

A SERMON PREACHED ON MATTHEW XXII. 11-13.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not a wedding-garment; And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? and he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—MAT. xxii. 11-13.

THESE words are the conclusion of a parable, wherein the ample and rich provision which God hath made for poor sinners in the gospel is compared to a feast; not an ordinary feast, but a marriage feast; not an ordinary marriage, but the marriage of the king's son. In the structure of the parable there is a twofold invitation—the former of the Jews, the latter of the gentiles. In that paragraph that concerns the Jews, observe three things—the invitation itself, the success, and the issue.

1. The invitation itself is in vers. 3, 4, 'And he sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage.' There is a double call—the first call, ver. 3; the second call, ver. 4. God will take not the first repulse, but will try again before he will quit a people. He punisheth not the contempt of his grace suddenly, but sendeth once more to see if men will repent, and be sorry for their former negligence.

More particularly, the first call was by the prophets foretelling the coming of Christ into the world. The second was by the apostles representing him as already come. In the second call, more earnest words are used, 'I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready: come to the marriage.' God omitteth nothing that belongeth to the salvation of his people. He is ready to bless us, his Son to receive us, his Spirit to help us. All things are

ready, if we are ready; we need but come and take what God hath provided for us.

2. The success of this invitation or offer of grace. Some slighted it, others rejected it with malice. Some slighted it: ver 5, *οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες*, 'They made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.' They had other business to mind than come to a marriage feast. In Luke it is said, 'They made excuse,' Luke xiv. 18. 19. But excusing is refusing. The sinner's plea is outwardly and formally, *non vacat*; but the very intrinsic reason and reality is, *non placet*. They care not for these things, being biassed and prepossessed with other affections. Others rejected it with malice: ver. 6, 'And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.' This is the unworthy return which the unthankful world maketh to God for the tenders of gospel grace; they do not only refuse his offers, but persecute his servants, that have no other design upon them but the promoting of their salvation.

3. The issue: ver. 7, 'When the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent forth his servants, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.' So did God deal with the Jews; he sent an army of Romans against them, and destroyed them utterly. The Romans are called his army, for all creatures are at God's command. The pagans may be *flagellum Dei*, the rod and scourge whereby God will punish his people. Contempt of the gospel joined with persecution of the preachers of it bringeth utter ruin and devastation.

The next part of the parable is God's inviting other guests, or his calling of the gentiles, vers. 9, 10. There is the charge to invite, and the success.

1. The charge to invite: 'Go into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage.' The Jews are represented as living in a community and city society, because of their visible church relation to God; but gentiles as dispersed up and down in lanes and highways; and upon the Jews' refusal, they are called to the feast: 'Go preach the gospel to every creature.'

2. The servants' obedience, and their success: 'So these servants went out into the highways, and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.' Observe, a people may want God, but God cannot want a people to serve him. Again, all that give their names to Christ are not found. Some coming to the gospel in truth, others entering into the visible church in hypocrisy: for there is a mixture of good and bad. So sometimes the church is full, but heaven never the fuller; for though they receive the gospel, they do not receive it in full power and efficacy.

3. You have the carriage of the king towards the hypocritical guests: 'And when the king came to see his guests,' &c.

In the words observe three things—(1.) The discovery, ver. 11; (2.) The expostulation, ver. 12; (3.) The doom and sentence, ver. 13.

1. The discovery: ver. 11, 'And when the king came to see the guests, he saw there a man that had not on a wedding-garment.' Christ is represented under the notion of a king, to show that when God treateth us most familiarly and socially, yet still he retaineth his

sovereignty, and will show the magnificence of a king, entertaining his subjects of all sorts, reduced now to his obedience, and also keeps up the state and majesty of a king, will be honoured by all those that come to partake of his feast. The king cometh to see the guests; that is, to discern whether they come to his feast in such manner as is required. All that receive the gospel must look to have their sincerity tried, for the king will visit and observe the guests. In this view and observation he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment: among all the guests, there seemeth but one found out. You must not thence conclude that the unsound and insincere professors of the gospel are but few. No; this is not spoken for that intent. This one impersonateth and representeth many; for it is said, ver. 14, 'That many are called, but few are chosen.' But the meaning is, that in the throng and multitude of converts, if there were but one that is insincere, God can espy him and find him out. The fault of the person discovered is, that he had not *ἔνδυμα γάμου*, a better sort of array than those that were used or worn upon ordinary occasions. While they were in the lanes and highways, ordinary apparel would serve the turn; but if they will come to the feast, the marriage feast of the king's son, they must have suitable array. It is a disgrace to a wedding feast not to come with a wedding garment; to take the christian profession, and continue in their pagan sins and practices. Repentance and reformation of life is the new garment of the soul; that only will become the gospel feast.

2. The expostulation: ver. 12, 'He saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and the man was speechless;' *ἑταίρε*: Fellow, how camest thou? God loveth to make the sinner convinced, and condemned in his own conscience, 'that he may be clear when he judgeth, and justified in all his proceedings with him,' Ps. li. 4. The effect of this expostulation is that the man was speechless; he had nothing to say; saw it was unreasonable to come without it. They that embrace the gospel, and live in an unmortified and impenitent manner, can have nothing to plead by way of excuse. This man was as confident before, and as bold as the other guests, but now is abashed, hath nothing to say, it being so necessary and reasonable to come to a wedding feast with a wedding garment.

3. The doom and sentence: ver. 13, 'Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Mark, he is not only not permitted to taste of the feast, or remain among the guests, but falleth under a terrible sentence of the king and judge, which will certainly be executed upon him, and he for ever must remain in a most dismal and doleful condition. No vengeance so sore as that of the gospel. Besides the forfeiture of our hopes and the possibility of our recovery, there is that which the scripture calleth a 'sorer punishment,' Heb. x. 29. Conscience in hell will have a special kind of accusing and self-tormenting in our reflecting on the refusal of the remedy; and Christ will pronounce a heavier doom if we obey not the gospel, to which we profess to submit.

Doct. That it is dangerous to come to God's feast without a wedding garment.

First, I shall explain—(1.) What is God's feast; (2.) What is coming to this feast; (3.) What is the wedding garment.

Secondly. I shall confirm it, and show why it is so dangerous.

1. What is God's feast? It is usual in scripture to set forth the grace of the gospel by the notion of a feast. These blessed privileges of remission of sins and eternal life, as dispensed by Christ, are fitly called so. See some places where those celestial dainties whereby God feedeth his people in the word and sacraments are called so: Isa. xxv. 6, 'And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' The entertainer is the Lord of hosts; the place is this mountain, alluding to Mount Zion, a figure of the church; the guests are all people, gentiles as well as Jews, Rev. vii. 9; the provision for meat are fat things, full of marrow, as the fatted calf was brought for the entertaining of the returning prodigal, Luke xv. 23; for drink, wines not racked, but well refined on the lees, which are usually most generous and sprightly; by all which is set forth those choice soul-refreshings which are the fruits of Christ's purchase, and dispensed in the word and sacraments to those who will come and take them. So Ps. xxxvi. 8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.' They are provided for out of an unexhausted magazine, and continually supplied with a fluent stream of divine plenty. And Prov. ix. 2, 'Wisdom hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table;' that is, in the gospel all kinds of comforts and spiritual gifts and graces are ready prepared, and offered freely to us. God hath made excellent provision for the entertainment of his own family. So here it is compared to a marriage feast of a king's son, wherein all kind of pomp and glory useth to be shown. This feast serveth for two uses—(1.) The honour of God; (2.) The comfort and refreshment of sinful man.

[1.] For the honour of God, to show his magnificence and royalty, and the glory of his exceeding great grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. For thus we find feasts made by great kings and potentates; as Esther, chap. i. 3, 4, 'He made a feast unto all his princes and his servants, to show them the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty.' And so Belshazzar made a feast to a thousand of his lords, Dan. v. 1. And so the great God, to show the riches of his glorious grace, hath made a feast of fat things, and wines well refined upon the lees; the choicest blessings. Love is gone to the utmost. Beyond God there is nothing. God reconciled and God enjoyed are the chiefest blessings we can enjoy.

[2.] For the comfort and refreshment of sinful man. When man was banished out of paradise, he had no tree of life by which he might be refreshed, and would perish for need and hunger but that God had mercy on him and prepared a banquet, a rich banquet of grace. His fatlings are killed, his wines are mingled; the crucified body of Christ, and his blood shed for the expiation of sins and procuring eternal life; this is meat indeed, and drink indeed. There is in it all that we can expect in a feast.

(1.) Ample satisfaction to every soul that is spiritually hungry and thirsty: Ps. xxxvi. 8, 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and Ps. xxii. 26, 'The meek shall eat, and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your hearts shall live for ever.' The poor humble christian shall be satisfied with this spiritual food, and feel the vital effects of it. It shall be to him an eucharist indeed: Ps. lxxv. 4, 'They shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house.' There is no defect or want in God's feast. Here is remission of sins to allay our legal fears, eternal life to satisfy our desires of happiness. But many prefer husks before the fatted calf, swinish pleasures before these chaste delights, one morsel of meat before the birthright. These besot the heart for a while, but they cannot satisfy it.

(2) Joy, pleasure, and delight. What will cheer the heart and conscience, if reconciliation with God, and the favour of God, and the fruition of God will not cheer us? The pardon of sin is the true reviving thing: Mat. ix. 2, 'Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.' And so also the hopes of glory: Rom. v. 1, 2, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' So that here is heavenly joy, and pleasure unspeakable and full of glory: Isa. lv. 2, 'Let your soul delight itself in fatness;' and Ps. lxxiii. 5, 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' Did we once drink of this wine and taste of this fatness, how should we walk before the Lord with joy and cheerfulness all our days!

(3.) God useth us as friends. It is a great honour put upon us that we are invited to this wedding, that we may sit down at his table; this is familiar fellowship. Haman boasted, Esther v. 12, 'The queen did let no man come into the banquet but myself; and to-morrow I am invited also with the king.' But what an honour is it to sit down at the feast of the King of kings! It is a token of our reconciliation with him; for eating together is an act of friendship. Under the law, they were to bring their peace-offerings on the top of their burnt-offerings, and having offered them to the Lord, they were to eat of their part cheerfully among their friends; for then they had, as it were, one dish sent them from God's table. This is the true notion of the Lord's supper; it is a feast upon a sacrifice: Ps. l. 5, 'Gather my saints together, which make a covenant with me by sacrifice.'

2. What is coming to this feast? It is to profess ourselves christians, and using the ordinances which belong thereunto. When you submit to be baptized, hear the word, and frequent the sacraments, you come to the feast of God. Every day is a festival with a christian; for the whole gospel-dispensation is a continual feast. Only some come to the feast—(1.) Ready and spiritually, they have constant cause of rejoicing: 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, 'Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened; for Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' (2.) Others outwardly profess

faith in Christ, and external obedience to him, but do not thoroughly and fully walk according to Christ's rules; would be judged christians, but retain nothing of the life and power of christianity, are not disciples indeed, John viii. 31. And it is said, John ii. 23, 24, 'Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did; but Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.' Some were so far affected with Christ's miracles as they did profess faith in him, yet Christ would not trust them, because he knoweth the hidden secrets of the heart; that is, not admit them into familiar converse, knowing the temper of their faith.

3. What is the wedding garment? To find out this, let me tell you—(1.) That it is usual in scripture to set forth sin by nakedness, and grace by a garment. That one place which we have in Rev. iii. 17, 18, showeth both: 'Thou art poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked; therefore I counsel thee to buy of me raiment that thou mayest be clothed.' Graces are a beautiful ornament to the soul, as garments are to the body; therefore we are said 'to put on the new man, which is created in holiness and righteousness,' Eph. iv. 24. And again, to 'put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,' Col. iii. 12. (2.) It is such a garment as becometh the solemnity of the marriage feast of the king's son. Christ's gospel feast is a royal feast and a spiritual feast, becoming the nature of God's kingdom; therefore the *ἔνδυμα γάμου*, wedding garment, is that new array which becometh such a solemnity. As it is a royal feast, it must be something more than ordinary excellency that is required of us at a spiritual feast—a spiritual excellency. Therefore the wedding garment is holiness, habitual and actual, which is the glory of God and the beauty of God and his people. Habitual holiness: Rev. xix. 8, 'And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.' *Δικαιώματα ἁγίων* are those graces which constitute us as saints; as faith, love, hope, meekness, sobriety, purity. And then actual holiness is an holy conversation: Phil. i. 27, 'Only let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel;' Eph. iv. 1, 'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.' We put on the wedding garment to honour the marriage; therefore those that come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment, who take up a bare profession of the gospel without newness of heart and life, which may be an honour and ornament to it, are a dishonour and disgrace rather to it.

I must now represent the danger of entering upon the profession of the gospel, or coming to this feast without such a wedding garment; and that I shall do in this method—(1.) To show the odiousness of the sin; (2.) The certainty of discovery; (3.) The dreadfulness of the doom and punishment.

First, The odiousness of the sin, in these considerations—

1. Your profession is partial. There is a twofold profession—in word, and deed. In word, when we own Christ, in whom we have believed; in deed, when we walk answerably.

[1.] In word the profession is necessary: Rom. x. 9, 10, 'If thou

shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved : for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' There was much weight laid in those days upon confession with the mouth, or a visible owning of the faith and doctrine of Christ. It was then a free spontaneous thing, without compulsion of outward power ; yea, forbidden by those powers ; yea, it exposed them to great difficulties and hardships. They ran the hazard of all by submitting to this hated name and profession ; and yet this was not enough to submit to the verbal profession of christianity ; nay, the visible and real acting of it in the assemblies of christians in prayers, praises, hearing, sacraments, and joining in all the ordinances of the church, was not enough unless there were a life answerable.

[2.] In deed, by walking suitably to the institutions of christianity ; and so a christian's life is a confession or hymn to God ; for our Lord telleth us, Mat. vii. 21-23, ' 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. Many will say to 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 ? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.' Not every one that professeth Christ to be his Lord shall be saved. No ; the obedience of Christ's doctrine must be taken into the profession, or else it will not be accepted. We must believe in the Son of God, and show forth our faith by an holy conversation and godliness, or else we shall be disclaimed, or not approved for his true disciples. Let an unrenewed wretch preach or pray or cast out devils, yet he is a worker of iniquity. In Luke xiii. 26, it is said, ' We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.' Is not this coming to the gospel feast, to eat and drink in his presence, to be familiar with Christ, to come to him in gospel ordinances ? But it is to come without a wedding garment, unless the heart and life be changed. But what if this profession be sealed by sufferings ? 1 Cor. xiii. 3, ' Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' Swine's blood was not to be offered to the Lord ; nor would a scabby sacrifice be accepted for a burnt-offering. God requireth holiness of life, as well as zeal in suffering for Christ.

2. One part of the profession condemneth the other. If we own a God, a Christ, and a life to come, and do not live answerably in all holy conversation and godliness, our belief condemneth our practice ; and if we allow ourselves in those things which we condemn, our judgment is the more just ; so that they profess themselves to be christians only for self-condemnation, to be witnesses against themselves ; their faith condemneth their practice. They believe as christians, yet live as pagans ; as the apostle saith, Titus i. 16, ' Professing to know God, but in their works they deny him.' So while they own Christ they do but mock him. They profess to honour Christ by coming to his feast, but they dishonour him and affront him while they come in their old or ordinary apparel ; as it is an high contempt and

scorn of a great man to pretend to honour him by our attendance, but in such an indecent and slovenly manner that our presence is a disgrace to him. Such a contempt of Christ it is while we entitle ourselves christians, and live in such ways as Christ doth condemn: Luke vi. 46, 'And why call you me lord, and do not the things that I say?' *Cui res nomini subjecta negatur*. Surely they that called him king of the Jews intended it for no honour to him, while they spit upon him and buffeted him. *Dicimur christiani in opprobrium*. The ungodly lives of christians are a reproach to christianity. You should adorn, but you disgrace the gospel, Titus ii. 10. Religion, as visibly acted and expressed by you, should be found a beautiful thing. Therefore, while you usurp the name of christians, and join in conjunction with the visible church of Christ without a new heart and life, one part of your profession condemneth the other.

3. One part of your profession is abused to corrupt and destroy the other, and the christian name is only taken on to patronise unchristian practices: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.' They come to the gospel feast that they may the more securely live in their sins, and so make Christ himself the minister of sin, Gal. ii. 17; which is a thought to be abhorred by all christians. The heathens took notice of this. Celsus said, That the christian religion was a sanctuary for flagitious persons. Origen answereth him, That it was not a sanctuary to shelter them, but an hospital to cure them. In the notion of the text, 'Go into the highways; bid them to the marriage; but yet they must come with a wedding garment, in a decent manner. Therefore they live loosely, either pervert the gospel, or at least do not admit the force of it to prevail upon their hearts: 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' If you do really believe salvation by Christ, temptations would be of no force; you would reject the baits of sin with abhorrence and detestation. You could not quiet your consciences with a common, careless course of life; but you pervert its use or deny its force.

Secondly, The certainty of discovery.

1. When you come as guests to the marriage feast, your business lieth not with men but with God. The king cometh to see the guests; you may have a garment to cover you before men, but not before God. But when the Lord looketh to the guests, he is the party with whom you have to do. How will you do to escape his eye and search? Gal. vi. 7, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked.' You may deceive men, stop the mouths of men, colour your sin, veil and blind their eyes, and, for aught men can discover, may enjoy the pleasure and profit of your sins and yet escape the shame and imputation of them. Men may hold you innocent, know not how to fasten guilt upon you; but the all-seeing eye of God will find you out: you cannot escape his accurate search. There is no casting a mist before the eyes of God: Heb. iv. 13, 'All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' The prophets in the light of God could discern cheats; certainly God himself much more: 2 Kings v. 26, 'Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee,' said Elisha to Gehazi. So the

blind prophet could spy out Jereboam's wife under her disguise : 1 Kings xiv. 6, 'Why feignest thou thyself to be another? I am sent unto thee with heavy tidings.' Now, when God seeth things in his own light, surely he will pull the devil out of Samuel's mantle, the heathen out of the christian disguise. The workers of iniquity cannot hide themselves from him : Job xxxiv. 22, 'There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.'

2. God loveth to uncase hypocrites : Prov. xxvi. 26, 'His wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation.' His being and attributes are more questioned by them than others, for atheism lieth at the bottom of hypocrites. Tush! he cannot see : Ps. xciv. 7, 'They say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.' They are such a generation of men as crowd into his house out of custom, or to make his service lacquey upon their base ends. God suffereth more by them than by others. They put him off with an outside, as if he did like well enough of their superficial duties ; and they dishonour and disgrace religion ; therefore God will uncase them, and pull off their disguise, and set them forth in their own appearance. Though but one in the throng, he shall not escape. When Achan had stolen the wedge of gold, God taketh the tribe, the family, the person, Josh. xvii. 17, 18. His anger is more kindled against them because they profess such a nearness to him, and to be that and do that which it never came into their hearts to be and do.

3. Hypocrisy is hateful to God in anything, but especially in coming to the gospel feast ; for that is a kind of daring of God, or a putting it to the trial whether he will discover you or no. Ananias and Sapphira's sin is called a lying to the Holy Ghost, Acts v. 3. Why a lie to the Holy Ghost? Because of his presiding in church affairs. All acts of grace are of his operation. And because they pretended to do it by his motions. And afterwards it is said in the 9th verse, 'And how is it that you have agreed to tempt the Holy Ghost?' Namely, by their hypocrisy and dissimulation ; putting it to the trial whether he would discover them in their sin, yea or no. They had endeavoured as much as in them lay to deceive the Spirit by keeping back a part of the price, and by that practice would put it to the trial whether the Holy Ghost could find out the cheat and fallacy. So when you obey the call and invitation, and solemnly dedicate yourselves to Christ, that you may partake of his heavenly dainties. Now if all this should be found a lie, surely it will be nothing for your comfort for the present ; and for your eternal confusion hereafter.

4. There are certain times when God cometh in a more especial manner to discover those that are unsound in the profession of the gospel. God doth always see their hearts, but there are certain seasons when they shall know that he seeth them.

[1.] By trying judgments. When the tree is shaken the rotten apples fall. Sometimes God cometh to search for hypocrites, to produce and bring them forth in order to discovery or punishment ; as when Christ hath his fan in his hand, and cometh thoroughly to purge

his floor, Mat. iii. 12. So Zeph. i. 12, 'I will search Jerusalem with candles;' look into every corner; it is spoken after the manner of man. We light a candle when we would look for anything exactly in the dark; as Luke xv. 8, 'What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?'

[2.] Sometimes by offences, divisions, scandals, errors: Mat. xviii. 7, 'Woe to the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh;' 1 Cor. xi. 19, 'For there must be also heresies among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest.' How will light chaff then be discovered from solid grain!

[3.] At death; a man should always be provided for that hour: 2 Cor. v. 3, 'If so be we shall not be found naked.' We carry nothing out of the world but a winding sheet and a wedding garment—the one for the soul, the other for the body. Then men see what a formal profession they have made in their horrors and anguish; when others have comfort in their sincerity: Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.'

[4.] In the day of judgment. When all the world is arraigned before Christ, and he distinguisheth the sheep from the goats, then will he expostulate with you, Where is your wedding garment? You believed the gospel, but did you obey the gospel? 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance unto all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.' It standeth us much upon to have confidence in that day, that you may show your faces in the great congregation. Christ will not say to the honourable person, Where are the ensigns of thine honour? to the rich man, Where are thy full barns or bags? to the knowing man, Where are thy parts and expressions? but to all, Where is your wedding garment? When others are disclaimed, he will own them that have not defiled their garments: 'They shall walk with him in white, for they are worthy,' Rev. iii. 3. It will be comfortable then to be found clothed with the garments of grace and salvation.

Thirdly, The doom and punishment.

1. They are not permitted to taste of the feast. God denieth them grace, and so they have but an empty ordinance. Surely this is a great evil. Cain was sensible of this, and afflicted with it; his countenance fell when God testified not of his gifts, Gen. iv. 4, 5. It is threatened, Hosea, v. 6, 'They shall go with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord, but shall not find him; for he hath withdrawn himself from them.' They come to external duties, but God is not found in them: 1 Sam. xxviii. 6, 'When Saul inquired of the Lord, he answered him not.' They have the shell of the gospel, but not the kernel. God will make them see they have no interest in him.

2. They incur eternal wrath, the portion of hypocrites: Mat. xxiv. 51, 'And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites.' There is an eternal disappointment. When others go from feast to feast, from the gospel to heaven, the earthly banquet

maketh way for the heavenly ; they are excluded the feast, and cast into the dungeon.

Use. To persuade us to get this wedding garment.

1. Then you are welcome and acceptable to God ; you are not intruders, but welcome guests ; not only invited, but nobly entertained : Ps. xlv. 14, ' She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needle-work ; the virgins, her companions, shall be brought with her.' When the church and all the members thereof shine in all the graces of holiness, purity, humility, charity, then they are acceptably brought to God ; the whole church, particular congregations, particular saints, all welcome to God ; they shall live with him in eternal blessedness.

2. Then you may be bold, and will not be dashed out of countenance : Isa. lxi. 10, ' I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in my God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation ; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.'

3. This showeth you are real friends to the bridegroom ; that you mean to honour him with such a conversation as floweth from faith and love to Christ, Gal. v. 6, 2 Thes. i. 10, 11. Faith and love evidencing itself in the fruits of holiness are the true glory of religion ; the badge and cognisance of the Lord Jesus, *tessura hospitalis* ; not riches, not honours, not parts, not bare profession. Alas ! without this we are but as tinkling cymbals ; of the faction of christians, rather than of the religion of christians. The question will not be whether you are of this or that party—Presbyterian, Independent, Episcopal—but whether we are really sanctified and do adorn the gospel, and walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called, and do so know and love God in Christ as to live to him. Oh ! then look to this.

4. Nothing doth more concern you than that you should not be christians in vain, and profess Christ to your loss. Haman boasted that he was invited to the queen's feast, but from that feast was he taken away to execution ; so many pride themselves with the name of christians, and some external duties of christianity, when their danger is the greater because they get so little by their christianity. What if all your prayers and preaching should be in vain, and frequenting holy duties in vain ? ' Have you suffered so many things in vain ? ' saith the apostle, Gal. iii. 4. It is so when you are not changed, but remain still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Dead faith that is not effectual to godliness, will not save you, James ii. 20. You must be exact, complete christians, if any at all.

What remaineth, then, but that we look after the wedding garment.

Means—

1. Determine what it is. It is that grace which inclineth us to order our whole conversation according to God's will, and for his glory. There are doctrinals in religion, and practicals : now it is not enough to be sound in the faith, but there must be a hearty love to Christ, and

a sober, righteous, and godly life, Titus ii. 12. There are privileges in religion, and duties. Now it is not enough to trust in Christ for privileges, but we must frame our hearts to the duties also: Ps. cxix. 166, 'I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.' We must believe in Christ to bring us to everlasting glory, and must also love God, and live in obedience to him. Heaven must be our hope, and scope, and aim. Love to God is the very constitution, bent, and inclination of our hearts, and thankful obedience the business of our lives. There are externals in religion, and internals. Now to attend upon external duties, and not to look to the internal frame and change of the heart, is not enough. But a holy conversation coming out of a renewed heart, is this wedding garment required of us: Mat. xii. 34, 'A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things.' There are negatives in religion, and positives. Not an adulterer, not an extortioner, this would suit with the light of nature, which remaineth now to guide us in duties of the lower hemisphere, in our commerce with men, but gives us little help in the worship of God. And therefore to do no harm is too low and too little to prove you to be christians. If men be civil and unblamable in their lives, yet destitute of the Spirit of God and his grace, it is not becoming the gospel, Rom. viii. 4. Again, there is a consent given and performed. Where feeble resolutions are not seconded with answerable endeavours, it produceth little effect: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorteth them to cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart.' Hopeful purposes must be verified and made good in the christian life.

2. Get this wedding garment out of the king's wardrobe; as Esther: chap. xxix., 'Such things as belonged to her and her maids were given her out of the king's house;' and Isa. lxi. 10, 'He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.' God delights in the graces of his own Spirit; no man is born clothed; we have it from God, therefore go to him for it.

3. Wear your wedding garment. Not only get grace, but exercise it in all duties towards God and man: Rev. xvi. 15, 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.'

4. Keep your garments undefiled and unspotted from the world: Rev. iii. 4, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.' Your sins are a great dishonour to Christ, because you are nearer to him, as well as a shame to yourselves, because you profess better.

5. Wash your garments often in the blood of the Lamb: Rev. vii. 14, 'And have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' The garments of the best need washing, and nothing will make them white but the blood of the Lamb. It is his merit and satisfaction hath procured this cleansing grace for us.
