

Doct. 2. That this will be found to be true wisdom, and the other folly.

For wisdom, to begin with that. Wisdom is *index sui et obliqui*. Wisdom lieth—

1. In proposing a right end.
2. In the choice of fit means.
3. In an earnest prosecution of the end by these means. This is the property of wisdom in the general, and it holdeth true in godly wisdom. The wise virgins did so. Their end was right; to be admitted into the nuptial feast, or everlasting enjoyment of God. And then they use right means, such as will bring them to the end. We do not use to draw ships in the sea with horses, nor draw waggons with the wind. We must not use contrary means, nor insufficient means. We cannot go to the bottom of a well that is thirty foot deep with a line that is but ten foot. We must use such as will certainly do. The wisdom of God hath fixed means for us, and we are doubly fools if we will not use them opportunely, carefully and constantly; else it is a 'price put into a fool's hand,' Prov. xvi. 17. The wise virgins did all this; sought oil in time both for their lamps and vessels, Luke xiii. 24. On the contrary, he that contents himself with a profession of Christ, without a work of grace upon his heart, is a fool; he is not a profane fool that doth the contrary, but a professing fool; that sort of profession is better than profaneness, so far it is a degree of wisdom; but rested in it is folly, it faileth in all the points of wisdom in the end. They do not esteem the Lord as the chief good, for they think a little ease of the flesh, or a little sensual liberty, or a satisfaction of a lust, to be better; or honour, or pleasure, or gain; this quiets them in the neglect or want of God. They see some good in Christ, offer fair for him, but take him not as the chiefest good; they are willing to part with something, but not with all for his sake.

SERMON IV.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.—

MAT. XXV. 5.

WE have seen wherein they differed, now we shall see again wherein they agree. In the words observe—

1. What happened to the virgins, *they all slumbered and slept*.
2. The occasion of it (I do not say the cause), *while the bridegroom tarried*. The cause of sleeping was *infirmitas humana*; the occasion of it, *mora sponsi*. In the first of these—

[1.] Who? *they all*.

[2.] What? *slumbered and slept*.

First, Who? *they all*. It is no wonder to hear it of the foolish virgins, but that the wise should do it, there is the difficulty; therefore some of the ancients understand it of death, which is called sleep in scripture; but that is improbable, and suiteth not with the frame and drift of this parable. Some would understand it distributively,

not conjunctively; that the wise slumbered, and the foolish slept; but it is not said slumbered *or* slept, but slumbered *and* slept. The meaning is, all of them were not so diligent in their duty as they should have been: even the good are in part negligent as well as the foolish, though they always keep a good conscience, and a heart in some measure always prepared to meet Christ.

Secondly, What? *slumbered and slept*; wherein the degree of their security is set forth. They did not only *slumber*, which is a less failing, but *slept*.

Thirdly, The order, first *slumbered*, and then *slept*.

Doct. That the foolish and wise both slumber and sleep.

I shall first inquire, What this slumbering and sleeping is.

Secondly, How far it may befall the children of God, or the wise virgins.

Thirdly, The causes and reasons of it.

First, What this slumbering and sleeping is. It is twofold—that of the body, and that of the mind. That of the body, when the senses cease for a time to do their office; that of the mind is a secure state of soul, and that is twofold—moral and spiritual.

1. Moral. When reason and natural knowledge is as it were asleep and useless to us, a man doth not act as a reasonable creature: Ps. xciv. 8, 'O ye brutish among the people, when will ye be wise?' and Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;' Ps. cxix. 59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' If men did improve common principles, show themselves men, they could not continue in that course of life wherein they allow themselves. In part this sleep of reason may befall the children of God: they do not consider nor turn their minds to their affairs, nor act as men whose eyes are open.

2. Spiritual sleeping. Here I shall show the nature and effects of it.

[1.] The nature of it; when graces are not lively and kept in exercise. I shall instance in those three theological graces, faith, hope, and love; a weak dead faith, a feeble sleepy love, a cold and careless hope.

(1.) A weak and dead faith, that consists more in a form of knowledge than a lively assent to the truths of godliness. A dead opinionative belief may stand with a carnal life: James ii. 20, 'Faith without works is dead.' The word of God is come to them in word only, not in power; it puts no life into what we do believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13; doth not work effectually. This will fit the slumbering and sleeping of the foolish virgins. But alas! the wise have their drowsy fits; the truths of the word concerning God, Christ, heaven, and hell, have not such a lively influence upon them, by the blandishments of worldly prosperity. Faith is fallen asleep, ready to give place to the flesh, and they are governed more by fancy and appetite than by the heavenly mind; there is no consideration of the vanity of earthly things; the heart is kept strange to God and heaven, and the soul is taken up with carnal projects more than it should be.

(2.) A feeble sleepy love, which doth not level and direct our actions to the great end of them, which is the pleasing and glorifying of God, so that they live too much to themselves. Love in vigour doth over-

rule us to live unto God: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.' And this keepeth us more sincere and uniform in our course, always tending to the great end.

(3.) A cold and careless hope, when there is not that earnest and desirous expectation of blessedness to come which doth fortify us against the allurements of sense: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.' They do not mind their true treasure.

[2.] The effects of this sleepiness are seen in these things:—

(1.) In some intermission of their care and caution. Watching is a diligent taking heed to ourselves and ways, so as we keep ourselves from sin. We are in constant danger of sins that come on us by insensible degrees: Ps. xxxix. 1, 'I said I would take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' The best are surprised, and corruption often breaketh out. We may say of them, as Christ of the damsel, They are not dead, but sleep. The children of God are sometimes overtaken by their inadvertency, Gal. vi. 1, or overborne by the violence of temptations, James i. 14, inconsiderately and suddenly surprised with sin. So subtle and assiduous is Satan in tempting, and so ready is corruption to close with the temptation as soon as it is represented, that if a child of God doth but abate anything of his circumspection and diligence, he will be surprised by some one sin or other, and thereby be brought to dishonour God, and so lay a stumbling-block before others. Besides those sins of daily incursion and sudden surreption, Satan lieth in wait to draw us to greater offences, that may dishonour God and wound our peace, and scandalise the world against our profession.

(2.) Some abatement of our zeal and fervency. We are not always fervent in spirit, and do not keep up our life and seriousness in the duties of holiness. Our graces are not actuated and kept in exercise, but suffer some decay, though they be not quite dead. Faith is weak, love is cold, Mat. xxiv. 12. There is not that lively hope, 1 Peter i. 3. Christians should not only be living, but lively: 1 Peter ii. 5, 'Ye as living stones.' Nay, there may be so great a damp and quenching upon us, that there is no outward visible difference between a dead man and a dying Christian: all things in us may be ready to die: Rev. iii. 2, 'Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.' Life is even quite gone in some cases, when sin hath made fearful havoc in the conscience.

(3.) In forgetfulness or non-attendancy to the Lord's coming. When we live merrily, quietly, in a careless and unprepared estate; this is necessarily to be taken in as the cause of the two former. In the slumbering and sleeping of the foolish virgins the case is clear; Christ's absence or tarrying long is the occasion the world takes to grow secure

and wicked. The scoffers walked after their own lusts, because they said, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' 2 Peter iii. 3, 4. And in the degenerate church, the reason why they were given to sensuality, carnal pomp, and persecution, is set down, Mat. xxiv. 49, 'My Lord delayeth his coming.' Therefore the officers of the church smite their fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken, encourage the wicked, and smite the godly with censures; as it was with the Israelites, there was no speech of making a calf when Moses first went up to the mount, but when he tarried long, Exod. xxxii., 'And as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him;' then nothing would content them but making a calf. The ordinances and institutions of Christ had never been so perverted in the Christian world, but that they forgot Christ's coming to see how they have been observed: 1 Tim. vi. 14, 'That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.' But now for the wise virgins. Alas! there is not such a constant waiting for the coming of the Lord; for if we did not leave off to think of it, surely we would walk more cautiously, and serve God with greater ardency and alacrity of spirit; but when we forget it, we let loose the reins, and slacken our diligence, and yield to the importunity of the flesh, and suffer ourselves to be distracted with worldly cares, or benumbed with fleshly delights, that we do not mind our duty of preparing for the Lord's coming.

Secondly, How far may this seize upon Christians? The question may be stated negatively and affirmatively; how far it may, and how far it may not.

1. Affirmatively.

[1.] It may seize upon them not only when they are young, but when they are of long standing. When they are young: Many a man newly converted, having had as yet no thorough experience of the strength of sin, the danger of temptations, and his own weakness, may bear a little too high upon the confidence of his own resolutions, which, because they are sincere, he thinketh they will easily obtain their effect. In this rank I put Peter, whilst as yet the Spirit was not poured out, and was only under his Master's wing: I count him but a novice then, in comparison of what he was afterwards. He was so confident of his affection to Christ and resolution, that he had not a due sense of his danger, Mat. xxvi. 33. But alas! how soon were his unpractised wings clipped, and he taken in the snare of the fowler! Honest Peter would not believe such weakness in himself; and so inexperienced Christians can hardly believe themselves to be so weak as a temptation showeth them to be; the more sincere their purpose is, the more confident they are in their own strength, even when near a fearful fall. So a man of long standing, being assured of salvation, may grow negligent; and supposing he hath grace, and is possessed of the love of God, presumes that he needeth not such diligence as when he was doubtful of his state; and if he go round in a course of duty, and avoid grosser sins, he may think it is enough, as if he were now past all danger, and so insensibly falleth asleep or into decay: Rev. iii. 18, 'Because thou sayest that I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched,

and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked : I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and eye-salve that thou mayest see.' It is not spoken to the gross carnal, or to beginners, or persons unacquainted with Christ, but to lukewarm professors, after the first labours of regeneration, and the difficulties of reconciliation with God are passed over, and the terrors of the law well vanquished, and some peace and confidence gotten; then we are in danger of security, by which means all may run to waste in the soul, and sins break out and make our blindness and nakedness appear. The wise virgins slept not until their main work was in some measure over: and therefore a strange security and sleepiness is incident to us, and may befall not only the wicked, who scarce ever think of the world to come, being blinded with present things, but those that are good have their drowsy fits, by which they remit of their zeal, and grow more dead, and are not so diligent in seeking occasions to do good.

[2.] When we are in greatest danger, and matters most concerning us are in hand, and God calleth most for our service, and so have most need to watch, then are we usually most secure; witness the disciples upon Mount Olivet, after many warnings given them by Christ, Mat. xxvi. 41-45. Until Christ telleth them, 'Sleep on now;' that is, sleep if you can; it will not be long ere you are thoroughly awakened; so often are the saints slumbering and sleeping when most need to be awake, and misspend the time in sluggishness and carnal rest which is granted them to prepare themselves for trial. So Jonah i. 5, when a storm arises for his sake, though the winds blow, and the sea roar, and the mariners at their wits' end, yet Jonah was fast asleep. Those most guilty, and those whom the correction pointed at, are most secure under it. And Samson is asleep when the Philistines are ready to come upon him. Now, if ever, should men be awake. Now we are awakened by God's providence, and the estate of the Christian world round about us; now we should exercise all the grace and skill we can.

[3.] They may show their sleepiness in their public relations; as while the envious man sowed tares, the husbandmen were asleep, Mat. xiii. 25. Many times magistrates are asleep when abuses creep in and eat out the bowels of the commonwealth; and ministers are asleep while the kingdom of Christ is undermined; masters of families asleep while disorders creep into their houses. Magistrates are watchers as well as private Christians, Rom. xiii. 6, who sleep, and neglect the care of souls. But especially ministers are to watch over their people's souls, and should put forth their utmost care and diligence, Heb. xiii. 17.

[4.] It may befall them after some solemn service, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20. After this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, then he falleth into that rash engagement against Pharaoh Necho, which cost him his life. Hezekiah after his reformation fell into pride and provocation of God, 2 Chron. xxxii. Many times when we have performed some good service to God, we take occasion to be more careless and secure. We think we are privileged by our former diligence: 'If the righteous

trust in his righteousness, and commit iniquity,' Ezek. xxxiii. 13; that is, upon the presumption that he laid in a fore-merit. Our hearts will be seeking some unlawful liberty, and we intermit our watch upon such occasions.

2. Negatively. We must make the exceptions that are necessary.

[1.] Though the wise virgins may slumber and sleep, and there be an intermission of the acts of grace, yet no intercision of the habits of grace, or radical inclination to God. *Gradus remittitur, actus intermittitur, habitus non amittitur.* Some degrees may be remitted, acts intermitted, but the habit not extinguished; still the seed of God remaineth in them; love is the predominant habit. Sin doth not possess the heart instead of God, 1 John ii. 15. The habitual bent of the soul is more for God than for the flesh or the world. However he fail in some individual actions, the scope and tenor of his life is for God and sincere obedience. There is life and sap at the root, though in the winter the trees be without leaves and blossoms: Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' There is faith, and hope, and love in their hearts all this while; the Spirit of God abideth in them, and keepeth alive his work: 2 Tim. i. 14, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' The Spirit remaineth in the saints, to maintain the habits of grace. Their choice of God for their portion remaineth unshaken. They have chosen the better part, adhere to it, and have a general purpose to please God in all things.

[2.] A universal slumber is not usually incident to the saints. It is not the sleep of the whole man as to all goodness; it is not in all parts of the soul. If there be a remiss will, and dead affections, yet not a sleepy conscience; something that taketh God's part, as appeareth, because they are unsatisfied with this dull and drowsy estate.

[3.] They are more easily alarmed and roused up out of it than others that sleep the sleep of death. Their faith and love is soon awake again, and easily set a-work for God; there is somewhat to work upon. A true Christian riseth by unfeigned repentance, when his conscience hath but leisure, and helps to deliberate, and bethinks what he hath done; and so much the better resolveth and bethinketh himself against his sin for the time to come.

[4.] When they arise again, and repent, and do their first works, they are more earnest and fervent than they were before: as it were to make amends for their former languishing, and to redeem the time they have lost, they double their diligence.

Thirdly, I come to the reasons of this sleepiness.

1. There are two principles in the children of God—the flesh inclining to sleep, and the spirit to wake: Mat xxvi. 41, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;' and therefore the degree of grace which the best attain unto in this life is mixed with imperfection. The guiding and commanding faculties do but imperfectly direct, and the inferior faculties imperfectly obey. It is the office of the understanding and the will to command, of the inferior faculties to obey. There is weakness in all of them; therefore it is said, James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all.' The understanding in many things is but a blind guide; the will is but in part rectified, and so cannot exercise such a powerful command over our thoughts, passions, and senses.

2. Variety of outward occurrences, working upon the diversity of principles in us; as sometimes we are in a prosperous estate, sometimes in deep troubles; both may cause this deadness and drowsiness in us. Sometimes deep troubles make us 'weary of well-doing,' 2 Thes. iii. 13. So Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners, lest you be weary, and faint in your minds.' Now, as this weariness and heaviness causeth sleep in the body, so it doth in the soul. We are tired in God's service, and then our wheels are clogged. A man may be secure in trouble, but usually he is so in time of peace. Peace, wealth, and honour are often abused to spiritual drowsiness, and secure neglect of God: 'Ease slayeth the fool,' Prov. i. 32. We had need watch when Delilah spreads her lap for us, and the delights of the world open their bosom to us. Surfeiting with the abundance of worldly prosperity, we neglect the power of religion, and please ourselves with the form. David, enjoying peace and plenty, slew Uriah his friend, who in his adversity spared Saul his enemy; yea, his heart smote him but for the cutting off the lap of his garment. In the abundance of outward comforts we sit loose from God; therefore we have those cautions, Deut. viii. from ver. 7 to ver. 14.

3. Conversing with spiritual sluggards, that count it a high piece of wisdom not to be too forward. Irreligious company and example is a great matter, and hath a mighty force upon us; and though it doth not begin sin in the soul, it doth increase it, Isa. vi. 6. Sin is by propagation, not by imitation; but yet the contagion of example is a great advantage to corruption. To be among warm, heavenly, mortified, self-denying Christians, is a great advantage in the spiritual life. There is a notable provocation and excitement in their example. Saul among the prophets had his raptures, 1 Sam. x. 10; Heb. x. 24, 'Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' This begets a holy emulation who shall excel; but carnal company is a deadening thing. We are more susceptible of evil than good; we catch a disease from one another, but we do not get health one from another. By touching the unclean they became unclean, but he that was unclean was not purified by touching the clean. The conversations of the wicked have more power to corrupt than the good to provoke and excite to virtue. A man that would keep himself awake unto God, and mind the saving of his soul, must shake off evil company: Ps. cxix. 115. 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.' And by evil company I mean not only the profane, who bespeak their own hatred and detestation by their apparent odiousness, but the loose and careless. As we are to take heed that we be not allured to that which is evil, so that we be not deadened to that which is good. Neglect of God will keep us out of heaven as well as profaneness. We easily leaven one another with deadness and formality; frequent society with dead-hearted persons breedeth it, such whose conference is empty and unsavoury, and altogether of worldly things. Certainly our dulness and backwardness is such that we need the most powerful helps.

4. Another cause is a dead worship: *missa non mordet*. Christ compareth spiritual duties to new wine, Mat. ix., but the pharisaical feasts to taplash, or old unsavoury stuff that hath no spirits. Old

bottles will endure that well enough. Nothing lulleth the soul asleep so much as a perfunctory worship, or sleepy devotions. Christ's ordinances are simple, but full of virtue; his institutions conscientiously observed will keep us awake: Ps. cxix. 93, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.' Use them much in faith and obedience, and graces will be preserved in us in a lively manner, and constant exercise: 1 Thes. v. 19, 20, 'Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying.' If you would not quench the Spirit, you must not carelessly use the means of grace: 'The words of the wise are as goads to prick us forward' (Eccles. xii. 10) in heaven's way. To stir us up to our duty, the Spirit of God sharpeneth and pointeth the word, that it may be as goads in our sides. When we are negligent, here is quickening. A dull ministry as well as a dull minister maketh us fall asleep.

5. Slumber is the cause of sleeping. Mark the order in the text: they first slumbered, and afterwards slept. One degree of carelessness makes way for another; and usually there is a lesser degree at first. Take heed of the beginnings of declinations. If we would avoid sleep, we must avoid slumber. No man becometh stark naught at the first step. One careless prayer maketh way for another. Give way to it now, and it will settle into an utter deadness at last. Men fear not the danger of little sins, and so are hardened under them, till they fall into greater. Small sins harden as well as great sins; it is hard to say which more. Indeed at first little sins seem to awaken compunction. The prick of a pin maketh a man start, but a heavy blow stunneth him. David, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him; but when he fell into adultery and blood, he was like one in a swoon. This is true; but then, on the other side, great sins are more apparent and liable to the notice of conscience; but we neglect small sins, and so inveterate custom groweth upon us, and we are insensibly hardened by a carelessness and constant neglect of those kind of sins; yea, sometimes more than by gross falls. A surfeit or violent distemper maketh us run to a physician; but when a disease groweth upon us by degrees, we have death in our bowels ere we know it. We take care to mend a great breach, but a leak unspied drowneth the ship. We have need always to stand upon our watch. Many great mischiefs would not ensue, if we took notice of the beginnings of those distempers which afterwards settle upon us.

6. The omission of holy duties, and the want of a constant serious exercise, induces a secure careless temper of spirit. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xix. 15, 'Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and the idle soul shall suffer hunger.' Labour dispelleth the vapours, and scattereth them, but sloth and idleness maketh way for sleep. It is true in the soul. The renewed part hath need of a great deal of spiritual exercise to keep it awake; much prayer, much hearing, much fasting. The apostle saith, Rom. xii. 11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' The way to be fervent in duties is to be frequent in them. Be much in action, and in the exercise of grace, that you may be kept fresh and lively. Wells are the sweeter for draining; so is the soul the more fresh and ready for every good work. In gifts, we see, if they be not traded with, they rust and decay, and fail; so in

graces: 'To him that hath shall be given.' He that uses his gifts well shall find them increased. The right arm is bigger and stronger and fuller of spirits than the left, because more in use.

7. Grieving the Spirit causeth him to suspend his quickening influence, and then the soul is in a dead and drowsy estate. Though the children of God dare not quench the Spirit, yet they may grieve the Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. The conscience of a renewed man, after it is wounded by gross sins, may be a dead and stupified conscience for a long time: witness David and Jonah.

8. Immoderate liberty in worldly things, as worldly cares and fleshly delights. Sobriety is necessary, or a sparing meddling with those worldly comforts that do mightily indispose us for the Christian warfare, 1 Peter ii. 7; Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Look, as the multitude of gross vapours cast us into a sleep, so do these delights and cares stupify the soul: Ps. cxix. 37, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.' You will need quickening if you give way to vanity.

Use. Oh! take heed of this evil: Mark xiii. 26, 'Watch, lest the Lord cometh suddenly, and he find you sleeping.' Would you have Christ come and find you in this case?

1. Some are wholly in a state of spiritual sleep. To them the Lord speaketh, Eph. v. 14, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' And of such the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, 'Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.' It is all reason, and more than time, that you should thoroughly rouse up yourselves from the condition of sin wherein you have gone. It is a shame such should be among Christians, such as snort still upon the bed of security, when the light of the gospel shineth round about them. Oh! when God calleth, 'Awake, and rise from the dead;' if not, God may punish you by your own sin. One of his heaviest judgments is a 'spirit of slumber, and deep sleep,' Rom. xi. 8. And then what will the end of it be? You may sleep, but 'your damnation sleepeth not,' 2 Peter ii. 3. Certainly we should commiserate the case of such, especially if they be related to us; and seek to awaken them from the sleep of sin, that they may be brought home to Christ. Oh! poor careless creatures! they fear not God, nor think of his wrath, nor make preparation to stand before the Son of man at his coming.

2. There are others apt to slumber now and then, though for the main they have 'chosen the better part.' To these the apostle speaks, 1 Thes. v. 6, 'Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.' There is great need. Our adversary watcheth; the devil is observing all our motions and postures; if we fall asleep, we are exposed as a prey to him. There are many that mind our spiritual harm. If we had no enemy without, there is *hostis domesticus*, a bosom enemy; and we are prone as others to be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Therefore you may not sleep as do others. You have another spirit in you, and if you are God's children you have other obligations: Rom. xiii. 11, 'It is high time to awake out of sleep; for your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.'

When you first gave your names to Christ, you thought no labour too much, no pains too great. How vigilant and diligent then! and will you sleep now? Your course beginneth to draw to an end, and you are almost ready to set sail for the other world, that you may meet with Christ. Oh! now you have shaken off the sleep of sin, shake off the sleep of sloth too. Shall we be drowsy and cold at last?

First, I shall give you the signs of this sin.

Secondly, Motives against it.

Thirdly, Directions to avoid it.

First, The signs.

1. Senselessness, in not discerning and weighing the things that befall us, good or evil. An instance of the one we have, Hosea vii. 8, 'For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil.' The Lord is very liberal to us, yet little notice is taken of it. An instance of the other we have, Isa. xlii. 25, 'Yet he laid it not to heart.' In mercies we neither consider their author, nor their end, nor their cause. Their author: We are like swine, that eat the acorns, but never look up to the oak from whence they fall. It is said of the church, 'She hath dove's eyes;' they peck and look upward. We should see God in every mercy. A drowsy inattentive soul heedeth it not, but is swallowed up in present delights and enjoyments, and looketh no further. It is our privilege above the beasts to know the first cause. Other creatures live upon God, but are not capable of knowing God. Idolatry and profaneness had never crept into the world if men had kept up the sense of God's bounty. Some never regard the end of mercies, which is to draw in our hearts to God; therefore called the 'cords of a man,' Hosea vi. 4, being so many bonds and ties upon us: What honour hath been done to God for this and that mercy? I allude to that in Esther vi. 3. See how David reasoneth, 2 Sam. vii. 2, 'I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God within curtains.' When the heart is urging to duty upon this score: God hath been good to me, given me food and raiment, and plentiful provision for the comfort of this life; what have I done for God? Not only the impenitent abuse mercy, Rom. ii. 4, but David lost his awe of God, because he had not a thankful sense of the mercies of God, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. So for corrective providences. The body is a tender part with most men; though they are sensible of the smart of the lash, yet they do not consider the hand that striketh, nor the deserving procuring cause; they do not look upward nor inward; they do not see the hand of God in it: Isa. xxvi. 11, 'When his hand is lifted up they will not see;' look upon it as a chance, 1 Sam. vi. 4. Job had explicit thoughts of God: Job i. 23, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken.' Nor the cause, Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his sins?' If sickness cometh, if a relation be taken away, if an estate blasted, a waking conscience looketh to the cause: 'For this cause many are sick, and many are fallen asleep,' 1 Cor. xi. We should see the mind of God in his rod. When the Israelites fled before the men of Ai, Joshua looketh out for the troubler. So the children of God search for the sin that is the cause of their trouble.

2. Stupid dulness and cold indifferency in heavenly things: their

want of zeal and cheerfulness in holy duties; they go about them heavily: dull of hearing, Mat. xiii. 5; cold in prayer, when they should be fervent and effectual, James v. 6. In all things we show forth a heartless formality. Grace is asleep in the soul, and thence cometh a sleepy profession, a sleepy hearing, a sleepy praying, a sleepy receiving. The word, that was wont to be as burning coals, leaveth no impression, Luke xxiv. 32. Your whole converse with the living God is cold and dead-hearted. In such a condition a man heareth as if he heard not, and prayeth as if he prayed not, and receiveth as if he received not, and mourns for sin as if he mourned not, and rejoiceth in God as if he rejoiced not, looks after heaven and heavenly things as if he sought them not; and so brings little honour to God, and little profit and comfort to his own soul.

3. Tedious irksomeness in God's service. They grow weary of the ways of God: Mal. i. 13, 'Behold, what a weariness is it!' Amos viii. 5, 'When will the new moons be over, and the sabbath past?' Shall God do so great things for us in Christ, and shall anything which God hath commanded be grievous to us? How unkind is this! Neither have we a hard master, nor hath he enjoined us tedious work, but all our duties have a sweetness in them: Micah vi. 3, 'Do not my words do good?' You carry it so as if God did not deal well with his people, or were not easy to be served. His commands are not grievous, and his yoke is easy; trials sent by him not above measure, his corrections not above our deserving; therefore why should we snuff at his service? Weariness and repining at God's service is an ill sign. God loveth and requireth a willing people. This weariness, though it doth not make us wholly abandon God's service, yet it makes us slight it, and mind it no more than how to get it over any way. Oh! take heed, then, of growing weary of religion, and attending on the duties thereof; to look upon these as distractions, or matters by the by, or interruptions of the work we would be upon. They are led much by sense and carnality that esteem nothing but what yieldeth pleasure to the sense, or gratifieth the outward man.

4. Forgetfulness of changes, and vain dreams of worldly happiness. When we have a carnal pillow to rest upon, we fall asleep, Ps. xxx. 6, 7. A Christian should sit loose from all earthly things. There was leaven in the thank-offering. We should be content to dwell in booths as the Israelites: Ps. xxxix. 5, 'Surely every man in his best estate is vanity.'

5. Carnal complacency. The peace and pleasure which you live upon is fetched more from the world than from God and heaven; and you live in quietness of mind, not so much from the belief of the love of God in Christ, and the hope of heaven, as because you feel yourselves well in your bodily estate, and live at ease and in prosperity in the world, and have something grateful to the flesh, Luke xii. 19-21. Oh! that soul is in a dangerous condition, when the world is so pleasing and lovely to it, that it can take contentment and delight in it without God, or apart from God. To many worldly prosperity is so sweet, that it can keep them quiet under the guilt of wilful sins. When you have your heart's desire for a while, you can forget eternity,

or bear those thoughts with security which otherwise would amaze your souls.

Secondly, Motives.

1. Your enemy watcheth ; the devil is never asleep, 1 Peter v. 8 ; he observeth you in all postures, and watcheth all possible advantages against the children of God ; and will not you stand upon your guard and look about you ?

2. If you sleep you hazard yourselves to the whip, or God's severe correction, Hosea v. 15. God findeth out many times a very smart rod to whip lazy drowsy saints to their duty. He will not suffer grace to rust in his children. Your awakening will be sad. God sent a tempest after Jonah. Some sharp cross or other will fall upon us.

3. The eyes of many are upon us, and shall we be slumbering and sleeping ? 1 Cor. iv. 9, ' We are made a spectacle to the world, angels, and men.' Miscarriages will tend to God's dishonour.

4. When grace is asleep, sin breaketh loose. There is no sin but a man is exposed to in a secure estate : therefore the devil laboureth as much as he can to cast us into this temper. When David walked at ease on the top of his house, little did he know the evil of his own heart, and the danger of the temptation.

5. Every lesser indisposition, that hindereth any degree of communion with God, should be grievous to the children of God. If we do not take heed to the beginnings of sins, further mischief will ensue, when temptations are near, importunate, and constant. Little sticks set green ones on fire ; when the thatch once taketh fire, it is hard to quench it ; therefore we should not rest in such a temper.

6. Consider, God's eye is ever upon us, and beholdeth all our ways : Job xxxi. 4, ' Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps ? ' Shall we sleep when the great God looketh on us ? How dreadful is his displeasure ! There is no dallying with him.

Thirdly, Means.

1. Pray to God for his quickening Spirit, that he would stir us up to watchfulness. David is ever and anon crying out for quickening grace.

2. We should stir up ourselves. Much of this temper cometh upon us because of our own laziness, and ordinary indisposition : 2 Tim. i. 6, ' Stir up the gift of God that is in thee ; ' Isa. lxiv. 6, ' There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.'

3. We should maintain a lively sense of Christ's appearing, Luke xii. 35. ' This looking, and longing, and waiting keepeth the soul alive and awake : Heb. ix. 28, ' To them that look for him ; ' Phil. iii. 20, ' Whence we look for a Saviour.' Many may talk of that day, but do not look for it.

4. Keep these four fundamental radical graces lively and active in the soul—faith, fear, hope, and love. Faith presents things to us as they are, and puts them in being. Love constraineth us, 2 Cor. v. 14. Fear maketh God everywhere present ; and hope worketh in us a desirous expectation of blessedness to come, and this keeps the soul awake.

5. Keep a sense of the love of God upon your hearts. When your

drowsy fits are coming on you, say as they in Jer. xxxv. 6, I dare not; my Father hath commanded me the contrary. Hath not God forbidden this? how can I rest in such a temper of soul?

6. Improve the death of Christ for the destroying this sleepy temper. The great design of Satan is to lull us asleep; now Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. Now, shall we tie those knots the faster that Christ came to unloose, and tear open those wounds that Christ came to bind up and heal? Therefore let this evil frame of soul be far from you.

SERMON V.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.—MAT. XXV. 5, 6.

THERE is one clause in the former verse that remaineth undiscussed, 'The bridegroom tarried,' which I shall speak to in this verse.

Where observe—

1. The time, *at midnight*.
2. The means of awakening the sleepy virgins, *there was a cry made*.
3. The matter of the cry, the unexpected coming of the bridegroom, *behold, the bridegroom cometh*.
4. An excitement to their duty, *go ye out to meet him*. Still the allusion is carried on to the matter from whence this parable is taken. There were virgins with the bridegroom, and virgins with the bride; and that the bridegroom might be received with esteem, and attended with all respect, some of them were to go before and raise the cry in season, to bring the virgins forth to meet him. So here, Christ sends a cry before him to admonish and exhort the church to prepare and meet him.

[1.] With respect to every particular soul, this cry is to be referred to the voice and importunity of them that are the children of the bride-chamber, or friends of the bridegroom, John iii. 29; who all tell us that the Lord is at hand, 1 Peter iv. 7; that he will shortly come, Heb. x. 37. And still the faithful ministers of the church do cry aloud, and call upon us to meet the bridegroom.

[2.] With respect to the general meeting of the church in one great rendezvous or congregation, it is meant of the trump of the archangel, spoken of in many places, which I shall quote by and by, calling us to come to judgment.

Doct. The bridegroom will certainly come, but at his own time; and then all shall be called upon to go forth to meet him.

I shall handle this point with respect to the circumstances of this parable.

1. I shall prove the certainty of his coming.
2. Speak of the tarrying of the bridegroom, or the delay of his coming.