak-
ness of their faith, as it is, Matt. 17. 16, 17. To him
he says, You must apply yourselves for grace to
mend them; to him they cry, Lord, in-
crease our faith.
2. The assurance Christ gave them of the won-
derful efficacy of true faith: (v. 6.) "If ye had faith
as a grain of mustard-seed, so small as must-
card-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so
sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to
all other graces, as mustard to the animal spir-
its," and therefore used in palpables, "you might
do wonders much beyond what you now do; nothing
would be too hard for you, that were fit to be done
for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the
doctrine you preach, yea though it were the trans-
planting of a tree from the earth to the sea. See
Matt. 17. 26. As with God nothing is impossible,
so with Christians there is nothing impossible when
they use faith and prayer.
IV. That whatever we do in the service of Christ,
we must be very humble, and not imagine that we
can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a
debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so
much more for Christ than others, must not think
that they had thereby made him their debtor.
1. We are all God's servants; (his apostles and
ministers, excepting one special manner so;) and,
as servants, are bound to do our duty with all our
whole strength and our whole time are to be
employed for him: for we are not our own, nor
at our own disposal, but at our Master's.
2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our
time with duty, and we have a variety of work
appointed to us; we ought to make the end of one
service the beginning of another. The servant that
has been ploughing or feeding cattle in the field
when he comes home at night, has work to do still;
he must wait at table, v. 7, 8. When we have been
employed in the duties of a religious conversation
that will not excuse us from the exercises of devo-
tion; when we have been waiting for God, still we
must be waiting on God, waiting on him continually.
Our principal care here must be to do the duty of
our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us
the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit.
No servant expects that his master should say to
him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to
do that when we have done our day's work. Let
us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well,
and then the reward will come in due time.
2. If Christ's servants should be serve for us:
Make ready wherewith I send thee, and afterward
thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting Christians say
that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his
love as they should, because they have not yet ob-
tained the comfort of it; but this is wrong; first,
let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with
our praises, and then we shall eat and drink in the
comfort of it. Let the servant, and the there is a feast.
3. Christ's servants, when they are                        to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumber-
ing, and fit themselves with a close application of
mind to go on, and go through, with their work;
thei must gird up the loins of their mind. When
we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have
made ready wherewith I send thee, we must then
gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was among his disciples, as one that served, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister; witness his washing his disciples’ feet.

6. Christ’s servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him: “Doth he thank that servant? Doth he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means.” So good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God’s favour, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a Debtor to his own honour, and that we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a quantum meruit—according to merit.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should do all things that are commanded us, and also in many things we come short of that, yet there is no work of supererogation, it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment, of loving God with all our heart and soul, which includes the utmost duty.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into utter darkness, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are unprofitable: our goodness extendeth not unto God, nor if we are righteous is he the better, Ps. 16. 2. Job 22. 2. 3—5. 7. “God cannot be a Gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a Debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections; it becomes us therefore to call ourselves unprofitable servants, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17. And Jesus answering said: Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God’s displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance, in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee; he was now in the frontier country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee; he went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them, for he is found of them that sought him not.

Observe,

1. The address of those lepers to Christ; they were ten in a company; for though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to confide with one another. Now observe,

1. They met Christ as he entered into a certain village; they did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he entered the town, weary as he was; and yet he did not put them off, or adjourn their case.

2. They stood afar off, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to keep their distance. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we that we should approach so near to him that is infinitely pure? We are impure.

2. Their request was unanimous, and very impor- tante; (y. 13.) They lifted up their voices, being at a distance, and cried, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Those that expect help from Christ, must take him for their Master, and he at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Servant, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy but, have mercy on us: and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they failed not. They had heard the fame of this Jesus, (though he had not been much conversant in that country,) and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

3. Christ sent them to the priests, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the lepers. He did not tell them positively that they should be cured, but bid them go show themselves to the priests, y. 14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman’s in like case, Go wash in Jordan. Note, Those that expect Christ’s favours, must take him in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription; “Let them either cure, or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool’s errand;” but, overruled by the rest, they all went to the priest. While the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here further design, which was to have the priest’s judgment concerning the most holy and onerous of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to inquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

4. As they went, they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him, that they were clean. Observe, Then we may expect God to meet us with mercy, when we have been under the weight of our sins. If we do what we can, God will not be unwilling to do that for us which we cannot. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; Go show thyself to the priests; and open thy case to a faithful minister; and though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means.
5. One of them, and but one, returned, to give thanks; (v. 13.) When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he turned back toward him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings; He glorified God and spake of his mercies, such as he had returned to him; and he lifted up his voice in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, v. 13. Those that have received mercy from God, should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. But he also made a particular address of thanks to Christ; (v. 16.) He fell down at his feet, put himself into the most humble, reverent posture he could, and gave him thanks. Note, we ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness: and we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, and not to defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes us to judge ourselves less than the least of God's mercies, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

6. Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself, for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, v. 16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that glorified God, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, refused, to do it. Now observe here,

(1.) The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercies that he who was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, was the only one that returned to give glory to God, v. 17, 18. See here, [1.] How rich Christ is in doing good; Were there not ten cleaned? Here was a cure by wholesale, a whole hospital healed with one word's speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing, cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though even so many. Here are ten at a time cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others sharing it.

[2.] How poor we are in our returns; "Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?" This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that return to give thanks in a right manner, (scarcely one in ten,) that return unto the Lord with tenfold. [3.] How those often prove most grateful, from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion, are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral virtue, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those two cases of whom the benefit had been so great, that his kindness was so slighted. And it intimates how justly he represents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had done so much, and from whom he has received so little.

(2.) The great encouragement Christ gave him, v. 19. The rest had their cure, and had it not revok'd, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude; but he had, had it not been for his conscience, and the example of his great and obvious mercy, and his expected and offered gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium; Thy faith hath made thee whole. The rest were made whole by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole by his faith, which is the difference by the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us, when they are fetched in by the prayers of faith, and returned by the praises of faith.

20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23. And they shall say to you, See here; or, See there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. 25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; 29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32. Remember Lot's wife. 33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34. I tell you, In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the kingdom of God, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now set up, and of which there was great expectation. I. Here is a demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse; they asked

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the kingdom of God should come; forming a notion of it as a temporal kingdom, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth: they were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was at hand; "Now," say the Pharisees, "when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this long-looked-for kingdom?"

4. Christ's reply to that demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterward to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it; (v. 22,) what he said to both, he saith thus.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual kingdom, and not temporal and external. They asked when it would come. "You know not what you ask," saith Christ, "it may come, and you not be aware of it." For it has not an external show, as other kingdoms have; the advancement of revolutions which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. "No," saith Christ, (1.) "It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise; it cometh not with observation, nigh to the eyes, with outward show. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the time of it, to which Christ doth not give them any certain answer concerning, but directs them to the signs of the times of this kingdom, those are secret things which belong not to you; but the great intentions of this kingdom, those are things revealed."

When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, Lo here, or, Lo there, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories. It is in every body's mouth, he is here, or, he is there. He is in the court of heaven, in the council of power. Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be here or there; nor will it be here or there, as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or farther from, that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place or that place, cry, Lo here, or, Lo there. You confine your hopes and expectations too much to the designs of christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church. (2.) "It has a spiritual influence; The kingdom of God is within you." It is not of this world; (John 18. 36,) its glory does not strike men's fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The kingdom of God will not change men's outward condition, but their hearts and lives; then it comes, when it makes those humble and serious and heavenly, that were proud and vain and carnal; when it moves those from the world, that were wedded to the world; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is among you; so some read it. "You inquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up in the midst of you. That gospel is preached, it is confirmed by miracles, it is embraced by multitudes, so that it is in your nation, though not in your hearts."

Note, It is the folly of many curious inquirers concerning the times to come, that they look for that before them, which is already among them.

2. That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of opposition and interruption, v. 22. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and executed a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise; "The days will come, before you have finished your testimony, and done your work, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man," (one such a day as we now have), "of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and shall not see it. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success; (so they had, when thousands were added to the church in a day;) but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned; so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel, as you now have; you will grow cold to it, when they have enjoyed it a while, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterward as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him as doves to their windows." This looks forward to his disciples in afterages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with like liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under inward restraints. Teachers will be moved into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered; then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath-days, sacrament-days, preaching-days, praying-days; those are days of the Son of man, in which we hear from him, and converse with him; the time may come, when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the loss of them; it is by great designs to improve them, and in the years of plenty to lay up in store for the years of famine. Sometimes they will be under inward restraints, will not have such tokens of the presence of the Son of man with them as they have sometimes had; the Spirit is withdrawn from them, they see not their signs, the angel comes not down to stir the waters, there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great cessation of the work of God. This is a period, then we would wish to see such victorious, triumphal days of the Son of man as we have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but we cannot see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost, because not always alike visible and prevailing.

3. That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in any one particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once; (v. 23, 24.) "They will say to you, See here, or, See there; here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the oppressing Jews; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet, Here in this mountain, or, there at Jerusalem, you will find the true church. Go not after them, or follow them; do not heed such suggestions; the kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to give light to the Gentiles, for as the lightning that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, shineth all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." (1.) "The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the christians from them, shall fly like lightning through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction, can no more avoid it, or oppose it, than they can a flash of lightning." (2.) "The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world, shall fly like lightning through the nations; the kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a head thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a moment; the kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel, ere they are aware of it." The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's
kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued by the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up Christ's kingdom, was not to make one nation great, but to make all nations equal; some at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the nations rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves with all their might against it.

4. That the Messiah must suffer before he must reign; (v. 25.) "First he must suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation; and if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no otherwise, but to make all nations, for his sake, to slumber and dream. They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour; "No," saith Christ, "we must go by the cross to the crown. The Son of man must suffer many things, pain, and shame, and death, are those many things; he must be rejected of this generation of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles; that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power will appear to be of God, and not of man; for though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be glorious to the ends of the earth." 5. That the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah would occasion the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of security, and drowned in sensuality, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, v. 26, &c. Observe, (1.) How it had been with sinners formerly, and what posture the judgments of God, which they had been fairly warned of, did at length find them in. Look as far back as the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their way, had been filled with violence, come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, whom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; now observe concerning both these. [1.] That they had fair warning given them of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world, so was Lot to the Sodomites; but they neither gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off. [2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it; they were very secure, went on in their business as uncorncerned as you could imagine; they did eat, they drank, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to make provision for the flesh, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and were given in marriage, that their families might be built up; they were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too; they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. These were lawful things, but the fault was, they minded these inordinate, and their hearts were set on these. [3.] That they must not put any heart at all to prepare against the threatening judgments; when they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, fasting and praying, repenting and reforming, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, eating flesh, and drinking wine, when God called to repentance, and to mourning, Isa. 22. 12, 13. [5.] That the Son of man must suffer many things, and in security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came upon them, and they were swallowed up in the flood, and Noah entered into the ark. Lot went out of Sodom, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note, The stupidity of sinners in a sinful way, though it is as strange as it is without excuse; yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the old way that wicked men have trodden, that have gone slumbering to hell, as their damnation slumbered while they did. [4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the care of themselves, which they gave to others. Noah entered into the ark, and there he was safe, Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on heedless and headlong into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of them that believe. [5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable lamentation, and destruction. Noah, before he was come, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; fire and brimstone came, and destroyed all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will, in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here, is, to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual. 2. How it will be with sinners still; (v. 30.) Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed; when Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them by the angel before him. He will come to Sodom as he came to Lot; but it will be all in vain. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition against Christ and his gospel; till all the christians are withdrawn from among them, and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought that this was a sight of our Saviour's, which were not long after published to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end, nor the account that they must give. Wise to then, that are thus at ease in Zion. 6. That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers, to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to be given to their sins, and perish with them. Observe, (1.) This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be attended with great danger, and much must be done concerning about their worldly affairs; (v. 31.) "He that shall be on the housetop when the alarm is given, let him not come down to take his stuff away; but if he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but encourage him, and retard his flight. Let him not regard his stuff, at such a time as that, when it will be next to a miracle if he have his life, given him for a prey. It will be better for him to leave what he has by Noah and Lot, and stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do: Escape for thy life, Save yourselves, from this inward destruction." (2.) When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning; (v. 32.) "Remember Lot's wife, and take warning by her not to flee from this
Sodom, (for so Jerusalem is become, Isa. 1. 10.) but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back, as she did, be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction, whatever you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you." Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; may, lest he be con- 
tinued a going back in heart, or an evidence that he had once been belind. 8. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against all states, who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh.

(5.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken; 
(v. 33.) "Who- 
soever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity, and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them and perish in the common calamity: but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or ensure upon their securities." 
Note, Those do best for themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

7. That all good Christians should certainly escape, but many of them very narrowly, from that destruction, v. 34—36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others that were nearest to a bed, one taken and the other left; one snatched out of the snare and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and all things seem to come alike to all; yet, sooner or later, it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to take out the fire from the vile. We are sure that the Judge of all the earth doth right: and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purposes of mercy, the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be taken away by that judgment.

Lastly, That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, v. 37. Where, Lord? They had inquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question, "Where, Lord? Where shall those be safe, that are taken? Where shall those perish, that are left?" The answer is pros- 
verbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question; Wherever the body is, there are the enemies gathered together. (1.) Where- 
ever the wicked are, there are marked for perdition, they shall be found out by the judgments of God, as wherever a dead carcass is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews hav- 
ing made themselves a dead and putrefied carcass, odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the carcasses do upon the fowls. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, (Ps. 21. 8.) and them that set their nests among the stars, Obad. 4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape. (2.) Where- 
ever the godly are, who are marked for preservation, 
they shall be found happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be ex- 
tended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church. Wherever Christ is, beholders will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or showed the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel and his ordinances and church are; 
For where two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them, and thither therefore 
others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is to have one particular place 
for its metropolis, such as Jerusalem was to the Jew- 
ish church, to which all Jews were to resort: but, 
wherever the body is, wherever the gospel is preach- 
ed, and ordinances are ministers of, thither will pious 
sects resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith 
feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them, John 4. 21, 
&c. 1 Tim. 3. 16. Many good interpreters understand 
it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory; "Ask not where the 
carcass will be, and how they shall find the way to 
it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to 
him who is their living, quickening Head, and the 
Centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of 
the people be."  

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. The parable of the impotent 
widow, designed to teach us faith in prayer, v. 1—8. 2. The 
parable of the Pharisee and publican, designed to 
teach us humility, and humiliation for sin, in prayer 
(9—14.) 3. Christ's favour to little children that were 
bring it to him, v. 15—17. 4. The parable of a rich man 
that had a mind to follow Christ, whether he loved better 
Christ or his riches; his coming short upon that trial; 
and Christ's discourse with his disciples upon that occasion; 
(v. 18—34.) 5. Christ's discourse with 
his disciples upon the occasions of their want or dis- 
comforts, v. 31—34. 6. His restoring of sight to a blind 
man, v. 35—43. And these four passages we had before 
in Matthew and Mark.

1. A ND he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought 
always to pray, and not to faint: 2. Saying, There 
was in a city a judge, which feared not God, nor 
regarded man: 3. And there 
was a widow in that city; and she came 
unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine 
adversary. 4. And he would not for a while; 
but afterward he said within himself, 
Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5. Yet, be- 
cause this widow troubleth me, I will avenge 
her, lest by her continual 
coming she weary me. 6. And the Lord 
said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7. And shall 
not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though 
he bear long with them? 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?  

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the 
drift and design of it are prefixed. Christ spake it 
with this intent, to teach us that men ought always 
to pray, and not to faint, v. 1. It supposes that all 
God's people are praying people; all God's chil- 
dren keep up both a constant and an occasional 
correspondence with him, send to him state- 
advice, and upon every emergency. It is our privilege and honour 
that we may pray; it is our duty, we ought to pray, 
we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant
work; we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving it off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting put to do this that which seems particularly de-
signed here, is, to teach us constancy and perseve-
rance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God; when we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies; we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall, and their which is in like manner like wise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

1. Christ shows, by a parable, the power of im-
portunity among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence to do that which is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of importunity. Observe here,

1. The bad character of the judge that was in a certain city; he neither feared God, nor regarded man; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the con-
science of the people. He had no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. It is not strange, if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator, be altogether regard less of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. Such a preva-
ience of irreverence and inhumanity is bad in any, but worse in a judge, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment, was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Exci. 3. 16.

2. The distressed case of a poor widow that was ne-
cessitous, and no make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror; she had manifestly right on her side; but, it should seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, Avenge me of mine adversary, that is, Do me justice against mine adversary; not that she desired to be revenge
ved on him for anything he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state, to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magnates are particularly injurious to them, not so much for want of necessity, (Jer. 22. 3.) but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow, (Isa. 1. 17.) to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, Ps. 68. 5.

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause; He would not for a while; according to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but continned at all times long and hard in her case, as if he had no heart to spare her, or be at all ready to give her, no great man whom she stood in any awe of, to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to re-
dress her grievances; and he himself was conscious of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself, that he neither feared God nor regarded man; it is said that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The gaining of her point by continual dunning of this unjust judge; (v. 5.) "Because this wido-
v woman troubles me, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much, lest by her clamour against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamour to me she weary me: for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last." Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, Avenge me of mine adversary, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

II. He applies this for the encouragement of God's praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

1. He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them; (v. 6.) Hear what the unjust judge saith; how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and from thence infers, Shall not God avenge his own elect? Observe,

(1.) What is it that they desire and expect; that God would avenge his own elect. Note, [1.] There are a people in the world that are God's people, his el-
et, his own elect, a chosen people, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. We ought to be particular in praying for them; it is because they are his chosen, and in pur-
sumance of the choice he has made of them. [2.] God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world; there are many ad-
versaries that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary. [3.] That which is wanted and waited for, is God's preserving and protecting of them, and the corruption of the hands of them; his securing of the interest of the church in the world, and of his grace in the heart.

(2.) What it is that is required of God's people in order to the obtaining of this; they must cry day and night to him; not that he needs their remon-
strances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. We ought to be particular in pray-
ing against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was; For this thing I brought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; like this importunate wi-
dow. Lord, omit this corruption; Lord, arm me against this temptation. We ought to concern our-

selves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set them in safety. And herein we must be very urgent, we must cry with earnestness; we must cry day and night, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must wrestle with God, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God's praying people are bid to give him no rest, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

(3.) What discouragements they may perhaps meet with, when they press their prayers and expectations; he may hear long with them, and may not presently ap-
pear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is needful in this case—he exercises patience toward the adversaries of his people, and does not take vengean ce on them; and he exercises the patience of his people, and does not plead for them. He bore long with the cry of the sin of the Egyptians that oppressed; Is. 7. 2. and he the cry of the sorrow of those that were oppressed.

(4.) What assurance they have that mercy will come at last, though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith; If this wi-
dow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail! For, [1.] This widow was a stranger, nothing related to the judge; but God's praying people is his own elect, whom he
knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for. [2.] She was but one, but the praying people of God are many, all of whom come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need, Matth. 18. 19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers. [3.] She came to a judge that bid her keep her distance; we come to a Father that bids us come boldly to him, and teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. [4.] She came to a judge who said, in a just cause, Jesus (John 17. 25.) one that regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as widows and fatherless. [5.] She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, Jesus, O Lord, plead these own cause; and what will then do to thy great name? [6.] She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven. [7.] She had no promise of speed, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are bid to ask, and it is promised that it shall be given us. [8.] She came to a judge who often at some distance times; but we may cry to God day and night, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity. [9.] Her importunity was pro vocing to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer. [10.] In all this, she was the outstanding this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him; (v. 8.) 'Nevertheless, though such assurances are given, that God will avenge his own elect, yet, when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?' The Son of man will come to avenge his own elect, to plead the cause of persecuted Christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his own name and power, and will save his people in every age, and at the great day he will come finally to determine the controversies of Zion. Now, when he comes, will he find faith in the earth? The question implies a strong negation; No, he shall not; he himself foresees it. (1.) This supposes that it is on earth only that there is occasion for faith: for sinners in hell are feeling that which they would not believe, and saints in heaven are enjoying that which they did believe. (2.) It supposes that it is the great thing that Jesus Christ looks for. He looks down upon the children of men, and does not ask, Is there iniquity? but, Is there faith? He inquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures. (3.) It supposes that if there were faith, though ever so little, he would discover it, and find it out. The weakest believer and smallest sign of his eye is upon him. (4.) It is foretold that, when Christ comes to plead his people's cause, he will find but little faith in comparison with what one might expect. That is, [1.] In general, he will find but few good people, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest: nay, he will find little faith among men: the faithful fail. Ps. 12. 1. 2. Even to the end of the time there will still be occasion for the same complaint; the world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous. [2.] In particular, he will find few that have faith concerning his coming. When he comes to avenge his own elect, he looks if there be any faith to help, and to uphold, and wonders that there is none, Isa. 59. 16.—63. 5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will, delay his coming so long as that, First, Wicked people will begin to defy it, and to say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. 3. 3. They shall say, Behold, the Lord tarryeth for ever, and, yet liketh him not, Amos 5. 19.) and his delay will harden them in their wickedness, Matth. 24. 48. Secondly, Even his own people will begin to despair of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God's time to appear for his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Zion begins to say, The Lord has forsaken his land, and Zion his people, Jer. 6. 8. (Isa. 13.) and so he will bring them to repentance, that, when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelieving of man has not made the promise of God of no effect.

9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: 12. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14. I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told, (v. 9.) who they were, whom it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had, 1. A great concet of themselves. Such is of their own goodness; they think they do right themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all, 2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed to God, as their plea; they trusted in themselves as being righteous: they thought they had obtained God's favour, and might demand anything from him; and, 3. They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that broadly justify themselves, and those that hereby condemn themselves; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day. 1. Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time; (v. 10.) Two men went up into the temple, (for the tem-
ple stood upon a hill,) to pray. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up the public prayers, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner, in or toward that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our Temple, and to him we must look for the acceptance of our prayers. The Pharisee and the publican both went to the temple, to pray. Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself acceptable. This was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1. The Pharisee went to the temple, to pray, because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion. He thought his piety was noticed, and therefore expected it.

The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa. 56. 7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a confinement, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

11. Here is the publican's address to God; for (for a prayer I cannot call it;) he stood and prayed thus with himself; (v. 11, 12.) standing by himself, he prayed thus, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or setting himself with a great deal of state and formality he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to have said is not what he would have said.

1. That he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he said of himself, which we will suppose to be true— he was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, nor an usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him; he was not unjust in any of his dealings; he was not a robber, a plunderer, a thief, or a cheat, a fraud, a cheat, a fraud; he was not adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, partly as an act of temperance, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday; thus he glorified God with his body; yet that was no more a glory then than it could be so now: an ass or a beast, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate; now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee; yet he was not accepted; and why was he not? (1.) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, by the grace of God I am, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank thee; which is intended but for a plausible introduc-
unites his heart with penitent remorse; O sobs well
that I am!" Ephraim is said to swine upon his
thigh, Jer. 31. 19. Great mounties are represented
labouring upon their breasts, Nah. 2. 7.
2. He expressed it in what he said. His prayer
was short; fear and shame hindered him from say-
ing much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words;
but what he said was to the purpose, God, be mer-
fic to me a sinner! And blessed be God, that we
have such prayers, such penitent and requiting
prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it,
goes to his house justified; and so shall we, if we
pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ; "God be
merciful to me a sinner; the God of infinite mercy
be merciful to me, for if he be not, I am for ever
 undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me,
for I have been cruel to myself." (1.) He owns
himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees
no reason to charge himself with any thing amiss; he is clean, he is pure from sin; but the publican
gives himself no other character than that of a sinner;
(a convicted criminal at God's bar. (2.) He has
no dependence but upon the mercy of God, and the only
blessing he can expect is upon. The Pharisee had
insisted upon the merit of his fasting and tithes; but
the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and
flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold
of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me,
nothing will save me but mercy, mercy." (3.) He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy; O God
be merciful, be prodigal to me; forgive my sins, be
reconciled to me; take me into thy favour; receive
me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a
beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for
hunger. Probably, he repeated this prayer with re-
newed affections, and perhaps said more to the same
purport; made a particular confession of his sins, and
mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and
waited upon God for; but still this was the burden
of his song, God, be merciful to me a sinner.
IV. Here is the publican's acceptance with God.
We have seen how differently these two addressed
themselves to God; it is now while to inquire
how they sped. There were those who would cry
up the Pharisee, and by whom he would go to his
house appealed, and who would look with con-
tempt upon this sneaking, whining publican. But
our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all de-
sires known, and from whom he can no secret hid;
who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the
court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent,
broken-hearted publican went to his house justified,
rather than the other. The Pharisee thought, if one
of them two must be justified, and not the other, that
certainly it must be he, rather than the publican.
"No," said Christ, "I tell you, I affirm it with the
utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the ut-
most certainty, I say unto you, this day thou shalt
see him in the Pharisee." The proud Pharisee goes away,
rejected of God! his thanksgiving are so far from
being accepted, that they are an abomination; he is
not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he del-
ivered from condemnation: he is not accepted
righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous
in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble
address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins;
and we may reason, the Pharisee would not set up the
dogs of his flock, God sets with the children of his
family.
The reason given for this is, because God's glory
is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble.
1. Proud men, who exult themselves, are rivals with God,
and therefore they shall certainly be abased.
2. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof
that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is
men, who abuse themselves, are subject to God, and
they shall be exalted. God has preference in store
for those that will take it as a favour, not for those
that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into
the love of God, and communion with him; shall be
exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at
last as high as heaven. See how the punishment
accosts the sinner that exalts himself, shall be
abased. See how the recompense answers the duty;
He that humbles himself, shall be exalted. See also
the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil;
the publican had been a great sinner, and out of
the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness
of his repentance; out of the water came forth meat.
See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in
brining evil out of good. It was good that the
Pharisee was no exterminator, or oppressor; but the devil
made him proud of this, to his ruin.
5. And they brought unto him also in-
fants, that he would touch them; but when
his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16. But
Jesus called them unto him, and said,
Suffer little children to come unto me, and
forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom
of God. 17. Verily, I say unto you, 
Who
soever shall not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

This passage of story we had both in Matthew and
Mark; it very fitly follows here after the story of
the publican, as a confirmation of the truth which
was to be illustrated by that parable, that those shall
be accepted with God, and honored, who humble
themselves, and for them Christ has blessings in
store, the choicest and best of blessings. Observe
here,
1. Those who are themselves blessed in Christ,
should desire to have their children also blessed
in him, and should hereby testify the true honour they
have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the
true love they have for their children, by their con-
cern about their souls; They brought him infants,
very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some
think. None are too little, too young, to bring to
Christ, who knows how to show kindness to them
that are not capable of doing service to him.
2. One gracious touch of Christ's will make our
children happy; They brought infants to him, that
he might touch them, in token of the application
of his grace and Spirit to them, for that always makes
way for his blessing, which likewise they expected;
see Isa. 44. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy
head, and then my blessing upon thine off	spring.
3. It is no strange thing, for those who make their
application to Jesus Christ, for themselves or for
their children, shall be honored, even from those
who should countenance and encourage them:
When the disciples saw it, they thought, if
this were admitted, it would bring endless trouble
upon their Master, and therefore they rebuked them,
and frowned upon them. The sponse complained
of the watchmen, Cant. 3. 3.-5. 7.
4. Many whom the disciples rebuke, the Master
inclines his Jesus called them unto him, when they
upon the disciples' check, they were retiring. They did not
appeal from the disciples to the Master, but the
Master took cognizance of their desipled cause.
5. It is the mind of Christ, that little children
should be brought to him, and presented as living
sacrifices to his honour; "Suffer little children
to come to me, and forbid them not; let nothing be done
The promise is to us, and to our seed; and therefore he that has the dispensing of promised blessings, will bid them welcome to him with us.

6. The children of those who belong to the kingdom of God, do likewise belong to that kingdom, as the children of freemen are freemen. If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too; for if the root be holy, the branches are so.

7. So welcome are children to Christ, that those grown people are most welcome to him, who have in them most of the disposition of children; (v. 17.) Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, that is, receive the benefits of it with humility and thankfulness, not pretending to merit them, as the Pharisee did, but gladly owning himself indebted to free grace for them, as the publican did; unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame, he shall in no wise enter into that kingdom. They must receive the kingdom of God as children, receive their estates by descent and inheritance, not by purchase, and call it their Father's gift.

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they that heard it, said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. 28. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

In these verses, we have,

1. Christ's discourse with a ruler, that had a good mind to be directed by him in the way to heaven.

In which we may observe,

1. It is a blessed sight to see persons of distinction in the world distinguish themselves from others of their rank, by their concern about their souls and another life. Luke takes notice of it, that he was a ruler; few of the rulers had any esteem for Christ, but here was one that had; whether a church or state-ruler, does not appear, but he was one in authority.

2. The great thing we are every one of us concerned to inquire after, is, what we shall do, to get to heaven; what we shall do, to inherit eternal life. This implies such a belief of an eternal life after this, as atheists and infidels have not; such a concern to make it sure, as a careless, unthinking world have not; and such a willingness to comply with any thing that it may be made sure, as these have not, who are resolvedly devoted to the world and the flesh.

3. Those who would inherit eternal life, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ as their Master, their teaching Master, so it signifies here, (ἀπὸ τοῦ διδάσκαλου,) and their ruling Master, and so they shall for certain find him. There is no learning the way to heaven, but in the school of Christ, by those that enter themselves into it, (v. 19.)

4. Those who come to Christ as their Master, must believe him to have not only a divine mission, but a divine goodness. Christ would have this ruler know that if he understood himself aright in calling him good, he did, in effect, call him God; and indeed he was so; (v. 19.) "Why callest thou me good?" It is no more good but one, that is, God; and dost thou then take me for God? If so, thou art in the right.

5. Our Master, Christ himself, has not altered the way to heaven from what it was before his coming, but only has made it more plain and easy, and comfortable, and provided for our relief, in case we take any false step. Thou knowest the commandments; Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to establish them. Wouldst thou inherit eternal life? Govern thyself by the commandments.

6. The duties of the second table must be conscientiously observed, in order to our happiness, and we must not think that any acts of devotion, how plausible soever, will atone for the neglect of them. Nor is it enough to keep ourselves free from the gross violations of these commandments, but we must know these commandments, as Christ has explained them in his sermon upon the mount, in their extent and spiritual nature, and so observe them.

7. Men think themselves innocent, because they are ignorant; so this ruler did; He said, All these have I kept from my youth up, (v. 21.) He knows no more evil of himself than the Pharisee did, v. 11. He knows no more evil of himself than he had committed in it to this day; and that he had not in any instance transgressed. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, and with the workings of his own heart; had he been but Christ's disciple a while, and learned of him, he would have said the quite contrary: All these have I broken from my youth up, in thought, word, and deed. He is ignorant of all these things, to whom the Lamb whithersoever he goes. (2.) If he have a true affection to his brethren, he will, as there is occasion, distribute to the poor, who are God's receivers of his dues out of our estates. (3.) If he think meany of this world, as he ought, he will not stick at selling what he has, if there be a necessity for it, for the relief of God's poor. (4.) If he think highly of the other world, as he ought, he will desire no more than to have treasure in heaven, and will reckon that a sufficient,
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abundant recompense for all that he has left or lost, or laid out for God in this world.

9. There are many that have a great deal in them that is very commendable, and yet they perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler here, he broke with Christ upon this, he liked all his terms very well, but this one thing would part between him and his estate. In this, I pray God, he was excused."

If this be the bargain, it is no bargain.

10. Many that are bough to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day at last; they are very sorry that they cannot serve God and mammon both; but if one must be quit, it shall be their God, not their worldly sin.

II. Christ's discourse with his disciples upon this occasion: in which we may observe,

1. Riches are a great hindrance to many in the way to heaven. Christ took notice of the reluctance and regret with which the rich man broke off from him; he saw that he was very sorrowful, and was sorry for him; but from thence he infers, How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God. From this we may see how little of the world as Peter, and James, and John had, in all probability he would have left it, to follow Christ, as they did; but, having a great estate, it had a great influence upon him, and he chose rather to take his leave of Christ than to lay himself under an obligation to dispose of his estate in charitable uses. Christ asserts the difficulty of the salvation of rich people very emphatically: (v. 25.) 2. It is not very hard for any to get to heaven. If we must sell all, or break with Christ, who then can be saved? v. 26. They do not find fault with what Christ required, as hard and unreasonable. No, it is very fitting that they who expect an eternal happiness in the other world, should be willing to forgo all that is dear to them in this world, in expectation of it. But they know how closely the hearts of the most of men cleave to this world, and are ready to despair of their being ever brought to the kingdom of God, and yet these things are possible with God. His grace can work upon the soul so as to alter the bent and bias of it, and give it a contrary ply; and it is he that works in us both to will and to do.

4. There is an aptness in us to speak too much of what we have left or lost, of what we have done and suffered, for Christ. This appears in Peter; (v. 28.) 5. We have left all, and followed thee. Who could have expected this from him? Yet magnifying his own and his brethren's affection to Christ, in quitting all to follow him. But this we should be so far from boasting of, that we should rather acknowledge it not worth taking notice of, and be ashamed of ourselves that there have been any regret and difficulty in the doing of it, and any hangings toward those things afterward.

5. Whatever we have left, or laid out, for Christ, it shall without fail be abundantly made up to us in this world and that to come, notwithstanding our weaknesses and infirmities; (v. 29, 30.) No man has left the comfort of his estate or relations for the kingdom of God's sake, rather than they should hinder either his services to that kingdom, or his enjoyments of it. But he shall receive manifold more in this present time, in the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, in the pleasures of communion with God and of a good conscience, advantages which, to those that know how to value and improve them, will abundantly counterbalance all their losses. Yet that is not all; in the world to come they shall receive life everlasting, which is the thing that the ruler seemed to have his eye and heart upon.

31. Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit upon: 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. 34. And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Here is,

1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, and of the glorious issue of them, which he himself had a perfect sight and foreknowledge of, and thought it necessary to give them warning of, that it might be the less surprise and terror to them.

Two things here are, which we had not in the other evangelists. 1. The sufferings of Christ are here spoken of as the fulfilling of the scriptures, with which consideration Christ reconciled himself to them, and would reconcile them; All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, especially the hardships he should undergo, shall be accomplished. Note, The Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophecies, testified for him, and his sufferings, and the day of his resurrection shall follow. 1 Pet. 1. 2. This proves that the scriptures are the word of God, for they had their exact and full accomplishment; and that Jesus Christ was sent of God, for they had their accomplishment in him; this was he that should come, for, whatever was foretold concerning the Messiah, was verified in him; and he would submit to any thing for the fulfilling of scripture, that not one jot or tittle of that should fall to the ground. This makes the office of the cross to shine, and puts an honour upon it. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, thus it became him. 2. The ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings, are here most insisted upon. The other evangelists had said that he should be mocked; but here it is added, He shall be spitefully treated, Gelse:—he shall be loaded with contumely and contempt, shall have all the possible reproach put upon him. This was that part of his sufferings, by which in a spiritual manner he satisfied God's justice for the injury we had done him in his honour by sin. Here is one particular instance of disgrace done him, that he was spit upon, which had been particularly foretold, Isa. 50. 6. But here, as always, when Christ spake of his sufferings and death, he foretold his resurrection as that which took off both the terror and reproach of his sufferings; The third day he shall rise again.
II. The confusion that the disciples were hereby put into; this was so contrary to the notions they had had of the Messiah and his kingdom, such a bulk to their expectations from their Master, and such a breaking of all their measures, that they understood none of these things, v. 34. Their prejudices were so strong, that they would not understand them otherwise, so that they did not understand them at all; it was a mystery, it was a riddle to them, it must be so; but they think it impossible to be reconciled with the glory and honour of the Messiah, and the design of setting up his kingdom. This saying was hid from them, therefore, to the end of the term, it was a mystery to them, they could not receive it; for their part, they read not or understood not many objects, but they could never see any thing in it that should be accomplished in the disgrace and death of this Messiah. They were so intent upon these prophesies that spake of his glory, that they overlooked those that spake of his sufferings, which the scribes and doctors of the law should have directed them to take notice of, and should have brought into their creeds and catechisms, as well as the other scriptures, they had not read yet their scheme, and therefore were laid aside. Note, therefore it is that people run into mistakes, because they read their Bibles by the halves, and are as partial in the prophecies as they are in the law. They are only for the smooth things, Isa. 30. 10. Thus now we are too apt, in reading the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, to have our expectations raised of the glorious state of the church in the latter days. But we overlook its wilderness, sackcloth-state, and are willing to fancy that is over, and nothing is reserved for us but halcyon days; and then, when tribulation and persecution arise, we do not understand it, neither know we the things that are done; though we are told as plainly as can be, that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

35. And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side, begging: 36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Christ came not only to bring light to a dark world, and so to set before us the objects we are to have in view, but also to give sight to blind souls, and by hearing the organ to enable them to view them better. As a token of this, he cured many of their bodily blindness; we have now an account of one to whom he gave sight near Jericho. Mark gives us an account of one, and names him, whom he cured as he went out of Jericho, Mark 10. 46. Matthew speaks of two, whom he cured as he departed from Jericho, Matt. 20. 30. Luke says it was in the way—when he was near to Jericho, which might be when he was going out of it, as well as when he was coming into it.

Observe,

1. This poor blind man sat by the way-side, begging, v. 35. It seems, he was not only blind but poor, had nothing to subsist on, nor any relations to maintain him; the bitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save; they are therefore wretched and miserable, for they are both poor and blind, Rev. 3. 17. He sat begging, for he was blind, and could not work for his living. Note, The poor, and the diseased, and the blind, and the halt, are the objects of Christ's mercy and compassion. The providence of God has any way disabled to get their own bread. Such objects of charity by the way-side ought not to be overlooked by us. Christ here cast a favourable eye upon a common beggar, and though there are cheats among such, yet they must not therefore be all thought such.

II. Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. 36. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 37. It is good beginning in Christ's prayer; and, when we have an opportunity of applying ourselves to him, not to let it slip.

III. His prayer has in it a great deal both of faith and fervency; Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, v. 38. He owns Christ to be the Son of David, the Messiah promised; he believes he is to be Jesus a Saviour, he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly beggs his favour; "Have mercy on me, pardon my sin, pity my misery." Christ is a merciful King; those that apply themselves to him as the Son of David, shall find him so, and ask enough for themselves when they pray, Have mercy on us; for Christ's mercy includes all.

IV. Those who are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings, will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they come with opposition; if they are not permitted to pass along, chide him as troublesome to the Master, noisy and impertinent, and bid him hold his peace; but he went on with his petition, nay, the check given him was but as a dam to a full stream, which makes it swell so much the more; he cried the louder. Thou son of David, have mercy on me. Those who would speed in prayer, must be importunate in prayer. This historical part of the chapter, speaks the same thing with the parable in the beginning of the chapter, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

V. Christ encourages poor beggars, whom men have upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to entertain them, and bid them welcome; He commanded him to be brought to him. Note, When Christ's tender, and compassionate expression to distressed suppliants is any of his followers have. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped and stood, and commanded him to be brought to him. Those who had checked him must now lend him their hands to lead him to Christ.

VI. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us; (c. 41.) What will thou, that I shall do unto thee? By speaking our case before God, with a particular representation of our wants and burdens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of; and it is necessary that we
Christ, of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zacchaeus. Christ passed through Jericho, v. 1. That city was built under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel takes away the curse. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not thereof a sin to live in it when it was built. Zacchaeus, of whom we hear, was the son of Bithynian near Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus to life; when he was going to do some good work, he contrived to do many by the way. He did good both to the souls and to the bodies of people; we have here an instance of the finer. Observe, I. Who, and what, this Zaccheus was. His name bespeaks him a Jew. Zaccheus was a common name among the Jews; they had many to call them, much about this time, of that name. Observe, 1. His calling, and the post he was in; he was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ; but here was one that was chief of the publicans, and therefore of the most objectionable sort. Christ was now going from the other side of Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus to life; which publicans being done good work, he contrived to do many by the way. They did good both to the souls and to the bodies of people; we have here an instance of the finer. Observe, 2. His circumstances in the world were very considerable; he was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and few in the world; but he that was chief among the publicans, raised a good estate. Christ had bade them how hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God; yet presently produces an instance of one rich man that had been lost, and was found, and that not, as the prodigal, by being reduced to want. Observe, 3. How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him. 1. He had a great curiosity to see Jesus, what kind of a man he was, having heard great talk of him. It is natural to us, to come in sight, if we can, of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, he would be able to say hereafter, that he had seen such and such great men. But the eye is not satisfied with seeing. We should now seek to see Jesus with an eye of faith, to see who he is; we should address ourselves in holy. To see what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him. 4. He could not get his curiosity gratified in this matter, because he was little, and the crowd was great. Christ did not study to show himself, was not carried on men's shoulders, (as the peep is in procession,) that all men might see him, neither nor his kingdom came with observation; he did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but, as one of us, he was lost in a crowd; for that very day of his humiliation was the day of salvation, and overtopped by all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature, have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Sand, though he was higher by head and shoulders than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature, take thought of adding cubic to it. Because that he should not disappoint his curiosity, he forgets his estate, as chief of the publicans, and ran before, like a boy, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree, to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ, will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and he willing to take pains to see him. Those that find themselves little, must take all the advantage they can get to raise themselves to a sight of Christ, and not be
ST. LUKE, XIX.

1. Christ invited himself to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of the hearty welcome there; nor, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own entertainment along with him, so he brings his own welcome, he opens the heart, and incites them to receive him. The Lord, looking up into the tree, and saw Zaccheus. He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. See how Christ prevented him from the blessings of his goodness, and subdued his expectations; and see how he encouraged very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He who had a mind to know Christ, shall be known of him; he that only counted to see him, shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more. And sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened to their sins; God's calls - Christ called him by name. Zaccheus, for he knows his chosen by name; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathaniel did, (John 1. 48.) Whence knowest thou me? But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bid him make haste, and come down. Those that Christ calls, must come down, must humbly themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any nobleness of their own; and they must make haste, and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration, whether he should welcome such a guest to his house. He must come down, for Christ intends this day to batt at his house, and stay an hour or two with him. Behold, he stands at the door, and knocks. 2. Zaccheus was surprised to have such an honour put upon his house; (v. 6.) He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully: and his receiving of him into his house, was an indication and token of his receiving of him into his heart. Note, When Christ calls us, we must make haste to answer his calls; and when he comes to us, we must receive him joyfully; Lift up your heads, O gates. We may well receive him joyfully, who brings all good along with him, and, when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there, which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, Often to me, when we have, with the spouse, made excuses, Cant. 5. 2. 3. Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

IV. The offence which the people took at this kind greeting between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-minded, censorious Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a Guest with a man that is a sinner, (Luke 19. 1.) with a sinful man; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world, to seek and save men that were lost? Zaccheus-Had they thought to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho; such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with. Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to his house; for, 1. Though he was a publican, and many of the publicans were bad men, it did not therefore follow that they were all so; we must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by con-
fold." This was the restitution that a thief was to make, Exod. 22. 1. (1.) He seems plainly to own that he had done wrong; his office as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, imposing upon the merchants, to curry favour with the government. True penitents will own themselves to have been guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them. (2.) That he had done wrong by false accusation; this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, Luke 3. 14. They were solemnly warned to confess and retract, for sake of repentance, which we must stretch in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill-will. (3.) He promises to restore four-fold, as far as he could recollect or find by his books that he had wronged any man. He does not say, "If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution;" (some are honest when they cannot help it;) but he will do voluntarily. It shall come to his house, for that he is zealous. "These who are convinced of having done wrong, cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by making restitution. Observe, He does not think that his giving half his estate to the poor, will atone for the wrong he has done; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and we must first do justly and then love mercy. It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which can be purchased for less, and not to make a sacrifice of our own; that which we have not come honestly by, nor that our own which is not so, when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done. VI. Christ's approbation and acceptance of Zaccheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a Guest with him, ver. 10, 11. 1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a happy man; now he is turned from sin to God, now he has bid Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest charitable good man; This day is salvation come to this house. Now that he is converted, he is, in effect, saved, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his; Christ is come to his house, and where Christ comes, he brings salvation with him, that shall be his own salvation. Christ giveth eternal salvation to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation this day comes to his house. (1.) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be, more than he had been, a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is son of Abraham; indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord. He that is greedy of gain shall be blessed of God, and brings a curse upon it; (Hab. 2. 9.) but he that is charitable to the poor, does a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least, Ps. 112. 3. (2.) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself, his family also become related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to his house; as a son is related to a father, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that blessing of Abraham, which comes upon the publicans, upon the Gentiles, through faith, that God will be a God to them and to their children; and therefore, when he believes, salvation comes to his house, as to the gardener's, to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house, Acts 16. 31. Zaccheus is hereby a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen; they are put upon a level, Matt. 18. 17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so; but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become rector in cura—spiritual in effect, as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been a publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man, was constant to the great design and intention of his coming into the world; (v. 10,) with the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Matt. 9. 13. 19. There he pleaded, that he came to call sinners to repentance; now that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Observe, (1.) The delightful case of the sons of men; they were lost; but here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world; lost, as a city is lost when it is revoluted to the rebels; as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness; as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable; or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him. (2.) The gracious design of the Son of God; he came to seek and to save, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth, (a long journey!) to seek that which was lost, (which had wandered and gone astray,) and to bring it back; (Matt. 18. 11, 12,) and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up, and he gives himself to bring those to themselves, that were lost to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ came into this lost world, to seek and to save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. In prosecution of that design, he sought, took all probable means, to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks these that sought him not, and asked not for him, as Zaccheus here.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20. And another came, saying, Lord behold here is thy pound,
which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth wilt I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore then gavest thou not my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26. For I say unto you, That unto every one who hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27. But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Our Lord Jesus is now upon his way to Jerusalem, to his last passover, when he was to suffer and die; now here we are told,

I. How the expectations of his friends were raised upon this occasion: They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. v. 11. The Pharisees expected it about this time, (ch. 17. 20,) and, it seems, so did Christ's own disciples; but they both had a mistaken notion of it. The Pharisees thought that it must be introduced by some other temporal prince or potentate. The disciples thought that their Master should introduce it, but with temporal pomp and power, which, with the power he had to work miracles, they knew he could clothe himself with in a short time, whenever he pleased. Jerusalem, they concluded, must be the seat of his kingdom, and therefore now that he is going directly thither, they doubt not but in a little time to see him upon the throne there. Note, Even good men are subject to mistakes concerning the kingdom of Christ, and to form wrong notions of it, and are ready to think that should immediately appear, which is reserved for hereafter.

II. How their expectations were checked, and the mistakes rectified upon which they were founded; and this he does in three things.

1. They expected that he should appear in his glory now presently, but he tells them that he must not be so thought of as not to be present with them while yet. He is like a certain nobleman, οὐκ εἶναι ἐν καλοίς—καὶ ἐν μισθοσκόλοις, a certain man of high birth, (so Dr. Hammond,) for he is the Lord from heaven, and is entitled by birth to the kingdom, but he goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. Christ must go to heaven, to sit down at the right hand of the Father there, and to receive from him honour and glory, before the Spirit was poured out by which his kingdom was to be set up on earth, and before a church was to be set up for him in the Gentile world. He must receive the kingdom, and then return. Christ returned when the Spirit was poured out; when Jerusalem was destroyed, by which time that generation, both of friends and enemies, which he had personally conversed with, was wholly worn off by death, and gone to give up their account. But his chief return here meant, is, that at the great day, which we are yet in expectation of. That which they thought should immediately appear, Christ tells them will not appear, till this same Jesus, which is taken from us, shall in like manner come again; see Acts 1. 11.

2. They expected that his apostles and immediate attendants should be advanced to dignity and honour; that they should all be made princes and peers, privy-counsellors and judges, and have all the pomp and preferments of the court, and of the town; but Christ here tells them, that, instead of that, he designed for them a mere servant. That he must expect no other preferment in this world than that of the trading end of the town; he would set them up with a stock under their hands, that they might employ it themselves, in serving him and the interest of his kingdom among men. That is the true honour of a christian and a minister, if we be as we ought to be truly ambitious of, we shall be able to look upon all temporal honours with a holy contempt.

The apostles had dreamed of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom, enjoying ease after their present toil, and honour after the present contempt put upon them, and were pleasing themselves with this dream; but Christ tells them that which, if they understood it aright, would fill them with care, and concern, and seriously injure the interest of those aspiring ones which they filled their heads with.

(1.) They have a great work to do now; their Master leaves them to receive his kingdom, and, at parting, he gives each of them a pound, which, the margin of our common Bibles tells us, amounts in our money to three pounds and half a crown; this signifies the same thing with the talents in the parable, and is parallel to this, Matt. 25.) all the gifts with which Christ's apostles were endowed, and the advantages and capacities which they had, of serving the interest of Christ in the world, and others, both ministers and christians, like them in a lower degree. But perhaps it is in the parable thus represented, to make them the more humble: their honour in this world is only that of traders, and that of first-rate merchants, who have vast stocks to begin upon, but that of poor traders, who must take a great deal of care and pains to make any thing of what they have.

He gave these pounds to his servants, not to buy rich liveries, much less robes, and a splendid equipage, for themselves to appear in as they expected, but with this charge, Go and trade till I come again (as it might much better be translated,) (fair till I come another. Matt. 25.) Be busy. So the word properly signifies; "You are sent forth to preach the gospel, to set up a church for Christ in the world, to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, and to build them up in it: Ye shall receive power to do this, for ye shall be filled with the Holy Ghost," Acts 1. 8. When Christ came again, he gives it them saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, then did he delivered them ten pounds. (2.) Now," saith he, "mind your business, and make a business of it: set about it in good earnest, and stick to it: labor and toil yourselves to do all the good you can to the souls of men, and to gather them in to Christ. Note, [1.] All christians have business to do for Christ in this world, and ministers especially: this is not to be left, nor to be made idle, to be idle. [2.] Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnishes with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, from these to whom he gives power he expects service. He delivers the pounds with this charge, Go work, go trade. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal, 1 Cor. 12. 7. And as every one has received the gifts, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. 4.
10. [v. 3.] We must continue to mind our business
while our Master comes, whatever difficulties or op-
oppositions we may meet with in it; those only
that endure to the end, shall be saved.

(2.) They have a great account to make shortly.
These servants are called to him, to show what use
they made of the gifts they were dignified with, what
service they had done with Christ, and what good
they had done to the souls of men, that he might know what
every man had gained by trading. Note, [v. 1.] They that
trade diligently and faithfully in the service of
Christ, shall be gainers; we cannot say so of
the business of the world, many a labouring tradesman
has been a loser, but these that trade for Christ,
shall be gainers; though Israel be not gathered, yet
they will be glorious. [v. 2.] The conversion of souls
to Christ is a rare true coin, clear gain to Jesus Christ.
Ministers are but factors for him, and to him they must give account what
fish they have inclosed in the gospel-net; what guests
they have prevailed with, to come to the wedding
supper; that is, what they have gained by trading.
Now in the account given up, observe,
First, The good account which was given by some
of the servants, and the master's approbation of
thence; v. 16, 19.
1. They had both made considerable improve-
ments, but not both alike; one had gained ten pounds
beside his trading, and another five. Those that are
diligent and faithful in serving Christ, are commonly
blessed in being made blessings to the places
where they live. They shall see the travail of their
soul, and not labour in vain. And yet, all that are alike
faithful, are not alike successful: and perhaps,
though they were both faithful, it is intimated
that one of them took more pains, and applied him-
self more closely to his business, than the other, and
sped accordingly. Blessed Paul was surely this
servant that gained ten pounds, double to what any
of the rest did, for he laboured more abundantly
than they all, and fully preached the gospel of Christ.

2. They both acknowledged their obligations to
their Master, for intrusting them with these abili-
ties and opportunities to do him service; Lord, it
is not my industry, but thy pound, that has gained
ten pounds. Note, God must have all the glory of
all our gains; not unto us, but unto him, must be the
praise, Ps. 115. 1. Paul, who gained the ten
pounds, acknowledges, "I laboured, yet not I,
By the grace of God, I am what I am, and do what
I do; and his grace was not in vain," 1 Cor. 15. 10.
He had not made the thing done, but of what
God had done by him, Rom. 15. 18.
3. They were both commended for their fidelity
and industry; Well done, thou good servant, v. 17.
And to the other he said likewise, v. 19. Note,
They who do that which is good, shall have praise
of the same. Do well, and Christ will say to thee,
Well done; and if he said Well done, the matter
is not great who with otherwise. See Gen. 4. 7.
They were not only commended for the improve-
ment they had made; "Because thou hast been
faithful in a very little, and didst not say, 'As
good sit still as to go trade with one pound, what can
one do with so small a stake?' but didst humbly
and honestly apply thyself to the improvement of
that, have thou authority over ten cities." Note, These
are in a fair way to rise, who are content to begin low.
He who has used the office of deacon well, found
unto him was the office of a bishop, 1 Tim. 3. 1. Other things
are hereby promised the apostles; (1.) That, when
they have taken pains to plant many churches, they
shall have the satisfaction and honour of presiding
in them, and governing among them; they shall
have great respect paid them, and have a great in-
terest in the love and esteem of good christians. He
that keepeth the fig-tree, shall eat the fruit thereof;
and that laboureth in the word and doctrine, shall
be counted worthy of double honour. (2.) That, when
they have served their generation according to
the will of Christ, though they pass through this
world despised and trampled upon, and perhaps pass
out of it under disguise and persecution, as the apol-
ties did, yet in the other world they shall reign as
kings, and shall have power over the nations, Rev. 2. 26.
The happiness of heaven will be a much greater ad-
vancement to a good minister or christian, than it
would be to a poor tradesman, that with much ado
had cleared ten pounds, to be made governor of ten
cities. He that had gained but five pounds, had
dominion over five cities. This intimates that there
are degrees of glory; one shall have a crown of
rubies, one may not be alike tall, but not alike large.
And the degrees of glory there, will be according to the degrees
of usefulness here.

Secondly, The bad account that was given by one
of them, and the sentence passed upon him, for his
slothfulness and unfaithfulness, v. 20, &c.
1. He owned that he had not traded with the pound
with which he had been intrusted; (v. 20.) "Lord,
I knew thee to be a man that could do great
things, and thou hast made this more, but withal I
have kept it sable laid up in a napkin." This repres-
ts the carelessness of those who have gifts,
but never lay out themselves to do good with them;
it is all one to them, whether the interests of Christ's
kingdom sink or swim, go backward or forward; for
their parts, they will take no care about it, no pains,
be at no expenses, run no hazard; those are the
men who make a very small account of their
wealth, who think it is enough to say that they have done
no hurt in the world, but did no good.
2. He justified himself in his omission, with a plea
that made the matter worse and not better; (v. 21.)
I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, rigid
and severe, μακροσθενέως καί σαβελλείν. Austere is the Greek
word itself; a sharp man; Thou tookst up that thou
laidst not down. He thought that his master put
a hardship upon his servants, when he required
and expected the improvement of their pounds, and
that it was reaping where he did not sow; whereas really
it was reaping where he had sown, and, as the
husbandman expects in proportion to what he had
sown. He had no reason to fear his master's austeri-
ty, nor blame his expectations, but this was a mere
shame; a frivolous, groundless excuse for his idleness,
which the master would not have believed.
Note, The pleas of slothful professors, when they
come to be examined, will be found more to their
shame than in their justification.

3. His excuse is turned upon him; (v. 22.) Out of
thine own mouth wilt I judge thee, thou wicked
servant. He will be condemned by his crime, but
self-condemned by his plea. "If thou didst look
upon it as hard, that I should expect the profits of thy trading
of me, and not of thee; but it was thy own business,
yet, if thou hadst any regard to my interest,
thou mightest have put it into the bank, into some
of the funds, that I might have had, not only mine
own, but mine own with better, which, though a less
advantage, would have been some." If he durst not
trade, for fear of losing the principal, and so being
made accountable to his lord for it, though it was
lost, which he pretends, yet that was no reason for his not using it to interest, where it
would be safe. Note, Whatever may be the pre-
tinces of slothful professors, in excuse for their sloth-
fulness, the true reason of it is a reigning indifference
or the interests of Christ and his kingdom, and their
coldness therein. They care not whether religious
gets ground or loses ground, so they can but live in
peace.

4. His pound is taken from him, v. 24. It is fi-

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that those should lose their gifts, who will not use their gifts; and that those who have dealt falsely should be no longer trusted. Those who will not serve their Master with what he bestows upon them, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? Take from him the pound.

5. It is given to him that had got the ten pounds. When this was objected against by the standers-by, because he had so much already, (Lord, he has ten pounds, v. 25.) it is answered, (v. 26.) Unto every one that hath shall be given. It is the rule of justice, (1.) That those should be most encouraged, who have been most industrious, and that those who have lived and done themselves much to do good, should have their opportunities of doing good enlarged, and be put into a higher and more extensive sphere of usefulness. To him that hath gotten shall more be given, that he may be in a capacity to get more. (2.) That those who have their gifts, as if they had them not, who have them to no purpose, who do no good with them, should be deprived of them. Those who endeavour to increase the grace they have, God will increase it; those who neglect it, and suffer it to decline, can expect no other than that God should do so too. This needful warning Christ gives to his disciples, lest, while they were gaping for honours on earth, they should neglect their business, and so come short of their happiness in heaven.

6. Another thing they expected was, that, when the kingdom of God should appear, the body of the Jewish nation should immediately fall in with it, and submit to it, and all their aversions to Christ and his gospel should immediately vanish; but Christ tells them that, after his departure, the generality of them would persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, and it would be their ruin. This is showed here,

(1.) In the message which his citizens sent after him, v. 14. They not only opposed him, while he was in obscurity, but, when he was gone into glory, to be invested in his kingdom, then they continued their enmity to him, protested against his dominion, and said, We will not have this man to reign over us. [1.] This was fulfilled in the prevailing infidelity of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom; they would not submit their necks to his yoke, nor touch the top of his golden sceptre. They said, Let us break his bands in sunder, Ps. 2. 1—3. Acts 4. 26. [2.] It speaks the language of all unbelievers; they could be content that Christ should save them, but they will not have him to reign over them; whereas Christ is a Saviour to those only to whom he is a Prince, and who are willing to obey him.

(2.) In the sentence passed upon them at his return; (v. 27.) Those mine enemies bring him hither. When his faithful subjects are preferred and rewarded, then he will take vengeance on his enemies; and particularly on the Jewish nation, the doom of which is here read. When Christ had set up his government, thereby giving his abomination upon the gospel ministry, then he comes to reckon with the Jews; then it is remembered against them, that they had particularly disclaimed and protested against his kingly office, when they said, We have no king but Caesar, nor would own him for their King; they appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar they shewed their allegiance, and Caesar shall be their reign. Then the kingdom of God was set up, when he was tread on those irreconcileable enemies to Christ and his government; they were brought forth, and slain before him. Never was so much slaughter made in any war as in the wars of the Jews. That nation lived to see Christianity victorious in the Gentile world, in spite of their enmity and opposition to it, and then it was taken away as dress. The wrath of Christ came upon them to the uttermost, (1 Thess. 2. 15, 16.) and their destruction redounded very much to the honour of Christ and the peace of the church. But this is applicable to all others who persist in their infidelity, and will undoubtedly perish in the end. [1.] Utter ruin will certainly be the portion of all Christ's enemies; in the day of vengeance they shall all be brought forth, and slain before him. Bring them hither, to be made a spectacle to saints and angels; see Josh. 10. 22, 24. Bring them hither, that they may see the glory and happiness of Christ and his followers, whom they hated and proscribed. Bring them hither, to have their frivolous pleas everlasting, and to receive sentence according to their merits. Bring them, and say them before me, as Agag before Samuel. The Saviour whom they have slighted, will stand by, and see them slain, and not interpose on their behalf. [2.] Those that will not have Christ to reign over them, shall be reputed and dealt with as his enemies. We are ready to think that none are Christ's enemies but persecutors of Christianity, or scoffers at least; but you see that those will be accounted so, that dislike the terms of salvation, will not submit to Christ's yoke, but will be their own masters. Note, Whoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ.

28. And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29. And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 30. Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither. 31. And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? Thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32. And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? 34. And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35. And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38. Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

We have here the same account of Christ's riding in some sort of triumph, (such as it was,) into Jeru
salem, which we had before in Matthew and Mark; Let us therefore here only observe,
I. Jesus Christ was forward and willing to suffer and die for us. He went forward, bound in the Spirit, to Jerusalem, knowing very well the things that should befal him there; and yet he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem, v. 28. He was the foremost of the company, as if he longed to be upon the subject of his sufferings and death. He was the first to move upon action. Was he so forward to suffer and die for us, and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him?
II. It was no ways inconsistent, either with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a public entry into Jerusalem a little before he died. Thus he made himself to be the more taken with, of all the ignorance of his might appear the greater.
III. Christ is entitled to a dominion over all the creatures, and may use them when and as he pleases. No man has a property in his estate against Christ, but that his title is prior and superior. Christ sent to fetch an ass and her colt from their owner's and master's crib, when he had occasion for their service, and they were not to be withstood. The beasts of the forest are his, and the tame beasts too.
IV. Christ has all men's hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to their taking them away, as soon as they were told that the Lord had occasion for them.
V. Those that go on Christ's errands, are sure to speak the word of life, that are sent, found what he told them they should find, and the owners willing to part with them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers that what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it, they shall bring it.
VI. The disciples of Christ, who fetch that for him from others, which he has occasion for, and which they have not, should not think that enough; but, whatever they have themselves, wherewith he may be served and honoured, they should be ready to serve him with it. Many can be willing to attend Christ at other people's expense, who care not at being at any charge upon themselves; but those disciples not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but cast their own garments upon the colt, and were willing that those should be used for his trappings.
VII. Christ's triumphs are the matter of the disciples' rejoicing, when Christ came to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the whole multitude of the disciples, not to the twelve only, but abundance more, that were disciples at large, to rejoice and praise God; (v. 37.) and their spreading of their clothes in the way, (v. 36.) was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. Observe, 1. What was the matter or occasion of their joy and praise. They praised God for all the things he had wrought, all the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the raising of Lazarus, which is particularly mentioned, John 12. 17, 18. That brought others to mind, for fresh miracles and mercies should revive the remembrance of the former. 2. How they expressed their joy and praise; (v. 38.) Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord; Christ is the King, he comes in the name of God, clothed with a divinity of authority, commissioned from heaven to give joy, and treat of peace; blessed be he. Let us praise him, let God prosper him. He is blessed for ever, and we will speak well of him. Peace in heaven. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be glory in the highest. It will redound to the glory of the most high God; and the angels, the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, will give him the glory of it. Compare this song of the saints on earth with that of the angels, (chs. 2. 14.) they both agree: give glory to God in the highest, there the praises of both centre; the angels say, On earth peace, rejoicing in the benefit which men on earth have by Christ; the saints say, Peace in heaven, rejoicing in the benefit which the angels have by Christ; such is the communion we have with the holy angels, that, as they rejoice in the peace on earth, so we rejoice in the peace in heaven, the peace God makes in his high places, (Job 25. 2.) and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
VIII. Christ's triumphs, and his disciples' joyous praises of them, are the vexation of proud Pharisees, that are enemies to him and his kingdom. They were some Pharisees among the multitude, which were far from joining with them; but they were enraged at them, and Christ being a famous Example of humility, they thought that he would not admit such acclamations as these, and therefore expected that he should rebuke his disciples, v. 59. But it is the honour of Christ, that, as he despises the cur upmpt of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble.
9. When other men praise Christ or no, he will, and shall, and must, be praised; (v. 46.) If these should hold their peace, and not speak the praises of the Messiah's kingdom, the stones would immediately cry out, rather than that Christ should not be praised; which was, in effect, literally fulfilled, when, upon men's reviling Christ upon the cross, instead of praising him, and his own disciples' sinking into a profound silence, the earth did shake, and the rocks rent. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot gain their point; for as God can cut out of stones such children into, Abraham, so he can cut out of the mouths of those children perfect praise.
41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it. 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. 44. And shall lay thee even when the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. 45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; 46. Saying unto them. It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. 47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him; 48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

The great Ambassador from heaven is here making his public entry into Jerusalem, not to be respect ed there, but to be rejected; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into; and yet see here two instances of his love to that place, and his concern for it.
1. The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city; (v. 41.) When he was come near, he be-
held the city, and slept over it. Probably, it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the mount of Olives, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here, 1. What a tender spirit Christ was! For we never read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were men of war. There are cases in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men, to melt into tears. 2. That Jesus Christ slept in the midst of his triumphs, sleep! when all about him were rejoicing, to show how little he took Christ; and what a conception of the application of the thoughts of the people. Thus he would teach us to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. If Providence does not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sull it with our sorrows. 3. That he slept over Jerusalem. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ sleep at the sight of Jerusalem? Was it because “Yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified”? No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears. (1.) Jerusalem has not improved the day of her overthrow, and spoilt, and sunk, and then had known, even then at least in this the last day, if thou wouldst but yet know, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldest at length bettirk thyself, and understand the things that belong to thy peace, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare—but thou dost not know the things that belong to thy peace, and must be for ever speaking is abrupt; If thou hast known on that thou hast, so some take it; like that O that my people had hearkened unto me, Ps. 81. 13. Isa. 48. 18. Or, If thou hast known, well; like that of the figure, ch. 13. 9. How happy had it been for thee! Or, If thou hast known, thou wouldst have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee. Why? I have reproved rather.” So that he saith lays all the blame of Jerusalem’s impending ruin upon herself. Note, [1.] There are things which belong to our peace, which we are all concerned to know and understand; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace, are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application. [2.] There is a time of visitation, when those things which belong to our peace, may be known by us, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, as powerfully preached to us, when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened, then is the time of visitation, when we are moved to day of their dead bodies. The things of their peace are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they hide their eyes from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the accepted time and the day of salvation, and so let it slip and perish through mere carelessness. None are so blind as these that will not see; nor have any the things of their peace more certainly hid from their eyes, than those that turn their back upon them. [5.] The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel-grace, are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, and running upon their own ruin! he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish. (2.) Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. The things of her peace are now in a manner hid from her eyes; they will be shortly. But that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles; all the house of Israel were called to know this Jesus Christ was their Peace, (Acts 2. 36.) and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation and the leading part of it, it was sealed up under unbelief, God had given them the spirit of slumber, Rom. 11. 8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, that nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them; and it could not be expected that such a miracle should be wrought, and so they were justly given up to judicial blindness and hardness. The peaceable things are not hid from the eyes of particular persons; but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews as such, becoming a christian nation, by embracing Christ. And therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretells, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation often brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than sixty years after this: when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled. [1.] The Romans besieged the city, cast up their works about it, and compassed it round, sect 27. Titus, the Roman General, who had all their inhabitants in captivity, as Josephus relates, that Titus ran up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping. [2.] They laid it even with the ground. Titus commanded his soldiers to dig up the city, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers; see Josephus’s history of the wars of the Jews, chap. 7. sect. 6. But they were no more used for the purpose of their inhabitants in captivity, than the temple, the church they were, but the citizens, were laid even with the ground, (thy children within thee,) by the cruel slaughters that were made of them: and there was scarcely one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying of Christ, this was because they knew not the day of their visitation. Let other cities and nations take warning. 11. The zeal he shewed for the present purifying of the temple. Though it must be destroyed ere long, it does not therefore follow, that no care must be taken of it in the mean time. 1. Christ cleared it of those who profaned it. He went straight to the temple, and began to cast out the buyers and sellers, v. 45. Hereby (though he was represented as an Enemy to the temple, and as a desecrator of it, who would make a havoc of it, when he should come in the name of the Priest) he made it to appear that he had a true love for the temple than they had who had such a reparation for its corban, its treasury, as a sacred thing; for its purity was more its glory than its wealth was. Christ gave a reason for his desecrating of the temple-merchants, v. 46. The temple is a house of prayer set apart for communion with God; the buyers and sellers made use of it for the sake of their gains; Christ cleared it of them by these means. He told them what gains they had made there; which was by no means to be suffered, for it would be a distraction to those who came there to pray. 2. He put it to the best use that ever it was put to, for he taught daily in the temple, v. 47. Note, It is not enough that the corruption of a church be purged out, but the preaching of the gospel must be
encouraged. Now, when Christ preached in the temple, observe here, 11.

(1) How plaintext the church-rulers were against him; how industrious to seek an opportunity, or pretext rather, to do him a mischief; (v. 47.) The chief priests and scribes, and the chief of the people, the great sanhedrin, that should have attended him, and summoned the people also to attend him, they sought to destroy him, and put him to death. 12.

(5) How respectful the common people were to him; they were very attentive to hear him; he spent most of his time in the country, and did not then preach in the temple, but, when he did, the people paid him great respect, attended on his preaching with diligence, and let no opportunity slip of hearing him; attended to it with care, and did not lose a word. Some read it, All the people, as they heard him, took his part; and so it comes in very properly, as a reason why his enemies could not find what they might do against him; they saw the people ready to fly in their faces if they offered him any violence. Till his hour was come, his interest in the common people protected him: but when his hour was come, the chief priests' influence upon the common people delivered him up.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's answer to the chief priests' question concerning his authority, v. 1-8. II. Those who were by the power of God put out to death, and hounded upon, 9. III. Christ's answer to the question proposed to him concerning the flatness of paying tribute to Caesar, v. 19-26. IV. His vindication of that great fundamental doctrine of the Jewish and Christian institutions, the resurrection of the dead and the future state, from the foolish cavils of the Sadducees, v. 27-38. V. His puzzling of the scribes with a question concerning the Messiah's being the son of David, v. 39-44. VI. The taunting of him, his disciples, to take heed of the scribes, v. 45-47. All which passages we had before in Matthew and Mark, and therefore need not enlarge upon them here, unless on those particulars which we had not there.

1. And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, By what authority doth thou these things? Or who is he that gave thee this authority? And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they will persuade the people that John was a prophet. And they answered, That they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

In this passage of story nothing is added here to what we had in the other evangelists; but only in the first verse, we have there to 1. That he was now teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel. Note, Christ was a Teacher of his own gospel. He not only purchased the salvation for us, but published it to us, which is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and gives abundant encouragement to us to receive it, for it is a sign that the heart of Christ was much upon it, to have it received. This likewise puts an honour upon the preachers of the gospel, and upon their office and work, how much soever they are despised by a vain world. It puts an honour upon the popular preachers of the gospel; Christ condescended to the capacities of the people in preaching the gospel, and taught them. And observe, when he was preaching the gospel, the people, he had not only given him to Satan, and his agents do all they can to hinder the preaching the gospel to the people, for nothing weakens the interest of Satan's kingdom more.

11. That his enemies are here said to come upon him—tetrarch, that word is used only here, and it signifies, 1. They thought to surprise him with this question; they came upon him suddenly, hoping that it outstripped him, and prevented an answer, as if this were not a thing he had himself thought of. 2. That they thought to frighten him with this question. They came upon him in a body, with violence. But how could he be terrified with the wrath of men, when it was in his own power to restrain it, and make it turn to his praise? From this story itself we may learn,

(1.) That it is not to be thought strange, if even that which is evident to a demonstration, be disputed, and called into question, as a doubtful thing, by those that shall shut their eyes against the light. Christ's miracles plainly showed what authority he did these things, and sealed his commission; and yet this is which is here arranged.

(2.) Those that question Christ's authority, if they be but catechised themselves in the plainer and most evident principles of religion, will have their folly made manifest unto all men. Christ answered these priests and scribes with a question concerning the baptism of John, a plain question, which the meanest of the common people could answer. Was it from heaven, or of men? They all knew it was from heaven, there was nothing in it that had an earthly relish or tendency, but it was all heavenly and divine. And this question galvanised them, and put them at a loss, and served to shame them before the people.

(3.) It is not strange if those that are governed by reputation and secular interest, imprison the plainest truths, and smother the strongest convictions, as these priests and scribes did, who, to save their credit, would not own that John's baptism was from heaven, and had no other reason why they did not say it was of men but because they feared the people. What good can be expected from men of such a spirit?

(4.) Those that bury the knowledge they have, are justly denied further knowledge. It was just with Christ to refuse to give an account of his authority to them that knew the baptism of John to be from heaven, and would not believe him, nor own their knowledge, v. 7, 8.

9. Then began he to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. 10. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. 11. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. 12. And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out. 13. Then said the lord of the vineyard, Vol. v.—4 I
What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him, when they see him. 14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

Christ spake this parable against those who were resolved not to own his authority, though the evidence of it was ever so full and convincing; and it comes very reasonably to the Church by quoit that is no less despised than that by which they forfeited their own. Their own power of the lord of their vineyard, was a dispensation of their lease of the vineyard, and a giving up of all their title.

1. The parable has nothing added here to what we had before in Matthew and Mark. The scope of it is to show that the Jewish nation, by persecuting the prophets, and at length Christ himself, had provoked God to take away from them all their church privileges, and to abandon them to ruin. It teaches us,

1. That those who enjoy the privileges of the visible church, are as tenants and farmers who have a vineyard to look after, and rents to pay for it, God, by setting up revealed religion and instituted orders in the world, has planted a vineyard, which he lets out to those people who work in it. The tabernacle is, 10. And they have vineyard-work to do, needful and constant work, but pleasant and profitable. Whereas man was, for sin, condemned to till the ground, they that have a place in the church, are restored to that which was Adam's work in innocency, to dress the garden, and to keep it, for the church is a paradise, and Christ the Tree of life in it. They have also vineyard-fruits to present to the Lord of the vineyard. There are rents to be paid, and services to be done, which, though bearing no proportion to the value of the premises, yet must be done, and must be paid.

2. That the work of God's ministers is to call upon those who enjoy the privileges of the church to bring forth fruit accordingly. They are God's renters, and have to put the husbandmen in mind of their arrears, or rather to put them in mind that they have a Landlord who expects to hear from them, and to receive some acknowledgment of their dependence on him, and obligation to him, 10. The Old Testament prophets were sent on this errand to the Jewish Church, to demand from them the duty and obedience they owed to God.

3. That it has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused by his own tenants, they have been beaten and treated shamefully, by those that resolved to send them empty away. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot be called to upon to do it. Some of the best men in the world have had the hardest usage from it, for their best services.

4. That God sent his Son into the world to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, to gather the fruits of the vineyard for God: and one would have thought that he should have been received with joy and benediction by the servants. Thus with the Lord; but Christ as a Son, among his own, Verily I say unto you. Putting such an honour as this upon them, to send him, one would have thought, should have won upon them.

5. That these who reject Christ's ministers, would reject Christ himself, if he should come to them; for it has been tried, and found, that the persecutors of the servants were the persecutors of Christ himself. They said, This is the Heir, come let us kill him. When they slew the servants, there were other servants sent; 18. But if we can but the death of the son, there is never another son to be sent, and then we shall be no longer molested with these demands. We may have a quiet possession of the vineyard for ourselves. This is the Scripture. Pharisees promised themselves, that if they could but get Christ out of the way, they should for ever rise masters in the Jewish Church; and therefore they took the bold step, they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

6. That the putting of Christ to death, filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity, and brought upon them all the downfall and destruction, and the eternal ruin, which they had prepared for themselves. And in the New Testament, it is said, that, if they would not have the Son, they would not have the Father, 

7. That all this was a part of God's just judgment, and a punishment, which he would have inflicted upon them, but for his exceeding mercy, showing them the way of salvation, which was not what they did, but the grace of God, which, of itself, is not a reason why they should not have had the fruits of the vineyard. CHRIST with his Servants. They came and shewed him the fruit of the vineyard, and said, Master, it is in blossom and full of fruit. He said unto them, Did ye never read what was spoken unto you by the prophets? They said unto him, If so be he will send them also an Evangelist, of whom the scriptures say, Whose into the vineyard, and filled it with his servants, and gave it to the husbandmen. 19. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. 20. Then said he to them, Behold the Lord of the vineyard; for ye have done that which was righteous in his eyes. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And they sought how they might lay hold on him. 21. Then went he to their scribes and Pharisees, saying, For what reason doth the scripture say, That Christ is the stone which the builders refused; which is become the head of the corners? 22. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will dash him to pieces. 23. And the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Lord, who shall believe these things? 24. And he said, To whom shall I compare the children of this generation? to children of men born of women? for as much as the Son of man came not to receive praise of men, but of angels. 25. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the公共. The Old Testament prophets were sent on this errand to the Jewish Church, to demand from them the duty and obedience they owed to God. 26. That it has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused by his own tenants, they have been beaten and treated shamefully, by those that resolved to send them empty away. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot be called to upon to do it. Some of the best men in the world have had the hardest usage from it, for their best services. 27. That God sent his Son into the world to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, to gather the fruits of the vineyard for God: and one would have thought that he should have been received with joy and benediction by the servants. Thus with the Lord; but Christ as a Son, among his own, Verily I say unto you. Putting such an honour as this upon them, to send him, one would have thought, should have won upon them. 28. That these who reject Christ's ministers, would reject Christ himself, if he should come to them; for it has been tried, and found, that the persecutors of the servants were the persecutors of Christ himself. They said, This is the Heir, come let us kill him. When they slew the servants, there were other servants sent; 18. But if we can but the death of the son, there is never another son to be sent, and then we shall be no longer molested with these demands. We may have a quiet possession of the vineyard for ourselves. This is the Scripture. Pharisees promised themselves, that if they could but get Christ out of the way, they should for ever rise masters in the Jewish Church; and therefore they took the bold step, they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 29. That the putting of Christ to death, filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity, and brought upon them all the downfall and destruction, and the eternal ruin, which they had prepared for themselves. And in the New Testament, it is said, that, if they would not have the Son, they would not have the Father,
him, that stumble at him, and are offended in him, they shall be broken, it will be their ruin; but those that not only reject him, but hate and persecute him, as the Jews did, he will fall upon them and crush them to pieces, will grind them to powder. The condemnation of sinful persecutors will be much sorer than that of careless unbelievers.

Lastly, We are told how the chief priests and scribes were exasperated by this parable; (r. 19.) They perceived that he spake this parable against them; and so he did. A guilty conscience needs no accuser; but they, instead of yielding to the convictions of conscience, fell into a rage at him who awakened that sleeping him in their bosoms, and sought to lay hands on him. Their corruptions rebelled against their convictions, and got the victory. And it was because they had not any fear of God or of his wrath before their eyes, but only because they feared the populace, that they did not now fly in his face, and take him by the throat. They were just ready to make his words good; The hire, the hire, let us kill him. Note, When the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, the fairest warnings both of the sin they are about to commit, and of the consequences of it, make no impression upon them. Christ tells them, that instead of kis-sing the Son of God they would kill him; upon which they should have said, What, is this servant a dog? But they do, in effect say this, 'Him we will; hurt of him we will.' And though they deprecate the punishment of the sin, in the next breath they are projecting the commission of it.

20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? 23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24. Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. 25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. 26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvellcd at his answer, and held their peace.

We have here Christ's evading a snare which his enemies laid for him, by proposing a question to him about tribute. We had this passage before, both in Matthew and Mark; but here is 1. The mischief designed him, and that is more fully related here than before. The plot was to deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 20. They could not themselves put him to death by course of law, nor otherwise than by a popular tumult, which they could not depend upon. And since they cannot be his judges, they will willingly condense to be his prosecutors and accusers, and will they themselves inform against him. They hoped to gain their point, if they could but incense the governor against him. Note, It has been the common artifice of persecuting church-rulers, to make the secular powers the tools of their malice, and oblige the kings of the earth to do their drudgery, who, if they had not been instigated, would have availed themselves to shew their neighbours by quietly by them, as Pilate did Christ till the chief priests and the scribes represented Christ to him. But thus Christ's word must be fulfilled by their cursed politics, that he should be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

II. The persons they employed. Matthew and Mark told us that they were disciples of the Pharisees, with some Heretians. Here it is added, They were spies, which should feign themselves just men. Note, It is in the nature of spies to seek a cover, to be just men, and to cover the most wicked projects with most specious and plausible pretences. The devil can transform himself into an angel of light, and a Pharisee appear in the garb, and speak the language, of a disciple of Christ. A spy must go in disguise. These spies must take on them to have a value for Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it as an oracle, and therefore must desire his advice in a case of conscience. Note, Ministers are concerned to stand upon their guard against some that feign themselves to be just men, and to be wise as serpents, when they are in the midst of a generation of vipers and serpents.

III. The question they proposed, with which they hoped to ensnare him. 1. Their preface is very courteously: Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, r. 21. They thought it fit to flatter him, who, they hoped, would be free from prejudice, and confide with them, and so to gain their point. They that are proud, and love to be commended, will be brought to do any thing for those that will but flatter them, and speak kindly to them; but they were much mistaken who thought thus to impose upon the humble Jesus. He was not pleased with the testimony of such hypocrites, nor thought himself honored by it. Christ is the true person of any, but it is as true that he knows the hearts of all, and knew theirs, and the seven abomina-tions that were there, though they speak fair. It was certain that he taught the way of God truly; but he knew that they were unworthy to be taught by him, who came to take hold of his words, not to be taken hold of by them. 2. Their case is very nice; Is it lawful for us, (that is added here in Luke,) a question proposed to Christ, as a question proposed to Caesar, a free-born seed of Abraham, us that pay the Lord's tribute, may we give tribute to Caesar? Their pride and covetousness made them both to pay taxes, and then they would have it a question, whether it was lawful or no. Now if Christ should say that it was lawful, the people would take it ill, who expected that he who set up to be the Messiah, should in the first place free them from the Roman yoke, and stand by them in denying tribute to Caesar. But he said that it was not lawful as they expected he would, (for if he had not been of that mind, they thought he could not have been so much the Darling of the people as he was,) then they should have something to accuse him of to the governor, which was what they wanted.

IV. His evading of the snare which they laid for him: He perceived their craftiness, r. 23. Note, These that are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot with all their art conceal them from his cognizance. He can see through the most political disguises, and so break through the most dangerous snare; for surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. He did not give them a direct answer, but reproved them for offering to impose upon him: (Why tempt ye me?) called for a full and free account of the matter. (Where are thy money?) and asked them whose money it was; whose stamp is it here; who coined it. They owned, It is Caesar's money. Why then, saith Christ, you should first have
asked whether it was lawful to *give* and receive Cæsar's money among yourselves, and to admit that to be the instrument of your commerce. But you having granted that by a common consent, are concluded by your own act, and, no doubt, you ought to give tribute to him who furnished you with this convenience for your trade, protects you in it, and lends you the sanction of his authority for the value of your money. You must therefore render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. It is in civil things you ought to submit to the civil powers, and so, if Cæsar protects you in your civil rights by laws and the administration of justice, you ought to *pay* him tribute; but in sacred things God only is your King, you are not bound to be of Cæsar's religion; you must render to God the things that are God's, must worship and adore him only, and not any golden image that Cæsar sets up; and we must worship and adore him in such a way as he has appointed, and not according to the inventions of Cæsar. It is God only that has authority to say, My son give me thy heart.

V. The confusion they were hereby put into, v. 26. 1. The snare is broken; They could not take hold of his words before the people. They could not fasten upon any thing whereby to incense either the governor or the people against him. 2. Christ is honoured; even the wrath of man is made to praise him. They marveled at his answer, it was so discreet and unexceptionable, and such an evidence of that wisdom and sincerity which make the face to shine. 3. Their mouths are stopped; they held their peace. They had nothing to object, and durst ask him nothing else, lest he should shame and expose them.

27. Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her: and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. 35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

This discourse with the Sadducees we, ad before, just as it is here, only that the description Christ gives of the future state is somewhat more full and large here. Observe here,

I. In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, that have endeavoured to subvert the fundamental principles of revealed religion. As there are deists now, who call themselves free-thinkers, but are really false-thinkers; so there were Sadducees in our Saviour's time, who bantered the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the life to come, though they were plainly revealed in the Old Testament, and were articles of the Jewish faith. The Sadducees deny that there is any resurrection, any future state: so *sacrihice* may signify; not only no return of the body to life, but no continuance of the soul in life; no world of spirits, no state of recompense and retribution for what was done here; and all religion falls to the ground.

II. It is common for those that design to undermine any truth of God, to perplex it, and load it with difficulties. So these Sadducees here did; when they would weaken people's faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, they put a question upon the supposition of it, which they thought could not be answered in the way to satisfaction. The case perhaps was matter of fact, however it might be so, of a woman that had seven husbands. Now in the resurrection, whose *wife* shall she be? Whereas it was not at all material whose she was, for when death puts an end to that relation, it is not to be resumed again.

III. There is a great difference between the state of the children of this earth and that of the children of God in heaven; a vast unlikeness between this world and that world; and we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of that world of spirits by our present enjoyment in this world of sense.

1. The children of men in this world marry, and are given in marriage; Isa. 56:1-2—The children of this age, this generation, both good and bad, marry themselves, and give their children in marriage. Much of our business in this world, is, to raise and build up families, and to provide for them. Much of our pleasure in this world is in our relations, our wives, and children; nature inclines to it. Marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life, here in this state where we carry bodies about with us. It is likewise a remedy against fornication, but natural marriage is neither good nor bad, but be under direction and control. The children of this world are dying, and going off the stage, and therefore they marry, and give their children in marriage, that they may furnish the world of mankind with needful recruits, that, as one generation passeth away, another may come, and that they may have some of their own offspring to leave the fruit of their labours to; especially that the chosen of God in future ages may be introduced, for it is a very seed that is sought by marriage, (Mal. 2. 15.) a seed to serve the Lord, that shall be a generation to him.

2. The world to come is quite another thing; it is called that world, by way of emphasis and eminence. Note, There are more worlds than one; a present world, and a future world; and it is the concern of every one of us to compare worlds, this world, and that world, and give the preference in our thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. Now observe,

(1.) Who shall be the inhabitants of that world; they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain it; that is, that are interested in Christ's merit, who purchased it for us, and have a holy meanness for it sought it in them by the Spirit, whose business it is to prepare us for it. They have not a legal worthi
ness, upon the account of any thing in them or done by them, but an evangelical worthiness upon the account of the inestimable price which Christ paid for the redemption of the purchased possession. It is a worthiness imputed, by which we are glorified, as well as justified; in which we are baptised, by which we are justified; they are made agreeable to that world. The disagreeableness that there is in the corrupt nature, is taken away, and the dispositions of the soul are by the grace of God conformed to that state. They are by grace made and counted worthy to obtain that world; it intimates some difficulty in reaching after it, and danger of coming short. We must so run as that we may obtain. They shall obtain the rest from the dead, that is, the blessed resurrection: for that of corruption, (as Christ calls it, John 3. 29.) is rather a resurrection to death, a second death, an eternal death, than from death.

(5.) What shall be the happy state of the inhabitants of that world, we cannot express or conceive. 1 Cor. 2. 9. See what Christ here saith of it.

[3.] They neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Those that are entered into the joy of their Lord, are entirely taken up with that, and need not the joy of the bridegroom in his bride. The love in that world of love is all spiritual, and such as eclipses and loses the purest and most pleasing loves we entertain ourselves with in this world of sense. Where the body itself shall be a spiritual bow, the delights of sense are all vanished; and where there is a perfection of holiness, there is no occasion for marriage as a preservative from sin.

[4.] They cannot die any more; and this comes in as a reason why they do not marry. In this dying world there must be marriage, in order to the filling up of the vacancies made by death; but where there are no burials there is no need of weddings. This crowns the comfort of that world, that there is no more death there, which savours all the beauty, and damps all the comforts, of this world. Here death reigns, but thence it is for ever excluded.

[5.] They are equal unto the angels. In the other evangelists it was said, They are as the angels—κοινωνία, but here they are said to be equal to the angels, ἡμεῖς ἀνδριασθήσομεν; angels peers; they have a glory and bliss no way inferior to that of the holy angels. They shall see the same sight, be employed in the same work, have the same care in the same jors, with the holy angels. Saints in heaven shall be naturalized, and though by nature strangers, yet, having obtained this freedom with a great sum, which Christ paid for them, they have in all respects equal privileges with them that were free-born, the angels that are the natives and aborigines of that country. They shall be companions with the angels, and converse with those blessed spirits that live eternally, and with an innumerable company, to whom they are now come in faith, hope, and love.

[6.] They are the children of God, and so they are as the angels, who are called the sons of God. In the inheritance of sons, the adoption of sons will be completed. Hence believers are said to wait for the adoption, even the redemption of the body, Rom. 8. 23. For till the body is redeemed from the grave, it is not yet completely adopted. Not until is the Son of God. 1 John 3. 2. We have the nature and disposition of sons, but that will not be perfected till we come to heaven.

[7.] They are the children of the resurrection. Note, God owns those only for his children, that are the children of the resurrection, that are born again, are called to the world of spirits, and prepared for that world, the children of that family.

In the spiritual world, there is another life after this, and there were eminent observers made of this truth in the early ages of the church; (c. 57, 58.) Moses showed this, as it was shewed to Moses at the bush, and he hath showed it to us, when he calleth the Lord, as the Lord calleth himself, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were delivered out of this world, they were departed out of it many years before, and their bodies were turned into dust in the cave of Machpelah; how then could God say, not I, but I am, the God of Abraham? It is abundantly that the living God and Fountain of life, should continue related to them as their God, if there were no more of them in being than what lay in that cave, undistinguishable from common dust; we must therefore conclude that they were then in being in another world, for God is not the God of the dust, but of the living. Luke adds, For all live unto him, that is, all who, like them, are true believers; though they are dead, yet they do live; their souls which return to God that gave them, (Fell. 12. 7.) live to him as the Father of spirits; and their bodies shall live again at the end of time by the power of God; for he calleth things that are not as though they were, because he is the God that giveth the dead, Rom. 4. 17. But there is more in it yet; when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was their Felicity and Portion, a God Absolutely; to them, (Gen. 17. 1.) their exceeding great Reward, Gen. 15. 1. Now it is plain by their story, that he never did that for them in this world, which would amount to the true intent and full extent of that great undertaking, and therefore there must be another life after this, in which he will do that for them that will amount to a discharge in full of that promise—that he would be to them a God; which he is able to do, for all live to him, and he has wither-while to make every soul happy that lives to him; enough for all, enough for each.

39. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all. 41. And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43. Till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 44. David therefore calleth him Lord; how is he then his son? 45. Then, in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers; the same shall receive greater damnation.
have in these verses concerning them, which we had before.

1. We have them here commending the reply which Christ made to the Saducees concerning the resurrection; (v. 39.) Certain of the scribes said, Master, thou hast short even of the spirit of his adversaries, that he said well; and therefore the scribes were his enemies, because he would not conform to the traditions of the elders; but yet when he vindicated the fundamental practices of religion, and appeared in defence of them, even the scribes commended his performance, and owned that he said well. Many that call themselves christians despise the scribes, as if they were enemies of religion.

2. We have them here struck with an awe of Christ, and of his wisdom and authority; (v. 40.) They durst not ask him any questions at all, because they saw that he was too hard for all that contended with him. His own disciples, though weak, yet being willing to receive his doctrine, durst ask him any question; but the Saducees, who contradicted and cavilled at his doctrine, durst ask him none.

3. We have them here puzzled and run aground with a question concerning the Messiah, v. 41. It was plain by many scriptures, that Christ was to be the Son of David; even the blind man knew that, (ch. 18. 39.) and yet it was plain that David called the Messiah his Lord, (v. 42. 44.) his Owner, and Ruler, and Benefactor; The Lord said to my Lord. God said it in the Messiah Ps. 2. 7. Now be his Son, why doth he call him my Lord? If be his Lord, why do we call him his Son? This he left them to consider, but they could not reconcile this seeming contradiction; thanks be to God, we can; that Christ, as God, was David's Lord, but Christ, as Man, was David's Son. He was both the Root and the Offspring of David, Rev. 22. 16. By his human nature he was the Offspring of David. He was born of a woman, and being in the likeness of man, was the Root of David, from whom he had his being and life, and all the supplies of grace.

4. We have them here described in their particular characters, and a public caution given to the disciples to take heed of them, v. 45—47. This we had, just as it is here, Mark 12. 38. and more largely, Matth. 23. Christ bid his disciples beware of the scribes, cursed of God, and blind guides, teaching them as their doctrines, but deceiving them. Take heed of being drawn aside by them, of learning their way and, going into their measures; beware of such a spirit as they are governed by. Be not you such in the Christian church, as they are in the Jewish church." 2. "Take heed of being brought into trouble by them," in the same sense that he had said, (Matth. 10. 17.) " Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils; beware of the scribes, for they do so. Beware of them, for,"

1. They are proud and haughty; they desire to walk about the streets in long robes, as those that are above business, (for men of business went with their loin girt up,) and as those that take state, and take place. Ceunt arma rogi—Let arms yield to the gown. They loved in their hearts to have part of his glory; their desire was to see them in the market, that many might see what respect was paid them; and were very proud of the precedence that was given them in all places of concourse. They loved the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts, and when they were placed in them, looked upon themselves with great concrest, and upon all about them with a great contempt. I should say,

2. "They are covetous and oppressive, and make their religion a cloak and cover for it." They devour widows' houses, get their estates into their hands, and then by some trick or other make them their own; or, they live upon them, and eat up what they have. And widows are an easy prey to them, because they are apt to be deluded by their specious pretences; for a show they make long prayers, perhaps long prayers with the widows when they are in sorrow, as if they had not only a foolish but a pious concern for them, and thus endeavour to mitigate the fury and effects into their hands. Such devout men may surely be trusted with untold gold; but they will give such an account of it as they think fit.

CHRIST reads them their doom in a few words; These shall receive a more abundant judgment; a double damnation, both for their abuse of the poor widows, whose houses they devoured, and for abuse of religion, and particularly of prayer, which they had made use of as a pretence for the more plausible and effectual carrying on of their worldly and wicked projects; for assembled piety is double infamy.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. The notice Christ took, and the approbation he gave, of a poor widow that cast two mites into the treasury, v. 1—4. II. A prediction of future events, in answer to his disciples' inquiries concerning them, v. 5—7. 1. Of what should happen between that and the destruction of Jerusalem—beware of the rising, bloody wars and persecutions of Christ's followers, v. 8. 19. 2. Of that destruction itself, v. 20—24. 3. Of the second coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world, under the type and figure of that, v. 25. 26. 3A. Of the power of his followers, v. 34. 36. and an account of Christ's preaching, and the people's attendance on it, v. 37. 38.

1. And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, That this poor widow had cast in more than they all. 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury cast in all the living that she had.

This short passage of story we had before in Mark. It is thus recorded twice, to teach us,

1. That charity to the poor is a main matter in religion; our Lord Jesus took all occasions to commend it, and recommend it. He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes, who devoured poor widows; (ch. 20.) and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it, that the poor widows were the best benefactors to the public funds, which the scribes had the disposal of.

2. That Jesus Christ has his eye upon us, to observe what we give to the poor, and what we contribute to works of piety and charity. Christ, though intent upon his preaching, looked up, to see what gifts were cast into the treasury, v. 1. He observes whether we give largely and liberally, in proportion to what we have, or whether we be sneaking and paralytic in it, and will, without further observation, whether we give charitably and with a willing mind, or grudgingly and with reluctance. This should make us afraid of coming short of our duty in this matter; men may be deceived with excuses which Christ knows to be frivolous; and this should encourage us to be abundant in it, without desiring that men should know it; it is enough that Christ does; he has eyes to see, and will reward openly.

3. That Christ observes and accepts the charity of the poor in a particular manner. Those that have nothing to give, may yet do a great deal in charity, by ministering to the poor, and helping them, and begging for them, that cannot help themselves, or beg for themselves. But here was en-
that was herself poor, and yet gave what little she had to the treasury. It was but two mites, which make a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest; She has cast in more than all. 3. Christ does not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury: but commanded her liberality, and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God; which proceeded from a belief of, and dependence upon, God's providence to take care of her. Jesus-valphe—The Lord will provide.

4. That whatever may be called the offerings of God, we ought to have a respect for, and to our power, yea, and beyond our power, to contribute cheerfully to. These have cast in unto the offerings of God. What is given to the support of the ministry and the gospel, to the spreading and propagating of religion, the education of youth, the release of prisoners, the relief of widows and strangers, and the maintenance of poor families, is given to the offerings of God, and it shall be so accepted and recompensed.

5. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6. As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. 7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? And what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? 8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. 10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: 11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights: and great signs shall there be from heaven. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

See here,

1. With what admiration some spake of the external pomp and magnificence of the temple, and they were some of Christ's own disciples too; and they took notice of it to him, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, v. 5. The outside was built up with goodly stones, and it was justified in the eyes of the people; but this represents the whole offered up for that purpose, and were hung up in it. They thought their Master should be as much affected with these things as they were, and should as much regret the destruction of them as they did. When we speak of the temple, it should be of the presence of God in it, and of the ordinance of God administered in it, and the commonwealth which his people have with him. It is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our discourse dwell upon its pomp and revenues, and the dignities and powers of its officers and rulers; for the king's daughter is all glorious within.

II. With what contempt Christ spake of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly; (v. 6.) 6. As for these things which ye behold, those dear things which you are so much in love with, behold, the days will come, and some now living may see them, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another. This building, which seems so beautiful, that one would think none could, for pity, pull it down, and which seems so strong, that one would think none should be able to pull it down, shall yet be utterly ruined; and this shall be done as soon as ever the spiritual temple of the church is in danger.

11. With what curiosity those about him inquire concerning the time when this great desolation should be; (v. 7.) 7. Master, when shall these things be? It is natural to us to covet to know future times and the time of them, which it is not for us to know; what we are more concerned to work, is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them. This it is for us to know. They inquire what sign there shall be, when these things shall come to pass. They ask not for a present sign, to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it, (Christ's word was enough for that,) but what the future signs will be of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which we may know and mark the time of those things Christ had taught them to observe.

IV. With what clearness and fulness Christ answers their inquiries, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice. 1. They must expect to hear of false christs and false prophets appearing, and false prophecies given out; (v. 8.) 8. Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. 10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: 11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights; and great signs shall there be from heaven. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. 18. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

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No, ye must not expect any such thing, for my kingdom is not of this world." When they asked solicitously and eagerly, Master, when shall these things be? the first word Christ said, was, Take heed that ye be not deceived. Note, Those that are most insatiable in the things of God, (though it is very good to be) and industrious to be possessed uppon, and have most need to be upon their guard. (2.) "Go ye not after them, ye know the Messiah is come, and ye are not to look for any other; and therefore do not so much as hearken after them, nor have any thing to do with them." If we are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine is the gospel of God, we must be dead to all iniquity, and are to look for another way and peace. 2. They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments inflicted upon the Jews and their neighbours. (1.) There shall be bloody wars; (v. 16.) Nation shall rise against nation; one part of the Jewish nation against another, or rather the whole against the Romans. Encouraged by the false christs, they shall wickedly endeavour to throw off the Roman yoke, by taking up arms against the Roman powers; when they had rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free, they were left to themselves, to grasp at their civil liberty in ways that were sinful, and therefore could not be successful. (2.) There shall be earthquakes, great earthquakes, in divers places, which shall not only frighten people, but also terrify them, and make many in the ruins of them. (3.) There shall be famines and pestilences, the common effects of war, which destroy the fruits of the earth, and, by exposing men to ill weather and reducing them to ill diet, occasion infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people. The four sorts of judgments which the Old Testament prophets often spake of, are threatened by the New Testament prophets too; for though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel-times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. (4.) There shall be fearful sights, and great signs from heaven, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as omens of something bad. Now as to these, the caution which gives them is, "Be not terrified. Others will be frightened at them, but be ye not frightened, v. 2. As to the fearful sights, let them not be fearful to you, who look above the visible heavens to the throne of God's government in the highest heavens. Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them, v. 16. 2. And as to the famines and pestilences, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his, that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, and that he will keep them from the noise and resileence; trust therefore in him, and be not afraid. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings and within are fears, yet be not you terrified; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do, and therefore be not afraid of them; for, (1.) It is your interest to make the best of that which is, for all your fears cannot alter it, these things must first come to pass, there is no remedy, it will be your wisdom to make yourselves easy by accommodating yourselves to them. [2.] There is worse behind; flatter not yourselves with a fancy that you are gained of all these troubles, no, not so soon as you think of, the end is not by, and by, not suddenly. Be not terrified, for if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you bear up under what is yet before you? 3. They must expect to be themselves for signs and wonders in Israel; their being persecuted would be a prognostic of the destruction of the city and temple, which he had now foretold. Nay, this shall be the first sign of their ruin coming; before all these, they shall lay their hands on you. The judgment shall begin at the house of God; you must smart first, for warning to them, that, if they are not sensible of their situation, they may consider, if this be done to the green tree, will it not be done to the dry? See 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18. But that is not all; this must be considered not only as the suffering of the persecuted, but as the sin of the persecutors. Before God's judgments are brought upon them, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity by laying their hands on you." Note, The ruin of a people is their own doing, and nothing introduces a surer and sorer ruin than the sin of persecution. This is a sign that God's wrath is coming upon a people to the uttermost, when their wrath against the servants of God comes to the uttermost. Now as to this, (1.) Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purport with what he had told them when he first called them to follow him, Matt. 10. They should know the wages of it, that they might sit down and count the costs. St. Paul, who was the greatest labourer and sufferer of them all, not being now among them, was told by himself what great things he should suffer for Christ's name's sake, (Acts 9. 16.) so necessary is it that all who will live godly in Christ must be ready to suffer persecution. The Christians having themselves originally Jews, and still retaining an equal veneration with them for the Old Testament, and all the essentials of their religion, and differing only in ceremony, might expect fair quarter with them; but Christ bids them not expect it; "No, they shall be the most forward to persecute you." [1.] They shall use their own churches against you; they shall deliver you up to the synagogues to be scourged, and to be stoned with their anathemas. [2.] They shall incense the magistrates against you; they shall deliver you into prisons, that you may be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake, and shall be punished by them. [3.] Your own relations will betray you, (v. 16.) your parents, brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; so that you will not know them in the midst of your persecutions. [4.] Your religion will be made a capital crime, and you will be called to resist unto blood; some of you shall cause to be put to death; so far must you be from expecting honour and wealth, that you must expect nothing but death in its most frightful shapes, death in all its dreadful pomp. Nay," [5.] You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. This is worse than death itself, and was fulfilled when the apostles were not only appointed to death, but made a spectacle to the world, and counted as the fith of the world, and the effecting of all things, which every body behath, Col. 4. 19, 13. They were hated of all men, that is, of all bad men, who could not bear the light of the gospel, (because it discovered their evil deeds,) and therefore hatred these who brought in that light, slew them in their faces, and would have pulled them to pieces. The wicked world, which hated to be reformed, hated Christ the great Reformer, and all that were his, for his sake. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing very well that, if the gospel obtained among the Jews, their usurped, abused power was at an end, raised all their forces against it, put it in an ill name, filled people's minds with false lies against it, and so made the preachers and professors of it odious to the mob. (2.) He encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with.
[1.] God will bring glory both to himself and them out of their sufferings; (v. 13.) "It shall turn to you for a testimony. Your being thus set up for a mark, and publicly persecuted, will make you and your doctrine and miracles the more taken notice of and inquired into; your being brought before kings and rulers, will give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, who otherwise would never have come within hearing of it; your suffering such severity, and being so hated by the worst of men, of the most vicious lives, will be a testimony that you are good, else you would not have such bad men your enemies; your courage and cheerfulness and constancy under your sufferings will be a testimony for you, that you believe what you preach, and that you are supported by a divine power, and the Spirit of God and glory rests upon you." 

[2.] "God will stand by you, and own you, and give you, in your trials, your advocate, and you shall be well furnished with instructions, v. 14, 15. Instead of setting your hearts on work to contrive an answer to informations, indentures, articles, accusations and interrogatories, that will be exhibited against you in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, on the contrary, settle it in your hearts, impress it upon them, take pains with them to persuade them not to meddle with what ye shall answer, do not depend upon your wit or your wisdom, your own prudence and policy, and do not distruster or despair of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the divine grace. Think not to bring yourselves off in the cause of Christ, as you would in a cause of your own, by your own parts and application, with the common assistance of divine providence, but promise yourselves, for I promise you, the special assistance of the divine grace, ye shall not be forsaken, for I know the thoughts that I think, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an answer both new and old, and a door of utterance by which to bring them forth. Secondly, Those that plead Christ's cause, may depend upon him to give them a mouth and wisdom, which way soever they are called to plead it, especially when they are brought before magistrates for his name's sake. It is not said that he will send an angel from heaven to answer for them, though he could do that, but that he will give them a mouth and wisdom to answer for themselves; which puts a great honour upon them, which requires them to use the gifts and graces Christ furnishes them with, and redounds the more to the glory of God, who stills the enemy and the avenger out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Thirdly, When Christ gives to his witnesses a mouth and wisdom, they are enabled to say that it is not only to their enemies and themselves, which all their adversaries are not able to overawe or resist, but that their answers are silenced and put to confusion. This was remarkably fulfilled presently after the parting out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this mouth and wisdom, when the apostles were brought before the priests and rulers, and answered them so as to make them ashamed, Acts 4, 5, and 6.

[3.] You shall suffer no real damage by all the harm they shall put upon you; (v. 18.) There shall not be a hair of your head perish; for they shall not remove all of them lose their heads, and yet not lose a hair! It is a proverbial expression, denoting the greatest indemnity and security imaginable; it is frequently used, both in the Old Testament and New, in that sense. Some think that it refers to the preservation of the lives of all the Christians that were among the Jews, when they were cut off by the Romans; historians tell us that not one christian perished in that desolation. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ saith, He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. Not a hair of your head shall perish but, First, "I shall take cognizance of it." To this end he had said, Both the hairs of your head are all numbered; and an account is kept of them, that none of them shall perish but he will miss it. Secondly, "It shall be upon a valuable consideration." We do not reckon that lost or perish, which is laid out for good purposes, and will turn to a good account. If we drop the body itself for Christ's name's sake, it does not perish, but is well bestowed. Thirdly, "It shall be abundantly recompensed;" when you come to balance profit and loss, you will find that there is nothing perished, but, on the contrary, that you have great gain in present comforts, especially in the joys of a life eternal." So that though we may be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

[4.] "It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings and those of the church, to maintain a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always in the midst of a calm. First, In your patience possess ye your souls; get and keep possession of your souls. Some read it as a promise, "You may or shall possess your souls." It comes all to one. Note, First, It is our duty and interest at all times, especially in perilous, trying times, to secure the possession of our own souls; not only that they be not destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not disturbed and tossed now, nor our possession of them disturbed and removed. Secondly, "In your patience possess ye your souls, be your own men, keep up the authority and dominion of reason, and keep under the tumults of passion, that neither grief nor fear may tyrannize over you, or turn you out of the possession and enjoyment of yourselves." In difficult times, when we can keep possession of nothing else, then let us make that sure which will be made sure, and keep possession of our own souls. Secondly, It is by patience, christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls. "In suffering times, set patience upon the guard for the preserving of your souls; by it keep your souls composed and in a good frame, and keep out all these impressions which would ruffle you and put you out of temper.

20. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter therein. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 21. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon
the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, he here comes to show them what all those things would issue in at last; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter dispersal of the Jewish nation. Forth, 1. shall be a little day of judgment; a type and figure of Christ's second coming, which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place, (Matt. 24.) yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world to those whose hearts were bound up in it.

I. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem beset with sieges, and surrounded with Roman armies; and when they saw that, they might conclude that its desolation was nigh, for in that the siege would infallibly end, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins, he will make an end.

II. He warns them, upon this signal given, to shift for their own safety; (v. 21.) "Let them which are in Judea, quit the country and flee to the mountains." It is commonly called (of Jerusalem,) "To depart out, before the city be closely shut up, and" (as we say now) "before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about, enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people." 3. He foretells the terrible havoc that should be made of the Jewish nation; (v. 22.) Those are the days of vengeance so often spoken of by the Old Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people; all their predictions must now be fulfilled and the blood of the Old Testament martyrs must now be required. All things that are written, must be fulfilled at length. After days of patience long abused, there will come days of vengeance, for reproaches are not pardons. The greater the delusion, the heavier the descent; the inflicting cause of it, it is wrath upon this people, the wrath of God; that will kindle this devouring consuming fire. 2. By the particular terror it would be to women with child, and poor mothers that are nurses. Woe to them, not only because they are most subject to frights, and least able to shift for their own safety, but because it will be a very great torment to the new-born, and the aged, and nurses for the murderers. 3. By the general confusion that should be all the nation over. There shall be great distress in the land, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

IV. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans, and what they which were for us to last; in short, 1. Multitudes of them shall fall by the edge of the sword; let not the sword above eleven hundred thousand. And the siege of Jerusalem was, in effect, a military execution. 2. The rest shall be led away captive, not into one nation, as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans which gave them an opportunity of keeping together, but into all nations, which made it impossible for them to correspond with each other, much less to incorporate. 3. Jerusalem itself was trodden down of the Gentiles. The Romans, when they had made themselves masters of it, laid it quite waste, as a rebellious and bad city, hurtful to kings and provinces, and therefore hateful to them.

He describes the great frights that people should generally be in. Many frightful sights shall be in the sky, the sun, and stars, phenomena in the heavens, and here in this lower world, the sea and the waves roaring, with terrible storms and tempests, such as had not been known, and above the ordinary workings of natural causes. The effect of this shall be universal confusion and consternation upon the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, v. 25.

Dr. Hammond understands by the nations, the several governments or tetrarchies of the Jewish nation, the Levitical, and of the Gentiles, those shall be brought to the last extremity. Men's hearts shall fail them, for fear, (v. 26.) κατοικήσαντες πάσην πόλιν—men being quite exanimated, dispirited, un-souled, dying away for fear. Thus they are killed all the day long, by whom Christ's apostles were so, (Rom. 8. 36.) that is, they are all the day long in fear of being killed; sinking under that which lies upon them, as if they were in a furnace, or in a furnace, and most confusion. So Dr. Clarke. But our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions, because at the end of time they shall be literally accomplished, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their powers not only shaken, but broken, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 12. As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving and their calamities attended with this. VI. He makes this to be a kind of appearing of the Son of man; (v. 27) Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. The destruction of Jerusalem was in a particular manner an act of Christ's judgment, the judgment committed to the Son of man; his religion could never be thoroughly established but by the destruction of the temple, and the abolishing of the Jewish worship. But, on the other hand, even the converted Jews, and many of the Gentiles too, were still hankering, till they were destroyed; so that it might justly be looked upon as a coming of the Son of man, in power and great glory; yet not visibly, but in the clouds; for in executing such judgments as these, clouds and darkness are round about him. Now this was, 1. An evidence of the first coming, in establishing his kingdom by it. Then the unbelieving Jews shall be convinced, when it is too late, that Jesus was the Messiah; they that would not see him coming in the power of his grace to save them, shall be made to see him coming in the power of his wrath to destroy them; those that would not have him to reign over them, shall have him to triumph over them. 2. It was an earnest of his second coming. Then in the terrors of that day they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with all the terrors of the last day. They shall see a specimen of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible what will be that?

VII. He encourages all the faithful disciples to resign themselves to the terrors of that day; (v. 28.) "When these things begin to come to pass, when Je-
rusalem is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, then do you look up, when others are looking down, look heavenward, in faith, hope, and prayer, and lift up your heads with cheerful confidence, for your redemption draws nigh." 1. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; then had the churches rest. 2. When he comes to judge the world at the last day, he will redeem all that are his from all their grievances. And the foresight of that day is as pleasant to all good christians as it is terrible to the wicked and ungodly. The death itself is so; when they see that day approaching, they can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, their removal to their Redeemer.

VIII. Here is one word of prediction, that looks farther than the destruction of the Jewish nation, which is not easily understood; we have it, v. 24, that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 1. Some understand it of what is past; so Dr. Hammond. The Gentiles, who have conquered Jerusalem, shall keep possession of it, and shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world be become christian, and then after Jerusalem is rebuilt by Adrian the emperor, with an exclusion of all the Jews from it, many of the Jews shall turn christians, shall join with the Gentile christians, to set up a church in Jerusalem, which shall flourish there for a long time. 2. Others understand it of what is yet to come; so Dr. Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other, for the most part, till the time comes when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

29. And he spake to them a parable: Behold, the fig-tree, and all the trees: 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my word shall not pass away. 34. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 37. And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple: and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. 38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Here, in the close of this discourse,

1. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by, if they had an eye to the foregoing directions; and there is certainly such a judgment as the prophet of the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, v. 29-31. As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. When we see a nation filling up the measure of their iniquity, we may conclude that their ruin is nigh; when we see the ruin of persecuting powers hastening on, we may from thence infer that the kingdom of God is near at hand, that, when the opposition given to it is removed, it shall gain ground. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons, when second causes have begun to work, so we may in the disposal of events, expect something uncommon, when God is already raised up out of his holy habitation; (Zech. 2. 13.) and then stand still and see his salvation.

2. He charges them to look upon those things as nearer day than day, as distant, (for then they would not make a due impression on them,) but as sure and very near. The destruction of the Jewish nation, 1. Was near; (v. 32.) This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. There were some now alive, that should see it; some that now heard the prediction of it. 2. It was sure, the sentence was irreversible, it was a consumption determined, the decree was gone forth; (v. 33.) Hence and earth shall pass away, sooner than any word of mine: nay, they certainly shall pass away, but my words shall not: whether they take hold or no, they will take effect, and not one of them fall to the ground, 1 Sam. 3. 19.

3. He cautions them against security and sensuality, by which they would disfist themselves for the trying times that were coming on, and make them to be a great surprise and terror to them; (v. 34.) And take heed to yourselves. This is the second command given to all Christ's disciples, "Take heed to yourselves, that ye be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own corruptions."

Note. We cannot be safe, if we be secure. It concerns us at all times, but especially at some times, to be very cautious. See here, 1. What our danger is—that the day of death and judgment shall come upon us unawares, when we are not expecting and preparing for it; lest, when we shall be called to meet our Lord, that he be found the fourest thing from our thoughts, which ought always to be laid nearest our hearts, lest it come upon us as a snare; for so it will come upon the most of men, who drowse upon the earth, and mind earthly things only, and have no converse with heaven; to them it will be as a snare; see Eze. 9. 12. It will be a terror and a destruction to them; it will put them into an inexorable frame, and lead them to a doom yet more frightful. 2. What our duty is, in consideration of this danger; we must take heed lest our hearts be overcharged, lest they be burdened and overloaded, and so disfitted and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment. Two things we must watch against, lest our hearts be overcharged with them. (1.) The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing of carnal pleasures, grossness, and vanity, as the gratifiers of our corrupt nature;—Take heed lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, the immoderate use of meat and drink, which burden the heart not only with the guilt thereby contracted, but by the ill influence which such disorders of the body have upon the mind; they make men dull and lifeless to their duty, dead and listless in their duty; they stropify the conscience, and make the mind unaffected with those things that are most affecting. (2.) The inordinate put-
suit of the good things of this world. The heart is
overcharged with the cares of this life. The former is
the snare of those that are given to their pleasures;
this is the snare of the men of business, that will be
rich. We have not been warned. Our heart is not only
left at the time when death comes, but lest in that
ime, our hearts should be thus overcharged. Our
cSafety against sin, and our care of our own souls,
must be constant.
IV. He counsels them to prepare and get ready
for this great day, v. 36. Here see, 1. What should be
our aim—that we may be accounted worthy to
escape all those things, that, when the judgments of
God are abroad, we be preserved from the
maliglity of them, that either we may not be in-
olved in the common calamity, or it may not be
that to us, that it is to others; that in the day
of death we may escape the sting of it, which is
the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet
we must aim not only to escape that, but to stand
before the Son of man; not only to stand acquitted
before him as our Judge, (Ps. 1. 5.) to have boldness
in the day of Christ, (that is supposed in our escaping
all those things,) but to stand before him, to attend
on him as our Master, to stand continually before his
throne, and serve him day and night in his temple,
(Rev. 7. 15.) always to behold his face, as the
angels, Matt. 18. 10. The saints are here said to be
accounted worthy, as before, ch. 20. 33. God, by
this, would show off his grace in them, makes them
meet for this happiness, and by the good will of his
grace toward them, accounts them worthy of it:
but, as Grotius here saith, a great part of our
worthiness lies in an acknowledgment of our own un-
worthiness. 2. What should be our actions in these
aims; Watch therefore, and pray always. Watch-
ing and praying must go together; Neh. 4. 9. Those
that would be saved must watch and pray, and make
sure of the joys to come, must watch and pray, and
must do it always, must make it the constant
business of their lives, (1.) To keep a guard upon
themselves; "Watch against sin, watch to every duty,
and to the improvement of every opportunity of
doing good. Be awake, and keep awake, in expecta-
tion of your Lord's coming, that you may be in a
right condition to meet him, and bid him welcome.
(2.) To keep up their communion with God; "Pray
always; be always in an habitual disposition to that
duty; keep up stated times for it, abound in it:
pray upon all occasions." Those shall be accounted
worthy to live a life of praise in the other world,
that live a life of prayer in this world.
In the two last verses we have an account how
Christ disposed of himself during those three or
four days between his riding in triumph into Jerusalem,
and the night in which he was betrayed.
[1.] He was all day teaching in the temple. Christ
preached on week-days as well as sabbath-days.
He was an indefatigable Preacher, he preached in
the face of opposition, and in the midst of those
that he knew sought occasion against him.
He taught out of doors, he taught at a friend's
house, in the mount of Olives, about a mile out of
town. It is probable that he had some friends in
the city, that would gladly have lodged him, but he
had not a place to retire in the evening; out of the
noise of the town, that he might have more time for secret
decoration, now that his hour was at hand.
[2.] Early in the morning he was in the temple
and taught there. He had a morning-lecture for them
that were willing to attend it; and the people were
forward to hear one that they saw forward to preach;
(v. 35.) They all came early in the morning, flock-
ing to the temple, like doves to their windows, to hear
him, though the chief-priests and scribes did all
they could to prejudice them against him.
Sometimes the taste and relish which serious, honest,
plain people have of good preaching, are more to be
valued and judged by than the opinion of the witty
and learned; and those in authority.

CHAP. XXII.
All the evangelists, whatever they omit, give us a particular
account of the death and resurrection of Christ, because
he died for our sins, and rose for our justification: this
evangelist, as fully as any, and with many circumstances
and passages added, which we had not before. In this
chapter we have, 1. The plot to take Jesus, and Judas's
coming into it, v. 1. 6. 2. Christ's eating of the pass-
over with his disciples, v. 7. 20. 3. The infliction of
the Lord's supper, v. 19. 20. 4. Christ's discourse with
his disciples after supper, upon several heads, v. 21. 38.
5. His agony in the garden, v. 39. 46. 6. The appre-
hiations of the passion, by the assistance of Judas, v. 47. 55.
VII. Peter's denying of him, v. 54. 62. VIII. The in-
dignities done to Christ by those that had him in custody,
and his trial and condemnation in the ecclesiastical court,
v. 63. 71.

NOW the feast of unleavened bread
drew nigh, which is called the
passover. 2. And the chief priests
and scribes sought how they might kill him,
for they feared the people. 3. Then
entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot,
being of the number of the twelve. 4. And
he went his way, and communed with the
chief priests and captains, how he might
betray him unto them. 5. And they were
glad, and covenantet to give him money.
6. And he promised, and sought opportu-
nity to betray him unto them in the absence
of the multitude.

The year of the redeemed is now come, which
had been from eternity fixed in the divine counsels,
and long looked for by them that waited for the conso-
lation of Israel; after the revolutions of many ages,
it is at length come, Isa. 65. 4. And it is observable,
it is in the very first month of that year that the
redemption is wrought out, so much in haste was the
Redeemer to perform his undertaking, so was he
engaged the whole time; God was himself the Worthy
Tide. It was in the same month, and at the same time of the
month, (in the beginning of months, Exod. 12. 2.) that
God by Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, that the
Antitype might answer the type. Christ is here
delivered up, when the feast of unleavened bread
drew nigh, v. 1. About as long before that feast as
they began to make preparation for it, here was
preparation a making for our Passover's being of-
fered up.

I. Here we have his sworn enemies contriving it;
(v. 2.) the chief priests, men of sanctity, and the
scribes, men of learning, seeking how they might
kill him, either by force or fraud: could they have
had their will, it had been soon done, but they feared
the people, and the more, for they now saw of
their diligent attendance upon his preaching.

II. O. He was, as he had been, the Sovereign discipule joining in with them,
and coming to their assistance, Judas surnamed Isca-
riot; he is here said to be of the number of the
twelve, that dignified, distinguished number. One
would wonder that Christ, who knew all men, should
take a traitor into that number; and that one of that
number, who could not but know Christ, should be
so base as to betray him; but Christ had wise and
holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple, and how
he knew Christ so well, yet came to betray him,
we are here told, v. 3. Satan entered into Ju-
das. It was the devil's work, who thought hereby
to ruin Christ's undertaking, to have broken his
head; but it proved only the bruising of his heel.
Whoever betrays Christ, or his truths, or ways, it
is Satan that puts him upon it. Judas knew how desirous the chief priests were to get Christ into their hands, and that they could not do it safely without the assistance of some that knew his retirements, as he did. He therefore went himself, and made the motion to them, v. 4. Note, It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom by the power and policy of its open enemies, or by the treachery and self-seeking of its pretended friends; nay, without the latter its enemies could not gain their point as they do. When you see Judas communing with the chief priests, be sure some mischief is in hatching; it is for no good that they are laying their heads together.

The issue of the treaty between them is, 1. That Judas must betray Christ to them, must bring them to a place where they might seize him without danger of tumult—and this they would be glad of. 2. They must give him a sum of money for doing it—and that he would be glad of, (v. 5.) They contrived to give him money. When the bargain was made, Judas sought opportunity to betray him. Probably he shily enquired of Peter and John, who were more intimate with their Master than he was, where he would be at such a time, and whither he would retire after the passover. He would not need enough to suspect him. Somewhat or other, in a little time, he gained the advantage he sought, and fixed the time and place where it might be done, in the absence of the multitude and without tumult.

7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water: follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto me, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

What a hopeful prospect had we of Christ's doing a great deal of good by his preaching in the temple, during the feast of unleavened bread which continued seven days, when the people were every morning, and early in the morning, so attentive to hear him! But here is a step put to it. He must enter upon work of another kind: in that, however, he shall do more good than in the other, for both Christ's new church's suffering days are their idle, empty days.

Now here we have, 1. The preparation that was made for Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, upon the very day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed according to the law, v. 7. Christ was made under the law, and observed the ordinances of it, part of the duty of the passover being to hark in like manner to observe his gospel-institutions, particularly that of the Lord's supper, and not to neglect them. It is probable that he went to the temple to preach in the morning, when he sent Peter and John another way into the city to prepare the passover. Those who have attendants about them, to do their secular business for them in a great measure, must not think it strange if they employ themselves more in spiritual business, or service to the public. He directed those whom he employed, whether they should go; (v. 9, 10.) they must follow a man bearing a pitcher of water, and he must be their guide to the house. Christ could have described the house to them, probably it was a house they knew, and he might have said no more than, Go to such a man's house, or to a house in such a street, with such a sign, &c. But he directed them thus, to teach them to depend upon the conduct of Providence, and to follow that, step by step. They went, not knowing whither they went, but whither they followed. Being come to the house, they must desire the master of the house to show them a room, (v. 11.) and he will readily do it, v. 12. Whether it was a friend's house, or a public house, does not appear; but the disciples found their guide, and the house and the room, just as he had said to them; (v. 13.) for they need not fear a disappointment, who go upon Christ's word; according to the orders given them, they got every thing in readiness for the passover, v. 11.

II. The solemnizing of the passover, according to the law. When the hour was come that they should go to supper, he sat down, it is likely, at the head of the table, and invited them. It is likely, Judas not excepted: for it is possible that they whose hearts are filled with Satan, and all manner of wickedness, may yet continue a plausible profession of religion, and be found in the performance of its external services. And while it is in the heart, and does not break out into any thing scandalous, such cannot be denied the external privileges of their external profession. Though Judas had no very need of the protection of the law, yet, not being publicly known, Christ admits him to sit down with the rest at the passover. Now observe, 1. How Christ bids this passover welcome, to teach us in like manner to welcome his passover, the Lord's supper, and to come to it with an appetite: (v. 13.) "With desire have desired, I have most earnestly desired, to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He knew it was to be the privilege to his sufferings, and therefore he desired it, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He delighted to do even this part of the will of God concerning him as Mediator. Shall we be backward to any service for him who was so forward in the work of our salvation? See the love he had to his disciples; he desired to eat it with them, that he and they might have a little
time together; themselves and none besides, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem, but on this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to eat this passover with them before he suffered, as if the comfort of that would carry him the more cheerfully through his sufferings, and make them the easier to him. Now, Our Lord, in this passover, by faith with Jesus Christ, will be an excellent preparation for sufferings, and trials, and death itself.

2. How Christ in it takes his leave of all passoverers, thereby signifying his abrogation of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which that of the passover was one of the earliest and one of the most eminent; (Ex. 12.) "I will not any more eat thereof, nor shall it be any more celebrated by my disciples, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Mk. 14.) was fulfilled when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And therefore that type and shadow was laid aside, because now in the kingdom of God the substance was come, which superseded them. (2.) It was fulfilled in the Lord's supper, an ordinance of the gospel-kingdom, in which the passover had its accomplishment, and which the disciples, after the pouring out of the Spirit, frequently celebrate, as we find, Acts 2. 42, 46. They ate of it, and Christ might be said to eat with them because of the spiritual communion they had with him in that ordinance. He is said to sup with them, and they with him, Rev. 3. 20. But, (3.) This complete accomplishment of that commemoration of liberty will be in the kingdom of glory, when all God's spiritual Israel shall be released from the bondage of death and sin, and be put in possession of the land of promise.

What he had said of his eating of the paschal lamb, he repeats concerning his drinking of the passover-wine; the cup of blessing, or of thanksgiving, in which all the company pledged the Master of the feast, at the close of the passover-supper. This cup, he took, according to the custom, and gave thanks for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born, and then said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves, v. 17. This is not said afterward of the sacramental cup: that being, probably, of much more weight and value, being the New Testament in his blood, he might with more propriety hand it over one's hand, to teach them to make a particular application of it in their own souls; but as for the paschal-cup which is to be abolished, it is enough to say, "Take it, and divide it among yourselves, do what you will with it, for we shall have no more occasion for it, v. 18. I will not drink of the fruit of the vine any more; I will not have it any more drunk of, till the kingdom of God shall come, till the Spirit be poured out, and then you shall in the Lord's supper commemorate a much more glorious redemption; of which both the deliverance out of Egypt and the passover-commemoration of it were types and figures. The kingdom of God is now so near being set up, that you will not need to eat or drink any more till it comes." Christ being next day, opened it. As Christ with a great deal of pleasure took leave of all the legal feasts (which fell of course with the passover) for the evangelical ones, both spiritual and sacramental; so many good Christians, when they are called to remove from the church militant to that which is triumphant, cheerfully exchange even their spiritual repasts, much more their sacramental ones, for the heavenly food.

III. The institution of the Lord's supper, v. 19. 20. The passover and the deliverance out of Egypt were typical and prophetic signs of a Christ to come, who should by dying deliver us from sin and death, and the tyranny of Satan; but they shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, a much greater deliverance shall eclipse the lustre of that, and therefore the Lord's supper is instituted to be a visible sign and memorial of a Christ already come, that by dying delivered us; and it is his death that is in a special manner set before us in that ordinance.

1. The breaking of Christ's body, as a sacrifice for us, is here commemorated by the breaking of bread; and the sacrifices under the law were called the bread of God; (Lev. 21. 6, 8, 17.) This is my body which is given for you. And there is a feast upon that sacrifice instituted, in which we have to apply it to ourselves, and take the benefit and comfort of it; this bread that was given for us, is given to us to be food to our souls, for nothing can be more nourishing and satisfying to our souls than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of our interest in that atonement; this bread that was broken and given for us, to satisfy for the guilt of our sins, is broken and given to us, to satisfy the desire of our souls. And this we do in remembrance of what he did for us, when he died for us, and for a memorial of what we do, in making ourselves partakers of him, and joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant; like the stones Joshua set up for a memorial. Josh. 24. 27.

2. The shedding of Christ's blood, by which the atonement was made, (for the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11.) as represented by the wine in the cup; and that cup of wine is a sign and token of the New Testament, or new covenant, made with us. It commemorates the purchase of the covenant by the blood of Christ, and confirms the promises of the covenant, which are all Ye and Amen in him. This will be reviving and refreshing to our souls, as wine that makes glad the heart. In all our commemorations of the shedding of Christ's blood, we must have an eye to it as shed for us; we need it, we take hold of it, we hope to have benefit by it; who loved me, and gave himself for me. And in all our regards to the New Testament, we must have an eye to the blood of Christ which gave life and being to it, and seals to us all the promises of it. Had it not been for the blood of Christ, we had never had the New Testament; and had it not been for the New Testament, we had never known the meaning of Christ's blood shed.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!. 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors.

26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath ap-
ponted unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. 34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

We have here Christ’s discourse with his disciples after supper, much of which is new here; and in St. John’s gospel we shall find more that is new still. We should take example from him, to entertain and edify our family and friends with such discourse at table as is good, and to the use of edifying, which may minister grace to the hearers; but especially after we have been at the Lord’s table, by christian conference to keep one another in a suitable frame. The matters Christ here discoursed of, were of weight, and to the present purpose.

1. He discoursed with them concerning him that should betray him, who was now present.

1. He signifieth to them that the traitor was now among them, and one of them, v. 21. By the placing of this after the institution of the Lord’s supper, which in Matthew and Mark is placed before it, it seems plain that Judas did receive the Lord’s supper, did eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; for after the solemnity was over. Christ said, Behold, the hand of him that betraveth me, is with me on the table. There have been those that have eaten bread with Christ, and yet have betrayed him.

2. He foretells that the treason would take effect; (v. 22.) Truth the Son of man goes, as it was determined; goes to the place where he will be betrayed; for he is delivered up by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, else Judas could not have deceived him up. Christ was not driven to his sufferings, but cheerfully went to them. He said, Lo, I come. 3. He threatens the traitor: (v. 23.) Woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. Note, Neither the patience of the saints under their sufferings, nor the counsel of God concerning their sufferings, will be any excuse for those that have any hand in their sufferings, or that persecute them. Though God has determined that Christ shall be betrayed, and he himself was cheerfully submitted to it, yet Judas’s sin or punishment is not at all the less.

4. He frightens the rest of the disciples into a suspicion of themselves, by saying that it was one of them, and not naming which; (v. 23.) They began to enquire among themselves, to interrogate themselves, to put the question to themselves, who it was that should do this thing, that could be so base to do so good a Master. The inquiry was not, Is it you? or Is it such a one? but, Is it I? 11. Concerning the strife that was among them for preeminency or authority. See what the dispute was; Which of them should be accounted the greatest? Such and so many contests among the disciples for dignity and dominion before the Spirit was poured upon them, were a sad presage of the-like strifes for, and affections of, supremacy in the churches, after the Spirit should be provoked to depart from them. How inconsistent is this with that in the pure heart! There they were, one of which could be the traitor, and here which should be the prince. Could there be such an instance of humility, and such an instance of pride and vanity, be found in the same men, so near together? This is like sweet waters and bitter, proceeding at the same place out of the same fountain. What a self-contradiction is the deceitful heart of man!

2. See what Christ said to this dispute. He was not sharp upon them, as might have been expected, he having so often reproved them, for this very thing, but mildly showed them the sin and folly of it.

(1.) This was to make themselves like the kings of the Gentiles, that affect worldly pomp, and with worldly power, v. 25. They exercise lordship over their subjects, and are ever and ever striving to exercise lordship too over the princes, that set themselves, though as good as themselves, to think them not so good as themselves. Note, the exercise of lordship better becomes the kings of the Gentiles than the ministers of Christ. But observe, They that exercise authority, and take upon themselves to bear sway, and give law, they are called Benefactors—Bene-dictors: they call themselves so, and so their flattering call them, and those that set themselves to serve their interests. It is proved, that they have been benefactors and not that account they should be admitted to have rule; nay, they, in exercising authority are they benefactors; however they really serve themselves, they would be thought to serve their country. One of the Ptolemies was named Bene-dictor—The Benefactor. Now our Saviour, by taking notice of this, intimates, (1.) That to do good is much more honorable than to look great; for these princes that were the terror of the mighty, would not be called so, but rather the benefactor of the needy; so that, by their own confession, a benefactor to his country is much more valued than a ruler of his country.

(2.) That to do good is the surest way to be great, else they that aimed to be rulers would not have been so solicitous to be called Benefactors: this therefore he would have his disciples believe, that their greatest honour would be to do all the good they could in the world. They would indeed be benefactors to the world, by bringing the gospel to others. Let them value themselves upon that title, which they would indeed be entitled to, and then they need not strive which should be the greatest, for they would all be greater; greater blessings to mankind than the kings of the earth, that exercise lordship over them. If they have that which is confessedly the greater honour of being benefactors, let them despise the lesser of being rulers.

(2.) It was to make themselves unlike the disciples of Christ, and unlike Christ himself; (v. 26, 27.) 'Ye shall not be so. It was never intended that ye should rule any other wise than by the power of
true and grace, but that you should serve." When church-rulers affect external pomp and power, and bear up themselves by secular interests and influence, they debase their office, and it is an instance of degeneracy like that of Israel when they would have a king like the nations that were round about them, whereas the Lord was their King. 

See here, [1.] What is the rule Christ gave to his disciples; He that is greater among you, that is ele-

cated; from any sort of pre-eminence is due upon the account of his age, let him be as the younger, both in point of frowness of place, (let him condescend to sit with the younger, and be free and familiar with them,) and in point of labour and work. We say, Juniores ad laborum, seniores ad honores—Let the young age and honour, instead of warranting them to take their case, bind them to double work. And he that is chief, the i.e., the president of the college or assembly, let him be as he that serves, 2: i.e., as the deacon, let him stoop to the meanest and most toilsome services for the public good, if there be oc-

[2.] What was the example which he himself gave to this rule; Whether is greater, he that sitteth at the head of a table, or he that is attended on? Now Christ was among his disciples, just like one that waited at table; he was so far from taking state, or taking his ease, by com-

manding their attendance upon him, that he was ready to do any office of kindness and service for them; witness his washing of their feet. Shall they take upon them the form of princes, who call them-

elves by the fullers of him that took upon him the form of a servant?

[3.] They ought not to strive for worldly honour and grandeur, because he had better honours in re-

serve for them, of another nature, a kingdom, a feast, a throne, for each of them, wherein they should be all share and share alike, and should have no occasion to strive for precedence, v. 28—30. Where observe,

[1.] The commendation Christ gives of the dis-

ciplcs for their faithfulness to him; and this was ho-

nour enough for them, they needed not to strive for any greater. It is spoken with an air of encomium and applause: Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, ye are the Lord's that have stood by me, and stuck to me, when others have de-

served me, and turned their backs upon me. [Christ here makes a parenthesis; he is desired to intercede for a number of men, reproached and reviled, and endured the contradiction of sinners. But his disciples continued with him, and were afflicted in all his afflictions. It was but little help that they could give him, or serv-

ice that they could do him; but however, he took it kindly that they continued with him, and he here owns their kindness, though it was by the assistance of his own grace that they did continue. Christ's disciples would be in heaven if they believed, and disbelieved, and found them guilty of many mistakes and weaknesses, they were very dull and very forgetful, and often blundered, yet their Master had passed all by, and forgotten it, does not upbraid them with their infirmi-

ties, but gives them this memorable testimonial, Ye are they who have continued with me. This does he praise at parting, to show how willing he is to move them to do that, whose hearts he knows to be upbight within them.

[2.] The recompense he designed them for their fidelity; I appoint, 3: I bequeath unto you a kingdom. Or thus, I appoint to you, as my Fa-

ther has appointed a kingdom to me, that ye may eat and drink at my table. Understand it.

First, Of what should be done for them in this world. God gave his Son a kingdom among men, the gospel-church, of which he is the living, quick ening, ruling Head; this kingdom he appointed to his apostles and their successors in the ministry of the gospel, that they should enjoy the comforts and privileges of the gospel, help to communicate them to others by gospel-ordinances, sit on thrones as officers of the church, not only declaratively, but as exhortatively judging the tribes of Israel, that per sist in their infidelity, and denouncing the wrath of God upon them. Secondly, In what they should continue; a. The richest dainties; for they shall eat and drink at Christ's table in his kingdom, of which he had spoken, v. 16, 18. They shall partake of those joys and pleasures which were the recompense of his services and sufferings. They shall have a full satisfaction of soul in the vision and fruition of God; and herein they shall have the best society, as at a feast, in the perfection of love. b. The highest dis-


gnors; they shall sit on thrones, as heads of the royal table, as Mephibosheth at David's, but you shall be preferred to the royal throne: shall sit down with me on my throne, Rev. 3. 21. In the great day you shall sit on thrones, as assessors with Christ, to approve of and applaud his judgment of the twelve tribes of Israel. "If the saints shall judge the world, (1 Cor. 6. 2.) much more the church."

Concerning Peter's denying of him. And in this part of the discourse we may observe,

1. The general notice Christ gives to Peter of the devil's design upon him and the rest of the apostles; v. 31. "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, observe what I say; Satan has desired to have you, to have you all in his hands, that he may sift you as wheat. Peter who used to be the mouth of the rest in speak-

ing to Christ, is here made the ear of the rest; and what is designed for warning to them all, (All you shall be offended because of me,) is directed to Pe-

ter, because he was principally concerned, being in a particular manner struck at by the tempter; Sa-
tan has desired to have you. Probably, Satan had accused the disciples to God, as mercenary in follow-

ing Christ, and aiming at nothing else therein but enriching and advancing themselves in this world, and not the glory and advantage of God. "No," said God, "they are honest men, and men of integrity." "Give me leave to try them," said Satan, "and Peter parti-
cularly." He desired to have them, that he might sift them, that he might show them to be chaff, and not wheat. The troubles that were now coming upon them, were sifting, would try what there was in them; but that was not all, Satan desired to sift them by his temptations, and encourage them to fall into sin, and to put them into a loss and hurry, as corn when it is sifted to bring the chaff uppermost, or rather to shake out the wheat, and leave nothing but the chaff. Observe, Satan could not sift them unless God gave him leave; he desired to have them, as he begged of God a permission to try and tempt. Epist.-He hath challenged you, has undertaken to prove you competent to carry on the work of the gospel, to endure the trials and sufferings of the gospel, only, the forerunners of you. Some suggest that Satan de-

manded leave to sift them, as their punishment for striving who should be greatest, in which contest Peter perhaps was very warm; "Leave them to me, to sift for them," says Peter.
ne is permitted to make his strongest onset upon thee only, then will be most violently assaulted; but I say, 13. If faith be kept up in an hour of temptation, though we may fall, yet we shall not be utterly cast down. Faith will quench Satan's fiery darts. (2.) Though there may be many failings in the faith of true believers, yet there shall not be a total and final failure of their faith. It is their seed, their root remaining. It is owing to the prayer made and intercession of Jesus Christ that the faith of his disciples, though sometimes sadly shaken, yet is not sunk. If they were left to themselves, they would fail; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The intercession of Christ is not only general, for all that believe, but for particular believers, I have prayed for thee, which is an encouragement for us to pray, and an engagement upon us to pray for others too.

3. The charge he gives to Peter to help others as he should himself be helped of God; "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren; when thou art recovered by the grace of God, and brought to repentance, do what thou canst to recover others; when thou hast found thy faith kept from failure, labour to confirm the faith of others, and to establish them, and not murmur against them, but rather than thyself, encourage others to hope that they also shall find mercy." Note, (1.) Those that are fallen into sin, must be converted from it; those that have turned aside, must return; those that have left their first love, must do their first works. (2.) Those that through grace are converted from sin, must do what they can to strengthen their brethren that stand, and prevent their falling; see Ps. 51. 12. 13. 1 Tim. 5. 13.

4. Peter's declared resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever it cost him; (v. 33.) "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. This was a great word, and yet I believe no more than he thought at this time, and thought he should make good too. Judas never protested thus against denying Christ, though often warned of it; for his heart was secretly set in him to the evil as Peter's was against it. Note, Christ did not refuse true repentance and conversion, for the sincerely desire and design to follow him, whithersoever he goes, and whithersoever he leads them, though into a prison, through out of the world.

5. Christ's express prediction of his denying him thrice; (v. 34.) "I tell thee, Peter, (though dost not know thou have heart, but must be left to thyself a little, that thou mayest know it, and mayest never trust to it again;) the cock shall not crow this day, before thou wilt deny that knowest me." Now, Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and knows the evil that is in us, and will be done by us, which we ourselves do not suspect. It is well for us that Christ knows where we are weak better than we do, and therefore where to come in with grace sufficient; that he knows how far a temptation will prevail, and therefore when to say, "Hither shalt it come, but shall not continue." Christ foretold nothing more than the truth, and what might have been, and what we feared, and thus he forewarned his disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind, (1 Pet. 4. 1.) arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no contradiction in us to it; and then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon inquired of him whether he should arm them with swords, (v. 38.) which was this: Christ, Peter's." The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples wearing of them. But how little he would have them depend upon that, he intimates when he saith, —

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It is enough; which, some think, is spoken ironi-
cally; "Two swords among twelve men, you are
bravely armed indeed, when our enemies are now
coming out against us in great multitudes, and every
one a sword." Yet two swords are our best
things, who need none, having God himself to be the
Shield of their hand and the Sword of their excellen-
ty, Deut. 32. 29.

39. And he came out, and went, as he
was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his
disciples also followed him. 40. And when
he was at the place, he said unto them,
Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41.
And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down,
and prayed. 42. Saying, Father, if thou
be willing, remove this cup from me: ne-
evertheless not my will, but thine, be done.
43. And there appeared an angel unto him
from heaven, strengthening him. 44. And
being in an agony, he prayed more ear-
nestly: and his sweat was as it were great
drops of blood falling down to the ground.
45. And when he rose up from prayer,
and was come to his disciples, he found
them sleeping for sorrow. 46. And said
unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray,
lest ye enter into temptation.

We have here the awful story of Christ's agony
in the garden, just before he was betrayed, which
was largely related by the other evangelists. In it
Christ accommodated himself to that part of his un-
derstanding which he was now entering upon—the
making of his soul an offering for sin. He afflicted
his own soul with grief for the sin he was to satisfy
for, and an apprehension of the wrath of God to
which man had by sin made himself obnoxious, which
he was pleased as a Sacrifice to admit the im-
port into the justice of God. He was therefore
strongly supported by an angel from heaven, being the surest token of its accep-
tance. In it Christ entered the lists with the powers
of darkness, gave them all the advantages they could
decline, and yet conquered them.

That which we have here in this story, which we
had before, is. 1. That, when Christ went out,
though it was in the night, and a long walk, yet his
disciples followed him, eleven of them, for Judas had
given them the slip. Having continued with him
hitherto in his temptations, they would not leave
him now. 2. That he went to the place where he
was wont to be private, which intimates that Christ
accustomed himself to retirement, was often alone,
to teach us to be so, for freedom of converse with
God and our own hearts. Though Christ had no
convenience for retirement but a garden, yet he re-
tained this habit in his public practice after we
had been at the Lord's table; we have then
work to do, which requires us to be private. 3.
That he exhorted his disciples to pray that though
the approaching trial could not be avoided, yet that
they might not in it enter into temptation to sin; that
when they were in the greatest fright and danger,
yet they might not have any inclination to desert
Christ, nor take a step towards it: "Pray that ye
may be kept from sin." 4. That he withdrew from
them, and prayed himself; they had their errands
at the throne of grace, and he had his, and there-
fore it was fit that they should pray separately, as
sometimes, when they had joint errands, they pray-
ed together. He withdrew about a stone's cast fur-
ther into the garden, which some reckon about fifty
or sixty paces, and there he kneeled down, (so it is
here,) upon the bare ground; but the other evan-
gelists say, that afterward he fell on his face, and
there he cried, 'My soul is grievous to me.' As if
they were the will of God, this cup of suffering, this bitterness of failure, might be "sought" from him. This was the language of that innocent
dread of suffering, which, being really and truly
Man, he could not but have in his nature. 5. That
he, knowing it to be his Father's will that he should
suffer and die, and that, as the matter was now set-
tled, it was necessary for our redemption and salva-
tion, presently withdrew that petition, did not insist
upon it, but resigned himself to his heavenly Fa-
ther's will; "Nevertheless not my will be done; not
the will of my human nature, but the will of God as
it is written concerning me in the volume of the book,
which I delight to do, let that be done," Ps. 40. 7,
8. 6. That his disciples were asleep when he was
at prayer, and when they should have been them-
selves praying, v. 45. When he rose from prayer,
he found them sleeping, unconcerned in his sorrows;
but see what a favourable construction is here put
upon it, which we had not in the other evangelists
—they were sleeping for sorrow. The great sor-
row they were in upon the mournful farewell's their
Master had been this evening giving them, had ex-
husted their spirits, and made them very dull and
heavy, which (it being now late) disposed them to
sleepiness. This was like the ship-masted vessel's and
children's infirmities, and if there be one cause better
than another, charitably impute them to that. 7.
That when he awakened them, then he exhorted them
to pray; (v. 46.) "Why sleep ye? Why do ye allow
yourselves to sleep? Rise and pray. Shake off your
drowsiness, that ye may be fit to pray, and pray for
grace, that ye may be able to shake off your drow-
siness." This was like the ship-master's advice to
Jonah in a storm; (Jon. 1. 6.) Arise, call upon thy
God. When we find ourselves either by our out-
ward circumstances or our inward dispositions en-
tering into temptation, it concerns us to rise and pray,
Lord, help me in this time of need.

But here are three things in this passage which we
had not in the other evangelists.

1. That, in the time of Christ's agony, there ap-
peared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening
him, v. 43. 1. It was an instance of the deep hu-
miliation of our Lord Jesus, that he needed the as-
sistance of an angel, and would admit it. The in-
fluence of the divine nature withdrew for the present,
and, as to his human nature, he was for a little
while lower than the angels, and was capable of re-
ceiving help from them. 2. When he was not de-
livered from his sufferings, yet he was strengthened
and supported under them, and that was equivalent.
If God proportion the shoulders to the burden, we
shall have no reason to complain, whatever he is
pleased to lay upon us. David owns this a sufficient
answer to his prayer, in the day of trouble, that God
strengthened him with strength in his soul, and so
does the Son of David, Ps. 130. 3. 5. The angels
were ministers of the most high God, and as the Son
of God could have had legions of them to rescue him;
aye, this one could have done it, could have chased
and conquered the whole band of men that came to take
him; but he made use of his ministration only to
strengthen him; and the very visit which this angel
made him now in his grief, when his enemies were
awake and his friends asleep, was such a seasonable
presence to him, the angels of the divine favor, as
would be a very great strengthening to him. Yet this
was not all; he, probably, said something to him, to
strengthen him; put him in mind that his sufferings were in order to his
Father's glory, to his own glory, and to the salvation
of those that were given him, represented to him the
joy set before him, the seed he should see; with

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these and the like suggestions he encouraged him to go on cheerfully; and what is comforting, is strengthening. Perhaps he did something to strengthen him, wiped away his sweat and tears, perhaps ministered some cordial to him, as after his temptation, or, it may be, took him by the arm, and helped him off the ground, or bore him up when he was ready to faint away; and in these services of the angel, the holy Spirit was working to strengthen him; for so the word signifies. It pleased the Lord to broil him indeed; yet did he put strength against his great power? No, but he put strength in him, (Job 23. 6.) as he had promised, Ps. 89. 21.

Ist. 49. 8.—50. 7.

1. That, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, v. 44. As his sorrow and trouble grew upon him, he grew more importunate in prayer; not that there was before any coldness or indifference in his prayers, but there was now a greater reverence in them, which was expressed in his voice and gesture. Note, Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable when we are in an agony; and the stronger our agonies are, the more lively and frequent our prayers should be. Now it was that Christ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, (Heb. 5. 7.) and in his fear sweat, as Jacob did after he saw a vision of his father, Gen. 31. 3. And therefore when Christ was made Sin and a Curse for us, he underwent a grievous sweat, that in the sweat of his face we might eat bread, and that he might sanctify and sweeten all our trials to us. It is some dispute among the critics, whether this sweat is only compared to drops of blood, being much thicker than drops of sweat commonly are, the pores of the body being more than ordinarily opened; or, that real blood out of the capillary veins mingled with it, so that it was in colour like blood, and might truly be called a bloody sweat; the matter is not great. Some reckon this one of the times when Christ shed his blood for us, for without shedding of blood there is no remission. Every pore was as it were a bleeding wound, and his blood stained all his raiment. This showed the travail of his soul. He was now abroad in the open air, in a cool season, upon the cold ground, far in the night, which, one would think, had been enough to strike in a sweat; yet now he breaks out into a sweat, which bespeaks the extremity of the agony he was in.

47. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50. And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53. When I was daily with you in the temple ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Satan, finding himself baffled in his attempt to terrify our Lord Jesus, and so to put him out of the possession of his own soul, betakes himself (according to his usual method) to force and arms, and brings a party into the field to seize him, and Satan was in them. Here is, I. The marking of him by Judas. Here a murderous party appears, and Judas at the head of them, for he was guide to them that took Jesus; they knew not where to find him, but he brought them to the place: when they were there, they knew not which was he; but Judas told them that whomever he should kiss, that same was he; so he drew near to him to kiss him, according to the warranted freedom and familiarity which our Lord Jesus admitted his disciples to amidst his enemies. Luke takes notice of the question Christ asked him, which we have not in the other evangelists; Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? What! Is that the signal? v. 48. Must the Son of man be betrayed, as if any thing could be concealed from him, and a plot carried on against him unknown to him? Must one of his own disciples betray him, as if he had been a hard Master to them, or deserved ill at their hands? Must he be betrayed with a kiss? Was ever a love-token so desecrated and abused? Note, Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed, and betrayed with a kiss, by those that profess relation to him, and an affection for him. These do so, who, under pretence of zeal for his honour, persecute his servants, who, under the cloak of a seeming affection for the honour of free-grace, had blow to the root of holiness and strictness of conversation. Many instances there are of Christ's being betrayed with a kiss, by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. It were well if their own consciences would put this question to them, which Christ here puts to Judas, Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? And will he not resent it? Will he not revenge it?

II. The effort with his disciples made for his protection; v. 47. When they therefore saw that their efforts would follow, that those armed men were come to seize him, they said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? Thou didst allow us to have two swords, shall we now make use of them? Never was there more occasion; and to what purpose should we have them, if we do not use them? They asked the question, as if they would not have drawn the sword without commission from their Master, but they were in too much haste and too much heat to stay for an answer. But Peter, aiming at the head of one of the servants of the High Priest, missed his blow, and cut off his right ear. As Christ by throwing them to the ground, that came to take him, showed what he could have done, so Peter, by this exploit, showed what he could have done too in so good a cause if he had had leave. The other evangelists tell us what was the check Christ gave to Peter for it. Luke here tells us, 1. How Christ excused the blow: Suffer ye thus far, v. 51. Dr. Whitby thinks he said this to his enemies who came to take him, to qualify them, that they might not be provoked by it to fall upon the disciples, whom he had undertaken the preservation of; "Pass by this injury and affront, it was without warrant from me, and there shall not be another blow struck. Though Christ had power to have struck them down, and struck them dead, yet he speaks their fair, and as it were, begets their pardon for an assault made upon them by one of his followers, to teach us to give good words even to our enemies. 2. How he cured the wound,
which was more than amends sufficient for the injury; He touched his ear and healed him; fastened his ear on again, that he might not so much as go away staggered, though he well deserved it. Christ hereby gave them a proof, (1.) Of his power. He that could heal, could destroy if he pleased, which should have obliged them in interest to submit to him. Had they returned the blow upon Peter, he would immediately have healed him; and what could not a small regiment of soldiers have done, in a Surgeon to it, immediately to help the sick and wounded? (2.) Of his mercy and goodness. Christ here gave an illustrious example to his own rule of doing good to them that hate us, as afterward he did of praying for them that despietly use us. Those who render good for evil, do as Christ did. One would have thought that this generous piece of kindness should have overcome them, that such cords, heaped on their heads, should have melted them, that they could not have bound him as a Malefactor, who had approved himself such a Benefactor; but their hearts were hardened.

III. Christ’s exultation with the officers of the detachment that came to apprehend him, to show what an absurd thing it was for them to make all this noise, with swords and staves. (1.) He was, as said to the multitude; Luke tells us that it was said to the chief priests and captains of the temple, who commanded the several orders of the priests, and therefore are here put between the chief priests and the elders, as the sacrament, they were all ecclesiastics, retainers to the temple, who were employed in this odious piece of service; and some of the first rank too disapproved themselves so far as to be seen in it. Now observe here,

1. How Christ reasons with them concerning their proceedings. What occasion was there for them to come out in the dead of the night, and with swords and staves? (1.) They knew that he was one that would not resist, or raise the mob against them, he never had done any thing like that. Why then are we come out against a thief? (2.) They knew he was one that would not absent, for he was daily with them in the temple, in the midst of them, and never sought to conceal himself, nor did they offer to lay hands on him. Before his hour was come, it was folly for them to think to take him; and when his hour was come, it was folly for them to make all this ado to take him.

2. How he reconciles himself to their proceedings. But he had not before said, “But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” How hard seaver it may seem that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined; this is the hour allowed you to have your will against me, there is an hour appointed me to reckon for it. Now the power of darkness, Satan, ruler of the darkness of this world, is permitted to do his worst, to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, and I resolve to acquiesce; let him have his victory, The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day, his hour, is coming.” Ps. 37. 13. Let this quiet us under the prevalence of the church’s enemies; let it quiet us in a dying hour, that, (1.) It is but an hour that is permitted for the triumph of our adversary, a short time, a limited time. (2.) It is their hour, which is appointed them, and in which they are permitted to try their strength, though humbled and perished may be the more glorified in their fall. (3.) It is the power of darkness that is ruled, and darkness must give way to light, and the power of darkness be made to trample to the Prince of light. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be so too.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest’s house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I know not. 59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilaean. 60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the melancholy story of Peter’s denying his Master, at the time when he was arraigned before the High Priest, with those that were of the church, who were ready to receive the prey, and to prepare the evidence of his arraignment, as soon as it was day, before the great Sanhedrim, v. 66. But notice is not taken here, as was in the other evangelists, of Christ’s being now upon his examination before the High Priest, only of his being brought into the High Priest’s house, v. 54. But the manner of expression is observable: they took him, and led him, and brought him, which methinks is like that concerning Saul, (1 Sam. 15. 13.) He is gone about, and passed on, and gone down; and intimates that, even when they had seized their prey, they were in confusion, and, for fear of the people, or, rather, struck with inward terror upon what they had seen and heard, they took him the furthest way about, or, rather, knew not which way they hurried him, such a hurry were they in in their own bosoms. Now observe,

I. Peter’s falling. 1. It began in sneaking. He followed Christ when he was led away prisoner, that was well, and showed a concern for his Master; but he followed afar off, that he might be out of danger. He thought to trim the matter; to follow Christ, and so to satisfy his conscience, but to follow afar off, and so to save his reputation, and sleep in a whole skin. 2. It proceeded in keeping his distance from Christ, and from his friends, and from his servants, when he should have been at his Master’s elbow. The servants kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and sat down together, to talk over their night-expedition. Probably, Malchus was among them, and Peter sat down among them, as if he had been one of them, at least would be thought to be so. 3. His fall itself was, disclaiming all acquaintance with his Master, and denying him, discovering him because he was now in distress and danger, and charged by a sorry, simple maid that belonged to the house, with being a retainer to this Jesus, about whom there was now so much noise. She looked wistly upon him as he sat by the fire, only because he was a stranger, and one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that at this time of night there were no neuters there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the High Priest, she concludes
Peter, Christ. I am not. And a third time, about the space of an hour after, (for, said the tempter, "When he is down, with him; let us follow the blow, till we get him past recovery," ) another confidently affirms, strenuously asserts it, "Of a truth this fellow also was with him, let him deny it if he can, for you may all perceive he is a Galilean." But he that has once told a lie, is strongly tempted to persist in it; the beginning of that sin is as the letting forth of water. Peter now not only denies that he is a disciple of Christ, but that he knows any thing of him; (v. 60.) "Min. I know not what thou sayest; I never heard of this Jesus." 11. Peter's getting up again. See how happily he recovered himself, or, rather, the grace of God recovers his broken spirit. 1. The cock crowed, just as he was the third time denying that he knew Christ; and this startled him, and put him upon thinking. Note, Small accidents may have great influences. 2. The Lord turned, and looked upon him. This circumstance we had not in the other evangelists, but it is a very remarkable one. Christ is here called the Lord. Though he had exalted himself, he afterwards humbled himself again. He had chosen him to be his special disciple, and now he looks upon him and sees the deceitfulness of a carnal and worldly spirit, and then, as it were, abandons him. 3. And he went out, and wept bitterly. One look from Christ melted him into tears of godly sorrow for sin. The candle was newly put out, and then a little thing lighted it again. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as he did on Peter, who had the divine seed remaining in him to work upon. It was not the look from Christ, but the grace of God with it, that recovered Peter, and brought him to rights. 63. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee! 65. And many other things blasphemously speak they against him. 66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 66. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. We are here told, as before in the other gospels, 1. How our Lord Jesus was abused by the servants of the High Priest. The cejntje gathered the men together against him, the rude and barbarous servants. They that held Jesus, that had him in custody till the court sat, they mocked him, and smote him, (v. 63.) they would not allow him to refuse himself one minute, though he had had no sleep all night, nor to compose himself though he was hurried to his trial, and no time given him to prepare for it. They made sport with him; this sorrowful night to him shall be a merry night to them; and the blessed Jesus, like Samson, is made the Fool in the play. They hood-winked him, and then, according to the common play that young people have among them, they struck him on the face, and continued to do so till he named the person that smote him, (v. 64.) intending thereby an affront to his prophetic office, and that knowledge of secret things, which he was said to have. We are not told that he said anything, but how every one he was let alone, and he suffered it to do its worst. A greater indignity could not be done to the blessed Jesus, yet this was but one instance of many; for, (v. 65.) many other things blasphemously speak they against him. They that
condemned him for a Blasphemer, were themselves the vilest blasphemers that ever were.

11. How he was accused and condemned by the great sanhedrin, consisting of the elders of the people, the chief priests and the scribes, who were all up betimes, and got together as soon as it was day, about five of the clock in the morning, to prosecute this matter. They were working this evil upon their beds, and, as soon as ever the morning was light, for instance, and how. They would not have been up so early for any good work.

It is but a short account that we have here of his trial in the ecclesiastical court.

1. They ask him, Art thou the Christ? He was generally believed by his followers to be the Christ, but they could not prove it upon him that he had ever said so totidem verbis—in so many words, and therefore urge him to own it to them, v. 67. If they had asked him this question with a willingness to admit that he was the Christ, and to receive him accordingly, if he could give sufficient proof of his being so, it had been well, and might have been for ever well with them; but they asked it with a resolution not to believe him, but a design to ensnare him.

2. He justly complained of their unfair and unjust usage of him. The whole, all, as Jews, professed to expect the Messiah, and expected him at this time; no other appeared, or had appeared, that pretended to be the Messiah, he had no competitor, nor was he likely to have any; he had given amazing proofs of a divine power going along with him, which made his claims very well worthy of a free and impartial inquiry; it had been but just for these leaders of the people, to have taken him into their council, and examined him there as a Candidate for the Messiahship, not at the bar as a Criminal; "But," saith he, (1.) "If I tell you that I am the Christ, and give you ever such convincing proofs of it, you are resolved that you will not believe. Why should the cause be brought on before you who have already prejudiced it, and are resolved, right or wrong, to run it down, and to condemn it?" (2.) "If I ask you what you have to object against the proofs I produce, you will not answer me." Here he refers to their silence when he put a question to them, which would have led them to own his authority, ch. 20. 5—7. They were neither fair judges, nor fair disputants; but, when they were pinched with an argument, would rather be silent than own their conviction: "You will neither answer me, nor let me go; If I have asked you the Christ, you ought to answer the arguments with respect to it and, if you cannot, be, you ought to let me go; but you will do neither."

3. He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their conviction, since they would not now admit the proof of it, to their conviction; (v. 69.) "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit, and be seen to sit, on the right hand of the power of God, and then you will not need to ask with me, but know it of a truth." (v. 70.)

4. Hence they inferred that he set up himself as the Son of God, and asked him whether he were so or no; (v. 7.) "Art thou then the Son of God? He called himself the Son of man, referring to Daniel's vision of the Son of man that came near the Ancient of days, Dan. 7. 13, 14. But they understood so much as to know that if he was that Son of man, he was the Son of God. Art thou son of God? By this it appears to have been the faith of the Jewish church, that the Messiah should be both Son of man, and Son of God.

5. He owns himself to be the Son of God; Ye say that I am; that is, "I am, as ye say." Compare Mark 14. 62. Jesus said, I am. This confirms Christ's testimony concerning himself, that he was the Son of God, that he stood to it, when he knew he should suffer for standing to it.

6. Upon this they ground his condemnation; (v. 71.) What need ye any further witness? It was true, they needed not any further witness to prove that he said he was the Son of God, they had it from his own mouth; but did they not need proof that he was not so, before they condemned him as a Blasphemer for saying that he was so? Had they no apprehension that it was possible he might be so, and then what horrid guilt they should bring upon themselves in putting him to death? No, they knew not, neither will they understand. They cannot think it possible that he should be the Messiah, though ever so evidently clothed with divine power and grace, if he appear not, as they expect, in worldly pomp and grandeur. Their eyes being blinded with the admiration of that, they rush on in this dangerous prosecution, as the horse into the battle.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter carries on and concludes the history of Christ's sufferings and death. We have here, I. His arraignment before Pilate the Roman governor, v. 1—5. II. His examination before Herod, who was tetrarch of Galilee, under the Romans likewise, v. 6—12. III. Pilate's struggle with the people to release Jesus, his repeated testimonies concerning his innocency, but his yielding at length to their importunity, and condemning him to be crucified, v. 13—25. IV. An account of his sufferings on the cross, v. 26—35. V. An account of what passed at the place of execution, and the indignities done there, v. 32—35. VI. The conversation of the Jews and people of the Romans, v. 36—44. VII. The death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, v. 44—49. VIII. His burial, v. 50—56.

1. AND the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.
Our Lord Jesus was condemned as a Blasphemer in the spiritual court, but it was the most impotent malice that could be that that court was actuated by; for when they had condemned him, they knew they could not put him to death, and therefore took another course to accuse him before Pilate. The whole multitude of them arose, when they saw they could go no further with him in their court, and led him unto Pilate, though it was no judgment day, no assizes or sessions, and they demand justice against him, not as a Blasphemer, (that was no crime that he took cognizance of,) but as one disaffected to the Roman government; which they in their hearts did not believe he was, their device was, they, themselves were more much more chargeable with it than he was; only it would serve the turn and answer the purpose of their malice: and it is observable, that that which was the pretended crime, for which they employed the Roman powers to destroy Christ, was the real crime, for which the Roman powers not long after destroyed them.

1. Here is the indictment drawn up against him, (v. 2.) in which these are included for Caesar, only to ingratiate themselves with Pilate, but it was all malice against Christ, and nothing else. They misrepresented him, (1.) As making the people rebel against Caesar. It is true, and Pilate knew it, that there was a general uneasiness in the people under the Roman yoke, and they wanted nothing but an opportunity to shake it off; now they would have Pilate find a way to have spread this general discontent, which, if the truth was known, they themselves were the leaders and abetters of: We have found him perverting the nation; as if converting them to God's government were perverting them from the civil government; whereas, nothing tends more to make men good subjects than making them Christ's faithful followers. Christ had particularly taught his people to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to Christ the things that are Christ's; through which, he knew there were those that would be offended at him for it; and yet he is here falsely accused, as forbidding to give tribute to Caesar. Innocency is no fence against calumny. (2.) As making himself a Rival with Caesar, though the very reason why they rejected him, and would not own him to be the Messiah, was, because he did not appear in worldly pomp and power, and did not set up for himself a temporal kingdom, and to do anything against Caesar; yet that is it they charged him with, that he said, He himself is Christ a King. He did say that he was Christ, and if so, then a King, but not such a King as was ever likely to give disturbance to Caesar. When his followers would have made him a King, (John 6. 15.) he declined it, though by the many miracles he wrought he made it appear that if he would have set up in competition with Caesar, he would have been too good a King.

2. His pleading to the indictment; Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? v. 3. To which he answered, Thou sayest it; that is, It is as thou sayest, that I am entitled to the government of the Jewish nation; but in rivalryship with the scribes and Pharisees, who tyrannize over them in matters of religion, not in rivalryship with Caesar, whose government is purely temporal. It was one of Christ's remarks that his kingdom was wholly spiritual, and will not interfere with Caesar's jurisdiction. Or, Thou sayest it; but canst thou prove it? What evidence hast thou for it? All that know him, know the contrary, that he never pretended to be the King of the Jews, in opposition to Caesar as supreme, or to the governors that were sent by him, but the contrary.

3. Pilate's declaration of his innocency; (v. 4.) He said to the chief priests, and the people, that seemed to join with them in the prosecution, I find no fault in this man. What breaches of your law he may have been guilty of, I am not concerned to inquire, but I find nothing proved upon him, that makes him obnoxious to our court.

4. The continued fury and outrage of the prosecutors, v. 5. Instead of being moderated by Pilate's declaration of his innocency, and considering, as they ought to do, whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, they were the more exasperated; more exceeding here. We do not find that they have any particular fact to produce, much less any evidence to prove it; but they resolve to carry it with noise and confidence, and say it, though they cannot prove it; He is a Rival of the people to rebel against Caesar, teaching through him to set up another King against Caesar. He did stir up the people, but it was not to any thing factions or seditions, but to every thing that was virtuous and praise-worthy. He did teach, but they could not charge him with teaching any doctrine that tended to disturb the public peace, or make the government uneasy or jealously us.

II. They accuse him before Herod.

Pilate removed him to Herod's court. The accusers mentioned Galilee, the northern part of Canaan. Why, said Pilate, is he of that country? Is he a Galilean? v. 6. Yes, they said, that is his head-quarters; there he has spent most of his time. Let us send him to Herod, then, said Pilate, for Herod is now in town, and it is but fit he should have cognizance of his case, since he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate had told Herod that it was a fit thing to have some desire to rid his hands of it, and that seems to be the true reason for sending him to Herod. But God ordered it so for the more evident fulfilling of the scripture, as appears Acts 4. 26, 27. where that of David, (Ps. 2. 2.) The kings of the earth and the rulers set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, is expressly said to be fulfilled in Herod and Pontius Pilate.

2. Herod was very willing to him, the examining of him; (v. 8.) When he saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; and perhaps the more glad because he saw him a prisoner, saw him in bonds. He had heard many things of him in Galilce, where his miracles had for a great while been all the talk of the country; and he longed to see him, not for any affection he had for him or his doctrine, but purely out of curiosity; and it was only to gratify that, he had longed to have heard him, and what sort of doctrine it was that would serve him to talk of as long as he lived. In order to this, he questioned with him in many things, that at length he might bring him to something in which he might show his power. Perhaps he pumped him concerning things secret, or things to come, or concerning his curing of diseases. But Jesus answered him nothing; nor would he gratify him so much as with the repetition of one miracle of the poor blind beggar, that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was never denied; but this proud prince, that asked a miracle merely for the gratifying of his curiosity, is denied; he might have seen Christ and his wondrous works many a time in Galilee, and would not, and therefore it is justly said, Now he would see them, and shall not; they are hid from his eyes, because he knew not the day of his visitation, and would not, as it were, that he had him in bonds, he might command a miracle, but miracles must not be made cheap, nor Omnipotence be at the back of the greatest potentate.

3. His prosecutors appeared against him before Herod, for they were restless in the prosecution; They stood and vehemently accused him, (v. 10.) impatiently and boldly, so the word signifies. They might have made certain to the end he had SIDEED Galilee too with his seditions notions. Note, It is no new thing for good men and good ministers, and who are real and useful friends to the civil government,
to be falsely accused as factious and seditions, and enemies to government.

4. Herod was very abusive to him; He, with his men of war, his attendants and officers, and great men, set him at naught. They made nothing of him; so the word is. Horrid wickedness! To make nothing of him who made all things. They laughed at him as a Fool; for they knew he had wrought many miracles to befriend others, and why would he not now work one to befriend himself? Or, they laughed at him as one that had lost his power, and was become weak as other men. Herod, who had been acquainted with John Baptist, and had more knowledge of Christ too, than Pilate had, was more abusive to Christ than Pilate was; for knowledge without grace, does but make men the more ingeniously wicked. Herod arrayed Christ in a gorgeous robe, some gaudy, painted clothes, as a mocking; and so he taught Pilate's soldiers afterwards to do him the same indignity. He was ringleader in that abuse.

5. Herod returned him to Pilate, and it proved an occasion of the making of them friends, they having been for some time before at variance. Herod could not get sight of a miracle, but would not condemn him neither as a malefactor, and therefore sent him again to Pilate, (v. 11.) and so returned Pilate's civility and respect in sending the Prisoner to him; and this mutual obligation, with the messages that passed between them on this occasion, brought them to a better understanding one of another than there had been of late between them, v. 12. They had been at enmity between themselves, probably upon Pilate's killing the Gallicians, who were Herod's subjects, (Luke 13. 1.) or some other such matter of controversy as usually occurs among princes and great men. Observe how these that quarrelled with one another, yet could unite against Christ; as Gebal, and Amonen, and Amidek, though divided among themselves, were confederate against the Israel of God, Ps. 83. 7. Christ is the great Peace-Maker; both Pilate and Herod owned his innocence, and their agreeing in that cured their disagreeing in other things.

13. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him: and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20. Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

We have here the blessed Jesus run down by the mob, and hurried to the cross in the storm of a popular passion and tumult raised by the malice and artifice of the chief priests, as agents for the prince of the power of the air.

I. Pilate solemnly protests that he believes he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And if he did believe so, he ought immediately to have discharged him, and not only so, but to have protected him from the fury of the priests and rabble, and to have bound his hands, and put them to their good behaviour for their insolent conduct. But, being himself a bad man, he had no kindness for Christ; and having made himself otherwise obnoxious, was afraid of displeasing either the emperor or the people; and therefore, for want of integrity, he called together the chief priests, and rulers and people, (whom he should have dispersed, as a rotten and sedulous assembly, and forbid them to come near him,) and will hear what they had to say, whom he should have turned a deaf ear, for he plainly saw what spirit actuated them; (v. 14.) “You have brought” (saith he) “this man to me, and because I have a respect for you, I have examined him before you, and have heard all you have to allege against him, and I can make nothing of it, I find no fault in him, you cannot prove the things whereof you accuse him.”

II. He appeals to Herod concerning this matter, (v. 15.) “I sent you to him, who is supposed to have known more of him than I have done, and he has sent him back, not convicted of any thing, nor under any mark of his displeasure; in his opinion, his crimes are not capital. He has laughed at him as a weak Man, but has not stigmatized him as a dangerous Man.” He thought Bedlam a fitter place for him than Tyburn.

III. He purposes to release him, if they will but consent to it. He ought to have done it without asking leave of them, Fiat justitia, rust caelum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated. But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that, whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release him, to please the people. 1. He will release him under the notion of a Malefactor, because of necessity he must release one; (v. 17.) so that whereas he ought to have been released by an act of justice, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an act of force, and not he beholden to the people for it. 2. He will chastise him, and release him. If no fault be to be found in him, why should he be punished? To save him, he ought to have done it without asking leave of them, Fiat justitia, rust caelum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated. But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that, whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release him, to please the people. 1. He will release him under the notion of a Malefactor, because of necessity he must release one; (v. 17.) so that whereas he ought to have been released by an act of justice, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an act of force, and not he beholden to the people for it. 2. He will chastise him, and release him. If no fault be to be found in him, why should he be punished? To save him, he ought to have done it without asking leave of them, Fiat justitia, rust caelum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated. But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that, whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release him, to please the people. 1. He will release him under the notion of a Malefactor, because of necessity he must release one; (v. 17.) so that whereas he ought to have been released by an act of justice, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an act of force, and not he beholden to the people for it. 2. He will chastise him, and release him. If no fault be to be found in him, why should he be punished? To save him, he ought to have done it without asking leave of them, Fiat justitia, rust caelum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated.
this man, and release unto us Barabbas. And no
wonder that such a man is the favourite and darling of
such a mob, he that was really seditioner, rather
than he that was really loyal, and falsely accused of
sedition.

V. When Pilate urged the second time that Christ
should be released, they cried out, Crucify him, cru-
cify him, v. 30, 31. They not only will have him
die, but they will have him die so great a death; nothing
tless will serve but he must be crucified; Crucify
him, crucify him.

VI. When Pilate the third time reasoned with
them, to show them the unreasonable and injus-
tice of it, they were the more peremptory and out-
rageous; (v. 32.) Why? What evil hath he done?
Name his crime. I have found no cause of death,
and you cannot say what cause of death you have
found in him; and therefore if you will but speak
the word, I will chastise him, and let him go." But
popular fury, the more it is complimented, the more
furious it grows; they were instant with loud voices,
with great noises or outcries, not requesting, but
requiring that he might be crucified; as if they had
as much right, at the least, to demand the crucifying
of one that was innocent, as the release of one that
was guilty.

VII. Pilate's yielding, at length, to their impon-
tunty. The voice of the people and of the chief
priests prevailed and were too hard for Pilate, and
overruled him to go contrary to his convictions and
inclinations. He had not courage to go against so
strong a stream, but gave sentence that it should be
as they required, v. 24. Here is judgment turned
away backward, and justice standing afar off, for
fear of popular fury. Truth is fallen in the street,
and equity cannot enter, Isa. 59. 14. Judgment was
looked for, but behold, oppression; righteousness,
but behold, a cry, Isa. 5. 7. This is repeated, v. 25.
with the aggravating circumstance of the release of
Barabbas; He released unto them him that for sedi-
tion and murder was cast into prison, who hereby
would be hardened in his wickedness, and do the
more mischief, but will find him more than they had
desired, being altogether such a one as themselves, but he deliver-
ed Jesus to their will; and he could not deal more
barbarously with him than to deliver him to their
will, who hated him with a perfect hatred, and whose
tender mercies were cruelties.

26. And as they led him away, they laid
hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming
out of the country, and on him they laid
the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.
27. And there followed him a great com-
pamy of people, and of women, which also
bewailed and lamented him. 28. But Je-
sus turning unto them, said, Daughters of
Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for
yourselves, and for your children. 29. For,
behold, the days are coming, in the which they
shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the
wombs that never bare, and the paps which
gave suck, 30. Then shall they begin to say to
the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover
us. 31. For if they do these things in a green
tree, what shall be done in the dry?

We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of
God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice.
It is strange with what expedition they went through
his trial; how they could do so much work in so
little time, though they had so many great men to
deal with, attendance on whom is usually a work
of time. He was brought before the chief priests at
break of day, (ch. 22. 66.) after that to Pilate, then
to Herod, then to Pilate again; and there seems to
have been a long struggle between Pilate and the
people about him. He was scourged, and crowned
with thorns, and contumeliously used, and all this
was done in fourteen or five hours' time, or six or
more, for he was crucified between the ninth and
twelfth. Christ's persecutors resolve to lose no time, for fear
lest his friends at the other end of the town should
get notice of what they were doing, and should rise
to rescue him. Never any one was so chased out of
the world as Christ was, but so he himself said, yet
a little while, and ye shall not see me; a very little
while indeed.

How as they led him away to death we find,
1. That one was a bearer, that carried his cross,
Simon in name, a Cyrenian, who probably, was
a friend of Christ, and was known to be so, and this
was done to put a reproach upon him; they laid
Christ's cross upon him, that he might bear it after
Jesus, (v. 26.) lest Jesus should faint under it and
die away, and so prevent the further instances of
malice they designed. It was a pity, but a cruel
fate, that gave him this case.

11. Many that were mourners, true mourners,
who followed him, bewailing and lamenting him.
These were not only his friends and well-wishers,
but the common people, that were not his enemies,
and were moved with compassion toward him, be-
cause they had heard the fame of him, and what
an excellent, useful Man he was, and had reason
to think he suffered justly; this drew a great crowd
after him, as is usual at executions, especially of
those that have been persons of distinction. A great
company of people followed him, especially of
women; (v. 27.) some led by pity, others by curiosity,
but they also (as well as those that were his particu-
lar friends and acquaintance) bewailed and lamented
him. Though there were many that reproached and
reviled him, yet there were some that valued him,
and pitied him, and were sorry for him, and were
partakers with him in his sufferings. The dying
of the Lord Jesus may perhaps meet natural affec-
tions in many that are strangers to devout affec-
tions, many bewail Christ, that do not believe in him
and lament him, that do not love him above all.

Now here we are told what Christ said to these
mourners; though one would think he should be
wholly taken up with his own concern, yet here he
began to take compassion of their tears. Christ
died lamented, and has a bottle for the tears
of those that lamented him. He turned to them,
though they were strangers to him, and bid them
not weep for him, but for themselves; he diverts
their lamentation into another channel, v. 29.

1. He gives them a general direction concerning
their lamentations: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep
not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your
children. 29. For, behold, the days are coming,
in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren,
and the wombs that never bare, and the paps
which never gave suck, 30. Then shall they begin
to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the
hills, Cover us. 31. For if they do these things in
a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?
it was our deliverance, and the purchase of eternal life for us. And therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, that were the cause of his death; and weep for fear (such were the tears here prescribed) of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves, if we slight his love, and reject his grace, as the Jewish nation did, which brought upon them the ruin here foretold. When our dear relations and friends die in Christ, we should weep for fear that they themselves, having put off the burden of the flesh, are made perfect in holiness, and are entered into perfect rest and joy, but for ourselves and our children, who are left behind in a world of sins, and sorrows, and snares. 

2. He gives them a particular reason why they should weep for themselves and for their children; "For behold, sad times are coming upon your city, it will be destroyed, and it will be terrifical to these common destruction." When Christ's own disciples sorrowed after a godly sort for his leaving them, he wiped away their tears with the promise that he would see them again, and they should rejoice, John 16. 22. But when these daughters of Jerusalem bewail him only with a worldly sorrow, he turned their tears into another channel, and told them that they should have something given them to cry for. Let them weep, and wail, and weep, and wail, and let them weep over him, and weep over Jerusalem, and now he bids them weep over it. Christ's tears should set us a weeping. Let the daughters of Zion, that own Christ for their King, rejoice in him, for he comes to save them; but let the daughters of Jerusalem, that only weep for him, but do not take him for their King, weep and tremble to think of his coming to judge them. 

Now the destruction of Jerusalem is here foretold by two proverbial sayings that might then fitly be used, which both bespeak it very terrible, that what people commonly dread they would then desire, to be written childless, and to be buried alive. (1.) They would wish to be written childless. Whereas common sense, that have no children, envy those that have, as Rachel envied Leah, then these that have children, will find them such a burden in attending them to escape, and such a grief when they see them either fasting for famine or falling by the sword, that they will envy those that have none, and say, Blessed are the barren, and the womb that never bare, that have no children to be given up to the murderer, or to be snatched out of his hands. It would not only gill with those who at that time were with child, or giving suck, as Christ had said, (Matth. 23. 13.) but it would be reproved to those common destruction. 

(2.) They would wish to be buried alive. It might make some wonder, why Christ thus should mention it. But let us consider, as he had said of the mountains, (see Mat. 23. 32.) "Behold, I make thee as a monument," so he here speaks of the mountains. He fell on us, and to the hils, Cover us. This also refers to a passage in the same prophecy with the former, Hos. 10. 8. They shall wish to be hid in the darkest caves, that they might be out of the noise of these calamities. They will be willing to be sheltered upon any terms, though with the hazard of being crushed to pieces. This would be the language, especially of the great and mighty who should be involved in this confusion. They that would not flee to Christ for refuge, and put themselves under his protection, will in vain call to hills and mountains to shelter themselves from his wrath. 

3. He shows how natural it was for them to infer that desolation from his sufferings; (v. 31.) If they had suffered in a green tree, what would be done in the dry? Some think that this is borrowed from Ezek. 20. 47. The fire shall devour evergreen trees in them, and every dry tree. These words may be applied. (1.) Mere particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and which the Jews by putting him to death brought upon themselves; "If they (the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) do these things upon the green tree, if they do thus abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for their doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt tree, and wicked generation, and good for nothing! If this be their sin, what do you think will be their punishment?" Or take it thus; "If they (the Romans, their judges, and their soldiers) abuse me thus, who have given them no provocation, who am to them as a green tree, which you seem to be as much enraged at, what will they do by Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, who will be so very provoking to them, and make themselves as a dry tree, as fuel to the fire of their resentments? If God suffer those things to be done to me, what will he appoint to be done to those barren trees, of whom it hath been often said, that they should be hewn down and cast into the fire?" Matth. 3. 10.—7. 19. (2.) They may be applied more generally to all the revelations of God's wrath against his enemies; and God will deliver me up to such sufferings as these, because I am made a sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves? Christ was a green Tree, fruitful and flourishing; now if such things were done to him, we may from thence infer what should have been done to the whole race of mankind, if he had not interposed, and what shall be done to those that continue dry trees, notwithstanding all that is done to make them fruitful. If God did this to the Son of his love, when he found but sin imputed to him, what shall he do to the generation of his wrath, when he finds sin reigning in them? If the Father were pleased in doing these things to the green tree, why should he be loath to do it to the dry? Note, The consideration of the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus should engage us to stand in awe of the justice of God, and to tremble before him. The best saints, compared with Christ, are dry trees. If he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer? And what then shall the damnation of sinners be? 

33. And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. 35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar. 37. And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. 38. And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40. But the
other answering, rebuked him, saying, Do not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation! 11. And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 13. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In these verses, we have,

1. Divers passages which we had before in Matthew and Mark, concerning Christ's sufferings.
2. That there were two others, malefactors, led with him to the place of execution; who, it is probable, had been for some time men to do so to death, and were designed to be executed at this day, which was, probably, the pretence for making such haste in the prosecution of Christ, that he and these two malefactors might be executed together, and one solemnity might serve.
3. That he was crucified at a place called Calvary, against, the Greek name for Calvary—

‘The place of a skull;’ an ignominious place, to add to the reproach of his sufferings, but significant, for this the place as it was upon his own longhill. He was crucified; his hands and feet were nailed to the cross as it lay upon the ground; and then it was lifted up, and fastened into the earth, or some socket to receive it. This was a painful and shameful death above any other.

4. That the soldiers who were employed in the execution, seized his garments as their fee, and divided them among themselves by lot; They parted his raiment, and cast lots; it was worth so little, that, if it were divided, it would come to next to nothing, and therefore they cast lots for it.

5. That he was reviled and reproached, and treated with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, when he was lifted up upon the cross. It was strange that so much barbarity should be found in the human nature: The people stood beholding, not at all concerned, but rather pleasing themselves with the spectacle; and the rulers, whom from their office one would take to be men of sense and men of honour, they stood among the rabbie, and derided him, to set those on that were about them to do so; and they said, He saved others, let him save himself.

Thus he was upbraided for the good works he had done, as if it were indeed for these that they crucified him. They triumph over him as if they had conquered him, whereas he was himself then more than a conqueror; they challenge him to save himself from the cross, when he was saving others by the cross: 

If he be the Christ, the chosen of God, let him save himself. At this time they knew that the Christ is the chosen of God; designed by him, and dear to him. If he, as the Christ, would deliver our nation from the Romans, (and they could not form any other idea than that of the Messiah,) let him deliver himself from the Romans that have him now in their hands. Thus the Jewish rulers jeered him as captivated by the Romans, instead of subduing them. The Roman soldiers jeered him as the King of the Jews, as if he were not entitled enough to that prerogative, and a prince and a prince good enough for such a people. They mocked him, (v. 35, 37.) they made sport with him, and made a jest of his sufferings; and when they were drinking sharp, sour wine themselves, as was generally all ‘ted them, they triumphantly asked him if he would pledge them, or drink with them. And they said, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. Is this the Jews, and the Roman soldiers, excited under the notion of a pretended Messiah, so the Roman, under the notion of a pretended King.

6. That the superscription over his head, setting forth his crime, was, This is the King of the Jews. 38. He is put to death for pretending to be the King of the Jews; so they meant it; but God intended it to be a declaration of what he really was, not with starting his claim for the King of the Jews, the Christ, the King of the church, and his cross is the way to his crown. This was written in those three languages, that it might be known and read of all men; but God designed it to signify that the gospel was to be preached in three languages, so by it he intended that, by the preaching of the gospel in all languages, the Gentile philosophy made the Greek tongue famous, the Roman laws and government made the Latin tongue so, and the Hebrew excelled them all for the sake of the Old Testament. In these three languages is Jesus Christ proclaimed King. Young scholars that are taking pains at school to make themselves masters of these three languages, some of these I think, they may increase their acquaintance with Christ.

II. Here are two passages which we had not before, and they are very remarkable ones.

1. Christ's prayer for his enemies; (v. 54.) Father, forgive them. Seven remarkable words Christ spoke after he was nailed to the cross, and before he died, and this is the first. One reason why he died the death of the cross was, that he might have liberty of speech to the last, and so might glorify his Father, and edify those about him. As soon as ever he was fastened to the cross, or while they were nailing him, he prayed this prayer: in which, observe,

(1.) The petition: Father, forgive them. One would think that he should have prayed, ‘Father, consume them;’ the Lord look upon it, and requite it. The sin they were now guilty of, might justly have been visited upon the Roman government and nation; but, it is the height of mercy, they have been excepted by name out of the act of intensity. No, these are particularly prayed for. Now he made intercession for transgressors, as was foretold, (Isa. 53. 12.) and it is to be added to his prayer, John 17, to complete the specimen he gave of his intercession within the vail; that for saints, this for sinners. Now the sayings of Christ upon the cross, as well as his sufferings had a further reach than they seemed to have. This was a mediating word, and expiatory of the intent and meaning of his death; ‘Father forgive them, not only these, but all that shall repent, and believe the gospel;’ and he did not intend that these should be forgiven upon any other terms. ‘Father, that which I am now suffering and dying for, is in order to this, that poor sinners may be pardoned.’ Note, [1.] The great things which Christ died to purchase, the present pressure for us, is, the forgiveness of sin. [2.] This is that which Christ intercedes for, all that repent and believe in the virtue of his satisfaction: his blood speaks this, Father, forgive them. [3.] The greatest sinners may, through Christ, upon their repentance, hope to find mercy. Father, forgive them; though they were his persecutors and murderers.

(2.) The plea: For they knew not what they did. If they had known, they would not have crucified him, 1 Cor. 2, 8. There was a veil upon his glory and upon their understandings; and how could they see through two vails? They wished his blood on them and their children; but had they known what they did, they would have unwished it again
Note, [1.] The crucifiers of Christ know not what they do. They that speak ill of religion, speak ill of that which they know not, and it is because they will not know it. [2.] There is a kind of ignorance that does in part excuse sin; ignorance through want of the means of knowledge, or of a capacity to receive instruction, through the infelicities of education itself. These crucifiers kept in ignorance by their rulers, and had prejudices against him instilled into them, so that in what they did against Christ and his doctrine they thought they did God service, John 16. 2. Such are to be pitied and prayed for. This prayer of Christ was answered not long after, when many of those that had a hand in his death, were converted by Peter. This is written also for example to us. First, We must in prayer call God Father, and come to him with reverence and confidence, as children to a father. Secondly, The great thing we must beg of God, both for ourselves and others, is the forgiveness of sins. Thirdly, We must pray for our enemies, and those that hate and persecute us; must extenuate their sins, and pray for them; for as we must ourselves: (They know not what they do, periadventure it was an oversight;) and we must be earnest with God in prayer for the forgiveness of their sins, his sins against us. This is Christ’s example to his own rule, (Matth. 5. 44, 45.) Love your enemies; and it very much strengthens the rule, for if Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enmity is our love, which we are not obliged to love and pray for? 2. The conversion of the thief upon the cross, which is an illustrious instance of Christ’s triumphing over principalities and powers, then when he seemed to be triumphed over by them. Christ was crucified between two thieves, and in them were represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men, to whom it would be brought near in the preaching of the gospel. They are all malefactors, all guilty before God. Now the cross of Christ is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them that are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God. (1.) Here was one of these malefactors, that was hardened to the last. Near to the cross of Christ, he railed on him, as others did; (v. 39.) he said, If thou be the Christ, as they say thou art, save thyself and us. Though he was now in pain and agony, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet that did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his fellow-sufferer. Though thou pray a fou in a mortar, yet will not the foolishness thereof depart from him. No troubles will fit themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they irritate the corruption which, one would think, they should mortify. He challenges Christ to save both himself and them. Note, There are some that have the impudence to call upon Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and to conclude that, if he do not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour. (2.) Here was the other of them, that was softened at the last. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that, though the thieves, even they that were crucified with him, reviled him, which, some think, is by a figure put for one of them; but others think that they both reviled him at first, till the heart of one of them was wounded, and had its language changed, and with it his heart. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a lion disappointed of his prey. This gives no encouragement to any to put off their repentance to their death-bed, or to hope that then they shall find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure that they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure that he may repent now, and thereby have his own advantages, and the penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. He never had any offer of Christ, nor day of grace, before now: he was designed to be made a singular instance of the power of Christ’s grace, now at a time when he was crucified in weakness. Christ, having conquered Satan in the destruction of Judas, and the preservation of Peter, procured this another trophy of his victory over him in the conversion of this malefactor, or as a specimen of what he would do. We shall see the case to be extraordinary, if we observe. [1.] The extraordinary operations of God’s grace upon him, which appeared in what he said. Here were so many evidences given in a short time of a blindness of heart, and of a mind that must not have been in so little a compass. First, See what he said to the other malefactor, v. 40, 41. 1. He reproved him for railing on Christ, as destitute of the fear of God, and having no sense at all of religion; Dost thou not fear God? This implies that it was the fear of God which restrained him from following the multitude to do this evil. "I do fear God, and therefore have you no reason to reproach me?" 2. He owns that he deserved what was done to him: We indeed justly. It is probable that they both suffered for one and the same crime, and therefore he spake with the more assurance, we receive the due reward of our deeds. This magnifies divine grace, as acting in a distinguishing way. These two had been comrades in sin and suffering, and yet one is saved, and the other is consigned to everlasting punishment. "The thief is among us, as long hitherto, and yet now one taken and the other left. He does not say, Thou indeed justly, but, We, Note, True penitents acknowledge the justice of God in all the punishments of their sin. God has done right, but we have done wickedly. 3. He believes Christ to have suffered wrongfully. Though he was condemned in two courts, and run upon as if he had been the worst of malefactors, yet this thief is convinced, by his conduct in his sufferings, that he has done nothing amiss. The chief priest would have him crucified between the malefactors, as one of them; but this thief has more sense than they, and owns he is none of them, It were nothing absurd, or unbecoming his character. Whether he had before heard of Christ and of his works, works does not appear, but the spirit of grace enlightened him with this knowledge, and enabled him to say, This man has done nothing amiss. Secondly, See what he said to our Lord Jesus; (v. 42.) Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. This is the prayer of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. It was the honour of Christ to be thus prayed to, though he was upon the cross, and the happiness of the thief thus to pray; perhaps he never prayed before, and yet now was heard, and saved at the last gasp. While there is life, there is hope; and while there is hope, there is room for prayer.
1. Observe his faith in this prayer. In his confession of sin, (v. 4.) he discovered repentance toward God. In this petition he discovered faith toward God. He believed he had a right to the kingdom, and to have a kingdom, and that he was going to that kingdom; that he should have authority in that kingdom, and that those should be happy whom he favours; and to believe and confess all this was a great thing at this time of day. Christ was now in the depth of disgrace, deserted by his own disciples, reviled by his own nation, suffering as the thief did not deliver by his own Father. He made this profession before those prodigies happened which put honour upon his sufferings, and which started the centurion; yet verily we have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. He believed another life after this, and desired to be happy in that life, not as the other thief, but saved from the cross, but to be well done for when the cross had done its work.

2. Observe his humility in this prayer. All his request is, Lord, remember me. He does not pray, Lord, prefer me, (as they did, Matth. 20. 21.) though, having the honour so as none of the disciples had, to drink of Christ’s cup, and to be baptized with his baptism either on his right hand or on his left in his sufferings; when his own disciples had deserted him, he might have had some colour to come to them and to say, Behold me, this is the right hand and on my left in his kingdom; acquaintance in sufferings hath sometimes gained such a point, Jer. 52. 31, 32. But he is far from the thought of it; all he begs is, Lord, remember me, referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him. It is a request like that of Joseph to the chief butler, Thank on me, (Gen. 40. 14.) and it sped better; the chief butler forgot Joseph, but Christ remembered this thief.

3. There is an air of importunity and fervency in this prayer. He doth, as it were, breathe out his soul in it; “Lord, remember me, and I have enough; I desire no more; into thy hands I commit my case.” Note, To be remembered by Christ, now that he is in his kingdom, is what we should earnestly desire and pray for, and it will be enough to secure our welfare, living and dying. Christ is in the temple; “Lord, remember me, and intercede for me.” He is there, ruling; “Lord, remember me, and rule in me by thy Spirit.” He is there, preparing places for those that are his; “Lord, remember me, and prepare a place for me; remember me at death, remember me in the resurrection.” See Job 14. 13.

[2.] The extraordinary grants of Christ’s favour to him are, Jesus said unto him, In answer to his prayer; “Verily I say unto thee, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, I say Amen to this prayer, put my foot to it; nay, thou hast more than thou didst ask, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” v. 45. Observe,

First, To whom this was spoken: to the penitent thief, to him, and not to his companion. Christ upon the cross is like Christ upon the throne; for now is the fulness of all things, and the brightness of the world, and the glory of every sort of creature, with a curse on the other with a blessing. Though Christ was now himself in the greatest strength and agony, yet he had a word of comfort to speak to a poor penitent that committed himself to him. Note, Even great sinners, if they be true penitents, shall, through Christ, obtain not only the pardon of their sins, but a place in the paradise of God, Heb. 9. 15. This magnifies the riches of free grace, that rebels and traitors shall not only be pardoned, but preferred, thus preferred.

Secondly, By whom this was spoken. This was another meditorial work which Christ spake, though upon a particular occasion, yet with a general intention to explain the true intent and meaning of his sufferings; as he died to purchase the forgiveness of sins for us, (v. 34.) so also to purchase eternal life for us. By this word we are given to understand that Jesus Christ died to open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers.

1. Christ here lets us know that he was going to paradise; to hades—the invisible world; his human soul was removing to the place of separate souls; not to the place of the damned, but to paradise, the place of the blessed. By this he assures us that the apostle’s thought was correct, and the Father was well pleased in him, else he had not gone to paradise; that was the beginning of the joy set before him, which he comforted himself with the prospect of. He went by the cross to the crown, and we must not think of going any other way, or of being perfected but by sufferings.

2. He lets all penitent believers know that when they die they shall go to be with him there. He was now, as a Priest, purchasing this happiness for them, and is ready, as a King, to confer it upon them when they are prepared and made ready for it. See here how the happiness of heaven is set forth to us. (1.) It is paradise, a garden of pleasure, the paradise of God, (Rev. 2. 7.) alluding to the garden of Eden, in which our first parents were placed when they were innocent. In the second Adam we are all accounted to all intents in the first Adam, and more, to a heavenly paradise instead of an earthly one. (2.) It is being with Christ there. That is the happiness of heaven, to see Christ, and sit with him, and share in his glory, John 17. 24. (3.) It is immediate upon death; This day shalt thou be with me, to-night, before to-morrow. The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, immediately are in joy and felicity; the spirits of just men are immediately made perfect. Lazarus departs, and is immediately comforted; Paul departs, and is immediately with Christ, Phil. 1. 23.

44. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst. 46. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49. And all his acquaintance; and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

In these verses, we have three things.

1. Christ’s dying magnified by the prodigies that attended it; only two are here mentioned, which we had an account of before.

1. The darkening of the sun at noon day. It was about the sixth hour. It is certain, by computation, twelve o’clock at noon; and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour; the sun was eclipsed, and the air exceedingly clouded at the same time; both which concur to this thick darkness, which continued three hours, or three days, as that of Egypt did.

2. The rending of the veil of the temple. The
former prodig in the heavens, this in the temple; for both these are the house of God, and could not but feel it when the Son of God was thus abused, and thus signify their resentment of it. By this rending of the veil was signified the taking away of the ceremonial law, which was a wall of partition between the Jewish nation and other nations, and all the difficulties and discouragements in our approach to God, so that now we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

II. Christ's dying explained. (v. 46.) By the words with which he breathed out his soul. Jesus had cried with a loud voice, when he said, Why hast thou forsaken me? So we are told in Matthew and Mark, and, it should seem, it was with a loud voice that he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, and the people might take notice of it; and this he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

1. He borrowed these words from his father David; (Ps. 31. 5.) not that he needed to have words put into his mouth, but he chose to make use of David's words, to show that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the Old-Testament prophets, and that he came to fulfill the scripture. Christ died with scripture in his mouth. Thus he directs us to make use of scripture-language in our addresses to God.

2. In this address to God, he calls him Father; when he complained of being forsaken, he cried, El, El, My God, My God; but to show that that dreadful agony of his soul was now over, he here calls God Father. He was giving up his life and soul for us, he did for us call God Father, that we through him might receive the adoption of sons.

3. Christ made use of these words in a sense peculiar to himself as Mediator. He was now to make his soul an offering for our sin, (Isa. 53. 10.) to give his life a ransom for many, (Matt. 20. 28.) by the eternal Spirit to offer himself; Heb. 9. 14. He was himself both the Priest and the Sacrifice; our souls were forfeited, and his must go to redeem the forfeit. The price must be paid into the hands of God, the Party offended by sin; to him he had undertaken to make full satisfaction. Now by these words he offered up the Sacrifice, did, as it were, lay his hand upon the head of it, and surrender it; did he deposit it, I pay it down into thy hands. Father, accept of my life and soul instead of the lives and souls of the sinners I die for. The animus offerentis—the good will of the Offerer—was requisite to the acceptance of the Offering. Now Christ here expresses his cheerful willingness to offer himself, as he had done when it was first proposed to him, (Heb. 10. 9, 10.) Lo, I come to do thy will, by which will we are sanctified.

4. Christ hereby signifies his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection, by the re-union of his soul and body. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be received into paradise, and returned the third day. By this it appears that our Lord Jesus, as he had a true body, so he had a reasonable soul, which existed in a state of separation from the body, and thus he was made like unto his brethren; this soul he lodged in his Father's hand, committed it to his custody, resting in hope that it should not be left in hades, in its state of separation from the body, no, not so long as that the body might see corruption.

5. Christ hath hereby left us an example; hath fitted those words of David to the purpose of dying saints, and hath, as it were, sanctified them for their use. In death our great care should be about our souls, and we cannot more effectually provide for their safety than to commit them, like Christ, into the hands of God as a Father, to be sanctified and governed by his Spirit and grace; and at death by committing them into his hands to be made perfect in holiness and happiness. We must show that we are freely willing to die, that we firmly believe another life after this, and are desirous of it, by saying, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

III. Christ's dying improved by the impressions it made upon those that attended him.

1. The centurion that had command of the guard, was now made the herald of Christ's sway; (v. 47.) He was a Roman, a Gentle, a stranger to the consolations of Israel; and yet he glorified God. He never saw such amazing instances of divine power, and therefore took occasion from thence to adore God as the Almighty. And he bore a testimony to the patient Sufferer; 'Certainly this was a righteous Man, and was unjustly put to death.' God's manifestation of Christ's sufferings with their sense of it, is a plain evidence of his innocence. His testimony in Matthew and Mark goes further; Truly this was the Son of God. But in his case this amounts to the same; for if he was a righteous Man, he said very truly when he said that he was the Son of God; and therefore that testimony of his concerning himself must be admitted, for if it were false, he was not a righteous man.

2. The disinterested spectators could not but be concerned. This is taken notice of only here; (v. 48.) All the people that came together to that night, as is usual upon such occasions, beholding the things which were done, could not but go away very seriously for the time, whatever they were when they came home; They smote their breasts, and returned. (1.) They were moved with a thing very heavy and put upon them, which was a wicked thing, to put him to death, and could not but think that some judgment of God would come upon their nation for it. Probably, those very people were of those that had cried, Cruelly, him, crucify him, and, when he was nailed to the cross, reviled and blasphemed him; but now they were so terrified with the darkness and earthquake, and the uncommon manner of his expiring, that they had not only their minds stopped, but their consciences startled, and, in remorse for what they had done, as the publican, they smote upon their breasts, beat upon their own hearts, as those that had indignation at themselves. Some think that this was a happy step toward that good work which was afterward wrought upon them, when they were pricked to the heart, Acts 2. 37. Ye are the Children of the prophets, and the shadow of the things which were to come.

3. Christ's dying improved by the impression his manner of dying made upon his people. They did not show any further token of respect to Christ, nor inquire more concerning him, but went home; and we have reason to fear that in a little time they quite forgot it. Thus many that see Christ evidently set forth crucified among them in the word and sacraments, are a little affected for the present, but it does not continue; they smite their breasts, and go away. They see Christ's face in the glass of the ordinances and admire him; but they go away, and straightway forget what manner of Man he is, and what reason they have to love him.

3. His own friends and followers were forced to keep their distance, and yet got as near as they could, and durst, to see what was done; (v. 48.) All his acquaintance that knew him, and were known of him, went a little off; they smote their breasts, and returned. They did not show any further token of respect to Christ, nor inquire more concerning him, but went home; and we have reason to fear that in a little time they quite forgot it. Thus many that see Christ evidently set forth crucified among them in the word and sacraments, are a little affected for the present, but it does not continue; they smite their breasts, and go away.
50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. 52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

We have here an account of Christ’s burial. For he must be brought not only to death, but to the dust of death, (Ps. 22. 15.) according to the sentence, (Gen. 3. 19.) To the dust that shalt return. Observ.

7. Who buried him. His acquaintance stood afar off; they had neither money to bear the charge, nor courage to bear the odium of burying him decently: but God raised up one that had both; a man named Joseph, v. 50. His character is, that he was a good man, and a just, a man of unsotted reputation for virtue and piety; not only just to all, but good to all that needed him; (and care to bury the dead, as becomes the hope of the resurrection of the dead, is one instance of goodness and benevolence, which is a person of quality, a counsellor, a senator, a member of the sanhedrim, one of the elders of the Jewish church. Having said this of him, it was necessary to add, that though he was of that body of men who had put Christ to death, yet he had not consented to their counsel and deed; (v. 51.) though it was carried by the majority, yet he entered his protest against it, and followed not the multitude to do evil. Note, That evil counsel and deed shall not be reckoned our act, which we have not consented to. Nay, he not only dissented openly from those that were enemies to Christ, but he consented secretly with those that were his friends; He himself waited for the kingdom of God; he believed the Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected the accomplishment of them. This was the man that appears upon this occasion to have had a true regard for the Lord Jesus. Note, There are many who are hearty in Christ’s interests, who, though they do not make any show in their outward profession of it, yet will be more ready to do him a piece of real service, when there is occasion, than others who make a greater figure and noise.

... What he did toward the burying of him. (1.) He went to Pilate, the judge that condemned him, and bought the sepulchre for it was at his disposal; and though he might have raised a clamour, and have been sufficiently to have carried off the body by violence, yet he would take the regular course, and do it peaceably. (2.) He took it down, it should seem, with his own hands, and wrapped it in linen. They tell us that it was the manner of the Jews, (and that the word here used signifies so much,) to roll the bodies of the dead as we do little children in their swaddling clothes; so that the piece of fine linen which he bought whole, he cut into many pieces for that purpose. It is said of Lazarus, He was bound hand and foot, John 11. 44. Grace clothes are to the saints as swaddling clothes, which they shall out-grow, and put off, when they come to the perfect man.

5. Where he was buried; in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, that the prison of the grave might stand, when, when she was brought into darkness, had her way欣慰与hewn stone, Lam. 3. 2, 9. But it was a sepulchre in which never man before was laid, for he was buried on such an account as never any one before him was buried, only in order to his rising again the third day by his own power; and he was to triumph over the grave so as never any man did.

6. When he was buried; (v. 54.) on the day of the preparation, when the sabbath drew on. This is given as a reason why they made such haste with the funeral, because the sabbath drew on, which required their attendance to other work, preparing for the sabbath, and going forth to worship. Yet, Weeping must not hinder saving. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they must apply themselves to the sanctifying of the sabbath. And when the sabbath draws on, there must be preparation. Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, that they may not hinder us from our sabbath-work; and our holy affections must be so excited, that they may carry us on in it.

5. Who attended the funeral; (v. 55.) not any of the disciples, but only the women that came with him from Galilee; (v. 56.) for, They stood, and wept. While he was making the cross, they followed him all in tears, no doubt, and beheld the sepulchre where it was, which was the way to it, and how his body was laid in it. They were led to this, not by their curiosity, but by their affection to the Lord Jesus, which was strong as death, cruel as the grave, and which many waters could not quench. Here was a silent funeral, and not a solemn one, and yet his rest was glorious.

6. What preparation was made for the embalming of his body after he was buried; (v. 56.) They returned, and prepared spices and ointments, which was more an evidence of their love than of their faith; for had they remembered and believed what he had so often told them, that he should rise again the third day, they would have spared their cost and pains herein, as knowing that in a short time there would be a greater honour put upon his body by the glory of his resurrection, than they could put upon it with their most precious ointments; but, busy as they were in this preparation, they rested on the sabbath-day, and did none of this servile work hereon, not according to the custom of their nation, but according to the commandments of their God, which, though the day be altered, is still in full force; Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

11. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning,
they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. 2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: 5. And, as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee. 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which came to pass.

The manner of the re-announcing of Christ's soul and body in his resurrection, is a mystery, one of the secret things that belong not to us; but the infallible proofs of his resurrection, that he did indeed rise from the dead, and was thereby proved to be the Son of God, are things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; some of them we have here in these verses which relate to the same subject, for substance that we had in Matthew and Mark.

1. We have here the affection and respect which the good women that had followed Christ, showed to him, after he was dead and buried, v. 1. As soon as ever they could, after the sabbath was over, they came to the sepulchre, to embalm his body, not to take it out of the linen in which Joseph had wrapped it, but to anoint the head and face, and perhaps the wounded hands and feet, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about the body; so it is usual with us to strew flowers about the dead bodies and graves of our friends, only to show our good will toward the taking off the deformity of death, if we could, and to make them somewhat the less loathsomely to those that are about them. The zeal of those good women for Christ did confound; the spices which they had prepared the evening before the sabbath, at a great expense, they did not, upon the second thoughts, when they had slept upon it, dispose of otherwise, suggesting, To what purpose is this waste? But they brought them to the sepulchre on the morning after the sabbath, early, very early. It is a rule of charity, Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; 2 Cor. 9. 7. What is prepared for Christ, let it be used for him. Notice is taken of the names of these women, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James; grave matronly women, r. should seem they were. Notice is also taken of certain others with them, v. 1. and again, v. 10. These that had not joined in preparing the spices, would yet go along with them to the sepulchre; as if the number of Christ's friends increased when he was dead, John 12. 24, 52. The daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw how inquisitive the spouse was after her, knew they were desirous to seek him with her; (Cant. 6. 1.) so were these other women. The zeal of some provokes others.

II. The surprise they were in, when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty; v. 2, 3. they were much perplexed at that (v. 4.) which they had much reason to rejoice in, that the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, (by which it appeared that it had been opened, and left to come out,) and that they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, by which it appeared that he had made use of his discharge, and was come out. Note, Good Christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.

III. The plain account which they had of Christ's resurrection, from two angels that appeared to them in shining garments, not only white, but bright, and casting a lustre about them; they first saw one angel without the sepulchre, who presently went in, and sat with another angel in the sepulchre, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; so the evangelists may be reconciled.

The women, when they saw the angels, were afraid lest they had some ill news for them; but, instead of inquiring of them, they bowed down their faces to the earth, to look for their dear master in the grave. They would rather find him in his grave-clothes, than angels themselves in their shining garments. A dying Jesus has more beauty in the eyes of a believer than angels themselves. These women, like the spouse, when found by the watchmen, (and angels are called watchmen,) enter not into any other conversation with them, than, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Now here,

1. Theyuplicates the woman with the absurdity of the search they were making; (v. 5.) Why seek ye the living among the dead? Witness is hereby given to Christ, that he is living, of him it is witnessed, that he liveth, (Heb. 7. 8.) and it is the comfort for which they laboured and laboured, that I know that he liveth; for because he lives we shall live also. But a reproof is given to those that look for him among the dead; among the dead heroes that the Gentiles worshipped, as if he were but like one of them, that look for him in an image, or a crucifix, the work of men's hands, or among unwritten traditions and the inventions of men. And indeed all they that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to seek the living among the dead.

2. They assure them that he is risen from the dead; (v. 6.) He is not here, but is risen, is risen by his own power; he has quitted his grave, to return no more to it. These angels were competent witnesses, for they had been sent express from heaven with orders for his discharge. And we are sure that their record is true; they durst not tell a lie.

3. They refer them to his own words: Remember what he spake to you, when he was yet in Galilee. If they had duly believed and observed the prediction of it, they would easily have believed the thing itself when it came to pass; and therefore, that the tidings might not be such a surprise to them as it seemed to be, he repeats to them what Christ had often said, in their hearing, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men; and though it was done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet they that did it, were
not the less sinful for doing it; he told them that he
must be crucified, surely they could not forget that
which they had with so much concern seen fulfilled;
and would not that bring to their mind that which
always he foretold, The third day he shall rise again?
Observe, the angels from heaven bring not a
new gospel, but put them in mind, as the angels
of the churches do, of the savings of Christ, and teach
them how to improve and apply them.
IV. Their satisfaction in this account, v. 8. The
women seemed to acquiesce; they remembered his
words, when they were thus put in mind of them,
and concluded from thence, that if he were risen, it
was no reason but that after a little while now
they were ashamed of the preparations they
had made to embalm him on the third day, who had
often said that he would on the third day rise again.
Note, A reasonable remembrance of the words of
Christ will help us to a right understanding of his
providence.
V. The report they brought of this to the apostles;
They returned from the sepulchre, and told
all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest
of Christ’s disciples, v. 9. It does not appear that
they were together in a body, they were scattered
every one to his own, perhaps scarcely two or three
of them together in the same lodgings, but one
went to some of them, and another to others of
them, so that in a little time, that morning, they got
this news of it. But we are told (v. 12.) how the
report was received; Their words seemed to
them as idle tales, and they believed them not.
They thought it was only the fancy of the women,
and imputed it to the power of imagination: for
they also had forgotten Christ’s words, and wanted to
be put in mind of them, not only what he had said
to them in Galilee some time ago, but what he had
said very lately in the night wherein he was betrayed.
Again a little while, and ye shall see me. I will
see you again. One would be amazed at the stupi
dity of these disciples, who believed Christ to be the Son
of God and the true Messiah, had been so often told
that he must die, and rise again, and then enter into
his glory, had seen him more than once raise the
dead, that they should be so backward to believe his
raising himself from the dead! But when they were
strangers to them, (when hereafter this complaint
would justly be taken up by them,) to remember
that there was a time when it might justly have
been taken up against them, Who hath believed our
report?
VI. The inquiry which Peter made hereupon, v.
12. It was Mary Magdalene that brought the
report to him, as appears, John 20. 1, 2. where this
story of his running to the sepulchre, is more par

fically related. 1. Peter hastened to the sepulchre,
upon the report; perhaps ashamed of himself, to
think that Mary Magdalene should have been
there before him; and yet, perhaps, he had not
been so ready to go thither now, if the woman had
not told him, among other things, that the watch
was fled. Many that are confounded enough when
there is no danger, are but coxcombish when there
is. Peter now ran to the sepulchre, who but the
other day ran from his Master. 2. He looked into
the sepulchre, and took notice how orderly the
linen clothes in which Christ was wrapped, were
taken off, and folded up, and laid by themselves,
but the body gone. He was very particular in mak
his observations, as if he would rather credit his
own eyes, than the testimony of the angels.
He went away, as he thought, not much the wiser,
wondering in himself at that which was come to
pass. Had he remembered the words of Christ, even
this was enough to satisfy him that he was
risen from the dead; but, having forgotten them, he
is only amazed with the thing, and knows not what
to make of it. There is many a thing puzzling and
perplexing to us, which would be both plain and
profitable, if we did but rightly understand the
words of Christ, and had them ready to use.
13. And, behold, two of them went that
same day to a village called Emmaus, which was
from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. 14. And
they talked together of all these things which had
happened. 15. And it came to pass, that
while they communed together and reasoned,
Jesus himself drew near, and went with them, 16.
But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.
17. And he said unto them, What manner of
communications are these that ye have one
to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18. And
the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering
said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem,
and hast not known the things which are come to pass
there in these days? 19. And he said unto them,
what things? And they said unto him, Concerning
Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in
word before God and all the people;
20. And how the chief priests and our rulers
delivered him to be condemned to death,
and have crucified him. 21. But we trusted
that it had been he which should have
redeemed Israel: and beside all this,
today is the third day since these things
were done. 22. Yea, and certain women
also of our company made us astonished,
which were early at the sepulchre;
23. And when they found not his body, they
come, saying, That they had also seen a
vision of angels, which said that he was
alive. 24. And certain of them which were
with us went to the sepulchre, and
found it even so as the women had said;
but they saw not. 25. Then he said
unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to
believe all that the prophets have spoken!
26. Ought not Christ to have suffered
these things, and to enter into his glory? 27.
And beginning at Moses and all the
prophets, he expounded unto them in all
the scriptures the things concerning
himself. 28. And they drew nigh unto the
village whither they went: and he made
as though he would have gone further.
29. But they constrained him saying,
Abide with us, for it is toward evening,
and the day is far spent. And he went in
to tarry with them. 30. And it came to
pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took
bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave
unto them. 31. And their eyes were opened,

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and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33. And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. 34. Saying, the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. 

This appearance of Christ to the two disciples going to Emmaus, was mentioned, and but just mentioned before; (Mark 16. 12.) here it is largely related. It happened the same day that Christ rose, the first day of the new world that rose with him. One of these two disciples was Cleopas or Alpheus, said by the ancients to be the brother of Joseph, Christ's supposed father; who the other was, is not certain. Some think it was Peter; it should seem indeed that these did appear particularly to Peter that day, which the eleven spake of among themselves, (v. 34.) and Paul mentions, 1 Cor. 15. 5. But it could not be Peter that was one of the two; for he was one of the eleven to whom the two returned; and besides, we know Peter so well as to think that if he had been one of the two, he would have been the chief speaker, and not Cleopas. It was one of those that were associated with the eleven, mentioned v. 9. Now in this passage of story we may observe, 

I. The walk and talk of those two disciples; They went to a village called Emmaus, which is reckoned to be about two hours' walk from Jerusalem; it is here said to be about six furlongs, seven measured miles, v. 13. Whether they went thither upon business, or to see some friend, does not appear. I suspect that they were going homewards to Galilee, with an intention not to inquire more after this Jesus; that they were meditating a retreat, and stole away from their company without asking leave or taking leave; for the accounts brought them that morning of their Master's resurrection, seemed to them as idle tales; and if so, no wonder they began to think of making the best of their way home. 

But as they travelled they talked together of all these things which had happened, v. 14. They had not courage to confer of these things, and consult what was to be done in the present juncture at Jerusalem; for fear of the Jews; but when they were got out of the hearing of the Jews, they could talk it over with more freedom. They talked over these things, reasoning with themselves concerning the probabilities of Christ's resurrection, for, according as these appeared, they would either go forward, or return back to Jerusalem. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up one another's devout affection. 

II. The good company they met with upon the road, when Jesus himself came, and joined himself to them; (v. 15.) They communed together, and reasoned, and perhaps were warm at the argument, one hoping that their Master was risen, and would set up his kingdom, the other despairing. Jesus himself drew near, as a stranger who seeing them travel the same way that he went, told them that he should be glad of their company. 

We may observe it for our encouragement to keep up christian conference and studying discourse among ourselves, where but two together are well employed in work of that kind, Christ will come to them, and make a third. When they that fear the Lord, speak one to another, the Lord hearkens and hears, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twisted in faith and love become a threefold cord, not easily broken, Excl. 4. 12. They in their communings and reasonings together were searching for Christ, in his dispensations, and arguments concerning him, to come to more knowledge of him; and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. When the spouse inquired of the watchmen concerning her Beloved, it was but a little that she passed from them, but she stayed at the window, Cant. 3. 4. 

But though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it; (v. 16.) Their eyes were held that they should not know him: it should seem, there were both an alteration of the object, (for it is said in Mark, that now he appeared in another form,) and a restraint upon the organ; for here it is said, that their eyes were held by a divine power; and so it was, as they were hindered from perceiving him, till the air was disposed, that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him; Christ so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him and be with him; and that it might appear that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much dejected upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them, and warm their hearts, by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them, and should have his grace going along with them unseen. 

III. The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them, and they knew him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in disguise, are here cross-questions. 

I. Christ's first question to them is concerning their present sadness, which plainly appeared in their countenances; (v. 17.) What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? It is a very kind and friendly inquiry. Observe, 

1. They were sad; it appeared to a stranger that they were so, 1. They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them; to fast when the Bridegroom is taken from them. 2. Though he was risen from the dead, yet they were not persuaded of it, for they were in sorrow; and, so they were still in sorrow. Note, Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful even then when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them. 3. Being sad, they had communications one with another concerning Christ. Note, First, It becomes christians to talk of Christ. Wherever they converse with one another, they should converse about him, and of what he has done and suffered for us, as they should be, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ and his grace and love. Secondly, Good company and good converse are an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad they did not each one get by himself, but gathered as he sent them out two and two, for two are better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent
to the grieve, may perhaps give ease to the grieved; and by talking it over we may talk ourselves, or our friends may talk us into a better frame. Jointmourners should be mutually comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(2.) Christ came up to them, and inquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief; What manner of communications are these? Though Christ was now entered into the number of his disciples, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy; Wherefore look you so sadly to day? Gen. 40. 7. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us, [1.] To be conversable. Christ here fell into discourse with two grave, serious persons, though in this subject. He would not have any know him not, and they readily embraced him. It does not become Christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society. [2.] We are hereby taught to be compassionate. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should, I like, Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can; With them that were sorrowful weeping.

(4.) Here, they, in this way, put a question to him concerning his strangeness; (r. 18.) Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days? Observe, (1.) Cleophas gave him a civil answer. He does not rudely ask him, "As for what we are talking of, what is that to you?" and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples; yet he was not jealous of this Stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not to find evil, no not of strangers.

(2.) He is full of Christ himself, and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too; What! art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know what has been done to our Master there?" Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem, that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What! are they daughters of Jerusalem, and yet so little acquainted with Christ, as to ask, What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?

(3.) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him, in his subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man, to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified, should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable, These disciples that were so forward to instruct the Stranger, were instructed by him; for to him that has given, more shall be given.

(4.) It appears, by what Cleophas says, that the death of Christ made a great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city, as not to know of it; it was the talk of the town, and discussed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

(5.) He was asked concerning their knowledge; (r. 19.) He said unto them, What things? thus making himself yet more a Stranger. Observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings, in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompense of it. Now that he was entering upon his glory, see what unconcerned ness he looks back upon his sufferings; What things? He had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks, What things? The sorrow was forgotten, for joy that the Man-Child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in innumeries for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(2.) Those whom Christ will teach, he will first ask them, What, art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know these things? He will not be a Stranger to them, he will tell them what was the meaning of these things, and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They, hereupon, give him a particular account concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, v. 19, &c.

(1.) Here is a summary of Christ's life and character. The things they are full of, are concerning him of Nazareth, and of his fulfilling of prophecy, who was a Prophet, a Teacher come from God. He preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency toward heaven; he confirmed it, by many glorious miracles, of mercy, so that he was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; that is, he was both a great Favourite of Heaven, and also of his designing audience. What he had appeared to be, greatly beloved of God, and most darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are great before all the people, and are censured by them, who are not before God, as the Scribes and Pharisees; but Christ was mighty both in his doctrine and in his doings, before God and all the people. Those were strangers in Jerusalem, that did not know this.

(2.) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, v. 20. Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the chief priests and our rulers, in contempt of both, delivered him to the Roman power, to be condemned to death, and they have crucified him. It is strange that they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay more hand upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ; but perhaps because they spake to one that was a Stranger, they thought it prudent to avoid all reflections upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(3.) Here is an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness; We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, v. 21. We are of those who not only looked upon him to be a Prophet, like Moses, but, like him, a Redeemer too; he was depended upon, and great things expected in him, by them that looked for redemption, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair, which, if they had understood it aright, was the surest ground of their hope—and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus. We trusted (say they) that the Lord would redeem Israel; and is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? So that now that that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to trust that this is he that shall deliver Israel; yet now they are ready to give up the cause.

(4.) He was prepared to execute his present arrangement, with reference to his resurrection. [1.] This is the third day since he was crucified and died, and that was the day, when it was expected, if ever, that he should rise again, and rise in glory and outward pomp, and show himself as publicly in honour as he had been shown three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears as
we expected, to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent." [2.] They own that there was a report among them, that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to; (v. 22, 23.) ‘Certain women also of our company made us astonished, (and that was all,) which were early at the sepulchre, (for they said they found the body gone, and they said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive;) but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon." [5.] They acknowledge that some of the apostles had made a visit to the sepulchre, that day, but they do not think they saw not, and therefore we have reason to fear that he is not risen, for if he were, surely he would have showed himself to them; so that upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave. [3.] But of Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word. [1.] He reproves them for their incredulity, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament; (v. 25.) O fools, and slow of heart to believe. When Christ forbade us to say to our brother, Thou fool, it was intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just fibrills. But Christ called them fools, not as it should be reproved of, to believe; but as it signifies weak men. He might call them fools, for he knows our foolishness, the foolishness that is hid in our hearts. They are fools, that act against their own interest; so they did, who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their foolishness, is, First, Their slowness to believe the prophets; Believers are branded as fools by atheists and infidels and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us that those are fools, who are slow of heart to believe, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. Secondly, Their slowness to believe the writings of the prophets. He does not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of the believers, and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof—their slowness to believe the prophets; for if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's rising from the dead that morning, (being the third day after his death,) as they were of the rising of the sun; for the series and succession of events as settled by prophecy, are no less certain and invariable than as on the evidence; were we but more conversant with the scripture, and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we often entangle ourselves in. [2.] He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them unapt to believe his glories, were really the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way; (v. 26.) ‘Ought not the Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Was it not decreed, and was not that decree declared, that the promised Messiah must first suffer, and then reign, that he must go by his cross to his crown? Had they never read of the prophet's predictions, how in his nativity, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow? 1 Pet. 11. The cross of Christ was it that they could not reconcile themselves to; now here he shows them two things, which take off the offence of the cross; First, That the Messiah ought to suffer these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they are, therefore, according to the promise, the share of the Lord; and, Secondly, That he really were the foundation of their hopes. He could not have been a Saviour, if he had not been a Sufferer. Christ's undertaking of our salvation was voluntary; but, having undertaken it, it was necessary that he should suffer and die. Secondly, That, when he had suffered these things, he should enter into his glory; which he did at his resurrection, that he might give light to his people in their afflictions, and make them happy in his glory; because he was duly entitled to it; and it was the glory he had before the world was; he ought to enter into it, for in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He ought to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the reproach of the cross is for ever rolled away; and we are directed to expect the crown of glory we have so long waited for.' [5.] He expanded to them the scriptures of the Old Testament, which spoke of the Messiah, and showed them how they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and now can tell them more concerning him, than they could before tell him; (v. 27.) beginning at Moses, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, he went in order through all the prophets, and expounded to them the things concerning himself, as dispersed throughout all the scriptures gone through, were so far from defeating the prophecies of the scripture concerning him, that they were the accomplishment of them. He began at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have his heel bruised, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken. Note, First, There are things dispersed throughout the whole web of the Old Testament. There is an eye of that white to be discovered in every place. Secondly, The things concerning Christ need to be expounded. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, except some man should guide him; (Acts 8. 31.) for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation; but now that the veil is taken away, the New Testament expounds the Old. Thirdly, Christ is himself the best exposition of scriptures, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection, it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of them. Even the Apocalypse was from raising their expectations, that scriptures, and has continually an eye to them. If men believe not Moses and the prophets, they are incurable. Fourthly, In studying the scriptures, it is good to be methodical, and to take them in order; for the Old-Testament light shone gradually to the perfect day, and it is good to observe how at sundry times, and in divers manners, (subsequent predictions of repenting, and giving light to the preceding ones,) God spake to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom he has now spoken to us. Some begin their Bible at the wrong end, who study
the Revelation first; Christ has here taught us to begin at More. Thus far the conference between them.

IV. Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the Bible, which he gave them; but it is not thought fit that we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures; the disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end; but so it is; They drew nigh to the village whether they went; (v. 26.) where, it should seem, they determined to take up for that night.

And the end of the journey being at hand, they cantoured his stay with them; He made as though he would have gone further; he did not say that he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn in to their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do unless he were invited; he would have gone further, if they had not counted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a stranger, he says, to any one knows, (which perhaps it, he will not thrust himself rudely upon your house or company; but if you make it appear that you are freely desirous of him for your Guest or Companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation; and this was all that Christ did, when he made as though he would have gone further. Note, Those that would have Christ dwell with them, must invite him, and be importune with him; though he is always desirous in a good cause to attend on all that seek, can be sure to find; and if he seem to draw off from us, it is but to draw out our importunity; as here, they constrained him; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, Abide with us. Note, Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ, cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him that he would abide with them all day, and not to abide with them at night. When the day is far spent, and it is towards evening, we begin to think of retiring for our repose, and then it is proper to have our eye to Christ, and beg of him to abide with us; to manifest himself to us, and to fill our minds with good thoughts of him, and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity; he went in, to tarry with them. Thus ready is Christ to comply with all the requests made to him of them, and to those who improve what they have received. He has promised that if any man open the door, to bid him welcome, he will come in to him. Rev. 3. 20.

2. He manifested himself to them, v. 30, 31. We may suppose that he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road; for thus must talk of the things of God when thou sittest in the house as well as when thou walkest by the way; when he began, he was very minute, (which perhaps was seen done, the provision was so small and mean,) it is probable that he entertained them with such communications as were good, and to the use of edifying; and so likewise as they sat at meat, his lips fed them. But still he little thought that it was Jesus himself that was all this while talking with them; till at length he was pleased to throw off his disguise, and to reveal himself to them. The oath to suspect it was he when, as they sat down to meat, he undertook the office of the Master of the feast, which he performed so like himself, and like what he used to do among his disciples, that by it they discerned him; He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. This he did with his usual air both of authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, with the same expressions as though in deriving a blessing, and in giving the bread to them. This was not a mini-
none but he, no word but his, could make our hearts burn within us as they did; it must be he that has the key of the heart, it could be no other." See here, (1.) What preaching is likely to do good—such as Christ's was; plain teaching, and which is familiar and level to our capacity—he talked with us by the way; and scriptural preaching—he opened to us the scriptures in which seeming ignorance and self-love should show people their religion in their Bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them than what is there; they must show that they make that the fountain of their knowledge, and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of these scriptures which speak of Christ, has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples and of the people, and to convince some of the enemies of Christ.

(2.) What hearing is likely to do good—that which makes the heart burn; when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts burn within us; when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the spirit which go up toward God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed." 2. The report they brought of this to their brethren, was speedily spread abroad. They rae up the same hour, sotransported with joy at the discovery. Christ had made of himself to them, that they could not stay to make an end of their supper, but returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this soon banished all such thoughts out of their mind, and there need no more to send them back to him. Their hearts were quickened to their quarters to-night at Emmaus; but now that they had seen Christ, they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for the confirmation of their trembling faith, and for the comfort of their sorrowful spirits, with the same comfort wherewith they were comforted of God. Note, It is the duty of those to whom Christ hath unsealed himself, to show others what he hath done for their souls. When then art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthened thy brethren. These disciples were full of this matter themselves, and must go to their brethren, to give vent to their own as well as to give them satisfaction that their Master was risen. Observe,

(1.) How they found them, just when they came in among them, dwelling on the same subject and relating another proof of the resurrection of Christ. They found the eleven, and those that were their usual companions, gathered together late in the night, to pray together, it may be, and to consider what was to be done in this juncture; and they found them saying among themselves; (Obverse, it is the saying of the eleven, not of the two, as is plain by the original;) and when these two came into their midst, they repeated to them with joy and triumph, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon, v. 34. That Peter had a sight of him before the rest of the disciples had, appears 1 Cor. 15. 5, where it is said, He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. The angel having ordered the women to tell Peter of it particulars (Mark 16. 7,) for his comfort, it is highly probable the Lord Jesus himself, on the very same day, appear to Peter, though we have no particular narrative of it, to confirm the word of his messengers. This he did related to his brethren; but observe, Peter does not here proclaim it, and boast of it himself, (he thought that did not become a penitent,) but the other disciples speak of it with exultation, The Lord is risen indeed, ver. 6. really; it is now past dispute; no room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared not only to the women, but to Simon. 36. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and sitteth unto them, Peace be unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them. 44. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. 46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48. And ye are witnesses of these things. 49. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Five times Christ was seen the same day that he rose: by Mary Magdelene alone in the garden; (John 20. 14,) by the women, as they were going to tell the disciples; (Matt. 28. 9,) by Peter alone; by the two disciples going to Emmaus; and now a
night by the eleven: which we have an account of in these verses, as also John 20. 19. Observe,
I. The great surprise which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection: As they thus spake, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question, whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence of their Master's resurrection or not, and how they should proceed: Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question. Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort, may expect further assurances, and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits, (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and has done ever since,) in supporting them in their faith, and children of God, and risen with Christ. Observe,
1. The comfort Christ spake to them; Peace be unto you. This intimates in general that it was a kind visit which Christ now made them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as the world does. They did not expect to see him, therefore he appears himself, that they might not continue in their discontentable incredulity. He had promised that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee; but so deserters was he to see them, and satisfy them that he anticipated the appointment, and saw them at Jerusalem. Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, Peace be unto you. This is commonly the greeting of a troubled spirit, and a comfort of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he was now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their old friends, and take state upon them; but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to the apostles that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him, and the rest, and therefore was away from him; no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them, and was reconciled to them. 2. The fright which they put themselves into at it; (v. 37.) They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they were aware. The word used (v. 38.) among the Jews is שמחה, a spirit, an apparition; but the word here used is πνεῦμα, the word that properly signifies a spirit: they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it; yet, while we are here in this world of sense and matter, it is a terror to us to have a spirit as far change our own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodies something; very extraordinary.
II. The great satisfaction which his discourse gave them; wherein we have,
1. The reproves he gave them for their causeless fears; (v. 38.) Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughtful thoughts arise in your hearts? Observe here,
(1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts arise to our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts, our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy; sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble, without are frights, and then within are fears. These that are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect discouragement upon
God, and create disquiet to themselves. I am cut
off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and for
gotten me.
(2.) That many of the troubles we think arise from which our minds are disquieted, arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright. We forget that
Christ is our elder Brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit convincing and humbling us, who: he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and that troubles us. (3.) Those of the unlawful thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time, are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them; and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why are thou troubled? Why do thoughts arise, that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation nor fruit, but under our joy in God, delight us for duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?
2. The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silence of their fears, by convincing them that he was not a spirit, and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine which they were to preach to the world, by giving them full satisfaction concerning his resurrection, which if not true, their faith and preaching were all vain. Two proofs he gives them,
(1.) He shows them his body, particularly his hands and his feet. They saw that he had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance of their Master: but is it not his ghost? No, saith Christ, Behold my hands and my feet; you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body: you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body, and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one. He lays down this principle— that a spirit has not flesh and bones, it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are. He does not tell us what a spirit is, but that it is not a body of the world of spirits, but what it is not: It has not flesh and bones. Now hence he infers, It is I myself, whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is I myself, whom you have reason to rejoice in, and not to be afraid of. Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs, will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches. He appeals to their sight, shows them his hands and his feet, which were pierced with the nails. Christ retouched the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself; and he was willing that they should be seen, afterward showed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then need we to question or doubt of the proofs for him. As he showed his wounds here to his disciples, for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he showed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain; (Rev. 5. 6.) his blood speaks, Heb. 13. 54. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction: he says to the Father, as we to the disciples, I hold my hands and my feet, Zech. 13. 6, 7. He appeals to their touch; Handle me, and see.
He would not let Mary Magdalene touch him at that time, John 20. 17. But the disciples here are entrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bids them to understand, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits, nor apparitions of spirits, (as by this and other instances it is plain that the disciples did believe there were,) this had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them that there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted that there have been, and may be, apparitions of spirits, and that he did not wish to use much pains to prove that he was not one. There were many heretics in the primitive times, atheists I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a mere phantasm, which was neither really born, nor truly suffered; such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichaces had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called 
adversaries and 

Blessed be God, these heresies are long since buried; and we know and are sure that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

(2.) He eats with them, to show that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend among others. St. Paul speaks of a great stress upon this, (Acts 10. 41.) We did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead.

[1.] When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say. They believed not for joy, and wondered, v. 41. It was their infirmity, that they believed not, that yet they believed not, is, They believed not as ye yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the fact of Christ's resurrection, that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, He is risen, when he is not, as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, He is not risen, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, shows that when afterward they did believe and venerate their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be.

But though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them, that they believed not: but, First, They believed not for joy, as Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak, because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. Secondly, They wondered! they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

[2.] For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with them; and it is a most astonishing thing it is not said that he did eat with them; now lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to show how his body was really and truly returned to life; though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly with them, as he had done, (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life,) as a ghost might, because none is more remarkable to the economy of the state he was risen to.

They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honedgecomb, v. 42. The honeycomb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare; yet, if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do, because in the kingdom of our Father they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

3. The might he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the mysteries are cleared.

(1.) He refers them to the word which they had heard from him, when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that as the angel had done; (v. 44.) There are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you. We should better understand what Christ doth, if we did but better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of understanding them together.

(2.) He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to; All things must be fulfilled which were written. Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations—that, whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him; what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom; those God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought that they should be put asunder in the event. All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar, he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, It is finished. The severest words the Old Testament ever mentioned, as containing each of them things concerning Christ: The law of Moses, that is, the Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses; the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetical, but these historical books that were written by prophetic men; the Psalms containing the other writings, which they called the Hagiothraph. And in it, as he now shows, God would reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bare all the prophets witness.

(3.) By an immediate present work upon their minds, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him; (v. 45.) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. In his discourse with the two disciples he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures; here he took the veil from off the hearts, by opening the mind. Observe here,

[1.] That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that have access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable, how he did now after his resurrection give a specimen of these two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men; his enlightening of the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating of the active powers of the soul, when he opened the will. Both these operations are within them.

[2.] Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prays, Open mine eyes. Give me understanding. And St. Paul, who knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more. [3.] Christ's way of working faith in the hearts of men, and raising them up from the dead, is, by opening the understanding, to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan, as a thief and a robber climbs up some other way. [4.] The design of opening the understanding is, that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may believe every word that is written, but that we may believe what
written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the world, and the Spirit in the heart must be as Christ's which is above their Bibles in this world; but they need be learning still more and more out of their Bibles, and to grow more and more right and mighty in the scriptures.

That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and our mistakes concerning him rectified, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

As the instructions he gave them as apostles, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour, which they thought themselves quite disappointed of when he was dead. "No," saith he, "you are now to enter upon them: ye are to be witnesses of these things, (v. 48.) to carry the notice of them to all the world; not as ashamed of a matter of news, but to assert them as evidence upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be, the casting down, and casting out, of the prince of this world. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear witnesses of them; go and assure the world of them; and the same Spirit that has enlightened you, shall guide you, while you go, for the enlightenment of others.

Now here they are told,

(1.) What they must preach; they must preach the gospel, must preach the New Testament as the full accomplishment of the Old, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their Bibles along with them, (especially when they preached to the Jews; nay, and Peter, in his first sermon to the Jews, did first consult the scriptures, Acts 10. 43.) and must succeed in the same manner that it was written of old concerning the Messiah, and the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them how, upon their certain knowledge, all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

[1.] The great gospel-truth concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, must be published to the children of men; (v. 48.) Thus it was written before, in the sealed books, directing scribes from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the New Testament, among the things revealed; and therefore thus it belonged Christ to suffer, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken that no word of God fail to the ground. "Go, and tell the world," First, That Christ suffered, as it was written of him, Go, preach Christ crucified, be not ashamed of his cross, knowing Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it belonged him to suffer, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin; nay, it became him to be perfected through sufferings. Secondly, that he rose from the dead on the third day, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this act the scriptures were fulfilled; (see 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4.) go, tell the world how often you saw him after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him. Your eyes see it, (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering of himself to them, in whose company he was dead,) that it is the very oath that speaketh unto you, Gen. 45. 12, Go, tell them, then, that he that was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave.

[2.] The great gospel-duty of repentance must be pressed upon the children of men. Repentance for sin must be preached in Christ's name, and by his authority, v. 47. All men everywhere must be called and commanded to repent, Acts 17. 4. and tell people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expects and requires that, immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods that they have made, to the worship of the God that made them, and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh; they must turn to the service of God in all soul and body, in all their practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed.

[3.] The great gospel-privilege of the remission of sins must be proposed to all, and assured to all that repent, and believe the gospel. Go, tell a guilty world, that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that an act of indemnity has passed the rascally assent, which all that repent and believe shall have the benefit of, and not only be pardoned, but preferred by. Tell them that there is hope concerning them.

(2.) To whom they must preach. Whither must they carry these proposals, and how far doth their commission extend? They are here told,

[1.] That they must preach this among all nations. They must take upon them the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way and some another, and carry this light along with them wherever they go. The prophets had preached repentance and remission of sins, but the apostles must preach them to all the world. None are exempted from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to repent, nor are any excluded from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins; the blind and dumb, the deaf and dumb, and the infirm put a bar in their own door.

[2.] That they must begin at Jerusalem; there they must preach their first gospel-sermon; there the gospel-church must be first formed; there the gospel-day must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth, which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? First, Because this was written, and therefore it behoved them to take this method. The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem, Isa. 2. 5. and See Joel 2. 31.—3. 16. Obad. 21. Zech. 11. 18. Secondly, Because there the matters of fact, on which the gospel was founded, were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer, that it dares face those daring enemies of his, that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. "Begin at Jerusalem, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves dispossessed." Thirdly, Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him, (both in his life and death,) and they might justly have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity; but no, so far from that, the first offer of gospel-grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

(3.) What assistance they should have in preaching. It is a vast undertaking that they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, essentially concerning the consideration of this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with; if therefore they ask, Who is sufficient for these things? here is an answer ready. (v. 49.) Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and we shall be endued with power from on high. He here assures them that in a little time the Spirit
should be poured out upon them in greater measure than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust: and therefore they must tarry in Jerusalem, and not enter up until this be done. Note, [1.] Those who receive the Holy Ghost, are thereby endued with a power from on high, a supernatural power; a power above any of their own: it is from on high, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to aim high. [2.] Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world, as they did, if it were not that he furnished them with such a power, and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them. [3.] This power from on high was the promise of the Father, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And if it be the promise of the Father, we may be sure that the promise is provable, and the thing promised realizable. [4.] Christ would not leave his disciples till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the ascension of Christ that there came the descent of the Spirit. [5.] Christ's ambassadors must stay till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials; though, one would think, it was now for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must tarry till they be endued with power from on high, and tarry at Jerusalem, though a place of danger, because there this promise of the Father was to find them, Joel 2. 28.

50. And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

This evangelist omits the solemn meeting between Christ and his disciples in Galilee; but what he said to them there, and at other interviews, he subjoins to what he said to them at the first visit he made them on the evening of the day he rose; and has nothing more to account for but his ascension into heaven, which we have a very brief narrative of in these verses: in which we are told,

I. How solemnly Christ took leave of his disciples. Christ's design being to reconcile heaven and earth, and continue a Daysman between them, it was necessary that he should lay his hands on them both, and, in order thereto, that he should pass and rephus. He had business to do in both worlds, and accordingly came from heaven to earth in his incarnate, human person, and then, having finished which, he returned to heaven, to reside there, and negotiate our affairs with the Father. Observe,

1. From whence he ascended: from Bethany, near Jerusalem, adjoining to the mount of Olives. There he had done eminent services for his Father's glory, and there he entered upon his glory. There was the garden, in which his sufferings began, there he thought, never was such host as now barrows of sorrow. Those that would go to heaven, must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrow, must go by agonies to their joys. The mount of Olives was pitched upon long since to be the place of Christ's ascension; (Zech. 14. 4.) His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. And here it was that a while ago he began his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, ch. 19. 29.

2. Who were the witnesses of his ascension; He led out his disciples to see him: probably, it was very odd for the disciples, that he ascended, before people were stirring, for he never showed himself openly to all the people after his resurrection, but only to chosen witnesses. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave, because his resurrection was capable of being proved by their seeing him alive afterward: but they saw him ascend into heaven, because they could not otherwise have an ocular demonstration of an ascending. They were led out on purpose to see him ascend; had they not seen him when he ascended, and were not looking another way.

3. What was the farewell he gave them: He lift up his hands, and blessed them. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a blessing behind him; he lift up his hands, as the High-Priest did when he blessed the people; see Lev. 9. 22. He blessed as one having authority, commanded by the blessings which he had purchased; he blessed them as Jacob blessed his sons. The apostles were now as the representatives of the twelve tribes, so that in blessing them he blessed all his spiritual Israel, and put his Father's name upon them. He blessed them as Jacob blessed his sons, and Moses the tribes, at parting, as having his own which were in the world, he left them unto the Lord.

4. How he left them: While he was blessing them, he was parted from them; not as if he were taken away before he had said all he had to say, but to intimate that his being parted from them did not put an end to his blessing of them, for the intercession which he went to heaven to make for all his, is a continuation of that blessing. He began to bless them on earth, but he went to heaven to go on with it. Christ was now sending his apostles to preach his gospel to the world, and he gives them his blessing, not for themselves only, but to be conferred in his name upon all that should believe on him through their word, for in him all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

5. How his ascension is described. (1.) He was parted from them, was taken from their head, as Elijah from Elisha's. Note, The dearest friends must part. Those that love us, and pray for us, and instruct us, must be parted from us. The bodily presence of Christ himself was not to be expected always in this world; those that knew him after the flesh, must now henceforth know him so no more. (2.) He was carried up into heaven; not by force, but by his own act and deed. As he arose, so he ascended, by his own power, yet attended by angels. There needed no chariot of fire, or horses of fire, he knew the way, and, being the Lord from heaven, could go back himself. He ascended in a cloud, as the angel in the smoke of Manah's sacrifice, Judg. 13. 20.

II. How cheerfully his disciples continued their attendance on him, and on God through him, even now that he was parted from them.

1. They paid their hommage to him at his going away, to signify that though he was going into a far country, yet they would continue his loyal subjects that were willing to have him reign over them; They worshiped him, v. 52. Note, Christ expects adoration from those that receive blessing from him. He will have glory to his name, even that they should be obedient to him; in his own person, in them, and in his母校, he and his followers, and they worshiped him. This fresh display of Christ's glory drew from them fresh acknowledgments and adorations of it. They knew that though he was parted from them, yet he could, and did, take no notice of their adorations of him; the cloud that received him out of their sight, did not put them or their services out of his sight.
2. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There they were ordered to continue till the Spirit should be poured out upon them, and thither they went accordingly, though it was into the mouth of danger. Thither they went, and there they stayed with great joy. This was a wonderful change, and an effect of the opening of their understandings. When Christ told them that he must leave them, sorrow filled their hearts; yet now that they see him, they are filled with joy, being convinced at length that it was expedient for them: and for the church that he should go away, to send the Comforter. Note, The glory of Christ is the joy, the exceeding joy, of all true believers, even while they are here in this world; much more will it be so when they go to the new Jerusalem, and find him there in his glory.

3. They abounded in acts of devotion while they were in expectation of the promise of the Father. 

(1.) They attended the temple-service at the hours of prayer; God had not as yet quite forsaken it, and therefore they continued in it. They were continually in the temple, as their Master was when he was at Jerusalem. The Lord loves the gates of Zion, and so should we. Some think that they had their place of meeting, as disciples, in some of the chambers of the temple which belonged to some Levite that was well affected to them; but others think that it is not likely that either could be concealed from, or would be concealed at by, the chief priests and rulers of the temple. (2.) Temples and synagogues, that knew, were superseded by Christ's sacrifice, but the temple-songs they joined in. Note, While we are waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. Praise and blessing God is work that is never cut off seasons; and nothing better prepares the mind for the receiving of the Holy Ghost than holy joy and praise. Tears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up.

The amen that concludes, seems to be added by the church and every believer to the reading of the gospel, signifying an assent to the truths of the gospel, and a hearty concurrence with all the disciples of Christ in praising and blessing God. Amen. Let him be continually praised and blessed.

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AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. JOHN.

It is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of that disciple whom Jesus loved; one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and agony. The ancients tell us, that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say that he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the hierarchy of Cerinthus and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a mere Man. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the Isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his Apocalypse, the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those latter fathers, who say that he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was a hundred saith another of them. However, it is clear that he wrote last of the four evangelists, and, comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe, 1. That he relates what they had omitted; he brings up the rear, and his gospel is as the rearward or gathering-host, it cleans up what they had passed by. Thus there was some collection, the profession of Solomon's wise sayings, (Pro. 22. 1.) and yet for short of what he delivered, (1 Kings 3. 2.) that he gives us more of the mystery of that which the other evangelists give us only the history of. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach, Luke 1. 1. Acts 1. 1. But that being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, John goes on to perfection, (Heb. 6. 1.) not laying again the foundation, but building upon it; leading us more within the vail. Some of the ancients observe that the other evangelists wrote more of the material—the bodily things of Christ; but John writes of the other things the spiritual things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the key of the evangelists. Here it is that a door is opened in heaven, and the first voice we hear is, Come up higher; come up higher. Some of the ancients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the four evangelists, make John himself to be the flying-eagle, so high doth he soar, and so clearly doth he see into divine and heavenly things.