

## SERMON UPON LUKE II. 52.

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*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.—LUKE ii. 52.*

THESE words are spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ. In them two things are observable—(1.) Christ's growth; (2.) The consequent of it.

1. Christ's growth, both as to body and soul: He 'increased in wisdom and stature.'

2. The consequent of it: He attracted the love of 'God and men.'

The point I am to speak of is this—

*Doct.* Jesus Christ himself, in respect of his human nature, which consisteth of body and soul, did grow and improve.

1. Let us state this growth of Christ.

2. Give you the reasons of it. For stating it—

[1.] Certain it is that there are two distinct natures in the person of Christ, divine and human; the one infinite and uncreated; the other created and finite; for he is 'Emmanuel, God with us,' Mat. i. 23; 'Of the seed of David, and yet declared to be the Son of God with power,' Rom. i. 3, 4; 'The Word was made flesh,' John i. 14; 'The man God's fellow,' Zech. xiii. 7; 'A child,' yet the 'everlasting Father,' Isa. ix. 6; born at Bethlehem, yet his goings forth were from everlasting, Micah v. 2; 'The bud of the Lord, and the fruit of the earth,' Isa. iv. 2. Now according to this double nature, so must his growth be determined: surely not of the divine nature; for to the perfection of it nothing can be added; an infinite thing cannot increase. So his knowledge is infinite; he knew God, and all things.

[2.] In his human nature there are two parts—his body and his soul. The text saith he grew in both. As to his body, and growing in stature, there is no difficulty. As to his soul, the doubt is whether he grew really, or in manifestation only. I think really his soul improved in wisdom, as his body in stature; as others of his age are wont to ripen by degrees. In the same sense that he is said to increase in stature, he is said also to increase in wisdom, for both are coupled together; and he increased in stature really, in deed and in truth; so that he daily became a more eminent person in the eyes of all.

[3.] It is not said he grew in grace, but in wisdom. To want degrees of grace cannot be without sin. And 'our high priest was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,' Heb. vii. 26; yet his knowledge as man was perfected by degrees. We always grow in knowledge:

'Follow on to know the Lord.' He was ignorant of some things, as the day of judgment; for in Mark xiii. 32, it is said, 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.' His divine nature was ignorant of nothing; but as to his human, he was ignorant of it. Some say he knew it not to reveal it; so the Father may be said not to know it as well as the Son. This simple nescience was no sin.

[4.] This knowledge or wisdom wherein Christ grew may be understood thus—

(1.) There is the habitual knowledge, and the actual apprehension of things. Christ had the foundation and root of all knowledge when conceived by the Spirit, from his very conception; but the actual knowledge came afterwards. He had the spirit of wisdom and promptness of understanding, but the act of knowing is as occasion is offered.

(2.) There is a knowledge of generals, when singulars are not actually known. So Christ was deceived in the fig-tree, Mat. xxi. 19; and he inquireth for Lazarus' grave: John xi. 34, 'And he said, Where have ye laid him?'

(3.) There is a knowledge intensive and extensive. Intensive, a clear knowledge; extensive, to more objects. Christ grew in both. He grew as to clearness of apprehension, and as he knew more objects.

(4.) There is a knowledge infused and experimental; so Christ knew more by experience: 2 Cor. v. 21, 'Who knew no sin;' that is, by experience in himself; and Heb. v. 8, 'He learned obedience by the things which he suffered.'

2. For confirmation—(1.) By scripture; (2.) By reason.

[1.] By scripture. Next the text take that, Isa. vii. 14-16, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel: butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good: for before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.' The child spoken of should not be any fantastical appearance, or mere imaginary matter, but a very man-child, fed and brought up with such food as other children were, that by growing up he may come to years of discretion. He should have such notice of good and evil as children usually have when the use of reason and understanding begins first to put out and exercise itself; as Deut. i. 39, 'Your children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil;' that is, had no ability to discern the one from the other. So that Christ was as other infants, bating only his nearness to the godhead. The sun is the sun still, at morning or at high noon; yet at first rising it is more glorious than any other creature. Well, then, the gift of the Holy Ghost showed himself in him, and was acted and discovered according to the progress of his age, and the increase of bodily strength. At twelve years old he disputed with the doctors.

[2.] By reason.

(1.) He every way made himself like man, except sin: Heb. iv. 15, 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' He was carried nine months in the womb of the blessed Virgin.

(2.) As his capacity was enlarged, so his wisdom discovered itself; and the power that was in him showed forth itself. In us, as the body increaseth, so the powers of the reasonable soul are increased also.

(3.) The effects of the personal union were communicated to the human nature, *non necessitate naturæ, sed libertate voluntatis*; not by necessity, but free dispensation. As to all creatures, God considereth what is profitable, and may make them useful in the state wherein he will employ them. So to Christ; he knew all things that were necessary for the execution of his office. So God hid from or revealed to his human nature according to his pleasure.

(4.) The divine nature did by degrees show itself in him, lest before the time it should be too prodigious, and not so suiting to the dispensation of the gospel, which is a dispensation of faith, not of sense, and so hinder the beautiful order of it, which from inconspicuous beginnings was to be carried on to a great increase. His kingdom was from a grain of mustard-seed to grow up into a tree; so in his person, he was from a state of childhood to grow up into the stature of a perfect man, and then to suffer and die; which might have been impeded and hindered if those things which were to be done by him as a man were done by him as a child.

(5.) There was need of a continual growth, that there might be a distinction between the state of his humiliation and exaltation. As in us, we know now but in part, but then that which is perfect will come, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10; so in Christ, he was to know somewhat as a child, more as a man. And there is a distinction between what he knew as a man in the state of his humiliation, and what he knoweth now in the state of his exaltation. He still knew what was necessary to his office: John v. 27, 'And he hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.' He exerciseth lordship over all things, therefore his knowledge is as vast as his empire. In Judea he knew those he conversed withal, yea, he knew their hearts; but now all judgment is put in his hand. And herein is nothing asserted unworthy of Christ; for as the divine nature did in some manner shut up and conceal and hide its majesty in itself during the humiliation of the Son of God, that it might not discover that dignity which appeared in his exaltation, so the spirit of wisdom was held in and restrained, that it might not presently put forth its perfections, but by little and little according to the state of Christ.

*Use 1.* Is to teach us to admire the condescension of the Son of God, who submitted to all our sinless infirmities, and would grow, and be improved in soul as well as body.

1. The oftener we think of this, the more should our hearts be filled with reverence at this stupendous mystery. It is without controversy great, that the Son of God should be as other infants; be carried nine months in the womb, be suckled, swaddled, brought up as other children, and grow in wisdom and stature as they do. Is this the great God that made all things, and governeth all things at his pleasure? Is this the fountain of wisdom, and the author of all perfection? Yes, it is he. But this abasing is for our sakes. The beginning of his humiliation was in the very womb, the progress of it from the cradle to the grave.

2. If Christ grew in wisdom, so must we: 2 Peter iii. 18, 'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' We have not only incapacity, but the veil of ignorance. It is little we know of God at our best. Therefore let us open and ripen by degrees, from good going on to better, that we may be best at last. When it is declining time with the outward man, yet the inward man may be renewed day by day, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Long use of means and many experiences should perfect us. Therefore let there be a continual progress in grace and knowledge, till we grow to a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. iv. 13. To be a child of days is as monstrous a thing as to keep to the stature of a child when thirty or forty years old. So it is in christianity: Heb. v. 12, 'When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.' When God hath given us means to improve our knowledge, it is inexcusable to be ignorant.

3. It informeth us that ignorance from natural defect and imperfection is no sin; for Christ was ignorant of some things, especially in his childhood. Ignorance may arise from several causes—

[1.] From want of revelation. We are not bound to know a thing never revealed to us: Deut. xxix. 29, 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children for ever.'

[2.] From the sublimity or excellency of the matter to be known. It is above our capacity: Ps. cxxxii. 1, 'I do not exercise myself in things that are too high for me.' We are to understand what is revealed, and must improve ourselves more and more.

[3.] From neglect of the means God hath given man to improve his knowledge. This will be charged on man as a great crime, especially of things necessary, or such as concern our everlasting salvation, or conduce thereunto. Many have time and teaching enough, but they wofully misspend it, and are ignorant of the principles upon which the knowledge of other things doth depend, and so are incapable of farther instruction, or the higher points of the gospel. This doth not excuse, but is a great sin.

[4.] From natural defect; as in mad folks and naturals, and for a time children. Now this is not culpable, and is not charged upon man at his last trial; for God accepteth according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not: 2 Cor. viii. 12, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'

II. The consequence; as he increased in wisdom and stature, so he increased in favour with God and man; that is, he obtained a testimony of the favour of God, and the general love and good-will of men. The same is said of Samuel: 1 Sam. ii. 26, 'And the child Samuel grew, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men;' that is, he was acceptable to God and men. God's favour is that by which he loveth his image. The more conspicuous the image of God is in any creature, the more is God delighted in that creature. Now there was more of the image of God to be seen in Christ a youth than in Christ a child; which is no more unworthy of Christ than to be a child.

*Doct.* The more true and saving wisdom men have, the more acceptable they are to God, and many times to men also.

Prov. iii. 4, 'So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man;' that is, acceptation and good success. So it is said of the primitive christians, whilst christianity was in its simplicity, Acts ii. 47, 'That they praised God, and had favour with all the people.' They praised God, as being acceptable to him, and received his blessing; and men had reverence and esteem for them: Prov. xxii. 11, 'He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend;' that is, a man that keepeth exactly to his duty, he hath an holy boldness, and a grace in his speeches, which many times, by the blessing of God, procureth him favour with great ones.

But a question or two must be considered.

*Quest.* 1. How is it possible to please God and men, since they that please God are hated by the world? John v. 19, 'Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you;' and 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution;' and they that please the world cannot be the servants of God, Gal. i. 10.

*Ans.* 1. We ought to carry it so that our life may be pleasing to God and approved of men. That is our duty, whatever the event be: Acts xxiv. 16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' 2 Cor. viii. 21, 'Providing for honest things in the sight of the Lord and in the sight of men.' Just and holy things must we provide, that evil men may have no cause to reproach us, and good men may be edified by our example. A life then it must be that is pleasing to God, and deserveth to be approved of men, that if they hate us, we may not be in fault: 1 Cor. x. 32, 'Give no offence, neither to Jews nor to gentiles, nor to the church of God.' Many times men bring trouble upon themselves by their own folly.

2. There is a difference between convincing men and having a testimony in their consciences, and humouring them in their sin. It is humouring them in their sin which is man-pleasing, inconsistent with the pleasing of God. But to be made manifest first to God, and then in their consciences, is another thing, 2 Cor. v. 11. We must not please them by joining with them in their sin. We buy the approbation of men at too dear a rate, if we buy it by the breach or neglect of our duty to God.

3. Though men like not the way of godliness so as to embrace it and follow it, yet they admire it: Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour;' and Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy.' The evidence of their consciences doth compel them to approve and honour them.

*Quest.* 2. How far is it lawful to mind the approbation of men, or to make it any motive to us? Since it is said, John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only?'

*Ans.* 1. We are not to cast off all respects to a good name, because it is an excellent blessing: Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and

gold.' It is of great use for our service and safety. The credit of religion dependeth much on the credit of those that profess it. Now, that we may not be a disgrace to Christ, nor act as blemished instruments, we must endeavour to preserve a good name. A pastor of the church must be one that hath a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil, διαβόλος, the slanderer, 1 Tim. iii. 7. The rather must we mind this, because men first make shipwreck of a good name, and then a good conscience; and he that is lavish of his credit is very seldom tender of his conscience. And it is of great use for our safety. Infamy cast upon the people of God is a forerunner of more trouble, and showers of slanders are a forerunner of the grievous storms of mischief and persecution. The devil is first a liar and then a murderer, John viii. 41. In the primitive times they did invest Christians with bear-skins, and then bait them as bears; first count them offenders, and then prosecute them as such. The devil is afraid to meddle with unstained innocence. Valens the emperor spared Paulinus out of reverence to the unspottedness of his life. Therefore, since it is a great part of our security and protection against violence, it must not be slighted.

2. This must not be our first and chief motive; that is the favour of God: 2 Cor. v. 11, 'But we are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.' The approbation of God must be chiefly sought after; we are not sincere without it; for sincerity is a straight and sincere purpose to please God in all things. The approbation of men must rather follow than be aimed at. *Laus humana non appeti debet, sed sequi.* This is the consequent of well-doing, not our proper scope. *Gloria bene appetitur, nihil male agendo contra ipsam, et bene appetitur,<sup>1</sup> nihil male agendo propter ipsam.* Credit is well sought when we do nothing ill against it, and when we do nothing ill to obtain it.

3. The favour of men may be sought when we take it as the fruit of the favour of God; for all good cometh from his favour. He giveth it us by his secret influence on the hearts and counsels of men: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' He made Laban and Esau kind to Jacob. God can procure unthought-of favour by his Spirit; either bridle their rage, or dispose them to show you favour. Sometimes he casts a terror into the hearts of enemies, and sometimes inclineth them to show favour; as Jacob when he met with Esau: Gen. xxxiii. 4, 'Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' So Joseph found favour with Potiphar, Gen. xxxix. It is God that maketh friends for us, when we seem to be destitute and lost in ourselves. It is not our merits, much less our compliances, that procures it.

4. It is the glory of God, and the honour of the gospel, and the safety of religion, which should be our chiefest aim and scope in all these things: Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;' and 1 Peter ii. 12, 'That they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God.' And because it is not our main

<sup>1</sup> Qu. 'contemnitur' †—Ed.

aim, if it come, we should not be over-affected with it. If it come not, we should not be over-troubled; but in good and bad report we should approve ourselves to be the faithful servants of the Lord, 2 Cor. vi. 6. Man's judgment is not to be stood upon; God will not ask their vote and suffrage for our admission into eternal glory. As we must not forfeit it by any fault of our own, so we must not desire it as our great happiness; in this, as well as in other temporal things, we must refer all to God.

*Quest.* 3. But what wisdom is requisite that we may increase in favour with God and man?

*Ans.* 1. In the general, an innocent holy conversation is that which procureth a good name, and respect with God and man. It will certainly be accepted with God; and as to men, you cut off occasion from them that do desire occasion: 1 Peter iii. 16, 'Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.' Live down reproaches by a clear innocency.

2. More particularly, by making conscience of morals rather than rituals: Rom. xiv. 18, 'He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men.' The weighty matters, piety, justice, charity, these carry their own evidence with them, and bespeak their references in the consciences of men. Will the world value a man for his zeal for or against ceremonies, when other things do not answer? Suppose he be in the right, yet who will regard a man purely for his rightness in opinion? It is hypocrisy, condemned of God, and not very well liked of man, to tithe mint and cummin, and not very well regard the weightier things of the law: Mat. xxiii. 23, 'Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'

3. Yet more particularly, though men care not for piety, yet they care for righteousness and duties of the second table. We have more light in things that are *inferioris hemisphaerii*, of the lower orb and rank; and though we are not to neglect the other, yet these must have a chief part in our practice: Rom. xii. 17, 'Providing things honest in the sight of men.' There justice, truth, equity are regarded as conducive to the good of human society, and men are wise in their own matters.

4. Once more, love, kindness, gentleness are very taking in the world, and our religion excludeth them not, but recommendeth them to us: Rom. v. 7, 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet for a good man some would even dare to die.' For a man of a rigid innocency scarce any would die, but for a good and bountiful man some would even dare to die. The contrary is observed of the Jews, who had a bitter zeal: 2 Thes. ii. 15, 'They please not God, and are contrary to all men.' Therefore we should study to excel in those things that are good. To be good should be our constitution, and to do good the business of our lives.

*Use.* To press us to get and increase in this heavenly wisdom, whereby we may get the favour of God and men.

1. We must seek to get the favour of God above all things, which is the life of our lives and the joy of our hearts : Ps. xxx. 5, 'In his favour is life ;' and Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance : thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased.' That should be our chief care ; direction, preservation, blessing do all depend upon it. The favour of God is either mercy or grace. Oh ! seek this, in the first place, that you may have the love of God and the comfortable effects of it : Rom. ii. 29, 'Whose praise is not of men, but God.'

2. Seek also the favour of men. Let us be careful not to offend them, but seek their favour, and that both of the good and bad. The good, that they may help you in the way to heaven, and you may be edified by them ; the bad : Col. iv. 5, 'Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.' There is great wisdom required in a christian's carriage towards the carnal and profane, lest we scare them from Christ, or give them occasion to speak evil of religion : 1 Tim. v. 14, 'Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully ;' and 2 Cor. vi. 3, 'Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.'

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