

SERMONS UPON LUKE XII. 48.

SERMON I.

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required : and to whom men have committed much, of them will they ask the more.—LUKE xii. 48.

THESE words are rendered as a reason why those servants that know their master's will are beaten with more stripes than those that knew it not, because they did not improve their advantages. And Christ pleadeth the equity of it from the custom of men, expressed in their common proverbs or sentences, that go from hand to hand among the people. A beneficiary that hath received much from his benefactor is obliged to a greater gratitude. A factor that hath his master's estate in his hands must make a return according to the degree of the trust. These things being evident by the light of nature, and granted among all men, our Lord accommodateth them to his purpose, which is to show God's proceedings with men are according to the degree of their advantages, 'For unto whomsoever,' &c.

In the words observe four things—

1. A double conveyance of benefits to us. Whatever a man receiveth, it is either given as a gift or committed as a talent. For, first, he saith, 'To whomsoever much is given;' and presently, 'To whomsoever men have committed much.'

2. These things are not given to all in the same measure; there is a difference in the distribution; some have 'much,' others have 'little.'

3. Whether men have received much or little, it is all in reference to an account; this is signified in the words, 'required,' 'asked.'

4. Answerable to their mercies shall their account be; much for much, and little for little. To whom anything is given, of him something shall be required and asked; but to whom 'much is given' and 'committed,' of him shall they 'ask the more;' not more than is committed, but more than is required and asked of another; as where the soil is better and more tilled, we look for the better crop, and we expect that he should come sooner that rideth on horseback than he that goeth on foot. These are the points.

Doct. 1. That what we have received from God is both a gift and a trust. *Datum* and *commendatum* differ. A thing may be given as a gift that is not committed as a talent; as money given to a beggar, and an estate put into the hands of a factor.

1. There is some difference in the benefits themselves. There are *dona sanctificantia et administrantia*, gifts for sanctification, and gifts for ministry. The one are given us for our own good, the other for the profit of others. Gifts are for the body or community in which we live, saving graces for the salvation of the person that hath them. The one sort serve to make us useful to men, the other to make us acceptable to God. A carnal man may come behind in no gift. As we use stamps of iron to leave an impress upon pieces of silver and gold, so God may make use of their gifts who shall perish for ever to form Christ in his own children; for these are given us indeed, but for the good of our brethren. But sanctifying graces are given *nobis et nobis*,¹ both to us and for us; not only to do good to others, but for the saving of our own souls; such as saving-knowledge, faith, hope, love of God, &c. Now there being such a difference in the things themselves, well might our Lord use these two words, 'given,' 'committed.' But—

2. Here it noteth rather the double conveyance of these benefits. They are given, for they are *dona Dei*, the gifts of God; and they are *talent a commendat a nobis*, talents committed to our trust. The giving noteth grace in the giver, which is God; and the committing a charge in the receiver. As they are given, they call for thankfulness; but as they are committed, for faithfulness; both must be regarded by us.

I. As they are gifts flowing from the mere grace of God; for it is not said, From him that hath much, but, To whomsoever much is given. The conveyance is by deed of gift, or free and liberal donation. They are *a Deo*, from God as the author; for 'every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,' James i. 27. And they are *ex dono*, for the manner; for what more free than gift? and what hath less of debt than grace? I will prove it thus—

There is a difference between men and men; it must come about some way or other. Now, that anything should come to us, either it must be—

1. *Ex debito*, as a due debt to our natures; then all would be alike happy and alike gifted and graced. But by nature all are equal; they have the same common nature and the same common misery. All have one Maker. Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? If there were two principles, a good and an evil God, and you made by the good and they by the evil God, as the Marcionites dreamed, then it were another matter; but that is a blasphemous error. For they differ or agree; if they differ, which of them is stronger, that he could impede and hinder the other? For agree they cannot, as Origen reasoned against them. No; we were all made by the same God, and he made us all of the same matter, the first man out of the dust of the ground, and for the rest of the world, the apostle telleth us, Acts xvii. 26, 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth.' All their parts, essential properties, and faculties are the same. They are all men endowed with

¹ Qu. '*nobis et pro nobis*'?—ED.

reason, have an immortal soul; and for the body, 'our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren,' Neh. v. 5. Yea, they are all involved in the same common misery; all sinners, all children of wrath, and guilty of eternal damnation. Now there being such a parity and equality in misery, what can be due to our nature? The apostle useth this argument, Rom. iii. 22, 23, 'The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' That righteousness which God freely giveth by Christ must save all, for there is no difference between one and another. Though there may be a diversity of states in the world, yet that doth not take away identity of nature. Others are reasonable creatures as well as we, and we are sinners as well as they. If God doth bestow any common and saving gifts upon any, it is merely of his free bounty.

2. Or else it must be *ex pretio*, by way of purchase. But we have nothing to pay, for all is God's already. There is indeed a price given to purchase all necessary grace for us; but not by us, but by Christ, 'who gave himself a ransom for all,' 1 Tim. ii. 6, to redeem us to God.

3. Or *ex merito*, by way of merit or great desert on our parts. But a creature can merit nothing of his Creator: Rom. xi. 35, 'Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?' God is debtor to no man. The fountain oweth nothing to the stream, but the stream all to the fountain. Nor doth the sun owe anything to its beams, but the beams owe their all to the sun. It remaineth then that it must be *ex dono*, by way of gift, free gift. There is no cause in the creature why God should make this difference, no inherent worth to move him so to do; all is of free donation.

Use. This sheweth—(1.) Whom to thank; (2.) Where to seek any good gift or grace that we stand in need of.

1. Whom to thank. Whatever excellency you have, or however you are dignified from others, are not all these things the free gifts of God? And should you boast of that which is God's free gift, and of which you are but receivers: 1 Cor. iv 7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' The apostle intimateth there that to give is a blessed thing, but to receive is an humbling thing. Wilt thou glory of that which never could be thine unless it had been bestowed upon thee by the singular grace and mere favour of another? The glory belongeth not to the party receiving, but to the person giving. Therefore we should not rob God of his glory, and sacrifice to our own net and drag. As we have nothing but from God, so we should have nothing but for God. All the gifts you have you receive from him, and not from yourselves; and therefore you must use them for him, and not for yourselves.

[1.] Do you differ in health, strength, beauty? it is from God. He might have stamped the deformity of our souls upon our bodies, and we might all come into the world blind and maimed, with crooked bodies, distorted limbs, that the shape of our bodies might discover the depravation of our souls. If it be not so, give God the praise, and pity others. We read, John ix. 1-3, 'As Jesus passed by, he saw a man that was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying,

Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.' We are not to make a perverse judgment, or censure others, but to admire the secret wisdom of God, and bless him if he hath given you a better constitution and a body fit for work and service.

[2.] Do you differ in the endowments of the mind, in a quick wit, clear understanding, solid judgment, and the vivacity of natural parts, whilst others are more heavy and blockish? Who must have the glory of this, God or you? Job xxxii. 8, 'There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.' You are to help the weaker, and glorify God that you have a more acute discerning, otherwise your understanding may undo you, and your unsanctified wit may be your eternal ruin, as many wit themselves into hell.

[3.] Is it that you flow in wealth and honour, and have great power and interest? Will you therefore vaunt yourselves unseemly, and despise and oppress the poor? There are three proverbs, Prov. xiv. 31, 'He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker,' Prov. xvii. 5; 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker;' and again, Prov. xxii. 2, 'The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them all;' that is, they live one among another, and have need of one another. Now God, that forbiddeth the poor to envy the rich, doth forbid the rich to despise the poor, for otherwise they dishonour God. This injury and contempt is to despise the wisdom of God, who would have some low and poor, others dignified with honour and estate. God hath laid this burden upon them. The heathens, that acknowledged a God and a providence, said, *εἰ τις τῆς φύσεως ἀμαρτήματα*, &c.—He that upbraided another with the defects of nature, did not upbraid the person so much as nature itself. So we that own a particular providence may know that to upbraid any man with his poverty, is to upbraid God who hath laid this burden upon them. We have cause to give thanks that we are not as they, that our Maker hath put a difference; when they labour hard for the supplies of life, they come to us more plentifully and easily.

[4.] But chiefly is this difference to be understood with respect to spiritual things; that we have the means of grace, and are called to the knowledge of the truth, while others are left to their own ways, sitting in the shadow of death. Surely it is a great favour that we are not put to spell God out of the dark book of the creatures, that we are not put to learn the majesty of God from those natural apostles the sun and the moon, nor his goodness from showers of rain and fruitful seasons. But shall not God have the thanks and praise: Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20, 'He showed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.' There is a kind of election and reprobation within the sphere of nature, or the dispensation of external means as they are ordered by God's providence. The benefit of scriptures and ordinances is a great benefit. How much hath God done for us above many others? Our lot might have fallen in places of the greatest idolatry and antichristian barbarism, where we might have sucked in prejudices against the gospel with our milk; but to

have a standing there where salvation is usually dispensed is a great mercy.

[5.] Is it that you have many common gifts and graces which are denied to others? Some have great gifts for the good of the body mystical. Common christians have common gifts, some have what others have not: Heb. vi. 4-6, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance,' &c., compared with ver. 9, 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.' To be nearer the kingdom of heaven is an advantage, and to have some common work of the Spirit, as compunction: 'After I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh,' Jer. xxxi. 19. Awakening grace: Eph. iv. 14, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,' 2 Tim. ii. 16, 'That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.' God's reproof: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you;' Job xxxvi. 10, 'He openeth also their ears to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.' God sanctifieth providences to make us serious: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law.'

[6.] Is it that you are a christian, not by outward profession, but spiritual acquaintance with God? Gal. i. 15, 'It pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.' There is a revealing Christ to us, and a revealing in us, that you are not carnal, obstinate, unbelieving, as others, but 'chosen out of the world,' John xv. 19, and 1 John v. 19, 'We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness;' that we are separated from the world, and called to the communion of God in Christ.

[7.] Is it that you are enabled in this estate to do anything that concerneth the glory of God? The Romans were wont to cast garlands into their fountains; so we must ascribe all to God: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am;' Luke xix. 16, 'Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' You must not rob God, and put the crown on your own head. No; all must be laid at his feet: Rev. iv. 10, 'The four-and-twenty elders fell down before him that sat on the throne, and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.' They have their crowns from him, and hold them of him, and their only design is to improve them for him.

[8.] That among the serious worshippers of God there is any difference between you and others, either in gifts or graces, or knowledge of his will: John xiv. 22, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?' That you are not lost in the crowd and throng; that God should call you out to any eminency of service. There is great difference among the people of God in degrees of grace. All barks that sail to heaven, do not draw alike depth.

I have instanced in all this, because this concerneth the people of God more than others, to keep them free from boasting. Pride in

others feedeth upon empty shadows, but in God's people on the best things, such as spiritual gifts, graces, privileges, singular mercies, and deliverances. Paul's abundance of revelations was ready to puff him up: 2 Cor. xii. 7, 'And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.' Hezekiah had received a remarkable deliverance: 2 Chron. xxxii. 24, 25, 'In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord; and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, but his heart was lifted up,' &c. And it is in them most unnatural to be proud of that which is given to destroy pride, for grace is given to humble us. They are common, not sanctifying and saving gifts that puff up: 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth: and if any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' Pompous gifts are of a more swelling nature than spiritual grace, so that you bring a suspicion on your gifts and graces if you are proud of them; that they are common, not sanctifying saving gifts. Besides the danger, you take the course to provoke God to bereave you of his gifts, when you are puffed up with what should be used for the glory of God. If we should do so, he provideth a sharp cure; witness Paul's 'thorn in the flesh,' 2 Cor xii. 7.

2. Where to seek gifts and graces that are needful: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God,' James i. 5. But then you must use means as well as pray. They that cry for knowledge and understanding must also dig for her as for hid treasure: Prov. ii. 3-5, 'If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; thou shalt then understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.'

II. These things are entrusted as well as given; for the word *committed* is used. It is given us as an estate to trade with. Here is not only the word ἐδόθη, 'given,' but παρέθεντο, 'committed.' That which we have is not only a matter of grace and favour, but a matter of charge and trust; a *depositum*, something deposited with us, that we must not only be chary of them, that our gifts be not lost by luxury, ease, and idleness, but we must be faithful in the use of them, that God may have glory, others benefit, and we comfort and peace for the present, and everlasting life for the future. All is an estate in trust; not for enjoyment barely, but for use and service. I will prove it—

1. From the nature of the gifts. They are not given us for themselves, but for some other thing. I confess they are of a various nature, and it is hard to bring them under one denomination. Reason, health, strength, time, parts, interests, power, authority, wealth, providences, such as afflictions, prosperity, ordinances, means of grace, yea, grace itself; all these are πρὸς ἄλλο not simply given us for their own sakes, but some other thing.

Reason, or such a life as is light: John i. 4, 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men.' Why was it given us but that we might have a mind to know God and an heart to love him? For therefore

doth God teach us more than the beasts of the field. It was a good saying of Epictetus, *Si essem lusciniā, canerem ut lusciniā*—If I were a nightingale, I would sing as a nightingale, &c. But alas ! how often do men use their wit against God rather than for him !

So for strength and time. Is it given us only to be employed in the service of sin, or for the service of God in our generation ? Is it to be strong to serve our lusts, or to have time to grow monsters in wickedness ? No ; we have strength and time to glorify God : Rom. vi. 13, ‘ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin ; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.’

So for interests, honour, and power, and wealth. Is this given us to set up for ourselves ? No, but to be factors and agents for God, to glorify him here in the world : 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, ‘ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.’ Every man should be what he is for God.

So for providences. Take the comfortable part of them, not afflictions, but deliverances. Afflictions are sent because we deny God his right : Hosea ii. 8, 9, ‘ For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal ; therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool, and my flax given to cover her nakedness.’ But for deliverances, why are we delivered, and enjoy so much of comfort, peace, and ease from trouble, to satisfy our lusts or to glorify God ? They are branded as a wicked people that said, ‘ We are delivered to do all these abominations,’ Jer. vii. 10. Because they were free and out of danger, therefore they might harden themselves in sin, and live in a forgetfulness of God.

So for ordinances and means of grace, which are advantages and opportunities put into our hands of being more good ourselves, and doing more good to others : Prov. xvii. 16, ‘ Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it ? ’ That is, why is the opportunity given, when men have no heart to solid wisdom ?

So for grace itself. The very nature of it sheweth it is a trust : Luke xvi. 11, ‘ If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches ? ’ To be trusted with an estate is not so great a trust as to be trusted with grace. This is a gift more precious, and should not lie idle. God trusts ordinary men with an estate, but his people with grace. When we suspect a vessel is leaky, we fill it with water before we fill it with wine. God expecteth more honour from new creatures than he doth from all the world besides, and that they should do more good in their places. This is the most precious gift, yet given in order to some other thing ; it is made for God, that we should glorify him, and be capable of enjoying him to all eternity.

2. This is the end of the distribution. Wherefore hath God given these talents in any eminent degree, or in such variety to men, but that

they should trade with them, and be more fitted for his service? 1 Cor. xii. 7, 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' There is indeed a threefold end of all our trading—the glorifying of God, the saving of our own souls, and the good of others; for, in a moral consideration, there are but three beings, God, neighbour, self.

The glory of God must be regarded in the first place, and with it is connected the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. For all the gifts that we have are for the master's use; and therefore, if we do not principally mind the glory of God and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, we pervert the gifts we have received. Yet this is rare in a self-loving world: Phil. ii. 21, 'All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.'

The saving of our souls must be regarded next to the glory of God; for next to God, man is to love himself; and in himself first his better part. The graces of sanctification, though profitable for others, yet are chiefly intended for the good of him that hath them; and the graces of edification, though profitable for the owner, yet are principally intended for the good of others. A man that hath sanctifying grace doth good to others with it, that is *utilitas emergens*, not *finis proprius*. It is not the direct end for which these graces are given, but other subservient gifts are for the good of the body.

Lastly, The good of others, their edification and benefit; for God hath scattered his gifts, that every part may supply somewhat for the good of the whole, as every member of the body hath its several use, by which the whole body receiveth benefit: Rom. xii. 4, 5, 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.'

Well, then, let us look to the end of the distribution. A man hath not wealth for himself, nor parts for himself, nor gifts for himself, to promote his own ends, but to bring in souls to God; not for pomp, but use. All have their proper and distinct offices, some to serve, others to rule; some to counsel, others to execute. Every one have their proper but distinct use; for God maketh nothing in vain, nor was the world appointed to be a hive for drones and idle ones. Wherefore hath God given some great wealth and power but, as the great veins supply the lesser with blood, that they might be more publicly useful? Wherefore hath he given ordinances, but that we may get grace by them, and save our own souls? They are represented sometimes as duties, they being not a matter arbitrary, but a part of the homage we owe to God; sometimes as privileges that we may not look upon them as a burdensome task; sometimes as means of our growth and improvement, that we may not rest in the work wrought; sometimes as talents for which we must give an account, to quicken our earnest diligence. Wherefore hath God given gifts, but that we may show forth his praise and edify others? Yea, wherefore hath he given grace itself, but that we might be both obliged and fitted to glorify him in the world? Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.' They are set up as lights in the world to shine to others.

3. There is a charge expressly given with the distribution of the

talents : Luke xix. 13, ' And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said to them, Occupy, till I come.' They were to employ their industry to improve it to the greatest advantage of bringing in an increase to God. This charge is given by our proper and rightful Lord and it is committed to servants, not to strangers and freemen, who are at their own dispose, but to servants who are at the the command of their Lord, who hath made us and bought us. And this trust is accepted by covenant of all that profess themselves to be his servants ; not implicit, as there may be between the devil and his agents ; but explicit and formal, that we will be wholly his and for him. And we are accountable for the profession if we do not mind the use : for a man that hath an estate made over to him in trust and for certain uses expressed in the conveyance, hath indeed no estate therein at all, but with respect to those uses. Certain it is that we have the comfort more in the use than the possession. The solid comfort of wealth, power, and honour is never seen till we employ it for God. It is not tasted so much when you are gorgeously attired, and your tables are plentifully furnished, and when you glut yourselves with all manner of fleshly delights, as in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the oppressed. So for ordinances, the worth of them is known by use and improvement ; not when we resort to them for custom and fashion's sake, but when we taste that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter ii. 3. So the graces of the Spirit are most sweet when they do not lie idle ; then we feel the comfort of them : John xv. 11, ' These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.'

Use. Let us improve our trust, and rouse up ourselves, and say, What honour hath God by my wealth, power, honour, greatness ? what protection to his cause ? what relief to his people ? To this end consider—

1. What is your business in the world. Our Lord Jesus said, ' To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth,' John xviii. 37. Every one is sent into the world for some end, for God would not make a creature in vain. For what end did you come into the world, but to glorify God in your place and calling ? What part in the world would God have me to act ? Most men are ready to go out of the world before they ask for what purpose they came hither.

2. Every one is trading for somebody, either for God, or for the devil and the flesh ; either regarding his master's glory, or his own carnal satisfaction : Rom viii. 5, ' They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.'

3. Consider how much you are entrusted with. Look within you, without you, round about you, and see how much you have to account for. For natural advantages, time, wealth, honour, estate : Neh. i. 11, ' Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man ; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' For ordinances : Mat. xi. 23, ' And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down to hell ; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained till this day.' Where the gospel is most clearly preached, that place and

people is most clearly exalted and made nearest to heaven; but yet if these be not improved, they bring you into the deeper state of condemnation. Persons honoured and favoured by God with spiritual advantages, shall be brought as low as they were formerly advanced. Yea, for grace itself. You are to be accountable, not only for corn and wine and oil, but for the saving gifts of the Spirit. *Τι περισσόν*, 'What do ye more than others?' Mat. v. 47. You are always to glorify his name, admire his grace, and live answerably to his love, and bring him into request among all about you.

4. Talents are increased the more they are employed, and we double our gifts by the faithful use of them; as the widow's oil increased in the spending, and the loaves in Christ's miracle were multiplied in being divided, and the right arm, by being much used, is bigger and fuller of spirits than the left. Grace groweth by exercise, but decayeth by disuse. Gifts, if they be not employed, are lost. How many poor withered christians are we acquainted with that are blasted, and have suffered a shrewd loss, by slacking their zeal, and want of diligent exercise! 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have,' Luke viii. 18. To *have* is to use or employ our present stock.

5. We must give an account to God. We must not think that when God hath given or committed anything to us, he will not look after it any more. No; he will call us to an account what honour he hath by us, as magistrates, ministers, or masters of families. Beasts are not called to an account, for they have no reason and conscience; but man is. God will ask, What you have done with your time, strength, and estate? An ambassador that is sent abroad to serve his king and country, if he could return no other account of his negotiation but that he had spent so much of his time in visiting the court ladies, and so much again in play, in cards, or dice, that he could not mind the employment he was sent about, would this satisfy the king that sent him? Or if a factor that is sent to a mart or fair should say that he stayed so long guzzling at the next alehouse, that the time was over ere he could part with his companions, and riotously wasted the money that he was to employ in traffic: these are odd things as they are represented to your imagination. Now consider how little better answer you can make to God, when he shall require and ask his own of you.

6. Consider what a sad thing it is to have gifts only to leave us without excuse. As the gentiles had the light of nature: 'God left not himself *ἀμάρτυρον*, without witness among them,' Acts xiv. 17. But what was the issue? 'The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse,' Rom. i. 20. God is not *ἀμάρτυρος*, without a witness, and they are *ἀναπολογητοί* without excuse; they have not the excuse of faultless ones. To others the word is preached *εἰς μάρτυριον*, for a witness to them: Mat. xxiv. 14, 'The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations.' But it is, Mark xiii. 9, 'For a testimony against them.' And the Lord would have Ezekiel preach, 'That they might know that a prophet

hath been amongst them,' Ezek. ii. 5. So that all the fruit is, God is clear when he judgeth, but they have no saving benefit by all this.

7. That in improving what is committed to our trust, our returns must carry proportion with our receipts: Mat. xxv. 16, 17, 'He that had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made them other five talents; and likewise he that received two, he also gained other two.' God will not accept of every rendering. For the mercies of common providence, it is said, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, he rendered something, but 'not according to the benefit done unto him.' So for the mercies of his covenant; where he pardoneth much, he expecteth to be loved much: Luke vii. 47, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' So for sanctification; he expecteth more from them to whom he hath given more grace. Paul saith, 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.' So for all other talents, ordinances, and means of knowledge. God expecteth more from them to whom they are vouchsafed, than from another people; as is evident in his judgments: 'You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.' The valley of vision had the sorest burden, Isa. xxii. 1. Yea, it is more easy to be saved for some than others. Righteousness consists in a proportion, which holdeth good both in our duty and God's judgments. But of this hereafter.

8. Consider how many encouragements God's stewards have to be faithful.

[1.] His right is clear, as appeareth by this double plain argument. God doth dispose of these gifts at his own pleasure by his providence, and by his laws he hath regulated the use of them, that thus and thus we shall employ them.

[2.] God hath given a liberal allowance to every steward which he employeth. He is well provided for; for he is an instrument of God's providence, first to provide for himself, and for his own: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'

[3.] Besides the gifts we are entrusted withal, there is co-operating grace to help us to be faithful: Phil. ii. 13, 'He worketh in us, both to will and to do;' else we should swallow the gift, and little mind the use: Col. i. 29, 'Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.'

[4.] There is an eternal reward to the faithful: Mat. xxv. 23, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' All his servants shall be highly dignified, as those whom Christ delighteth to honour.

SERMON II.

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of them will they ask the more.—LUKE. xii. 48.

DOCT. 2. These gifts are not given to all in the same measure; for in the text there is intimated a difference in the distribution; some have 'much,' others have 'little.'

This is a thing often inculcated in scripture, as worthy to be taken notice of, and seriously improved by us. Therefore I shall give you—(1.) Some observations concerning it; (2.) The reasons of it; (3.) The uses.

I. Observations.

1. That every one hath some gift or other to be improved for God; some relation, some opportunity and advantage, whereby he may glorify his Father which is in heaven, honour the gospel, and be useful to others. In the parable of the talents, one had five talents, another two, another one; he that had least had one, Mat. xxv. 15. Some have public offices, and move in a higher sphere. Others are in a private condition, where they may glorify God as masters or as servants, as parents or children, husbands or wives, by performing the duty of their places. Fidelity in the meanest piece of service is acceptable to God, and tendeth to his glory and honour: Eph. vi. 8, 'Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.' He taketh notice of the poor bond-servant, who serveth God in his calling as well as of the freemen and masters; for God looketh not to the splendour and greatness of the work, but the honesty and sincerity of the doer, how mean soever he be. And this tendeth to God's honour: Titus ii. 10, 'Showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' Religion is commended and well spoken of by means of the good carriage of a poor servant. *Dent imperatores tales, tales exactores fisci, &c.* It is very notable that every one offered to the use of the tabernacle in Moses' time, gold, or silver, or brass, or chittim wood, or goats-hair, or badgers skins; some that which was more expensive, others that which was more cheap and common, but every one according to his several ability. So when Christ went to Jerusalem, some strewed the way with garments, others cast down branches; some cried, Hosannah; that was all they could do. The meanest service hath its use, and is not without a reward: Mat. x. 41, 42, 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward;' and whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' That is, he that doth support and enable a prophet to do the work of him that sent him, shall receive the same reward that he should, if he had been sent to prophesy; yea, the same as if he had received him that sent him, even Christ that sent the apostles, or God that sent Christ: 'For

he that receiveth you receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me,' ver. 40. And for the other branch, 'He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward ;' an holy man sent to plant holiness among them, or recommend holiness to them by his doctrine or practice, shall receive the benediction of a righteous man ; the having a righteous man in one's house maketh you partake in his blessing. Nay, a cup of cold water given to another, because he is a disciple of Christ, that is, the least service or good turn done to a member of Christ, shall not be forgotten ; as the least injury is taken notice of, as 'the putting forth of the finger,' by way of mocking, Isa. lviii. 9. The Lord would have none of those upbraidings.

So that I observe two things here. One is the difference. To enable a prophet is more than to entertain a righteous man ; to entertain a righteous man is more than a slight good turn. The other is, that the smallness or meanness of the benefit whereby any of Christ's followers are helped and refreshed shall not diminish Christ's estimation of the man's good affection.

2. That there is great diversity in the talents themselves. Christ doth not give all to all, nor to all alike. The kinds of gifts are various ; some are more earthly and bodily, as strength, wealth, and honour ; these are gifts, and to be employed for God, bodily strength for the labours of the gospel : 'As God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord,' 1 Chron. xv. 26, by discharging bodily lassitude and weakness. So for the defence of his church. He giveth sometimes notable strength and valour to exercise it, as to Sampson, and David's worthies or mighty men, 1 Chron. xi. 10. Wealth, that we may 'honour God with our substance,' Prov. iii. 9, and 'make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,' Luke xvi. 9, and occasion others to bless God for us. So for honour and dignity, that we may protect and shelter God's people. As it is taken notice that Christ's grave was with the rich and honourable, Isa. liii. 9, meaning Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, John xix. 38, 39 ; these eminent men thought it their duty to own Christ in his lowest abasement. So it is taken notice of, Acts xvii. 4, 'A great multitude of the Greeks believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the chief women not a few.' So would God put some worldly authority and respect upon his gospel, lest it should seem only a frenzy of the people. But others are of a more spiritual nature, as gifts of the mind, wisdom, knowledge, faith, love, hope. With these especially God expecteth to be glorified ; for when he hath given us all things necessary to life and godliness, he trusteth his honour in our hands, that we may do some worthy thing for him in the world, and quit ourselves above the ordinary rate of mankind, either for the glory of God, or the benefit of others.

Now among these gifts some are common, as knowledge, utterance, &c. ; others saving, and 'such as do accompany salvation,' Heb. vi. 9, as faith and love, &c.

The common gifts are several : 'For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit,' 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Some are able to explain

truth soundly, others to apply it closely ; some have the gift of prayer and utterance, others are good to inform the judgment ; some to convince gainsayers, others to stir up lively affections. It was observed in the three ministers of Geneva, *Vireto nemo docuit dulcius, Farello nemo tenuit fortius, nemo doctius locutus est Calvino*—No man taught more sweetly than Viretus, no man held an argument more strongly than Farelus, no man spoke more learnedly than Calvin. Among hearers, some have more wisdom, some more knowledge, some more affection. Yea, in the penmen of scripture you may observe a variety : John is sublime and seraphical, Paul rational and argumentative, Peter writeth in a more easy, fluent, milky way. So in the Old Testament, Isaiah more court-like and lofty, Jeremiah more priestly and gravely, &c. Every one hath his different character and way of writing.

Among the saving graces you may observe a diversity, though all have all in some measure ; for the new creature must not be maimed, nor in any part wanting ; yet some are more eminent for one grace, some for another, as Abraham for faith, Job for patience, Moses for meekness, Timothy for temperance. And grace itself worketh according to the diversity of tempers ; some are modest and mild, others bold and zealous ; some are mourning for sin, others are wrapt up in the admiration of the grace of God in Jesus Christ ; some are exemplary for strictness and weanedness from the delights of the animal life, others are industrious in service. So true is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 7, ‘ Every one hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that ; ’ that is, some have this, others that special excellency, whereby to glorify God. And again, Rom. xii. 6, ‘ Having gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us.’

3. They are not given to all in a like measure ; some have more, others have less. This is also spoken in scripture : Eph. iv. 7, ‘ To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ ; ’ Rom. xii. 3, ‘ As God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.’ And once more : Eph. iv. 16, ‘ According to the effectual working in the measure of every part.’ The measure of Christ respects the author, the measure of faith the benefit of the receiver, the measure of a part our office in the body. All have their peculiar function, according to their several designations ; and all this, that every man may be doing according to his best capacity. With respect to this variety, some are weak, some are strong, Rom. xiv. 1 ; some have little, and some have great faith ; some are fathers, some young men, some babes in Christ, 1 John ii. 13, 14. And our Lord in his charge to Peter concerning his pastoral office distinguisheth between *ἀρνία*, his little lambs, and *πρόβατα*, his sheep : John xxi. 15, 16, ‘ Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.’ This is very suitable to the notion of a body, to which the community of christians is often resembled. For as in the natural body, all members are not of equal growth and bigness, so it is in the mystical body of Christ ; there is a different measure in each part, that there may be a meet symmetry in the whole. Besides, all members have not a like office, therefore God’s Spirit giveth not all a like measure of knowledge and other gifts. If all were of equal strength for faith, wisdom, and other graces, the matter and occasion of sundry principal duties would be taken away ; there would be no need that

one christian should edify another, bear with one another, avoid the offence of another, give help to another, restore another.

Well, then, let us observe this measure ; for plainly there is a three-fold difference—

[1.] In the degree of the gifts ; some have more means, some have more common grace, knowing their Master's will, which is a great talent and obligation ; some have greater obligations, and therefore greater condemnation if they answer it not : John iii. 19, ' This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

[2.] In opportunity : Phil. iv. 10, ' Ye lacked opportunity.' Certainly the lack or want of opportunity of doing good, not through our default, doth excuse or justify the forbearance of it. But when we have it, we should take hold of it : 1 Cor. xvi. 9, ' A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.' The door opened noteth opportunity ; the resistance of adversaries is not a discouragement, but maketh it more necessary not to suffer it to be shut again. Now all have not like opportunity.

[3.] In degree of success. It is ordered as God pleaseth ; some have more, some have less : Acts xvii. 34, ' Howbeit, certain men clave to him, and believed.' Seldom doth God light a candle but he hath some lost groat to seek ; yet sometimes few are gathered, for God is debtor to none.

II. The reasons.

1. To show the free sovereignty of God, who may do with his own as it pleaseth him. And he will be known to be the supreme Lord in the distribution of his gifts and graces : 1 Cor. xii. 11, ' All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.' As for graces : Mat. xi. 26, ' Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' And as for gifts, God is arbitrary in his gifts, but not in his judgments. Gifts are not given as we will, but as God willeth. The Spirit is compared to wind, not only for his force but his liberty : John iii. 8, ' The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' God doth not only dispense riches and honours as he pleaseth, and common gifts of knowledge and utterance, but saving graces. To some they are not given ; and where they are given, to some it is in a larger, to others in a more scanty measure.

2. These things are given by Christ in a different proportion, that the world may know that all fulness is only in himself : Col. i. 19, ' It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell.' The greatest gifts and graces which God bestoweth on any is far below that fulness which is in Christ. We have the Spirit by measure, but Christ without measure : John iii. 34, ' For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.' He giveth to none so much but still there is somewhat wanting ; and they who have received most are capable of receiving more. In him there is not only *plenitudo sufficientie* but *redundantie*, a fulness of sufficiency, but of redundance ; not only *plenitudo vasis*, but *fontis*, not only the fulness of the vessel, but of the fountain ; and so a manifest difference between head and members.

3. To show his singular love, care, and providence for and towards the church. Such a body as that is needeth distinct offices, and because there is a diversity of employments and offices, which must not be confounded, therefore doth he enable his servants with needful gifts and graces : Rom. xii. 4, 'All members have not the same office ;' some are designed for this function and use, and some for that. Now, as offices are divers, so are gifts and graces : Isa. liv. 11, 12, 'I will lay thy foundations with sapphires, I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.' The church is there compared to a beautiful palace and edifice. And mark, there is a diversity of employments, 'foundations, windows, gates, borders ;' and there is a variety of gifts, expressed by the several kinds of jewels, 'sapphires, agates, carbuncles, and pleasant stones.'

4. God dispenseth his gifts variously, for the beauty, order, and comeliness of the whole universe of mankind. Variety is grateful ; hills and valleys make the world more beautiful, so do the distinct orders and ranks of men ; all eye or all belly is monstrous. Difference with proportion maketh comeliness, therefore one excelleth another, and several gifts and ranks of men there are for the more convenient proportion of the whole, as labour, service, counsel, wit, wealth, strength, &c. Without this variety it would be a lump rather than a body.

5. That every one in the sight of his own wants may be kept humble. When we are singular for any or many excellences, we are apt to grow proud and unsociable : 'The eye is apt to say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; or the head to the feet, I have no need of you,' 1 Cor. xii. 21. Therefore, that we may have somewhat to commend us to the respects of others, and something to humble us, God hath scattered his gifts, that one should need another, that every one might have need of that gift of which he hath not the possession : 'As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God,' 1 Peter iv. 10.

6. That there might be no schism in the body, but the members of it may maintain mutual love and amity. Diversity of gifts was not intended to dissolve the bands of union, but to strengthen them rather. Therefore the apostle, when he had reckoned up the bands of union, he presently addeth, 'but to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. iv. 7. First he speaketh of what is one in all, then of what is not one in all, but diverse in every one. Every one hath his distinct excellency, to endear him to the rest. Diversity of gifts is an ordinary occasion of division and strife, of envy, pride, mutual disparagement, but in itself it is one of the strongest bands of union ; whilst all in their way contribute to the good of the whole, and have the use of that excellency which they want themselves. Divers countries have divers commodities ; one aboundeth in gold, another in spices, another with wine, wool, corn, flax, &c., to maintain a commerce between mankind ; so here.

Use 1. To quicken us to improve our several talents for God, and be faithful according to that degree and place we sustain in the body.

2. Those that have the greatest gifts should not contemn those who have few or less. There is none but hath need of another. It is a base spirit that would shine alone, or set up one gift to the prejudice

of another : ' All are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,' 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. *In veste varietas, sed scissura non sit.* Let us mutually help one another, and acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God in all that we have, and be humble in what we want.

3. Let those that have few be content with the meanest gifts. You have no reason to repine at the giver. How little soever God hath given you, it is more than he owed you. If his distribution had been a matter of justice and debt, you might have said, Why has he not given to me as well as to another ? But it is the act of a free Lord, and he may do with his own as it pleaseth him : Mat. xx. 15, ' Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own ? Is thine eye evil because mine is good ? ' And as you cannot repine against the giver, you should not envy the receivers. The accounts are easier, and the greatest dealers are not always the safest men. You that have received little shall account for little.

Doct. 3. That, whether we receive little or much, all is in reference to an account. That is intimated in the words *required, asked.*

Gifts are variously dispensed. Some have wit, others estate, others strength ; some have offices, honour, authority ; but all must be called to an account, and those that have any gifts must look to reckon for them. This requiring and asking is represented to us in scripture under the notion of certain records, rolls, or books kept between God and the creature, concerning what we have received and returned. Therefore I will prove—(1.) That there are books of account kept between God and the creature ; (2.) That at the day of doom these books shall be opened ; (3.) That all without exception shall be called to this reckoning ; none so high as to be exempted from it, none so low as to be neglected in it ; (4.) That the judgment shall pass upon all men according to the account then given.

1. That there are books of account kept between God and the creature ; which is to be understood not properly but figuratively. Not properly, as if God, who seeth all things with one infinite act of understanding, did need books, as men for the help of their memories, or to confirm the truth and equity of his judgment by producing a record ; but *ἀνθρωποπαθῶς*, after the manner of men, and for our better conception. Men use books, in which they write those things which they have given out upon trust, and of which they expect a return ; and in allusion to this, because of God's exact and righteous judgment, the scripture speaketh as if our good and evil were all upon record. So Jer. xvii. 1, ' The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond.' The expression there is taken from characters cut or carved with iron and steel, or any strong tool, in marble, so as they cannot be defaced. So again, ' It is written before me,' Isa. lxi. 6. God did not forget or pass over, but observe and remember. Indeed there is a twofold book. The book of God's remembrance : Mal. iii. 16, ' A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name ; ' whereby his notice is expressed. The sin that we commit, or the good that we do, doth not die with the action, as if no further memory of it should remain, but it is recorded. The book of our conscience : ' It is graven on the table of their hearts,' Jer. xvii. 1. It maketh a deep impression on their minds and memories,

as cannot easily be razed out. Nothing can escape the eye of the judge, and not easily the notice of conscience. Though one of the books be in our keeping, it is not easy to deface it, and blot it out. Now let us see what is written in these books.

[1.] What God doth for us, or to us ; as opportunities of grace and mercy : 'These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none,' Luke xiii. 7 ; John iv. 54, 'This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he came out of Judea into Galilee ;' 2 Peter iii. 1, 'This second epistle write I to you.' *Tot convincor testibus, quo christianis sermonibus me monuerunt*—I have so many witnesses against me as I have heard sermons. So the same is true for deliverances : 'The Lord will set his hand again the second time, to recover the remnant of his people that shall be left,' Isa. xi. 11. So for motions of his Spirit : 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man,' Gen. vi. 3 ; it had done so long already. So for God's apparitions to Solomon : 1 Kings xi. 9, 'His heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.' So Jer. xxv. 3, 'From the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, unto this very day (that is, the three-and-twentieth year), the word of the Lord hath come unto you, and I have spoken unto you, rising early, and speaking, but you have not hearkened.' God's expostulations in scripture, when he proceedeth to any particular judgment, are an instance of what he will do in the general judgment.

[2.] On the other side is written all the good and evil that we do. For good, the apostle speaketh of 'fruit abounding to their account,' Phil. iv. 17. The prophet showeth God taketh notice of our faithfulness, or owning God in an evil time : Mal. iii. 16, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another ; and the Lord hearkened and heard it ; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.' So of the conversion of any, be they never so few : Acts xvii. 34, 'Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed.' Kindness to his servants : Mat. x. 42, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward ;' 1 Kings xix. 18, 'Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.' On the other side injuries done to his people are recorded ; he hath a bottle for their tears, a book for their sorrows : Ps. lvi. 8, 'Thou tellest my wanderings ; put thou my tears into thy bottle ; are they not in thy book ?' So for all the sins we have committed : 'Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures ?' Deut. xxxii. 34. Nay, Job xiii. 27, 'Thou lookest narrowly unto all my paths, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.' Every action leaveth a mark behind it. Nay, in the verse before, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth ;' as if God had taken account of his old sins. Many in this account shall hear of things long ago committed ; their iniquities will find them out. If a man escape any remarkable judgment for one year or two, he thinketh all is forgotten. Ay ! but these debts stand upon record against us till the book be cancelled or crossed. Thousands of vain thoughts, sinful actions, much

misspense of time, abuse of mercies, will then occur to our view, when our whole lives shall be set in order before us : Ps. l. 21, ' These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself : but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.' Now these are the accounts kept between God and us.

2. At the day of doom these books shall be opened : Rev. xx. 12, ' I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened.' God can forget nothing, and conscience shall be awakened to an exact review of all our ways. Security vanisheth, light is greater, judgment is nearer. Circumstances of conviction shall then be produced ; the trial is to be open, the wicked are to be shamed, the righteous to be vindicated. God shall be justified when he judgeth : Ps. li. 4, ' That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' Impenitent sinners are to be condemned for abusing the law of nature or despising the grace of the gospel : 2 Thes. i. 8, ' Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

3. That all without exception shall be called to this reckoning ; none so high as to be exempted from it, none so low as to be neglected in it : ' I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God,' Rev. xx. 12. They all stand on the same level. Magistrates must give an account of their trust, and so must meaner people : 1 Peter i. 17, ' If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work.' God is an impartial judge. Men are often biassed by the expectation of benefit, or terrified by the apprehension of danger. No person, no action can escape his judgment.

4. The judgment will pass upon all men according to the account then given. If we have been faithful and fruitful in improving God's talents, it shall go well with us in the judgment ; if negligent and careless, it shall go ill : ' Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' Mat. xxv. 30. Though not persecuting, nor riotous, yet if unprofitable. The barren tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, as well as the naughty tree that bringeth forth bad fruit. God reckoneth with us now, but often doth not execute his threatening, or in the midst of judgment remembereth mercy. Then the doom is finally and irreversibly past, without hope of recovery, and there is no temperament of mercy at all to those that have lost their season.

Use. To reflect the light of these things on our hearts. Is our account ready ? Most neglect or put off the thoughts of it. But do you take occasion hence to reckon with yourselves aforehand ? See every day what you receive and what you return. Consider every day's mercies and every day's work. The profit of daily arraigning conscience is exceeding great.

1. It keepeth us sensible of our duty, which otherwise would be forgotten ; heathens saw a necessity of this reckoning with respect to growth in moral virtue. Men would not easily commit evil, nor omit good, or perform it so coldly, if they did but say, as the town-clerk of Ephesus did to still the citizens, ' We are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar,' Acts xix. 40.

2. It would make us often to have recourse to grace, when we observe our sins, duties, mercies, comforts, and how the one aggravate the other. Surely we should every day make even with God, deprecate the strict judgment: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Get the books cancelled: Ps. li. 1, 'According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.' Augustus bought his guilt, who slept securely when he owed so great a debt. And this we must do daily: Mat. vi. 12, *ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν*, 'Forgive us our debts.'

3. It would make us more earnest to improve opportunities of receiving grace: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.'

4. More careful to improve our talents. We must give an account: Heb. xiii. 17, 'They watch for your souls as they that must give an account.' Use time, health, wealth, wit, authority, honour for God.

5. What watchfulness, diligence, faithfulness would this breed in us! James ii. 12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.'

6. That we may be ready for the judgment, it concerneth us to begin betimes to mind this. This is the folly of men, that they put off their necessary work from time to time. The more of our lives is spent, the less is to come; the judgment is every hour nearer. The judge is at the door ready to judge; are we ready to be judged? None are ready to be judged but those that make even with God, and reckon with themselves often now. The saints do thus: 'Whose ox or ass have I taken?' 1 Sam. xii. 3. Paul: Acts xx. 26, 'I am pure from the blood of all men.' Our Lord Christ: John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

Doct. 4. Answerable to men's mercies shall their account be. Much for much, and little for little. For—

First, More shall be required of some than of others.

1. The more means, the more light and knowledge of God you should have: Heb. v. 12, 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.' So John xiv. 9, 'Have I been so long time with you and hast thou not known me?'

2. The more light, the more grace you should have, otherwise our condemnation is just, and will be the more grievous: John iii. 19, 'This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.'

3. The more grace, the greater our christian performances should be, that we should do some eminent thing for God. *Τί περισσόν*, what singular thing do ye? Mat. v. 47, 'What do ye more than others?' You should be such that God may boast of you, as he did of Job: chap. i. 8, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth

God and escheweth evil?' Where are there such men for holiness, wisdom, sobriety, meekness patience, so full of good fruits, so mindful of God's glory, and profitable to others? Then you would be ornaments to your holy profession.

4. Every additional mercy increaseth the obligation, be it inward or outward. Inward: 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,' 1 Peter ii. 3. When you have received at God's hands the pardon of sin, the spirit of adoption, and hope of glory, when you have got conscience settled and established by grace, God expecteth you should draw in others: 1 John i. 3, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' Outward, when many a prayer is answered, many deliverances are granted: Ezra ix. 13, 14, 'Seeing thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?' New favours call for new work, and diligence in it.

5. The more helps and advantages we have, the crime is yet the greater. They are more responsible to God who enjoy ordinances in their power, plenty, and purity. How have others thriven in less time, and by smaller means by far! Christ marvelled twice at the unbelief of his countrymen: Mark vi. 6, 'And he marvelled because of their unbelief,' and at the faith of the centurion: Mat. viii. 10, 'When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said unto them, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.' When others with less means shine before you in knowledge, meekness, patience, and a blameless upright life, and an heavenly conversation, how just is your condemnation!

6. The more abilities you have of nature, still the debt returneth the more upon you. God considereth all men according to their advantages. A factor is more responsible for a thousand than an hundred pounds. Therefore they that have received so much from God, men of high place, great interest, excellent gifts, large estates, are more bound to glorify God than others. How should they tremble at this! Thus for what is required.

Secondly, How far it is required of you.

1. So far that it will cost you dear to abuse or not to improve the gifts of God: Rom. ii. 9, 'Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the gentile. It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you,' Mat. xi. 22.

2. It is so far required that your salvation is more difficult; for those that have not such means are saved upon easier terms, and the Lord spareth a people where they know no better. But what is an infirmity in them is an iniquity in you, for all sins receive an aggravation from the degree of light against which they are committed: James iv. 17, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' God is no Pharaoh, to require the full tale of brick where he doth not afford stubble.

3. It is so far required that they are not spared, but often called to suffer the greatest trials. All that belong to Christ are bound to suffer great things for him; nay, they are to forsake all they have: Luke xiv

33, 'So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' Now though God spare his people till they be confirmed, and driveth as the little ones are able to bear, yet trials are suited to the grace we might have had *de jure*, though *de facto* we have it not: Heb. x. 32, 'After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;' Mat. xiii. 5, 6, 'Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they withered away,' which is explained: ver. 20, 21, 'He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.'

4. It is so far required that your punishment is more grievous. *Potentes potenter cruciabantur*—Great men shall be mightily destroyed. Rich men, and of great power and abilities, have the hotter hell. Greater mercies the, greater sin, and the greater shall be the judgment.

5. Righteousness doth consist in a proportion. And it holdeth good both for our duty and God's judgment; for our duty that we should be fruitful, according to our means, opportunities, and helps; and for God's judgment, for it is said, God 'will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,' Isa. xxviii. 17; observes an exact proportion. Precise justice shall be to the wicked. The only exception is the *ἐπιείκεια*, the lenity of the gospel.

[1.] That a man who hath been unfruitful heretofore do change his course, and for the future live unto God. For the gospel admitteth of repentance, and grants a pardon to the negligent or unfaithful, if they will be faithful afterward, and break off their sins by after righteousness, diligence, and fidelity. The gospel looketh forward to the time to come: Rom. vi. 6, 'That henceforth we should not serve sin;' 1 Peter iv. 2, 3, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; for the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.' It respecteth not what penitent believers have been before their conversion and turning to God. Many have been long serving their base lusts and vile affections, eminent in wickedness; but they should double their diligence for the future. We should be the more diligent and serious to restore to the Lord his honour: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.' He saith there he was *ἑκτρωμα*, 'one born out of due time,' ver. 8, and that 'he persecuted the church of God,' ver. 9.

[2.] Where a man is faithful for the main, though he be culpably defective in not making such exact returns according to his precepts, yet he is not rejected, for the gospel pardoneth manifold failings and escapes: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' But the negligent christian, that is right for the main, meeteth with many troubles in this life, and in the life to come loseth some degrees of glory: 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'He that soweth sparingly

shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.' God rewardeth in proportion to the several degrees of our charity and fidelity.

[3.] Ability is considered, and that is a return of much when we do our best. Look, as there may be a summer's day in winter, and a winter's day in summer, for the proportion, so much may be little, and little much, according to the estate or ability of the giver: Luke xxi. 4, 'All these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.' Though she had scarce enough for herself, yet out of that little she had been liberal. Some do twice as much good with a little as others with a great deal, for love will not be backward. Mark there, Christ sits by the treasury to observe what returns several persons made; he approveth the two mites of the widow before the larger offerings of the rich pharisees. So the apostle saith of the poor saints of Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 2, 'Their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality; because in the depth of their poverty they expressed a great bounty to others, though they gave less than the church of Corinth.

[4.] Opportunity in doing good is considered. Where opportunity is wanting, God taketh notice of affection. God considereth what is in our hearts: 1 Kings viii. 18, 'Whereas it was in thy heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.' He approved David's purpose, though opportunity served not as yet. So the apostle excuses the defect of the Philippians by lack of opportunity: Phil. iv. 10, 'Ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.' The want of opportunity, not through our default, doth justify for a time the forbearance of positive duties. But then we must take heed—

(1.) That it be not want of good-will, but of opportunity: 2 Cor. viii. 12, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.' If he doth according to his ability, that which he is not able to do shall not be expected of him.

(2.) That we do not lose the opportunity by giving way to every discouragement: 1 Cor. xvi. 9, 'A great door and effectual is opened to me, and there are many adversaries.' The apostle would stay at Ephesus, for there was great hope of doing much good by propagating the gospel in those parts, though there were many which did oppose the truth.

[5.] Whether we do much or little for the quantity, God chiefly looketh to the affection. *Affectus pretium rebus imponit*—Affection gives a price to things, without this, pompous services are rejected: 1 Cor. xiii. 3, '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 nothing.' If it be not out of love to God's glory, and aiming at others' good, it is not fruit abounding to our account. On the other side, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward,' Mat. x. 42. God doth respect the heart of the giver. Many poor christians have a large heart, but can do little. God loveth not *copiosum, sed hilarem datorem*; not a large, but a cheerful giver, where ability and opportunity will afford it. A liberal and open heart will not be defective in quantity;

they think nothing too much for God, but all seemeth too little: 1 Chron. xxii. 14, 'Now behold in my trouble,' or in my poverty, 'have I prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight.'

[6.] In employing our gifts, our faithfulness is measured and judged by our endeavour, not by the success: Isa. xlix. 4, 'I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work is with my God.' Though there be little fruit and effect in men, yet it is not the less regarded and rewarded by God. We read of a 'crown of righteousness,' 2 Tim. iv. 8, and of a 'crown of fruitfulness;' Rev. ii. 10, 'Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life;' 1 Thes. ii. 19, 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?'

Use 1. Let this assuage the envy and trouble of the meanest. If thy gifts be mean, thy account will be so much the easier. Alas! it is no easy thing to stand in the judgment. How much have others to account for!

2. To persuade those who have received greater gifts than others to do so much the more good with them. That which God will accept from others he will not accept from you. You will be deeper in the state of condemnation if your fruit be not proportionable. The rich in this world must be rich in good works: 1 Tim. vi. 18, 'That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.' Those that have more helps than ordinary should have the more grace: 'He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, &c., and looked that it should bring forth grapes,' Isa. v. 2; Heb. vi. 7, 8, 'The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God, but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.' So for them that have more grace. Others have common mercies, but you have the great and special mercies; and should not you abound in love and holiness? You are made partakers of a divine nature, and therefore you should be somewhat more than ordinary men. You have the Spirit, and will you not walk in the Spirit, and mortify the flesh by it? Surely God expecteth more from you, for he hath given you more, and will do more for you. As there is a great difference between heaven and hell, so should there be between your lives and theirs that shall perish for ever.
