

## SERMON XXII.

*For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—MAT. XXV. 35, 36.*

WE have seen the sentence, now the reason of the sentence. *For*, the illative particle, showeth that many like the sentence, would be glad to be entertained with a ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father ;’ but turn back upon the reason, to visit, feed, and clothe ; they have no mind, or to any other serious duties and acts of faith and self-denial. But we must regard both ; and I hope in a business of such moment you will not be skittish and impatient of the word of exhortation. I shall first vindicate the words, and then give you some observations from them.

First, Vindicate them, and assert their proper sense and intendment ; for upon the reading four doubts may arise in your minds :—

1. That good works are the reason of this sentence.
2. That the good works of the faithful are only mentioned, and not the evil they have committed.
3. That only works of mercy, or the fruits of love, are specified.
4. All cannot express their love and self-denial this way.

Let me clear these things, and our way will be the more easy and smooth afterward.

1. For the first doubt, that works are assigned as the reason of the sentence of absolution ; for the papists thence infer their merit and causal influence upon eternal life. I answer—

[1.] It is one thing to give a reason of the sentence, another to express the cause of the benefit received and adjudged to us by that sentence. A charter may be given to a sort of people out of mere grace, and privileges promised to all such as are under such a qualification, though that qualification no way meriteth those privileges and that grace promised ; as if a king should offer pardon and preferment to rebels that lay down their arms and return to their duty and allegiance, and live in such bounds ; their returning to their duty doth not merit this pardon, for it was a mere act of grace in the prince ; much less doth their return to their duty, and living peaceably within their ancient bounds, merit the honours and advancement promised ; yet this is pleadable in court, and the judge that taketh knowledge of the cause, taketh the reason of his sentence from their peaceable living within their bounds, whereby he judgeth them capable of the honours promised and expected. So here ; God of his mere grace promiseth the pardon of our sins, and to bestow upon us eternal life, if we believe and repent, and return to the duty we owed him by our creation. Our obedience is not the cause of our pardon, or of our right to glory, but his free promise ; but yet this qualification must be taken notice of by our judge in the great day, as the reason of his sentence. The sprinkling of the door-posts with blood was not a proper cause to move the destroying angel to pass over, but according to that rule he must proceed ; the admitting all that have a ticket to any solemnity

is not the cause why they are worthy to be received. This is clear, that a person is justified in some other way than a sentence is justified. These works are produced to justify the righteousness of his sentence before the whole world. A sinner is justified by faith; Christ's sentence by the believer's obedience.

[2.] That works merit not the blessings promised and adjudged to us, is evident; for they are due: Luke xvii. 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.' And they are imperfect: Phil. iii. 12, 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect.' And they are gifts of God, for which we ought to give him thanks, 2 Cor. viii. 1; a grace of God bestowed on us; and gifts have no equality with the reward, Rom. viii. 18. And they are done by servants redeemed by an infinite price: 1 Peter i. 19, 'With the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot;' being already appointed 'heirs of eternal life,' Rom. viii. 17; deserving eternal death, Rom. vi. 17; and that need continually implore the mercy of God for the pardon of sin. So much as you ascribe to man's merit, so much you detract from the grace of God; and the more sin is acknowledged, the more illustrious is grace: Rom. v. 20, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' You cross the counsel of God, all glorying in himself: 1 Cor. i. 29, 'That no flesh should glory in his presence;' and Deut. ix. 4-6, 'Speak not thou in thy heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.'

[3.] That works are produced as the undoubted evidences and fruits of a true and sound faith. Justification is opposed to accusation before God's tribunal. A double accusation may be brought against us—that we are sinners, or guilty of the breach of the first covenant, and that we are no sound believers, having not fulfilled the conditions of the second. From the first accusation we are justified by faith, from the latter we are justified by works, and that not only in this world, but in the day of judgment. Christ's commission and charge is to give eternal life to true believers, and the mark of true believers is holiness. Therefore, if his judgment be right, by producing this fruit and effect it must be justified. A judge is to proceed *secundum regulas juris, et allegata et probata*, as to the parties judged; and because in the day of judgment the covenant of grace hath the force of a law, therefore it belongeth to Christ as a judge to see we have fulfilled the condition of it, which is faith; and that our faith is true is proved by works. When we are first pressed with sin, because the promise of justification, or remission of sin, requireth

faith, it must be embraced by faith, and taken hold of by faith; our faith must pitch upon it, draw comfort from it, even before good works are done by us. But because the next accusation will presently arise, as if our faith were not true, we must be justified from this accusation by good works, not be contented with one or two good works, but abounding in all, that thus we may be justified more and more, and approved by our judge.

[4.] That faith is implied in all the works mentioned is evident— (1.) From Christ's scope. The manner of judging those in the visible church is intended. And (2.) The expression showeth it; for it is Christ they respected in his members. Now it requireth faith to see Christ in a poor beggar or prisoner, to love Christ in them above our worldly goods, and actually to part with them for Christ's sake. Self-denial is the fruit of faith. It is not merely the relieving of the poor, but the doing of it as in and to Christ. (3.) There is a near link between faith and works. Faith is not sound and perfect unless it produce these works, and these works are not acceptable unless they were the works of faith, and done in faith.

2. The second doubt is, whether the good works of the faithful shall be only mentioned, and not the evil? I answer—

So some would collect from this scheme and draught set down by Christ. It is a problem disputed, with probabilities on both sides, by good men. Some reason from the terms by which pardon is expressed; as by the blotting out of sin, remembering transgressions no more, cast into the depths of the sea. It is like God will cover them, because repented of and forgiven in the world. On the other side, they urge the exact reckoning, Rev. xx. 11; the general particles, 2 Cor. v. 10, and Eccles. xii. 13; and that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment, Mat. xii. 36. I would not interpose; I cannot say absolutely that their sins shall not be mentioned at all; for Acts iii. 19, it is said, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Certainly not to their trouble and confusion; possibly not particularly. These scriptures are not cogent to prove they shall. For it may be meant distributively; all the evil of the wicked, and the good of the godly. However, these scriptures should breed an awe in our hearts.

3. A third doubt is, that only works of mercy and charity, rather than piety, are mentioned by our Lord and Saviour. I answer—

[1.] It is clear that the special is put for the general, and an act of self-denying obedience is put for all the rest. In other places a more general expression is put; as Mat. xvi. 27, 'For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works;' and 2 Cor. v. 10, 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;' and Rev. xx. 12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the

books, according to their works.' And therefore acts of mercy are not intended to be cried up alone, as separate from all other acts of piety and charity to God and men; yea, all acts of charity, for which we are accountable unto God, are not mentioned; comforting the afflicted, reproving the faulty, instructing the weak, counselling the erring, praying for others. Therefore, under these works of charity, all the fruits of faith are understood, and the real gracious constitution of the heart that must produce them: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me not,' οὐδέν εἰμι. But Christ doth not express that so plainly, because he would show that this judgment shall proceed according to what is visible and sensible.

[2.] Christ singled out works of mercy for the evidence; because the Jews had been more exact and diligent in the observing the ceremonies of external worship, but negligent of these things. Therefore doth God so often by the prophets tell them of mercy above sacrifices: Hosea vi. 6, 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.' And mercy above fasting, Isa. lviii. 6, 7. These are duties never out of season, and including a real benefit to mankind. God preferreth them before external rites of worship.

[3.] These are most evident and sensible discoveries, and so fitted to be produced as fruits of faith. There is a demonstration of the soundness of it; *a signis notioribus*. These are most conspicuous, and so fittest to justify believers before all the world, who reckon good and evil most by the bodily life. Therefore doth Christ instance in acts of bodily rather than spiritual charity. Not in reproving, converting, counselling, but in feeding and clothing.

[4.] These are acts wherein we do exercise faith and self-denial. In imparting spiritual gifts to others we lose nothing ourselves, as our candle loseth nothing by communicating light to another. Christ would have us venture something on our heavenly hopes; and not please ourselves with a religion that costs us nothing, and puts us to no charges. Alms is an expensive duty; here is something parted with, and that upon reasons of faith: Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days;' Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he giveth them, will he pay it again.'

[5.] Christ would hereby represent the excellency of charity, and commend it to the covetous niggardly world. It is the duty wherein we do very much resemble God and Christ; and all his followers should be like him. These are all works of God; to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, we imitate him in this, are instruments of his providence. Mercy is a very lovely thing, an imitation of the divine nature. Our Lord told us, Acts xx. 35, it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive. It cometh nearest the nature of God. So Christ himself went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed. And by helpfulness to others we do very much resemble Christ. I cannot exclude this, since mercy is mentioned only.

4. A fourth doubt is this, that all cannot express their love and self-denial this way; some are so very poor and miserable. I answer—

[1.] All must have that faith which will work by love: Gal. v. 6, 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love;' and self-denial, which some way or other must be expressed: Mat. xvi. 24, 'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' By denying the ease of the flesh, if not the interests of it; to be serviceable in their place, whatsoever it be.

[2.] Though some be so needy themselves that they cannot clothe the naked or feed the hungry, yet they may visit the sick, resort to such as are in prison. Every one, in some kind or other, may be the object of his neighbour's charity; so may every one be either the instrument or agent in the doing of it. The rich may stand in need of the help or prayers of the poor, and the poor of the bounty of the rich. If we have a heart to part with all for Christ, we have that faith which will carry away the price of gospel privileges. All must have such a value for Christ, see such an excellency in the world to come, that they have a heart and disposition to part with all, rather than quit the profession of the gospel, or neglect the duties thereof, Mat. xiii. 44, 45.

These things premised, I come now to observe these points:—

First, That at the general judgment all men shall receive their doom, or judgment shall be pronounced according to their works; for Christ produceth works both in the sentence of absolution and condemnation.

Secondly, That Christ hath so ordered his providence about his members, that some of them are exposed to necessities and wants, others in a capacity to relieve them.

Thirdly, That works of charity, done out of faith and love to Christ, are of greater weight and consequence than the world usually taketh them to be.

Other points may be raised, but to these three all the rest may be reduced.

First, That at the general judgment all men shall receive their doom, or judgment shall be pronounced according to their works.

Of the wicked there is no doubt but that they shall receive according to their works; they stand on their own bottom; their works deserve punishment; their doom and sentence is justified by their works. But for the godly, it is also true that life everlasting shall be awarded, *secundum opera, non propter opera*. Not that this kingdom is by right due to us for our works; but the righteousness of the sentence is manifested by producing our works. This will appear if we consider—(1.) The business, scope, or end of the day of judgment; (2.) The respect of good works, and how far they are considered.

1. The business of that day is not only to glorify God's free love and mercy, but also his holiness rewarding justice and truth. Then God will not only glorify the riches of his glorious grace, in the electing of his people out of his love and favour to them, without anything considered in them—('Come, ye blessed of my Father.' The first cause of our salvation is made the blessing of the Father)—but also his

remunerating justice, veracity, or truth. This maketh for our purpose now.

[1.] His holiness. The holy God delighteth in holiness. He will now manifest it in the sun, the estimation he hath of the holiness of his people. The veil is taken away; now it is made matter of sense. It is a delight to him. Christ mentions their graces and services as things which are pleasing and acceptable to him: Ps. v. 4, 'Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness.' But he hath pleasure in the holiness of his people. The upright are his delight, and as such will he speak of them, and commend them, and represent them to the world.

[2.] His remunerating justice. The justice of God requireth that there should be different proceeding with them that differ among themselves; that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil; that every man should reap according to what he hath sown, whether he hath sown according to the flesh or the spirit; and the fruit of his doings be given into his bosom. Therefore, those whom Christ will receive into everlasting life must appear faithful and obedient; for then Christ will judge the world in righteousness, Acts xvii. 31.

[3.] That he may show his veracity and faithfulness. The faithful God will make good his promises, and reward all the labours and patience and faithfulness of his servants, according to his promises to them. If his promises take notice of works, his justice will. God is not unfaithful or unrighteous, 'to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed to his name,' Heb. vi. 10.

2. The respect of good works, and how far they are considered.

[1.] They are perfectional accomplishments. Those that have done them are lovely objects in his sight, as being conformed to his nature and pattern. Can we imagine that God should bid the saints love one another for their holiness, and count them the excellent ones of the earth, Ps. xvi. 3, how poor and despicable soever they be as to their outward condition, and that he himself should not love them the more? We, that have but a drop of the divine nature, hate impure sinners. Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, 2 Peter ii. 8. And we find a complacency and delight in the good. And can we imagine, without a manifest reproach to him, that God should be so indifferent to good and evil, and that the saints should not be more lovely in his sight for their holiness? Therefore the more lovely the more endeared objects to their Redeemer.

[2.] They are qualifications to make them capable of his remunerating justice. There is in God a threefold justice:—(1.) His strict justice; (2.) His justice of bounty, or free beneficence; and (3.) As judging according to his gospel law of promise.

(1.) He may be said to be strictly just when he rewardeth man according to his perfect obedience; yet no obedience, though never so perfect, can bind him to reward man or angel.

(2.) He is just by way of bounty, when he rewardeth a man capable of reward; though not in respect of his perfect righteousness in himself, yet because he is some way righteous in respect of others that are unrighteous. So it is said, 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'It is a righteous thing

with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his saints; and to them that are troubled, rest,' &c. This with respect to Christ's merit, and the qualification of the parties.

(3.) The third righteousness is in performance of his promises; for though his promise be free, yet if it be once made, justice doth require it; and God is not free, but bound to perform it. Now, in these two latter respects, are they capable.

[3.] They are signs and tokens of their being approved and accepted with God, according to the gospel covenant. Christ, as God's steward, cometh to distribute the appointed reward to the heirs of glory. This is the evidence he is to proceed by. When the destroying angel was sent to destroy the first-born of the Egyptians, he was to take notice of the sign of sprinkling of blood on the door-posts, Exod. xii. Not that that blood deserved; but it signified that there dwelt Israelites.

[4.] They are measures according to the degrees of grace, and our abounding in the work of the Lord: 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.' The reward is more full or sparing according to what we have done or suffered for God.

*Use.* To set us right in the doctrine of grace and works. We have to do with three parties—

(1.) The pharisaical legalist; (2.) The carnal gospeller; and, (3.) The broken-hearted and serious Christian.

1. The legalist that trusts in himself that he is righteous, and hopeth to be accepted with God for his works' sake. Trusting in works is very natural and very dangerous. It is very natural, because of the law written upon our hearts. We all come into the world with a sense of a duty-covenant; and because every one would be sufficient to his own happiness, an unhumbléd soul is apt to give more to duty and personal righteousness than to Christ: Rom. x. 3, 'For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God,' *οὐκ ὑπετάγησαν*. A russet ragged coat of his own pleaseth a proud man better than a silken coat that is borrowed. It is dangerous; for it is contrary to all the declarations of God: Eph. ii. 9, 'By grace ye are saved; not of works, lest any man should boast.' The whole progress of salvation, from its first step in regeneration till its final and last period in glorification, doth entirely flow from God's grace, and not from our works. The securing the interest of free grace in our salvation is a thing the Spirit of God is very careful of in the scriptures, the glory of grace being that which God mainly aimeth at, Eph. i. 6, and a thing which we do naturally incline to intrench upon, and to rob him of, in whole or in part. It crosseth the great end which God aimed at in contriving of man's salvation, which was that all ground of glorying should be taken away from man, as being in the meanest or least respect a saviour to himself, and that all the glory might be ascribed completely to God in Christ, 1 Cor. i. 29-31. Christ spake a parable against those that trusted in themselves that they were righteous: Luke xviii. 9, 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a pharisee, the other a publican.' The

one cometh appealing to justice: 'The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust,' &c. ; 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' The other cometh crying out grace: '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.' The sinner is justified, not the worker. In short, to prevent all mistakes—

[1.] Our works, whatever they are, either works of love to God or man, and the good use of external means or common grace, are not the moving cause or inducement to incline God to give us Christ, or the grace of faith, or work of conversion before others; but this is the mere work of grace, or the mercy and good pleasure of God: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.'

[2.] Works, both before and after conversion, are not that righteousness, nor any part of that righteousness, by which sin is expiated, or the wrath of God appeased, or whereby we are reconciled to God, and do originally obtain a right to eternal life; this is only ascribed to the merit of Christ: Rom. iii. 24, 25, 'Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.' The merit is in Christ's blood, Christ's obedience, his ransom and meritorious price.

[3.] Our works, or what we do to fulfil the law of God, are not that instrument by virtue of which we apply the merits of Christ to ourselves, or receive that righteousness by virtue of which we are reconciled to God. Our interest in the merits of Christ, our right to pardon of sin and grace, doth not arise from works, but merely faith, Rom. iii. 22; so that in the plea of justification, or our suit for the pardon of sin, we must renounce all our good works, and wholly rely on the merits of Christ, giving up ourselves to do the will of God. Abate this, and then works indeed come in as the fruits of faith, as evidences of eternal life and the way to glory.

2. The carnal gospeller is the other person we have to do with; and to him we say—

[1.] That no man can maintain his comfort, and faithfully rely upon Christ's merits, but he that is faithful in doing his Father's will. No other faith is allowed by the scriptures for sound in the judgment of our consciences but such a faith: Gal. v. 6, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.' No other faith will be approved by Christ for sound at the last day: Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'

[2.] That the doing of some good works cannot excuse men for the omission of others which be as necessary; we must not do one act of charity only, but all. Many acts are reckoned up of one kind, to imply



all the rest ; not only fed, but clothed ; not only clothed, but visited. Therefore, besides the goodness of the work which we are bound to do, there must be a uniformity in them. There are good works of divers kinds, many works of the same kind. To prophesy in Christ's name is a good work ; to cast out devils would seem to us more excellent than these mentioned ; as the workers of iniquity : Mat. vii. 22, ' Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? ' Ver. 23, ' Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ' Then there are many works of the same kind ; we must not only visit, but clothe ; not once, but often. The same faith which inclineth our hearts to works of one kind, will incline them to every kind ; for they all stand by the same authority, and it is not agreeable with sincerity to balk any of them.

[3.] These works must be done so heartily as that it may appear we have denied all for Christ, and love him above all ; or that it may appear they are fruits of faith and love. The parting with worldly goods implieth our hearts must be loosened from the love of temporal things ; and the visiting of Christ in prison, which may be for righteousness' sake, implieth our victory over our fear of danger ; otherwise it argueth our faith is weak and our love is cold, and so not sincere, not prevailing over us in such a degree as will argue sincerity. There is ' faith unfeigned,' 2 Tim. i. 5, and ' loving in deed and truth,' 1 John iii. 18. ' Faith unfeigned,' as when temporal things seem nothing to us, and are easily parted with ; and ' love in deed and in truth,' is to relieve our brethren with our goods, yea, to give our lives for them if need be, as appeareth ver. 16, 17. But alas ! love in most christians is cold ; it will neither take pains, nor be at charge, much less lay down life for them, as Christ did for us ; do little to maintain, comfort, or support Christ's servants in distress.

3. The broken-hearted, serious christian, that thinketh works can never have enough of his care, or too little of his trust, that is always hard at work for God, and yet seeth God must do all at last, he is persuaded that grace doth not weaken his duty, but enforce it ; yet, when he hath done all, counteth himself but an unprofitable servant, and is still approving himself unto God more and more ; and yet the more he doth, the more daily need he seeth of Christ. No man liveth under a greater dread of the holiness and justice of God, yet flieth oftener to his mercy. We must comfort these.

[1.] Consider, God observeth all the good that we do, and pondereth every action, of what kind soever it be ; whether giving food, or clothing, or harbour, or entertainment, or visiting, or comforting ; it will all be fruit abounding to your account, Phil. iv. 17. The more you abound in acts of communion with God, or relief towards such as are in misery, the greater will your reward be in the last day. There is fruit for our account, and abounding for our account.

[2.] The least actions done for Christ's sake shall be rewarded by him ; for some of the actions are more inconsiderable than the other ; yet, if done for Christ's sake, a meal's meat, a little harbour, yea, a visit, is taken notice of by him. He doth not say, Ye feasted me, ye made

me sumptuous entertainment; but, Ye gave me food, ye clothed me, ye visited, &c. The least action done for Christ's sake shall not go unrewarded: Mat. x. 42, 'Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward.'

[3.] God will pardon all their failings. Here is no mention of the evil, but the good they had done. An honest upright heart is dispensed with as to many weaknesses: Mal. iii. 17, 'I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'

I come now to the second point:—

*Doct. 2.* That Christ ordereth his dispensations so that some of his people are exposed to necessity, others in a capacity to relieve them.

The privileges and promises of the gospel do not exempt the one from distress, nor do the duties and rules of the gospel make the possession of riches to the other unlawful. In the one sort of good men Christ is hungry and athirst, in the other sort of good men he feedeth and clotheth them: Christ is in the giver and receiver: these want, that they may have matter of patience; those abound, that they may have matter of bounty: Abraham was rich, Lazarus that slept in his bosom was poor. It is so—

1. That he may show himself to be the governor and disposer of all things here in the world, and that he giveth honour and riches to whomsoever he will, Dan. iv. 17. If these things were at the devil's disposal, God's friends should never have them.

2. To show that the bare possession is not unlawful; that it is not the having, but the ill use that bringeth so much mischief.

3. That the world may know somewhat of his favour to his people, and what prosperity he can bestow upon all if it were expedient: some diseases require cordials, others sharp and bitter potions.

4. That in the time of our exercise we may have a pledge what he will do for us hereafter, and give us in heaven.

5. That they may be instruments of his providence, to supply others that want house and harbour, and all necessaries; as the great veins receive blood to convey it to the lesser: some are kept under affliction. We sail more safely to the haven of salvation with an adverse wind than a prosperous.

*Use.* If it fall to your lot to give rather than to receive, bless God in that behalf, and neglect not your duty. God could level all to an equality, but he will not, that you may be instruments of his providence to cherish them: you should be a fountain, not to keep the water to yourselves, but to overflow for the necessity of others.

I come now to the third point:—

*Doct. 3.* That works of charity, done out of faith and love to God, are of greater weight and consequence than the world taketh them to be.

1. There is a command of God requireth it. Next to the great duties of the gospel, nothing more enforced. To relieve the necessities of the poor is not arbitrary, but a duty required of us according to our abilities; it is charity to them, but a due debt to God, and a part of our righteousness. Stewards are to dispense the estate by the master's command.

2. It is the trial of our love to Christ. He hath made the poor his proxies and deputies. We would cozen ourselves with an empty faith, and a cheap love, if God had not devolved his right upon our brethren: 1 John iii. 17, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' If Christ were sick in a bed, we would visit him; if in want, we would relieve him. Christ is so nearly conjoined with his servants, that in their afflictions he is afflicted, in their comforts he is comforted; he looks upon it as done to him. The godly of old time thought themselves much honoured if they could get a prophet or an apostle to their houses: Heb. xiii. 1, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.' Here is Christ himself; will you refuse him who is heir of all things?

3. It is the great question interrogated by him at the great day of accounts. It is not, Have you heard? have you prophesied? have you ate and drank in my presence? but, Have you fed? have you clothed? have you visited? We are one day to come to this account, and what sorry accounts shall we make! So much for pleasure, for riot, for luxury, for bravery in apparel, and pomp in living, and little or nothing for God and his people; as if a steward should bring in his bill, so much spent in feasts, in rioting, in merry company, when his master's house lieth to ruin, the children starved, and the servants neglected. We are very liberal to our lusts, but sparing to God. A man that expecteth to be posed, is preparing himself, and would fain know the questions aforehand. Christ hath told us our question.

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### SERMON XXIII.

*Then shall the righteous answer and say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? and thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? and naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—MAT. XXV. 37–40.*

WE have handled the sentence and the reason. The reason is amplified in some parabolical passages, which contain a dialogue or interchangeable discourse between Christ the King and his elect servants. In which you may observe—(1.) Their question, ver. 37–39; (2.) Christ's reply and answer, ver. 40. Not that such formal words shall pass to and fro at the day of judgment, between the judge and the judged; but only to represent the matter more sensibly, and in a more lively and impressive way to our minds.

First, For their question; certainly it is not moved—(1.) By way of doubt or exception to the reason alleged by the judge in his sentence, there being a perfect agreement and harmony of mind and will between