

glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance.

[2.] This conduceth to the mortification of the flesh; therefore we deny ourselves present satisfactions, that we may not be castaways, disallowed in the judgment. 'Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the coming of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13.

[3.] The tolerance and enduring of the cross. This gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, 'but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy,' 1 Peter iv. 13. And then our reward will very much exceed the proportion of our sufferings; they are no more to be set against them than a feather against a talent of lead. 'I reckon they are not worthy to be compared,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18. It would be a disgrace to a man's reason that these things should bear any competition with our great hopes: 'these light afflictions, that are but for a moment,' with 'that exceeding weight of glory,' Christ shall bestow upon us.

For means, all I shall say is this: if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as sure and as near: Rev. xxii. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly, and bring my reward with me.' We have the promise of the eternal God for it, so attested, and made out to us with such evidence, that we have no reason to doubt of the recompenses of religion. But things at a distance, though never so great, will not leave a due impression upon us: therefore we must look upon this promise with a certainty of persuasion that it will not be long before its accomplishment. Thus faith lessens the distance between hope and enjoyment, and enables us comfortably to wait.

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## SERMON VIII.

*Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.*

—EPI. I. 8.

In the context the apostle speaks of the spiritual blessings we have by Christ: he considers them under a threefold reference:—(1.) As they were appointed and prepared for believers in God's decree of election. There was the first stone laid towards this building. (2.) As they were purchased by Christ in the great and wonderful work of redemption. (3.) As conveyed and applied to us in effectual calling, and so brought home to our souls. In all these God gave evident proofs of the riches of his free grace. For (1st,) If he 'chose us to be holy before the foundations of the world,' nothing anteceded his love; not in us—for there was nothing in being then; we were not, and so could do nothing to deserve it—nor in that prospect and foresight which God had of things; for he could foresee nothing but what was the effect of his free grace: not because holy, but 'that we *might* be holy and without blame before him in love.' (2dly,) Consider his

purpose to bring about all this by Christ, still he showed his free grace. For when there was nothing to move him, much to hinder the design of his grace, yet he found out a way to bring this about by Christ. (3dly.) In the effectual application to us, who were ignorant, obstinate, unbelieving, his grace doth more shine forth that he would do all this for creatures so much unworthy. Now, in the application, God discovers two things :—(1.) His abundant favour, or the riches of his grace, ver. 7. That his love, so long hid in his decree, did afterwards overflow in the effects to persons so averse and unworthy. (2.) His excellent wisdom in the text, ‘Wherein he hath abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence.’

The only difficulty in the words is, What is this wisdom and prudence spoken of? Whether it imply the wisdom of God, or the wisdom wrought in us by the Spirit in conversion? Many interpreters go for the last. The former, I suppose, is here meant, which is eminently discovered in the mysteries of the gospel: Rom. xi. 33, ‘Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!’ Surely it is not meant of wisdom in us; for how little a portion have we of true and heavenly wisdom. Now, the two words used: *wisdom* noteth the sublimity of the doctrine of the gospel, and *prudence* the usefulness of it. As Prov. viii. 12, ‘I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,’ which showeth there is some distinction between those words. It was wisdom to find out a way of recovering lapsed mankind, and it was prudence to dispose it into so good and convenient order that it might be commodious for our acceptance. If any think it relateth to the effects wrought in us, I am not against it. Christ is wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 24, and ‘made wisdom’ to us, 1 Cor. i. 30. These Asiatics, to whom the apostle wrote, gloried in their secular wisdom and curious arts; now the true wisdom was found in the mysteries of the gospel.

*Doct.* That in the dispensation of grace by Christ, God hath showed great wisdom and prudence.

When his grace overflowed to us, he showed therein not only his goodness but his wisdom. Now, though we can easily yield to this assertion, yet to make it out needeth more skill. ‘The manifold wisdom of God’ is better seen to angels than to us, Eph. iii. 10. They have more orderly understandings; whereas we are confused and dark. Yet to discover it to you in a few particulars, the grace of the Redeemer may be considered three ways :—

I. As to the purchase and impetration of it by the incarnation and death of the Son of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace.

III. The application of it to particular believers. In all these God hath shown great wisdom.

I. As to the purchase and impetration of grace by the death and incarnation of the Son of God.

1. There is wisdom in this, that in our fallen estate we should not come immediately to God without a mediator and reconciler. God is out of the reach of our commerce, being at such a distance from us, and variance with us. The wise men of the world pitched on such a way, 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. The heathens saw so far that it was an uncomfortable thing to make their immediate approaches to their

supreme God. But here is the true God and the true Mediator: 'But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' One God, the Father, from whom we derive all graces, to whom we direct all services; one Lord, Jesus Christ, who conveyeth the graces and benefits to us, and returneth our prayers and acts of obedience to God. This is a mighty relief to our thoughts; for the apprehensions of the pure Godhead do amaze us and confound us when we come to consider of that glorious and infinite being. As heretofore, before they found out the use of the compass, they only coasted, as loth to venture themselves in the great ocean; so by Christ we come to God. He is the true Jacob's ladder, John i. 51.

2. That this Mediator is God in our nature. Therein the wisdom of God appeared, in crossing and counter-working Satan's design. Satan's great design was double—to dishonour God, and depress the nature of man. (1.) To dishonour God to man by a false representation, as if he were envious of man's happiness: Gen. iii. 5, 'God doth know in the day that ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' His first battery was against the goodness of God, to weaken the esteem thereof. Now, by the incarnation of Christ, the Lord's grace is wonderfully manifested. He is represented as lovely and amiable in our eyes, not envying our holiness and happiness, but promoting it, and that at the most costly rate, and showing love to man above all his other creatures. 'God is love,' 1 John iv. 8. It is eminently demonstrated to us in the Son of God assuming our nature and dying for us, Rom. v. 8. When Christ was incarnate, love was incarnate. Love walked up and down and healed all sicknesses and diseases, love died, and love hung on a cross, love was buried in the grave. When that ill representation was suggested to us, it was necessary there should be some eminent demonstration of the love of God to man. Especially after we had made ourselves liable to his wrath, and were conscious to ourselves that we had incurred his displeasure; and so it was necessary that we should have some notable discovery of his *philanthropy*, or love to mankind. Many believers are harassed with doubts and fears, and cannot come to be persuaded that God loves them. 'Herein is love,' and 'God commended his love to us in that his Son died for us.' (2.) The next design of Satan was to depress the nature of man, which in its innocence stood so near to God. Now that the human nature, so depressed and debased by the malicious suggestion of the tempter, should be so elevated and advanced, and set up so far above the angelical nature, and admitted to dwell with God in a personal union, it is a mighty counter-working of Satan, and showeth the great wisdom of God. When he laboured to put God and us asunder, the Lord sent his Son, who took the unity of our nature into his own person.

3. That being in our nature, he would set us a pattern of obedience by his holy life; for he lived by the same laws that we are bound to live by. He imposed no duty upon us but what he underwent himself, that he might be an example of holiness unto us. We learn of him obedience to God at the dearest rates; contempt of the world, and contentation with a low and mean estate, and to be lowly and

meek in heart, Mat. xi. 29. Now man being so prone to imitation, it is the greatest effect of the wisdom of God thus to oblige us, unless we would be utterly unlike him whom we own as our Lord, and from whom we have all our hopes and expectations.

4. That he should die the death of the cross to expiate our sins. Gal. iii. 13, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,' &c. ; Phil. ii. 8, 'He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;' that the justice of God might be eminently demonstrated, the lawgiver vindicated, and the breach that was made in the frame of government repaired, and God might keep up his just honour without prejudice to his people's happiness, that he might be manifested to be holy, and a hater of sin, and yet the sinner saved from destruction, Rom. iii. 25, 26. An absolute pardon without satisfaction might have exposed God's laws to contempt, as if the violation of them were not much to be stood upon ; therefore God dispensed his grace with all wisdom and prudence ; would show eminent mercy, but withal a demonstration of his justice and holiness, that the world might still be kept in awe, and there might be a full concord and harmony between his mercy and justice.

5. That after his death he should rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, to prove the reality of the life to come, I Peter iii. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, strangely haunted with doubts about the other world ; therefore did Christ in our nature arise from the dead and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration of the visible resurrection and life to come, which he had promised to us ; and so encourage us, by a life of patience in sufferings, to follow after him into those blessed mansions. So that from first to last you see the wisdom of God.

II. The publication of it in the gospel or covenant of grace. It is 'ordered in all things and sure,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The messengers by whom it is published are not extraordinary ones, but men of like passion with ourselves. The great thing in a minister is love to souls. Christ saith, he 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister.' In the covenant of grace, you see the wisdom of God in two things :—(1.) The privileges offered ; (2.) The terms or duties required.

1. In the privileges offered to us, which are pardon and life. In these benefits, pardon and life, there is due provision made for the desires, necessities and wants of mankind. Pardon answereth the fears of the guilty creature ; and life, those desires of happiness which are so natural to us, and therefore are the most powerful and inviting motives to draw our hearts to God.

[1.] The consciousness of God's displeasure, and the fear of his wrath, should make offers of pardon acceptable to us. When sin entered into the world, fear entered with sin. The grand scruple which haunteth the guilty creature is, how God shall be appeased, and the controversy taken up between us and his justice : Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith shall he be appeased, and what shall I give for the sin of my soul?' We fear death and punishment from a holy and just God, and this is the bottom cause of all our troubles. Therefore till the forgiveness of sin be procured for us, and represented to us upon

commodious terms, we know not how to get rid of this bondage, the justice of the supreme governor of the world will be ever dreadful to us. These fears may be for a while stifled in men, but they will ever and anon return upon us. Now let us admire the wisdom of God, who hath provided such a suitable remedy to our disease as reconciliation and remission of sins by Jesus Christ; and that God showed himself so ready to pardon us, who are so obnoxious to his wrath and vindictive justice.

[2.] The other great privilege offered in the covenant is eternal life, which suiteth with those desires of happiness which are so natural to us. Corrupt nature is not against the offers of felicity; we would have immunity, peace, comfort, glory; none would be against his own benefit, but every one would be willing to be freed from the curse of the law, and the flames of hell, and enjoy happiness for evermore. Though we be unwilling to deny the flesh, and renounce the credit, pleasure, and profit of sin, and grow dead to the world, and worldly things, yet never was there a creature heard of that would not be happy, for there was never a creature but loved himself. Now, the Lord in his covenant 'hath brought life and immortality to light,' settled our happiness and the way to it; he promises that which we desire, to induce us to that which we are against. As we sweeten pills to children, that they may swallow them down the better, they love the sugar though they loathe the aloes. God would invite us to our duty by our interest; he hath told us of a happiness full, sure, and near, that he may draw us off from the false happiness wherewith we are enchanted, and bring us into the way of holiness, that we may look after this blessed hope.

2. The terms he hath required of us. The terms are either for entrance, or making covenant with God; or continuance, or keeping covenant with God; for entrance, faith, and repentance are required.

[1.] Faith in Christ. The world thinks faith quits reason and introduceth fond credulity. No; there is much of the wisdom of God to be seen in it. For faith hath a special aptitude and fitness for this work:— (1.) Partly in respect of God. For he having designed to glorify his mercy and free grace, and to make our salvation from first to last a mere gift, and the fruit of his love to us, hath appointed faith for the acceptance of this gift: Rom. iv. 16, 'It is of faith, that it might be by grace.' Faith and grace go always together, and it is put in opposition to the merit of works, or the strictness of the old covenant. (2.) As it is fittest to own Christ the Redeemer, the fountain of life and happiness, and our head and husband, whom we receive, and to whom we are united and married by faith. (3.) With respect to the promises of the gospel, which offer to us a happiness and blessedness, spiritual, and for the most part future. Unseen things are properly objects of faith: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' (4.) It is fittest as to our future obedience, that it may be comfortable and willing. Now, we owning Christ in a way of subjection and dependence, and consenting to become his disciples and subjects, other duties come on the more easily, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

[2.] For repentance. This is the most lively and powerful means of

bringing men to new life and blessedness. (1.) It is most for the honour of God that we should not be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, and resolution of future obedience. Common reason will tell us that our case is not compassionate while we are impenitent, and hold it out against God. Who will pity those in misery who are unwilling to come out of it? Besides, it would infringe the honour of God's law and government that one continuing in his sins, and despising both the curse of the law and the grace of the gospel, should be pardoned and saved. Repentance is often called a giving glory to God: Mal. ii. 2, 'Ye will not lay it to heart, and give glory to my name;' Josh. vii. 19, 'My son, give glory to God, and make confession to him;' Rev. xvi. 9, 'They repented not to give glory to God.' Repentance restoreth God's honour to him, as it acknowledges the justice of his laws. The self-condemning sinner acknowledges that God may destroy him, and if he save him it is mere mercy. (2.) The duty of the creature is best secured, and the penitent person more bound to future obedience, by the vow itself, or the bond of the holy oath into which he is entered, and the circumstances accompanying it, which surely induce a hatred of sin and a love of holiness. There will be a hearty consent to live in the love, obedience, and service of our Creator, with a detestation of our former ways. When we feel the smart of sin, such a sense of it will ever stick by us; and when we are in the deepest and freshest sense of his pardoning mercy, when we see at how dear rates he is pleased to have us, and upon what free terms to pardon all our wrongs, we shall love much, Luke vii. 47. Surely they that are brought back from the gibbet and the very gates of hell by such an act of pardoning mercy are most likely to remember the vows of their distress, and are more engaged to love God and please him than others are. (3.) It is most for the comfort of the creature that a stated course of recovering ourselves into the peace and hope of the gospel should be appointed to us, which may leave the greatest sense upon our consciences. Now what is likely to do so much as this apparent change, whereby we renounce and utterly bewail our former folly, and solemnly devote and give up ourselves to God by Christ? Those things that are serious and advised leave a notice and impression upon the soul. This is the most important action of our lives, the settling of our pardon and eternal interest. The heart is hardly brought to this, to renounce what we dearly love; therefore it is usually rewarded with some notable tastes of God's love: Isa. lvii. 15, God delights 'to revive the hearts of his contrite ones.'

For continuance in the new covenant, and delightful obedience unto God. The remedy is not only suited to the disease, but the duty to the reward. Our duty is to know God, and to love him; and our reward is to see him, and be like him, 1 John iii. 2. There is a marvellous suitableness between the end and means, holiness and happiness, conformity to God, and our communion with him; the holiness required of us now, and the happiness we expect hereafter; perfect conformity and uninterrupted communion; and they differ only but as the bud and the flower, the river and the ocean: here it is begun, hereafter perfected.

III. In the application of his grace to particular believers, he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.

1. In the way God taketh to convert souls to himself, there is a sweet contemperation and mixture of wisdom and power. There is a proposal of truth and good to the understanding and the will, and by the secret power of his grace it is made effectual. We are taught and drawn: John vi. 44, 45, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' In the 45th verse, 'And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' There is opening of blind eyes, and the turning of a hard heart: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,' &c.; Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of the understanding being opened,' &c.; Col. iii. 10, 'Renewed in knowledge.' Turning the heart: Acts xvi. 14, 'God opened the heart of Lydia;' Acts xi. 21, 'The hand of the Lord was with him; and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.' His hand implieth his power. Thus God worketh strongly, like himself; sweetly, with respect to us, that he may not oppress the liberty of our faculties. Christ comes into the heart, not by force, but by consent. We are 'transformed,' but so as we 'prove what the will of God is,' Rom. xii. 2. He draweth, we run, Cant. i. 4. The power of God and liberty of man do sweetly consist together. As God is said to 'create in us a new heart,' he is also said to 'give us a free spirit,' Ps. li. 10, 12. Eph. ii. 10, We are said to be 'his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' So he 'puts a new heart,' and we are said to 'walk in his ways.' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' Thus God showeth forth the powerful efficacy of his grace, and doth also win the consent and good liking of the sinner; he obtaineth his effect, and yet doth preserve the liberty of man's nature and the principles thereof. It is not only *voluntas mota*, but *mutata*; the nature is changed and renewed. 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

2. In the persuasive and moral way, the wisdom of God is seen as taking the most likely course to gain the heart of man, discovering himself to us as a God of love, kindness, and mercy. Guilty creatures stand aloof from a condemning God; our fear of his justice maketh us run from him: Gen. iii. 7, 10, Adam 'hid himself from the presence of the Lord.' So all his posterity forsake God and hate him. But God, though the superior, though the wronged party, maketh offers of peace, and showeth how willing he is to be reconciled to us. Having first laid the foundation in the highest demonstration of goodness that ever could come to the ears of man to hear of, or enter into the heart of man to conceive; namely, in giving his Son to die for a sinful world, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. What more apt to make man relent? And

then, because man had fallen from the love of God to the creature, Jer. ii. 13, what wisdom doth God show, not only in the offers of pardon, but eternal life and blessedness, infinitely beyond the false happiness which carnal self-love inclineth us to ! that it is a shame and disgrace to our reason to think these things are worthy to be compared together. What are all the pleasures, profits, and honours we dote upon, to the pleasures at God's right hand? the riches of the inheritance of the saints, and the glory which cometh from God. And therefore, what more powerful motive can be produced than this blessed immortality? Indeed, God is invisible, and the glory is to come; and sensual pleasures are at hand, ready to be enjoyed. But faith checketh sense: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Oh the wisdom of God in the frame of the gospel!

3. In the effect itself, the new creature, which is the wisest creature on this side heaven. To evidence this to you, I shall show you that all wisdom and prudence consisteth in three things:—(1.) In fixing a right end; (2.) In the choice of apt and proper means; (3.) In a dexterous effectual prosecution of the end by those means.

(1.) In fixing and propounding to ourselves a right end. A wise man doth not mind trifles, but is conversant about things of the greatest reality, necessity, and excellency: such are God and heaven. All other wisdom will prove but folly in the end. Others 'disquiet themselves about a vain show,' Ps. xxxix. 6. Poor, silly creatures cark and labour and turmoil to get together a few poor transitory enjoyments, where there is neither durable possession nor solid satisfaction. The honours, pleasures, and riches of the world are but pictures and shadows of the true honours, the true riches, and fulness of joy at God's right hand. Surely he is a wise man that chooseth God for his portion and heaven for his home: Prov. xv. 24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, to avoid hell beneath.' He is wise, and hath chosen the true sort of living, which mindeth the salvation of his soul, and looketh after eternal life. Surely this is above and beyond any wisdom man can pretend unto, to be happy, not for a while, but for ever.

(2.) In the choice of apt and proper means. A man is wise enough if he knows his duty, and the way to happiness. God hath appointed us the way wherein to walk, to fear him, and love him, and keep his commandments: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep these statutes, for this is your wisdom;' Job xxviii. 28, 'The fear of God, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.' There is an excellency in this sort of life, Prov. xii. 26. Those applaud it that do not choose it. All are of this mind at last, and dying are sensible of the excellency of it.

(3.) A dexterous effectual prosecution of the end. This prosecution imports—First, Diligence: He is a fool that hath a price in his hand and hath not a heart to lay it out on a good purchase, Prov. xvii. 16; but he is a wise man that improveth his time and labour to a good purpose: 'A wise man's heart is at his right hand,' Eccles. x. 2. Secondly, This prosecution lies in caution and circumspection to keep himself from sin: Eph. v. 15, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.' Lastly, It consists in self-denial. The wise merchant sold all that he had for the pearl of price, Mat. xiii. 46, 47.



A wise man doth not dally with religion, but thoroughly sets himself to it.

*Use 1.* Be persuaded that serious Christianity is the true wisdom; and the wisdom of the world, which is only conversant about worldly things, from a worldly principle to a worldly end, is foolishness with God. This is wisdom, which acquainteth us more with God, and leadeth us into everlasting happiness.

2. Admire the wisdom of God in dispensing salvation by Christ, who could bring light out of darkness, and so great a demonstration of his glory out of man's sin, and vanquish Satan by the way, whereby he seemed most to prevail, and still attain his end by means seemingly contrary. There is more of divine power and wisdom showed in Christ crucified than in anything men could think of. It was a more glorious act of power to raise Christ from the dead, than in not permitting him to die. He prevailed more by laying down his life, than by being prosperous in the world and taking the lives of his enemies.

3. If God hath abounded to us in all wisdom, let us not disturb the order of this grace by asking privileges without duties, or minding duties without the help of the Spirit; or placing all in duties, so as to exclude the merit and satisfaction of the Redeemer; or to eye the ransom so as to exclude the example of Christ. All things are well ordered in God's covenant; the confusion arises from our darkness and misapprehensions.

4. There should be wisdom and prudence in us, for the impression must be according to the seal and stamp. Wisdom is a saving knowledge of divine mysteries; and prudence, to regulate and order our actions and practices, to perform our respective duties to God and man. The apostle prays for the Colossians (Col. i. 9), that they might 'be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' All have not the same measure of saving knowledge and prudence, yet the least saint hath what is necessary to salvation. You must every day grow in those graces, for by degrees they are carried on towards perfection.

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## SERMON IX.

*And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—MAT. XXVII. 46.*

IN the history of the passion you will find that our Lord Jesus was exercised with all kind of temptations; affronted by men, assaulted by the powers of darkness, deserted by his own disciples—one of them denied him, another betrayed him, but all fled. And thus he was not only 'rejected of men,' but was stricken, and smitten, and forsaken of God. This was as gall and vinegar to his wounds, the passion of his passion. The world's cruelty and Satan's rage had been nothing, if the brightness of the divine presence had not been eclipsed. When the people were set against him—'His blood be upon us and our